



Bhutan - A nature and culture adventure

📅 12 Days

📍 Locations Included

- Paro (4 nights)
- Punakha (4 nights)
- Thimphu (3 nights)

Daily Schedule

Day	Highlights	Location
Day 1	Arrival in Paro, Paro - Transfer to Punakha	Paro to Punakha
Day 2	Explore Punakha, Punakha Dzong, Chimi Lhakhang	Punakha
Day 3	Jiligang Pine Trail	Punakha
Day 4	Chorten Ningpo and Khabasa Village	Punakha
Day 5	Punakha - Thimphu, Lungchutse Hike	Punakha to Thimphu
Day 6	Explore Thimphu, Kuensel Phodrang (Buddha Point), Post Office, Institute of 13 Arts and Crafts, Tashichho-Dzong., Royal Textile museum, Kaja Throm	Thimphu
Day 7	Dodeydra Hike	Thimphu
Day 8	Thimphu to Paro (1 hour, 20 minutes), Gawaling Happy Home, Paro Dzong, Ta Dzong	Thimphu to Paro
Day 9	Chumphu Nye Monastery Hike (The flying Goddess Temple)	Paro
Day 10	Rest Day, Paro Town, Farmhouse visit & Lunch	Paro
Day 11	Hike to Tigers-nest Monastery	Paro
Day 12	Departure from Paro, Departure	

Detailed itinerary

1

Arrive at Paro Int. Airport (PBH), Transfer to Punakha



Paro - Transfer to Punakha

Private group

Landing in the Paro Valley is like entering another world. Cultivated fields cover most of the valley floor, and hamlets and isolated farms dot the landscape. After arrival, your Bhutanese guide will meet you outside the terminal and accompany you to the Punakha valley.

From Thimphu, the road ascends up to the Dochu la Pass (3,050m) , where we will stop over , have a cup of tea or coffee, and the opportunity to view the peaks of the eastern Himalaya. From the pass we descend into the beautiful Punakha Valley. The drive to Punakha takes about 3 hours.

115 kms - Approx 3 hour drive



No hotels selected yet in Punakha

Punakha



Explore Punakha

Private group

Punakha Valley has been inextricably linked with momentous occasions in Bhutanese history. It served as the capital of the country from 1637 to 1907 and the first national assembly was hosted here in 1953. October 13, 2011 marked an unforgettable wedding of the King of Bhutan, Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck to Jetsun Pema which was held at Punakha Dzong.

Punakha valley has a pleasant climate with warm winters and hot summers. It is located at an average elevation of 1200 m above sea level. Owing to the favourable climatic conditions, rice has become the main cash crop cultivated in the region. Today after breakfast we can embark on the following excursions.



Punakha Dzong

Private group · 30 minutes

Punakha Dzongkhag has been inextricably linked with momentous occasions in Bhutanese history. It served as the capital of the country from 1637 to 1907 and the first national assembly was hosted here in 1953. Punakha Dzong is not only the second oldest and second largest dzong but it also has one of the most majestic structures in the country.

October 13, 2011 marked an unforgettable wedding of the King of Bhutan, Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck to Jetsun Pema which was held at Punakha Dzong. Punakha Dzong was built at the confluence of two major rivers in Bhutan, the Pho Chhu and Mo Chhu, which converge in this valley. It is an especially beautiful sight on sunny days with sunlight reflecting off the water onto its white-washed walls.

In addition to its structural beauty, Punakha Dzong is notable for containing the preserved remains of Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal, the unifier of Bhutan as well as a sacred relic known as the Ranjung Karsapani. This relic is a self-created image of Avalokiteswara that miraculously emerged from the vertebrae of Tsangpa Gyarey, the founder of the Drukpa School when he was cremated.



Chimi Lhakhang

Private group · 30 minutes

We will traverse the Punakha countryside walking through paddy fields to the Pana Village to see the 'Chimi Lhakhang' built by the great Lama Drukpa Kinley in 1400 to subdue local demons. The temple is a

popular pilgrimage point for all Bhutanese and is specially revered by women for its fertility powers. It is for him that every house and shop in the nearby village is decorated with protective phallus symbols.

Inside the lhakhang you'll see the central statue of the lama and his dog Sachi, as well as statues of the Zhabdrung, Sakyamuni and a 1001-armed Chenresig. To the right is a statue of Kunley's cousin, the founder of the temple. Make a small offering and you'll be rewarded with a blessing from the lama's wooden and bone phalluses and his iron archery set. Childless women come to receive a wang (blessing or empowerment) from the saint, while mothers-to-be select their future baby's name from a collection of bamboo slips, leaving with either Chimi or Kunley as one of their child's two names. Other women carry a large wooden phallus around the building perimeter in order to boost their chances of conception.



Optional Activity

Your specialist has selected this for you to consider.



Rafting & Picnic by river side

Private group · 3 hours

Rafting in Punakha valley is popular outdoor activity . The first river Pho Chu is 16km long with 15 rapids of class 2 - 4. The second river Mo Chu is 10km long with 10 rapids of class 2 and 2+. Pho Chhu river is one of the most popular rafting spots amongst tourists. You'll pass through stunning landscapes of Punakha valley and may see rare exotic birds such as White-Bellied Herons and Kingfishers. Rafting will meander along the upper Pho Chhu with a series of Class IV rapids immediately below the village of Wangthangkha. After rafting head for a leisurely picnic by the Punakha river.



No hotels selected yet in Punakha

Punakha



Jiligang Pine Trail

Private group · 6 hours

The first step of the Jiligang hike begins from the suspension bridge over Mochu, the female river which meanders along the valley until it meets her partner Pochu (male river) forming a confluence below the Punakha Fortress, Palace of Great Bliss. The breeze of the splashing glacier river and the swinging bridge will give you a prior taste of the adventure of the beautiful hike ahead. We will enjoy a relaxed hike through traditional Bhutanese houses replete with Bhutanese farm life. Hike uphill till you reach about 1,800 meters on the hilltop through the chirpine forest.

The moderately strenuous hike is through the cool shades of pine trees and serene environment with peeping views of the Punakha Dzong and valley below. As you hike up, the aesthetic view of the meandering river and the melodic chirping of the birds will welcome you all the way. During summer, numerous species of tropical birds can be spotted. As you climb a little higher, the view of Jiligang Monastery will wash away your weariness and a gush of newfound energy will greet you along with the warm smiles of the caretakers of the temple.

The trail passes through the Yebesa village and later ascending through the Pine trees above the village. Scenic views of the Yebesa Village, Khamsum Yuellay Namgyal Chorten and the meandering Mochu river can be observed while climbing uphill above the Yebesa village. Along the trail breathing scenic views of the meandering

Mochu river, Lakhu village, Kabesa village and Kabji Chorten Nyinpo Lhakhang can be observed at the other side of the Mochu River. Most prominent is the Punakha Dzong view.

Jiligang Lhakhang : It was built by Lam Ngawang Chogyel in the 15 th Century. According to legend , the name of the Lhakhang has been derived from the event when Lam Drukpa Kuenley asked his cousin brother

Lam NgawangChogyel to prove his spiritual attainment. In response to it Lam Ngawang Chogyel proved his spiritual attainment by sending a cat from beneath the mountain base of Sonagatsa, which came out from the top of the hill. Thus, the name 'Jili' which means cat and the 'gang' means mountain and when put together it means

'Jiligang' which means Cat Mountain.

From the hilltop you can enjoy 360 degree views of the nearby mountains, nine villages to be a precise and a spectacular view of the snowcapped mountains in the distance. Jiligang Monastery is believed to have the same values and blessings as Chimi Lhakhang, the Temple of Fertility located in Punakha.

Distance: Yebesa – Jiligang : 3.50 km, Jiligang – Punakha – 2.

6 kms (6 kms)

Altitude: 1257 m- 1820m – 1240m (Yebesa – Jiligang – Punakha)

Ascent: 536 m

Descent: 580 m

Duration: 6 hours approx



No hotels selected yet in Punakha

Punakha



Chorten Ningpo and Khabasa Village

Private group · 4 hours

After breakfast drive to Chorten Ningpo, which dates back to the 17th century. The chorten is a little-known spot with a magnificent statue of Maitreya (the future Buddha) and images of the great lamas of the Drukpa lineage. This magical spot was once a dense forest inhabited by evil spirits. The great oak tree outside the monastery is said to have grown out of the blazing log that the 'Divine Madman' threw (the tree's bark is still black from where it was burnt). In 2005 the monastery began to house orphans from the nearby village, and founded a small Buddhist educational institution where the children can study traditional Buddhist scriptures and texts as well as Western subjects. The hike back is around 45 minutes, going past Thodrup Lhakhang.



No hotels selected yet in Punakha

Punakha to Thimphu



Punakha - Thimphu

Private group

Leaving Punaka, we will drive back towards the Thimphu Valley, En route, we again cross the Dochu la Pass, where we can take in the views and visit the Dochu la Monastery and the superb cluster of 108 chortens. We descend to Thimphu after a drive of about 3 hours. (74 kms)

After arriving in Thimphu we will cover a few interesting sites or you may have the afternoon at leisure.



Lungchutse Hike

Private group · 4 hours

The trail from Dochu La slowly climbs through a forest of hemlock, birch and rhododendrons until reaching an open meadow. From there you will again enter into a forest of moss-covered rhododendrons, gigantic hemlocks, junipers, and bamboo undergrowth. The trail leads past a row of fluttering prayer flags up to Lungchutse.

Dochula To Lungchutse Lhakhang Hike

Staring Altitude: 3100 m – 3600 m approx.

Ascent: 400/500 m

Distance: 8 km

Duration 4 Hours

NOTE: Dochula is approximately 1-hour drive from Thimphu



No hotels selected yet in Thimphu

Thimphu



Explore Thimphu

Private group · 0 hours

Today, we will explore Thimphu according to your own interests. The following are options, although you don't need to include them all.



Kuensel Phodrang (Buddha Point)

Private group · 30 minutes

The Buddha Dordenma is located atop a hill in Kuenselphodrang Nature Park and overlooks the Southern entrance to Thimphu Valley. The statue fulfils an ancient prophecy dating back to the 8th century A.D that was discovered by Terton Pema Lingpa (Religious Treasure Discoverer) and is said to emanate an aura of peace and happiness to the entire world.

This massive statue of Shakyamuni measures in at a height of 51.5 m, making it one of the largest statues of Buddha in the world. The statue is made of bronze and is gilded in gold. 125,000 smaller Buddha statues have been placed within the Buddha Dordenma statue; 100,000 statues of which are 8-inches-tall and 25,000 statues of which are 12 inches tall. Each of these thousands of Buddhas have also been cast in bronze and gilded. The throne that the Buddha Dordenma sits upon is a large meditation hall.



Post Office

Private group · 30 minutes

Philatelists will be interested in the museum attached to the post office. Five galleries trace the development of the Bhutanese postal system, from the earliest mail runners to Bhutan's idiosyncratic and highly collectible modern stamps. Importantly, you can get your photo put on a Bhutanese stamp, and then use it to send mail back to friends.



Institute of 13 Arts and Crafts

Private group · 30 minutes

Opened in June 1997, the institute reflects Bhutan's effort to provide opportunities for vocational training and preserve the arts and crafts of Bhutan. The National Institute of Zorig Chusum is the centre for Bhutanese Art education. Painting is the main theme of the institute, which provides 4–6 years of training in Bhutanese traditional art forms. The curricula cover a comprehensive course of drawing, painting, wood carving, embroidery, and carving of statues.



Tashichho-Dzong.

Private group · 30 minutes

Also known as the 'fortress of the glorious religion', this dzong was initially built in 1641, and later rebuilt in its present form by King Jigme Dorji Wangchuk in 1965. The Dzong houses the main secretariat building with the Throne Room of His Majesty the King of Bhutan. The National Assembly Hall is housed in a modern building on the other side of the river. In the evening, take a walk along Thimphu's high street and get a feel for the culture of this small capital city



Royal Textile museum

Private group · 30 minutes

Thimphu's best museum is part of the Royal Textile Academy. It features a stunning display of ancient and modern textiles, and explores the rich traditions of Bhutan's national arts of thagzo (weaving) and tshemzo (embroidery). The ground floor focuses on royal ghos, including the wedding clothes worn by the fourth king and his four wives. The upper floor introduces the major weaving techniques, styles of local dress and types of textiles made by women and men. No photography is allowed. The museum shop offers some interesting books and fine textiles. Across the courtyard is the Royal Textile Academy conservation centre, where you can watch a small group of weavers working their looms.



Kaja Throm

Private group

A line of stalls selling fresh seasonal fruits, vegetables and incense begins from the parking area of the old market and extends all the way to the VAST building. You can also see some stalls selling cereals, animal products and flowers. The covered pathway provides shelter for both vendors and shoppers alike from the

natural elements. Even the sides of the footpath have various art installations by VAST Bhutan that seem to bring excitement to the little ones accompanying their parents. A small crepe station is also situated along the pathway next to wooden benches.

The Riverside market is a popular spot in Thimphu for families; locals can now do their weekly grocery shopping and, at the same time enjoy the various facilities available at the market. It tends to get more crowded towards the evening on the weekends.



No hotels selected yet in Thimphu

Thimphu



Dodeydra Hike

Private group

This beautiful monastery school hidden in the pristine valley above Thimphu town is excellent half day hike option. Apart from main temple with interesting mural paintings, there is also small museum with unusual artefacts. Monks speak good English and will be happy to show you around. Nice hiking trail starts above Dechencholing while descend is better to Jungshina. Round trip takes about 5 hours for average hiker including the sightseeing on the spot.



No hotels selected yet in Thimphu

Thimphu to Paro



Thimphu to Paro (1 hour, 20 minutes)

Private group

The drive to Paro from Thimphu is about 55 km. The western branch of lateral highway from Thimphu, runs close to the Wangchu river in the valley floor, through the suburbs and villages of Thimphu to arrive at the river confluence of Chuzom, which is also the hub of road network going to Paro, Haa, Thimphu and Phuntsholing. From Chuzom, it is north-west for about 20 minutes, following Pa Chu river upstream, passing Tachogang temple on the other side of the river, then through relatively straight road, into the villages and farm houses of Paro valley.



Gawaling Happy Home

Private group

The RENEW Gawaling Happy Home provides an environment of physical and psychological safety for individuals - particularly girls and women - and families. The Happy Home offers counselling, legal aid and (where needed) emergency medical aid, crisis intervention, medication practices, and many livelihood training streams. AHF is proud to assist RENEW in regard to Happy Home operations, helping support and empower those affected by domestic, sexual and gender-based violence through its scholarship program (A visit to the Happy Home will be dependent on operational and security circumstances) .



Paro Dzong

Private group · 30 minutes

Also called Rinpung Dzong, the Fortress of a Heap of Jewels. Constructed in the early 15th century as a diminutive fort, it was presented to the religious and political authority of Shabdrung Ngawang, who developed it into a much more commanding fortress in 1646. This is, without a doubt, one of the kingdom's finest examples of traditional Bhutanese architecture. Once, great catapults here flung stones at invading Tibetans. Today the Dzong houses a monastic school. Two hundred resident monks take meals in a communal room. Several interesting paintings here include an unusual Bhutanese interpretation of a mandala, a diagram of the cosmos.





Ta Dzong

Private group · 30 minutes

Ta dzong (watchtower), built in 1649 to protect the undefended dzong and renovated in 1968 to house the National Museum. The unusual round building is said to be in the shape of a conch shell, with 2.5m-thick walls. Displays include an impressive collection of thangkhas, both ancient and modern, depicting Bhutan's important saints and teachers, as well as fearsome festival masks grouped according to their tsechu dances. There's a natural-history gallery with a 3D map of Bhutan, while the Heritage Gallery contains such oddities as an egg laid by a mule and a horse horn attributed to Guru Rinpoche, plus a few original iron links from the iron bridge at Tamchhog. An underground tunnel is said to lead from the watchtower to the water supply below.



No hotels selected yet in Paro

Paro



Chumphu Nye Monastery Hike (The flying Goddess Temple)

Private group · 7 hours

Chumphu Nye is located on a secluded hilltop, detached from civilization. It is located at an elevation of 2800-2900 meters.

The total walking distance is approximately 14 km and takes around 4 to 5 hours to reach the monastery depending on your walking pace. The hike will begin at the 'Zee Go' opening gate formed by two standing rocks.

The trail is a bit longer than the hike to the Tiger's Nest, but it is easier. The pleasant hike through an enchanting forest, follows a beautiful river until you reach a Stupa (Chorten). The walk is on flat land with little gradient until the last part of the trail at a bridge located at the base of the hill. The last hundred meters incline up to the monastery is fairly steep. During spring season, you can see rhododendron flowers, mountain lilies and other rare floral species blooming beautifully.

The sacred site is popularly known for the floating statue of Dorji Phamo (Vajravarahi). This 3191m statue is inexplicably floating in the air which the visitors can witness upon reaching the monastery. Some visitors test the belief by swiping a money note below the goddess' feet and see it passing through smoothly.

Legend has it

that when the statue was discovered from the lake, the statue was only about a foot tall. It is said that the statue magically grew to the present height and was placed in the Lhakhang as the main statue. The lake from where the statue was discovered is above the monastery.

The most enchanting thing about the statue is that it is not a manmade statue but Dorji Phamo herself who turned into this statue. It is believed that prayers and wishes made to the statue are bound to come true. The temple also has some exquisite wall murals depicting various saints and buddhist masters. A further 10-minute walk behind the monastery leads to a sacred waterfall (3246m) and a pool connected to Guru Rinpoche. A typical descent from Chumphu Nye takes about 3 hours.

Chumphu Nye Monastery

Altitude: (2200 m - 2900m)

Ascent: 700 m

Distance: 9 kms

Approx: 7 hours



No hotels selected yet in Paro

Paro



Rest Day

Private group · 0 hours

Today is a day of leisure, at your discretion. You make choose to explore quaint town at your own leisure or alternatively just relax with a traditional Hot Stone Bath, or your can explore the market for last minute shopping.



Paro Town

Private group

The charming town of Paro lies on the banks of the Paro (or Pa) Chhu, just a short distance northwest of the imposing Paro Dzong. The main street, only built in 1985, is lined with colorfully painted wooden shopfronts and restaurants, though these appear under threat as the town grows and multistorey concrete buildings continue to pop up. For now Paro remains one of the best Bhutanese towns to explore on foot and is worth an hour or two's stroll at the end of a day of sightseeing



Farmhouse visit & Lunch

Private group

Rich in history, the beautiful Paro Valley is a place where time stands still. In addition to a thriving commercial farming industry, the region is known for subsistence farming using time-honoured methods. Known fondly as the 'rice bowl' of the Bhutanese kingdom, the Paro Valley grows large amounts of red rice, the staple starch of the nation, farmed on its fertile fields and terraces. The region's commercial enterprises and family-owned farms also yield copious amounts of millet, wheat, apples, potatoes, as well as a range of seasonal vegetables native to the area. Witness the daily rituals and share an authentic Bhutanese farm lunch with the farmers and their families, washing it all down with Ara, the local rice wine.



Optional Activities

Your specialist has selected these for you to consider.



Kyichu monastery

Private group · 30 minutes

It is one of the oldest monasteries in the country built in the 7th century by the Tibetan King Songsten Gampo. The story goes that a giant demoness lay across the whole area of Tibet and the Himalayas and was preventing the spread of Buddhism. Offering Butter Lamps is the most powerful offering because their light symbolizes wisdom. Just as a lamp dispels darkness, offering light from a Butter Lamp represents removing the darkness of ignorance in order to attain Buddha's luminous clear wisdom.



Butter Lamps Offerings

Private group

Karmé is one of the main offerings that Buddhist make. The offering of butter lamp is the offering of wisdom and light of knowledge to eradicate darkness or ignorance. Therefore it has a crucial place in Bhutan's daily rituals. The physical darkness symbolizes the inner darkness of ignorance and the butter lamp symbolizes the inner light of wisdom and knowledge.

This simple act is also much cherished by the Bhutanese as an offering to the Buddha. As they light a butter lamp, they recite and pray for all sentient beings as follows: "As I lit this butter lamp I am lighting a wisdom for the world, I am dispelling the darkness of the world by dispelling the darkness in this room." Thus, think of a single butter lamp as a microcosm of the universe, and that by lighting it, the entire universe is illuminated with positive energy.

The flickering of a butter lamp flame holds great significance for it is an embodiment of the fluid nature of any situations in life and that all things, good or bad, will come to pass.



No hotels selected yet in Paro

Paro



Hike to Tigers-nest Monastery

Private group · 7 hours

After breakfast, we drive around 25 minutes to Ramthanka base for a hike to view one of Bhutan's most revered pilgrimage sites in the Buddhist world, the Taktshang Lhakhang, popularly known as the "Tiger's Nest" Monastery. The trek offers spectacular views of this sacred monastery perched precariously on a sheer rock face 3000 ft above the valley floor. Legend has it that Guru Rimpoche, father of Bhutan's stream of Mahayana Buddhism arrived in the Paro valley more than a millennium ago on a back of a tigress. He meditated for 3 months in a cave which was converted into this monastery. The only sounds heard here are the murmurs of the wind, water and the chanting of monks. We begin our hike from the base to the cafeteria which will take us at least an hour and a half. From here it's about an hour's trek through some stunning landscape to reach the monastery. On our return, we stop by once more at the Cafeteria for lunch. Later, we begin our descent to Ramthanka base. The temple clinging at 3120 meters above the sea level on a vertical rocky cliff, Taktsang Monastery is a wonderful and impressive sight for visitors.

Taktsang Goenba Hike

Distance 8 km

Starting Altitude: 2200 – 3120 approx

Ascent 900m

Approx: 7 hours

Recommended: Sport shoes, Sun hat, camera, walking stick, sun glass, Umbrella if rain.

Note: Ponies are available at an additional cost - This facility is for uphill climb/journey only and not for descent.



No hotels selected yet in Paro

Transfer to Paro Int. Airport (PBH), Departure



Departure from Paro

Private group · 0 hours

Our guide and driver will drop you to Paro International Airport. It is essential to check - In 2 hours prior. Have a safe trip back home and we look forward to being in touch in future and re - living the fond memories.

Tashi Delek!

Hope you will visit us again!



