

BHUTAN ODYSSEY

Bhutan Odyssey - Paro Thimpu Punakha Wangdue Gangtey Trongsa Bumthang Thimpu Paro 10N 11D

Day 01: Arrive Paro

On a clear day, the flight to Paro is breathtaking, with views of major Himalayan peaks such as Everest, Kanchenjunga and Makalu, and on the final approach Bhutan's own snowy peaks, the sacred Chomolhari, Jichu Drake and Tserimgang. You will be met by your Etho Metho representative, and after completion of arrival formalities you will be taken to your hotel.

Evening visit to Paro market and town. Overnight at the hotel in Paro.

Day 02: Paro

After breakfast, visit Ta Dzong (National Museum) and then walk down a hillside trail to Rinpung Dzong. Afternoon visits to Drukgyel Dzong and Kyichu Lhakhang.

Overnight at the hotel in Paro.

Day 03: Paro – Thimphu

After breakfast, set off for Thimphu, the modern capital town of Bhutan. Stop en route at Chuzom (Confluence) at the entrance to the Paro valley, where the Paro and Thimphu rivers meet. Three chortens on the riverbank at this place, each in a different style, mark the confluence of the two rivers. Visit Semtokha Dzong, the oldest fortress of the kingdom, shortly before reaching Thimphu.

Afternoon sightseeing in Thimphu, visiting the National Memorial Chorten, majestic Tashichhodzong, the Handicrafts Emporium and the main shopping area.

Overnight at the hotel in Thimphu.

Day 04: Thimphu – Punakha

Morning sightseeing in Thimphu includes visits to the National Library, the Institute for Zorig Chusum (where students learn the 13 traditional arts and crafts of Bhutan), the National Institute of Traditional Medicine (**outside only**), and the National Textile Museum, as time permits.

After lunch drive to Bhutan's former capital Punakha, stopping en route at Dochu-la pass (3,088m/10,130ft) for refreshments. On a clear day you will enjoy breathtaking mountain views from this spot.

On arrival at Punakha, check into the hotel. In the evening visit Punakha Dzong, a 17th century fortress. Afterwards take a stroll around the market area.

Overnight at the hotel in Punakha.

Day 05: Punakha – Wangduephodrang – Gangtey (Phobjikha)

After breakfast drive to Gangtey via Wangduephodrang, where we will stop to visit the remarkable Wangduephodrang Dzong, stretched along a spur at the confluence of two rivers. We will also visit a local village house, to gain insight into the lifestyle of the people.

Then drive up a winding mountain road through oak and rhododendron forest, and over a high pass down into the Phobjikha valley.

In the evening, take a stroll around Gangtey village and visit Gangtey Gumpa, the only Nyingmapa monastery in the kingdom.

Overnight at guest house, or camp under the stars.

Day 06: Gangtey – Trongsa

In the morning, explore Phobjikha valley, chosen winter home of black-necked cranes, migrating from the Tibetan Plateau.

After lunch drive to Trongsa, crossing Pele-la pass (3,300m/10,830ft). Evening visit to Trongsa market. Overnight at the lodge in Trongsa.

Day 07: Trongsa – Bumthang

Morning visit to Trongsa Dzong, a masterpiece of Bhutanese architecture. Built in 1647, it is the most impressive dzong in Bhutan. Also see Ta Dzong, the watchtower built to defend this dzong.

After lunch, proceed to Bumthang, the religious heartland of the nation. Evening at leisure. Dinner and overnight at the lodge in Bumthang.

Day 08: Bumthang

Bumthang is the general name given to a group of four valleys – Chumey, Choekhor, Tang and Ura, with altitudes varying from 2,600 to 4,000m (8,530-13,125ft). This area is home to many ancient Buddhist temples and monasteries.

We will visit Tamshing Lhakhang, founded in 1501 by Pema Lingpa, which contains interesting and ancient Buddhist wall paintings. Later on we will visit Jakar Dzong, “the castle of the white bird”, the administrative center of the region.

In the afternoon, we will visit Kurje Lhakhang, one of the most sacred places in Bhutan as Guru Rinpoche meditated here, and later on Jambey Lhakhang which was erected in the 7th century, when Buddhism was first introduced into Bhutan.

Evening visit to local shops. Overnight at the lodge in Bumthang.

Day 09: Bumthang – Thimphu

After an early morning visit to Bumthang’s market, we will set off on the 7 hour drive back to Thimphu, taking lunch en route at a famous restaurant in Trongsa town. We will then drive on through the mountains and down to Wangduephodrang, where we will take a short break for tea/coffee before proceeding on the final stage of our journey to Thimphu.

On arrival at Thimphu, check in at the hotel. Dinner and overnight at the hotel.

Day 10: Thimphu – Paro

Free morning in Thimphu for shopping and leisure, then after lunch drive to Paro for an overnight stay.

Day 11: Depart Paro

Early breakfast in the hotel, then drive to the airport for flight to onward destination.

