

# **Bhutan Sample Itineraries**

## **CULTURAL TOUR**

### **Glimpses of the Dragon Kingdom – GK4 (Days / 3 Nights)**

#### **Day 1 Paro – Thimphu**

The flight to Paro is one of the most spectacular of all mountain flights. One can see the Mt. Everest, Mt. Kanchanjunga, Mt. Makalu and other peaks in Bhutan such as Mt. Chomolhari, Mt. Jichu Drakay, and Mt. Tsherimgang. The green wall of hills known as the doors, or gateways into Bhutan from the plains climbs continually higher as down the forested mountainsides, and to the north, the great snowcapped peaks of the inner Himalayas rise up to the sky. You will be received by our representative and escorted to the hotel. Welcome drinks will be served.

Drive to see the Rinpung dzong, built in 1645 to defend the valley against Tibetan invaders. The Dzong is now use as an administration center and school for monks.

Drive to Thimphu, the capital of Bhutan. Walk to the Changangkha temple – temple of Chenrigzig known as Buddha of Compassion and offer butter lamps. Drive to see the Takin Zoo, which houses the national animal the Takin that is only found in Bhutan. Drive to BBS tower to get a view of the Thimphu valley at night.

#### **Day 2 Thimphu Sightseeing – Wangdue**

Thimphu sightseeing includes a visit the National Library, a treasure trove of priceless Buddhist manuscripts. See the Traditional Painting School of Arts & Crafts where children are taught centuries old craft. Tour the traditional medicine center where centuries old medicine and acupuncture is still practiced.

Visit the National folk Heritage Museum to get an insight into the typical Bhutanese way of life. See the Textile Museum to get an understanding of the beautiful hand woven Bhutanese textiles.

Drive to Punakha (70Km) via the Dochula pass (3140 m). An hour's drive from Thimphu will take you to this pass (3140 m) where one can have a superb view of the Eastern Himalayas on a clear day. There is a powerful binocular telescope in the cafeteria. From west to east these are the different peaks with their elevation:

Kang Bum	6526 m
Gangchhenta	6840 m
Masang Gang	7165 m
Tsenda Gang	7100 m
Teri Gang	7300 m
Jejekangphu Gang	7100 m
Zongophu Gang ( Table Mt )	7100 m
Gangkhar Puensum	7541 m (Highest mt that is completely inside Bhutan)

Drive onto Punakha, the old capital of Bhutan and presently the winter residence of the central monk body. After lunch, visit the Punakha Dzong, located on the island of the Pho – Chu (male) river and the Mochu (female) river. Visit the Dho Jha Gha Lam Temple.

#### **Day 3 Wangdue – Paro**

**Drive = 5 hr**

Morning: Morning: Walk to Khamsum Yuelley Namgyal Chorten (50 Mins) – temple built by the Queen Of Bhutan for peace and stability in this ever-changing world.

Drive back to Paro driving through the idyllic countryside, dotted with villages and paddy fields, crossing rivers and natural forests to Paro.

Evening: Visit a farmhouse and try our traditional drinks and snacks.

#### **Day 4 Paro**

Early morning your guide will escort you to the airport for your flight onwards.

\*\*\* End of Services \*\*\*

## **Himalayan Splendor – HS8 (8 Days / 7 Nights)**

### **Day 1 Paro – Thimphu**

**Drive = 1 hr 30 min**

The flight to Paro is one of the most spectacular of all mountain flights. One can see the Mt. Everest, Mt. Kanchanjunga, Mt. Makalu and other peaks in Bhutan such as Mt. Chomolhari, Mt. Jichu Drakay, and Mt. Tsheringang. The green wall of hills known as the doors, or gateways into Bhutan from the plains climbs continually higher as down the forested mountainsides, and to the north, the great snowcapped peaks of the inner Himalayas rise up to the sky. You will be received by our representative and escorted to the hotel. Welcome drinks will be served. Visit the Ta Dzong rated as one of the finest natural Museum in South Asia, and is filled with antique thanka paintings, textiles, weapons and Armour. Drive to see the Rinpung dzong, built in 1645 to defend the valley against Tibetan invaders. The Dzong is now use as an administration center and school for monks.

Drive to Drukgyal Dzong (fortress) now in ruins, which were built in 1646 by Shabdrung to commemorate his victory over the Tibetan invaders, led by Mongolian Warlord, Gushri Khan. Historically and strategically this dzong withstood all its glory and had captured western eyes in 1914 vide National Geographic magazine.

Drive to Thimphu, the capital of Bhutan. Check into hotel. Walk around the National Memorial Chorten built in 1974 in honor of the late King. Browse through local handicrafts and free time to mingle with the people. Visit Changangkha temple, which is the temple of Chenrizig or Compassionate Buddha. Drive to see the Takin Zoo, which houses the national animal the Takin that is only found in Bhutan.

Tour to Tashichhodzong, its history is very old, dating back to the 13<sup>th</sup> century, which houses His Majesty's Throne Room and home to the Monk Body. Drive to BBS tower to get a view of the Thimphu valley by sunset/evening. See the Traditional Incense and Paper Factory.

### **Day 2 Thimphu Sightseeing – Wangdue**

**Drive = 3 hr**

Visit the National Library, a treasure trove of priceless Buddhist manuscripts. Visit Changangkha temple, which is the temple of Chenrizig or Compassionate Buddha. See the Traditional Incense and Paper Factory. See the Traditional Painting School of Arts & Crafts where children are taught centuries old craft, and the National Folk Heritage Museum to get an insight into the typical Bhutanese way of life.

Visit the Bhutan Post to see the different Stamps of the country. See the Traditional Incense and Paper Factory.

Drive to Punakha (70Km) via the Dochula pass (3140 m). An hour's drive from Thimphu will take you to this pass (3140 m) where one can have a superb view of the Eastern Himalayas on a clear day. There is a powerful binocular telescope in the cafeteria. From west to east these are the different peaks with their elevation:

Kang Bum	6526 m
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Zongophu Gang ( Table Mt )	7100 m
Gangkhar Puensum	7541 m (Highest mt that is completely inside Bhutan)

Drive onto Punakha, the old capital of Bhutan and presently the winter residence of the central monk body. After lunch, visit the Punakha Dzong, located on the island of the Pho – Chu (male) river and the Mochu (female) river. Visit the Dho Jha Gha Lam Temple.

**Day 3 Wangdue - Trongsa – Bumthang**

**Drive = 7 hr**

Today drive to Trongsa via Pele la pass at an altitude of 3,150 metres, a wonderful opportunity for photographs. Commanding the Mangde Chu at an altitude of 2,200 metres Trongsa Dzong is the most impressive dzong in Bhutan. Built in 1644 by the Shabdrung, the dzong is an architectural masterpiece.

Drive to Bumthang, this is one of the most spectacular valleys in Bhutan and also the heartland of Buddhism. Here the great teachers meditated and left in their wake many sacred grounds. The Guru and his lineage of Tertons, treasure finders, have led to the sprouting of many temples in the valley. Visit Yatha Weaving Center a cooperative of the National Women Association of Bhutan where the women of the region sell their textiles and Yatha specialty.  
Check into Hotel.

**Day 4 Bumthang Sightseeing**

Today, it's a pilgrimage tour for you; your first stop is the Jambay Lhakhang, built in the 7<sup>th</sup> century by the King Songtsen Goempo of Tibet. In his effort to propagate Buddhism he had a plan to build a total of 108 temples in Tibet and neighboring kingdoms.

Chakhar Lhakhang: Besides the main road, a short distance beyond Jambay Temple, is Chakhar (Iron Castle) Lhakhang. Although it is easy to mistake it for a house and drive right by, this is an interesting temple and is worth a short visit.

Visit Jambay Lhakhang: This monastery was built in the 7<sup>th</sup> century of Tibetan King Songtsen Gembo, believed to be the reincarnation of the Buddha of Compassion. It is one of the 108 monasteries built by him to subdue evil spirits in the Himalayan region.

Drive up the valley to Kurjey Lhakhang. Kurjey means, "Body imprint". The temple to the right is the oldest and was built by Minjur Tempa in 1652. It was built around the cave in which Guru Rimpoche meditated and left his body imprint. A few minutes walk from Kurjey cross over to the other side of the river over a small suspension bridge and visit Tamshing Lhakhang. This temple is also known as Tamshing Lhendrup Chholing (Temple of the Good Message). Visit to Jakar Dzong, "castle of the white bird". According to legend, when the lamas assembled in about 1549 to select a site for a monastery, a big white bird rose suddenly in the air and settled on a spur of a hill. This was interpreted as an important omen, and the hill was chosen as the site for a monastery and for Jakar Dzong. The fortress is now used as an administrative center of the valley and summer residence of Trongsa monks.

Take a walk around the beautiful landscape of the Bumthang valley.

**Day 5 Bumthang – Gangtay – Wangdue**

**Drive = 7 hr**

After early breakfast, drive to Gangtey Gompa with picnic lunch. Visit Gangtey Gompa, which now houses one of the only Nyingmapa monastery in Bhutan. The valley is also the winter home to the rare black-necked cranes (*Grus Nicorocolis*), which migrate, from remote parts of Tibet, China and Siberia to winter in this valley. Drive to Wangdue for overnight stay.

**Day 6 Wangdue – Paro**

**Drive = 4 hr**

Morning: Morning: Walk to Khamsum Yuelley Namgyal Chorten (50 Mins) – temple built by the Queen Of Bhutan for peace and stability in this ever-changing world.

Drive back to Paro driving through the idyllic countryside, dotted with villages and paddy fields, crossing rivers and natural forests to Paro.

Evening: Visit a farmhouse and try our traditional drinks and snacks.

**Day 7 Paro Day Excursion**

Morning hike up to the Taktsang Monastery (Tiger's nest). The climb up to the viewpoint will take approx. 3hours. Enjoy the stunning view of the monastery, where Guru Padmasambhava flew on the back of a tiger and landed there in the 8<sup>th</sup> century, and meditated for three months.

The monastery was later built in this holy place in 1684. After tea in the café, walk back to the road point and drive to hotel for lunch.

Afternoon Visit Kyichu temple one of the 108 temples built in the 7<sup>th</sup> 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. To overcome her, King Songtsen Gampo decided to build 108 temples, which would be placed on all the points of her body. Of these 108 temples, 12 were built in accordance with precise plans. Thus, it happened that in about the year AD 638 the temple of Jokhang in Lhasa was built over the very heart of the demoness. Visit the Dungte Lhakhang.

#### **Day 8            Paro**

Morning your guide will escort you to the airport for your flight onwards.

\*\*\* End of Services \*\*\*

### **Bhutan the Last Shangri-La – BS21 (21 Days / 20 Nights)**

#### **Day 1            Paro**

The flight to Paro is one of the most spectacular of all mountain flights. One can see the Mt. Everest, Mt. Kanchanjunga, Mt. Makalu and other peaks in Bhutan such as Mt. Chomolhari, Mt. Jichu Drakay, and Mt. Tsherimgang. The green wall of hills known as the doors, or gateways into Bhutan from the plains climbs continually higher as down the forested mountainsides, and to the north, the great snowcapped peaks of the inner Himalayas rise up to the sky. You will be received by our representative and escorted to the hotel. Welcome drinks will be served. Visit the Ta Dzong rated as one of the finest natural Museum in South Asia, and is filled with antique thanka paintings, textiles, weapons and Armour. Drive to see the Rinpung dzong, built in 1645 to defend the valley against Tibetan invaders. The Dzong is now use as an administration center and school for monks.

#### **Day 2            Paro Day Excursion**

Morning hike up to the Taktsang Monastery (Tiger's nest). The climb up to the viewpoint will take approx. 3 hours. Enjoy the stunning view of the monastery, where Guru Padmasambhava flew on the back of a tiger and landed there in the 8<sup>th</sup> century, and meditated for three months. The monastery was later built in this holy place in 1684. After tea in the café, walk back to the road point and drive to hotel for lunch.

Afternoon Visit Kyichu temple one of the 108 temples built in the 7<sup>th</sup> 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. To overcome her, King Songtsen Gampo decided to build 108 temples, which would be placed on all the points of her body. Of these 108 temples, 12 were built in accordance with precise plans. Thus, it happened that in about the year AD 638 the temple of Jokhang in Lhasa was built over the very heart of the demoness.

#### **Day 3            Paro – Thimphu**

**Drive = 2 hr**

Morning: On the way to Thimphu visit Tachogang Temple or the “Temple of the Hill of Excellent Zorse” which rises in austere surroundings on the left bank of the river, a few km before Chhuzom at the confluence of the Paro and Thimphu rivers. A Tibetan Saint had a vision of the excellent Horse Balaha – an emanation of Avalokiteshwara while he was meditating there. He decided thereupon to build a temple at this spot in addition to one of his famous iron bridges (later carried away by floods in 1969). The exact date of the temple's construction is not certain, but it was probably around the year 1433. Check into hotel. Free time to relax.

#### **Day 4            Thimphu Sightseeing**

Thimphu sightseeing includes a visit the National Library, a treasure trove of priceless Buddhist manuscripts. Visit Changangkha temple, which is the temple of Chenrizig or Compassionate Buddha. See the Traditional Incense and Paper Factory. See the Traditional Painting School of Arts & Crafts where children are taught centuries old craft, and the National Folk Heritage Museum to get an insight into the typical Bhutanese way of life. Visit Zilukha Nunnery where the nuns meditate and practice Buddhism. Walk around the National Memorial Chorten built in 1974 in honor of the late King. Visit Tashichhodzong, its history is very old, dating back to the 13<sup>th</sup> century, which houses His Majesty's Throne Room and home to the Monk Body .

**Day 5 Thimphu – Punakha**

**Drive = 3 hr**

Drive to Punakha (70Km) via the Dochula pass. An hour's drive from Thimphu will take you to this pass (3050mts) where one can have a superb view of the Eastern Himalayas on a clear day. Drive onto Punakha, the old capital of Bhutan and presently the winter residence of the central monk body. After lunch, visit the Punakha Dzong, located on the island of the Pho – Chu (male) river and the Mochu (female) river. Visit the Dho Jha Gha Lam Temple.

Day hike to Chimi Lhakhang, temple of the divine Madman Lama Drukpa Kuenley where couples unable to have siblings come here to pray. Walk around the street of Wangdue.

**Day 6 Punakha – Trongsa**

**Drive = 5 hr**

Today drive to Trongsa via Pele la pass at an altitude of 3,150 metres, a wonderful opportunity for photographs. Commanding the Mangde Chu at an altitude of 2,200 metres Trongsa Dzong is the most impressive dzong in Bhutan. Built in 1644 by the Shabdrung, the dzong is an architectural masterpiece. Visit the beautiful Trongsa Dzong built in 1648, the ancestral home of the Royal Family. Both the second and third King ruled the country from this ancient seat. All four Kings held the post of Trongsa Penlop (honorary governor) prior to being crowned as King. Tour Ta Dzong, the watchtower that once guarded Trongsa Dzong from internal rebellion, stands impressively and provides visitors an insight into historical significance of Trongsa in Bhutan's history.

**Day 7 Trongsa – Bumthang**

**Drive = 2 hr**

This is one of the most spectacular valleys in Bhutan and also the heartland of Buddhism. Here the great teachers meditated and left in their wake many sacred grounds. The Guru and his lineage of Tertons, treasure finders, have led to the sprouting of many temples in the valley. Check into hotel.

After Lunch: Tour the Jakar Dzong, seat of the district administration, built in the 17th century during the time of Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal, the first religious King of Bhutan. The dzong is now used as the administration centre for Bumthang valley. Visit the famous Kurjey, Jambay and Tamshing Lhakhangs.

**Day 8 Bumthang Day Excursion**

Full day excursion to Ura Village. Ura lies in the Tang Valley, which is one and a half hour drive from Bumthang. One drives through forests and large sheep pastures for about 20 km. En-route cross Ura La (3600 m pass) with a magnificent view of Mount Gangkar Puensum. Closely cluttered houses are the characteristics of the villages in Ura, which is a unique feature in Bhutan. Above Ura village a new Temple dedicated to Guru Rimpoche - founder of Buddhism in Bhutan can be visited which contains the paintings of the cycle of his teachings. Explore the village and stroll around. Drive back to Bumthang.

**Day 9 Bumthang – Mongar**

**Drive = 8 hr**

The journey continues eastwards, winding through more rugged terrain. The drive, with spectacular views, will take about six hours. Pass through Ura village in Bumthang before climbing sharply to the highest motor road pass in the Kingdom, the Thrumshingla Pass – 12,465 ft.

Gradually drop down to Sengor. Watch cascading waterfalls along the way. The descent stops at 2,130 ft on a bridge over the Kurichu. Climb again through pine forest, maize fields and eastern hamlets to Mongar town. The Mongar dzong, albeit built not to long age, still maintains the architectural traditions of the old dzongs.

**Day 10 Mongar – Trashigang**

**Drive = 3 ½ hr**

The road from Mongar to Trashigang, the eastern most region, begins through lush forests and ferns passing over the Kori La at 8,000 ft. After about an hour's journey you reach the village of Ngatshang, the site of one of the fiefdoms before unification of the nation. Descending rapidly through cornfields and banana groves, you reach Yadi village. Follow the Gamri River until the bifurcation to Drametsi. This temple, perched atop a steep hill, was founded by Nun Choden Zangmo in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. This is the place from where the famous Drametsi Nga Chham, mask dance with drums, originated. About 30 kilometres onwards lies Trashigang, at 3,775 ft. Trashigang is the center of the biggest and most populated district in the nation. View the dzong, built strategically on a spur going out towards the Gamri Chu.

After lunch: visit Khaling, it is the weaving center under women association of Bhutan and is under the Government of Bhutan. There you can see all the process and materials involved in weaving. Drive back to Trashigang for overnight.

**Day 11 Day Excursion to Trashiyangtse**

Excursion to Gom Kora and Tashiyangtse and sightseeing around Trashigang.

**Day 12 Trashigang – Ranjung – Mongar**

**Drive = 5 hr**

In the morning, drive to the Rangjung Monastery. After lunch at Rangjung, drive back to Mongar.

**Day 13 Mongar – Bumthang**

**Drive = 8 hr**

After breakfast stroll around Mongar town area. Drive back to Bumthang for overnight halt.

**Day 14 Bumthang – Gangtey**

**Drive = 7 hr**

After early breakfast, drive to Gangtey Gompa with picnic lunch. Visit Gangtey Gompa, which now houses one of the only Nyingmapa monastery in Bhutan. The valley is also the winter home to the rare black-necked cranes (*Grus Nicorocolis*), which migrate, from remote parts of Tibet, China and Siberia to winter in this valley. Overnight guesthouse, Phobjikha.

**Day 15 Gangtey – Wangdue**

**Drive = 3 hr**

Morning stroll around Gangtey to get a view of the black-necked cranes. Drive to Wangdue for overnight halt. Evening stroll around Wangdue town.

**Day 16 Wangdue – Thimphu**

**Drive = 2 hr**

After breakfast hike to Khamsum Yuelley Namgyal Chhorten – temple built by the Queen Of Bhutan for peace and stability in this ever-changing world.  
Transfer to Thimphu

**Day 17 Thimphu Day Excursion**

About 7 miles from Thimphu, the Tango Monastery is a lovely place for an afternoon excursion. The drive or walk to reach it offers beautiful views of the countryside and the Thimphu valley. The monastery dates back to the 13<sup>th</sup> century and was rebuilt in the 15<sup>th</sup> century by the “Divine Madman”, Lama Drukpa Kuenley. Drive to see the Takin Zoo, which houses the national animal the Takin that is only found in Bhutan. Drive to the BBS tower to get a glimpse of the Thimphu valley at night.

**Day 18 Thimphu - Paro**

Transfer to Paro, driving through the idyllic countryside, dotted with villages and paddy fields, crossing rivers and natural forests to Paro. Drive to Drukgyal Dzong (fortress) now in ruins, which were built in 1646 by Shabdrung to commemorate his victory over the Tibetan invaders, led by Mongolian Warlord, Gushri Khan. Historically and strategically this dzong withstood all its glory and had Captured western eyes in 1914 vide National Geographic magazine. And also visit the Drugyal Village.

**Day 19 Paro Sightseeing**

Drive to Pamesa village to visit the Pamesa Lhakhang built by Terton Sherab. While Terton Sherab was in Tibet he heard that there were religious treasurer places in Bhutan so he came to Bhutan and founded the Pamasalhakhang. Meditate in the Lhakhang and stay the night there. OR You can come to your hotel for the overnight stay.

**Day 20 Haa Day Excursion**

Day excursion to Haa valley. Take packed lunch. Visit the Haa Dzong. Drive back to Paro for overnight.

Evening: visit a farmhouse and try our traditional drinks and snacks. Try the stone bath.

**Day 21 Paro**

Early morning your guide will escort you to the airport for your flight onwards.

\*\*\* End of Services \*\*\*

## Bhutan Visa Information & Conditions

### Passport :-

- Must be valid for at least 6 months beyond the date of entry.
- Must have at least **TWO, clean, unused pages.**
  - Do NOT count amendment pages when determining if you have two, clean unused pages.
  - A blank passport page must not show ink or stains from other pages, or it is unusable.

### Visa Information :-

Visas are not issued by any of Bhutan's mission abroad. We need passport details at least one month prior to the date of entry into Bhutan to apply for the visa. Details needed for the completing visa formalities are:-

1. Full name spelt as in Passport
2. Nationality
3. Passport number
4. Date of birth
5. Date of issue & date of expiry of passport
6. Home address
7. Occupation

We will apply and clear visa for you. When the visas are approved, the visa clearance number will be sent to the outstations of Druk Air, visas will be delivered upon arrival at Paro Airport. All tourists must carry three passport photographs each and hand over to visa officials on arrival at Paro Airport attached to a copy of the visa application form.

### Reservation:-

- For all Cultural Tours, the booking must be completed 4 weeks advance but for tours during festivals, 12 weeks advance information is required. Festivals held in spring and autumn are the peak season so without early flight reservations confirmings and hotels can be difficult.
- For trekking groups, it is important to do bookings at least 8 weeks in advance, as it requires plenty of planning.

### Cancellations:-

Tour programmes booked and subsequently cancelled shall be subject to cancellation charges as follows:

- a. Within 45 days of start of progame - free
- b. Within 44-31 days – 15% of rate
- c. Within 30 - 14 days – 30% of rate
- d. Within 13 - 7 days – 50% of rate
- e. Less than 7 days or cancellation without notice – 100% of rate
- f. After arrival in Bhutan – 100%