

Itinerary: The Glacial Valleys of Bhutan

Duration: 8 Days / 7 Nights

Destinations: Thimphu, Paro, Punakha/Wangdue and Gangtey/Phobjikha

Package Type – Fly In/Fly Out

Overview

Behind the Great Himalayas lies the travel world's best kept secret. Bhutan is known for its Buddhist culture and Gross National Happiness. To the local people traditional values, environmental preservation and good governance takes precedence over material things. Throughout the journey, you would see fluttering prayer flags and prayer wheels to demonstrate the importance of Buddhism in daily life. You would also experience magnificent ancient monasteries, sensational landscapes, and panoramic views of snowcapped mountains. Along with the Golden Triangle of Bhutan, in this itinerary you would also visit Gangtey/Phobjikha, one of the most beautiful glacial valleys.

Thimphu: Capital and the largest city of Bhutan - Only capital city in the world that does not have traffic lights - Main center of Commerce, Religion and Government in the country - Most modern city of Bhutan and has abundance of restaurants, internet cafes, nightclubs and shopping center. It is one of the few cities of Bhutan having ATM facilities.

Paro: Small town in the western part of Bhutan - Also home to Paro Airport, Bhutan's only International Airport - The valley has many isolated small villages and is known for red rice - Also home to most of Bhutan's oldest temples and monasteries.

Punakha and Wangdue: Punakha and Wangdue is located in the same valley. These two places are located within a distance of 13 km. Punakha was the capital of Bhutan and the seat of government until 1955 - The valley is fed by the Pho Chhu and the Mo Chhu rivers - It is one of very few places in Bhutan which offers Rafting facilities - It is the winter seat of the Je Khenpo (Chief Abbot) and the monk body at present.

Gangtey/Phobjikha: The famous Phobjikha Valley is located in Wangdue district, 68 km away from the Wangdue valley- Phobjikha is the winter roosting place for endangered black necked crane and the valley is considered one of the most beautiful glacial valleys in the Himalayas.

Highlights of the tour:

- Visit Tashichhodzong and Punakha Dzong – two of the most impressive dzongs (fortresses)
- First had experience of Bhutanese way of life and traditional rural villages.
- Untouched Nature and unique Art & Architecture
- Untouched Buddhist Culture.
- Hike through pine forests to visit “Tiger’s Nest”
- Beautiful landscapes and spectacular Himalayan scenery.

- The must visit Dochula Pass and the Druk Wangyal Chhortens
- Visit Phobjika, the most beautiful glacial valley of Bhutan.
- Endangered Blacknecked Cranes in Phobjikha Valley (only in winter months)

Day Wise Itinerary

Day 1. Paro – Thimphu:

Driving Distance: 65 Km, Driving time: 1.5 – 2 Hr., Altitude of Thimphu: 2,350 m

Your flight to Paro on a clear day, is marked with the panoramic views of the Himalayas including the Everest and other famous Peaks. The approach through the foothills and the landing (including few steep turns) at the tiny airstrip of Paro has been termed as adventurous by many travelers. After the completion of immigration formalities at the Paro Airport exit door, you will be received by your Bhutanese guide with traditional **“Tashi Khadar”**. Afterwards drive to Thimphu following the Pa Chhu (River). Check-In to the hotel and have your first experience with Bhutanese Cuisine. Rest of the day is at leisure. You can explore the Thimphu valley and town or shop till your heart’s content. **A private traditional Cultural Show would be organized especially for you in the evening.**

Meals – Lunch and Dinner; Overnight at the Hotel in Thimphu

Day 2. Thimphu Sightseeing:

Today you would be driven in and around Thimphu covering key places of interest. After breakfast you would visit

- **Kuensel Phodrang**, the gigantic Buddha Dordenma Statue located atop a hill in Kuensel Phodrang Nature Park.
- **National Memorial Chhorten**, a Stupa built in 1974 to honor the third Druk Gyalpo, Jigme Dorji Wangchuck. Every morning till night old people and young people circumambulate the Chhorten. **You may choose to light butter lamps and also circumambulate around the Chorten.**
- **Zorig Chusum**, Premier institute of traditional arts and crafts in Thimphu established with an objective of preserving “thirteen arts and crafts of Bhutan”.
- **Folk Heritage**, traditional house giving an insight to the Bhutanese lifestyle, and artifacts from the rural households

Thereafter, you would be taken to a local restaurant for lunch. In the afternoon you would be taken to

- **Sangaygang View Point**, also known as BBS Tower offering panoramic view of Thimphu Town situated at an elevation of 2,685 m.
- **Changangkha Monastery**, popular fortress like temple perched on a ridge above Central Thimphu built in 15th Century by Lama Phajo Drugom Zhipo.

- **Takin Preserve Centre**, see Takin (National animal of Bhutan) It is a unique combination of Goat and an Antelope
- **Tashichhodzong**, or ‘the fortress of the glorious religion’. Initially erected in 1641 by Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal, it was rebuilt in the 1960s during the reign of Bhutan’s third king in the traditional style, without plans or nails. It houses some ministries, His Majesty’s secretariat, and the central monk body and opens after 5 PM.

On the completion of sightseeing, you are driven back to your hotel. After relaxing for some time you shall be served with dinner.

Meals – Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner; Overnight at the Hotel in Thimphu.

Day 3. Thimphu – Gangtey/Phobjikha:

Driving Distance: 140 Km, Driving time: 4 - 5 Hr., Altitude of Gangtey/Phobjikha: 2900 m

After breakfast and completion of check out formalities, you are driven to Gangtey/Phobjikha. On the way stop at

- **Dochula Pass**, lies at an elevation of 3,150 m and is a great place to view the higher Himalayas. The landmarks around the pass includes 108 Druk Wangyal Stupas built under the patronage of Queen Ashi Dorji Wangmo Wangchuk

Thereafter, you continue your drive to Gangtey/Phobjikha. Enroute, we would stop for lunch.

While in Gangtey, visit the

- **Gangtey_Goemba**, an important monastery of Nyingmapa school of Buddhism, the main seat of the Pema Lingpa tradition. The present Abbot, Kunzang Pema Namgyal is the ninth re-incarnation. It is one of the the largest Nyingma monastery in Bhutan.
- **Black Necked Crane Information Centre**, a place for recreation with crane watching equipment (binoculars, spotting scopes) and reference books

After the completion of sightseeing, you are driven back to your hotel. Evening free for relaxation.

Meals – Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner; Overnight at the Hotel in Phobjika/Gangtey.

Day 4. Gangtey/ Phobjikha Valley.

A full day to explore at the

- **Phobjikha Valley**, one of the most beautiful glacial valleys in the Himalayas. It lies at an elevation of 3,000 m. It is surrounded by a many small villages. Phobjikha is best known for the rare black necked cranes that migrate here from the Tibetan Plateau to avoid the extremely cold winters.

Today, you would have a typical Bhutanese Cuisine at a farmhouse. Later, you may choose to do any of the following: Visiting villages and interacting with People, Hikes around the valley, Photography, etc.

Finally, to drive back to the hotel. Evening free for leisure.

Meals – Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner; Overnight at the Hotel in Phobjika/Gangtey.

Day 5. Gangtey – Punakha/Wangdue:

Driving Distance: 78, Driving time: 2.5 – 3 Hr., Altitude of Punakha/Wangdue: 1310 m

After Breakfast, you would check out of the hotel and get transferred to Punakha/Wangdue. On arrival at Punakha, check in to the hotel. Post lunch, you would visit

- **Punakha Dzong**, built in 1637 by Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal. For many years until the time of the second King, it served as the seat of the Government. It is still the winter residence of Je-Khenpo (The Chief Abbot of the Central Monastic Body of Bhutan)
- **Chhimi Lhakhang**, a famous Temple, which is also known as “The Temple of Fertility” built by Lama Drukpa Kuenley

Later drive back to the Hotel. Evening free for leisure activities.

Meals – Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner; Overnight at the Hotel in Punakha/Wangdue

Day 6. Punakha – Paro:

Driving Distance: 135 km, Driving Time: 4-5 Hr., Altitude of Paro: 2280 m

After breakfast, you would check out of the hotel to proceed to Paro for the final leg of the tour. On the way stop at

- **Royal Botanical Park, Lamperi**, also known as the Rhododendron Garden. It is the first Botanical Garden of Bhutan. It is famous for 46 species of rhododendrons.

After arriving at Paro, you would be transferred to you Hotel for Check In. Post lunch, you would be taken around to visit

- **Paro Rimpung Dzong**, also known as Fortress of the heap of jewels, built during the time of Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal in 1646
- **Ta Dzong**, an ancient watch tower overlooking Rimpung Dzong built in 1951 now converted into national museum.

Later you are driven back to the Hotel. Evening is free for **leisure activities such as Archery experience, National Dress wearing experience** and shopping around the Paro Town.

Meals – Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner; Overnight at the Hotel in Paro.

Day 7. Paro:

After breakfast, start your day with a hike to

- **Taksang Monastery (Tiger's nest)**, the abode of gods and monks situated at an altitude of 3100m on the Upper Paro Valley, Bhutan. As per the legend, Guru Padmasambhana (Guru Rinpoche), the tantrum mystic who brought Buddhism to Bhutan, came in the form of Dorje Droloe riding a flying tigress to subdue the demon that was obstructing the spread of Buddhism in the Himalayas.

After the completion of the hike, you would be served picnic lunch among the woods. Post

BHUTAN TOUR PACKAGE
2016 / 2017
(3 Star Standard Hotels only)

Season	1 Pax	2 Pax	3 Pax and above
Low Season	1925	1715	1470
High Season	1995	1785	1540

Tariff Based on US Dollars / Per Pax

Low Season: December, January, February, June, July & August

High Season: March, April, May, September, October & November

Included in the minimum daily tariff package:

- Visa process and arrangement
- Royalty to the government and all other taxes
- Government surcharge for individual groups travelling as one or two pax
- All accommodations in 3 Star standard hotels
- Standard room on twin sharing basis only
- Meals on fixed buffet (Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner)
- Full time English speaking guide
- Private transportation for airport pick up/ drop and all sightseeing
- Entrance fees to events, historic sites, museums and parks as indicated in the itinerary

Not included in the minimum daily tariff package:

- Visa fee for single entry (US\$ 50)
- Refreshment, water and any alcoholic/non-alcoholic beverages
- Travel Insurance (Must for Trekking) applicable
- Single room supplement charges (US\$ 40/Night) applicable
- Luxury star hotels and resorts available at an additional cost
- Luxury camping/trekking can be arranged at an additional cost
- Gratuities to guide, driver, trekking staff, etc.
- Specialized guides (Foreign Language, Photography, Bird Watching, Buddhism or any specialized guide) available at an additional cost
- Any personal expense
- **Extra services like Cultural Show, Hot Stone Bath, Archery Session and National Dress Wearing Experience. For these services supplemental charges would be applicable as below.**
- **Special Group Discounts available**

Supplemental Costs:

- Cultural Show - \$ 95 Per Show
- Hot Stone Bath at Rural House - \$ 25 Per Person Per Bath
- Archery Session and National Dress Wearing Experience - \$ 15 per person per session.

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