

8 Days The Glacial Valleys Of Bhutan

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

Package Type – Fly In/Fly Out

Valid Till : Dec 2017

Overview

Visiting Bhutan is like taking a breath of fresh air filled with purity. The landscape is full of beautiful mountainous valleys, plunging rivers, and terraced rice fields. It's a country that not only has monarchy but also a newborn democracy. Bhutan is most famous for the "Gross National Happiness" in the tourism literature because they strive for growth and progress based on peace and happiness. With customs and traditions still going strong after centuries, and cultural festivals celebrated from corner to corner, there is nowhere quite like blessed Bhutan!

Brief Description of Cities

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 old Monasteries and majestic fortresses.
- ✓ Explore a capital city with no traffic lights.
- ✓ Feast on Ema Datsi and Red Rice, two of the most popular dishes of Bhutan
- ✓ First-hand experience of untouched Nature and unique Culture
- ✓ Experience the Sacred Spirituality.
- ✓ Prayer flags fluttering in the wind.
- ✓ Village houses and rural life

- ✓ Shop for Silks, Souvenirs and More
- ✓ Structures adorned with Phallus paintings.
- ✓ 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 Black-necked 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.

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, after roughly an hour’s drive and upward into the hill drive, 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. After crossing Dochula Pass, descend into Wangdue and Punakha Valley at around 1300m. You would drive through curvy, mountainous road, patches of which are being repaired. After passing through the town of Wangdue Phodrang, the road begins a climb up the black mountains national parks, passing through some roadside villages. At Nobding, the road makes a turn-off from the main east-west Highway. After a short distance and once you cross the pass, almost all of a sudden, a wide and spectacular Phobjikha valley with Gangtey Monastery atop a hill appears, overlooking the valley. Owing to road widening work, you may find too many stalls along the road side selling snacks and water. It is preferable you buy it at the start of the tour. 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 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. The drive from Punakha to Paro leads from balmy lush landscapes of Punakha to cool heights of Paro. Again owing to road widening work, you may find too many stalls along the road side selling snacks and water. It is preferable you buy it at the start 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** and shopping around the Paro Town.

