



## Bhutan Pilgrimage Tour

<b>Trip code</b>	
<b>Package name</b>	Bhutan Pilgrimage Tour
<b>Duration</b>	10
<b>Max. elevation</b>	3150 m
<b>Level</b>	MODERATE
<b>Transportation</b>	Private vehicals for all round trip.
<b>Accomodation</b>	3***hotel twin sharing bed basis during the tour.
<b>Starts at</b>	Paro
<b>Ends at</b>	Paro
<b>Trip route</b>	Paro - Thimphu - Punakha - Bumthang - Tharpa ling - Gangtey - Paro
<b>Cost</b>	USD 2,250 per person

## Highlights

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## Overview

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**Bhutan is known as the land of “Thunder Dragon” due to Bhutanese mythology and national symbol. In the national flag of Bhutan, we can see a Druk holding jewels to represent wealth. Thus, Bhutan is also known as the land of Druk and the Bhutanese Gyalpo which means “Thunder Dragon Kings”. This unique identity makes Bhutan distinct from other countries. Idiosyncratic culture of Bhutan plays an important role to make it renowned in the whole world. This country claims that the kingdom is ecological museum of Asia.**

Each and every country has its own culture and tradition. Culture plays a vital role for every country to make it renowned to the whole world. The ancient culture, customs and tradition makes the

country unique and rich in preservation of their ancestry. Culture shows the real face of their citizen, their daily life style, hospitality and it also plays a vital role to prospect their lifestyle back in the past years. Bhutan also has an extraordinary place hardly touched by the hands of time. Bhutan will bestow an opportunity to know the Bhutanese traditions and cultures jointly with the arresting natural beauties. Nestling in the heart of the great Himalaya, it remained in self-imposed isolation for centuries, aloof from the rest of the world. Since its doors were cautiously opened in 1974, visitors have been mesmerized: the environment is pristine, the scenery and architecture awesome, the people are hospitable and charming, and the culture unique in its purity. With one foot in the past and one in the future, it strolls confidently towards modernization, on its own terms, fiercely protecting its ancient culture, its natural resources and its deeply Buddhist way of life. Despite being a small country, it offers you different antique visits to different traditional and beautiful places which have historical significance. Bhutan is predominantly a Buddhist country with Vajrayana Buddhism being Bhutan's state religion. Hinduism is Bhutan's second-largest religion mostly followed by the Nepali speaking Bhutanese in the south.

Bhutan is the land of cultural diversities and natural beauty. It is a country rich in culture and its unique cultural heritage is famous worldwide. This Bhutan Cultural Tour of five days covers major highlighted spots of Paro, Thimphu and Lobesa and offers a several opportunities to enjoy the cultural grandeurs, natural splendors, adventures, and history. The highlight of tour will be visit to Simtokha Dzong within the tiny capital township of Thimphu and the Taktsang Monastery that clings to a sheer 3,000 foot rock face cliffs. It is believed that Buddhism spread wide in Bhutan from this valley. Actually the hikers would enjoy the valley. Explore the remote and warm villages and marvel at the beautiful Himalayas of Bhutan. Discover the delightful city of Thimphu, which is famously known as the only capital city in the world without traffic lights. Apart from exceptional art and architectures of monasteries, you will also spot Bhutan's national animal, Takin. This tour can also be termed as pilgrimage tour for people who devoted Buddhist. This tour is an ideal tour for the person who loves to see the Bhutanese Culture, society, glorious mountains scenery as well as low land with dense forest and you can click on main images of Bhutan while doing this tour. Your visit will feature on exploration of authentic culture and lifestyle of Bhutanese, which is so close to nomadism. You will witness and capture the moments firsthand up close on how people live and work in the Land of Thunder Dragon.

## Trip Itinerary

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### Day 1 : Drive to Paro (2,250m / 7,382ft) airport

Embarking our tour, we fly over to the dragon kingdom Paro. We fly over passing by Mountains of 5500 meters to Paro. Paro is a beautiful valley and is home to many of Bhutan's oldest monasteries and temples, and the country's only international airport. The flight to Paro is one of the most spectacular mountain flights in the world, with a constantly changing panorama of some of the highest mountains on earth including Chomolhari and Jitchu Drake peak. Paro Airport has been described as "the most difficult commercial airport in the world". 1980 meter runway length presents a double challenge, due to the extremely low density altitude at the site. So, only a handful of well experienced pilots are certified to operate commercial airplanes here thus, making least number of flights in a day. After immigration and custom formalities, check out from the departure lounge. There you will meet one of the representatives

of Nature Trail Travels & Tours, Trekking & Expedition who will greet you and then escort you to your respective hotel where you will stay overnight. Before dinner at the hotel there will be an orientation on Bhutanese etiquette by your guide.

## **Day 2 : Hike to Taktsang monastery (3180 m) and drive to Thimphu (2,320m/7,610ft) – 2 hrs. drive**

You will have a short hike up to Taktsang monastery, a prominent sacred Buddhist site and temple complex perched on the edge of upper Paro Valley. It is also known as the Tiger's Nest. This magical monastery clings to a vertical granite cliff 300 meter above the valley. Legend has it that the great Guru Padmasambhava flew to this spot on back of a tigress and meditated in a cave during the 8th century. When the Guru finished his meditation, he instructed that the monastery to be built. The temple was built around the cave and is a hallowed shrine for Bhutanese pilgrims. The spectacular view along the way and the historical sites draw many tourists to this imposing monastery. There are also a number of temples scattered along the route. Later we'll turn to the Paro Dzong, a large Buddhist monastery and fortress, which is considered the best example of Bhutanese architecture. Now it also houses the district Monastic Body and government administrative offices. On the hill above the Dzong stands an ancient watchtower called Ta Dzong, which is the National Museum of Bhutan. Visit Ta Dzong Museum housing many religious relics, works of art and handicrafts offering a great orientation into Bhutan's historical, cultural, and religious past. This Dzong was converted into the National Museum in 1968. The museum boasts antique thangkhas, textiles, weapons and armor, household objects and rich assortment of natural and historic artifacts. Here you can also learn about Bhutan's history. After this hike and a short sightseeing tour, we drive to Thimphu following the Pachu River. Once a rustic village sitting in a broad, fertile river valley, Thimphu is today the nation's bustling capital. We will stay overnight at Thimphu.

## **Day 3 : Drive Thimphu to Punakha (1,250m/4,100ft): 76 km, 2-3 hours**

Drive to Punakha via Dochu La Pass (3,100m) situated 10,000 feet above sea level. You can have magnificent view of eastern Himalayas from this pass which includes Bhutan's highest mountain Mount Gangkar Punsum (7550 m). From the pass, we drive downhill through the rhododendron, fir and hemlock forests. We then pass through rice fields along river banks and reach Punakha. In Punakha, we visit Punakha Dzong which was built between 1637/1638 and is the second oldest and the second largest Dzong in Bhutan. Overnight in Punakha.

## **Day 4 : Drive Punakha – Trongsa – Bumthang – approx. 8/9 hrs. drive**

On the following day, we drive to Trongsa, gateway to central Bhutan at 2,180 metres. Set amid spectacular scenery, Trongsa Dzong, the ancestral home of Bhutan's royal family, commands the eye from miles away. You'll also be able to visit Ta Dzong, which is the newly opened museum in the watchtower. 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 Zhabdrung, the Dzong is an architectural masterpiece. Dedicated to the Wangchuk dynasty, it tells the stories of the Dzong and the valley, featuring personal belongings of the kings and queens of Bhutan. Continue through some of Bhutan's most idyllic landscapes to Bumthang, an area of high valleys that sits between 2,580 – 3,100 metres. Bumthang is also known as the heartland of Buddhism. The Guru and his lineage of Tertons, treasure finders, have led to the sprouting of many temples in the valley. On arrival at Bumthang, you will stay in a local farmhouse where you'll experience a genuine slice of Bhutanese life and hospitality. The facilities here are quite basic, but the accommodation is exactly how a typical Bhutanese family live; and the food are in

no way adapted for tourists.

## **Day 5 : Bumthang sightseeing**

Sightseeing tour in the spiritual heartland of Bhutan includes many legendary monasteries, temples and palaces. You will start your pilgrimage sightseeing tour with a visit to Jambay Lhakhang. It was built in the 7th century by the Tibetan King Songtsen Goempo, 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. The next site we will be visiting today is Chakhar (Iron Castle) Lhakhang. Chakhar Lhakhang lies beyond a short distance from Jambay Temple. 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. Then drive up to 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 Rinpoche meditated and left his body imprint. A few minutes' walk from Kurjey will lead us to Tamshing Lhakhang. Cross the small suspension bridge and you can see a temple which is known as Tamshing Lhendrup Chholing (Temple of the Good Message).

If time permits, visit the Kungzandra Monastery which is one and half hour walk from the road. It is one of the places where Guru Rinpoche meditated as did his disciple Namkha Nyingpo, and a little temple is said to have been established there at the end of the eight century. However the present site was founded by the saint Pema Lingpa in 1488. Overnight Lodge.

## **Day 6 : Visit Tharpa ling (3500m) – 1 hour drive**

Visit Tharpa ling Monastery (the place of liberation) which is located on the face of a hillock overlooking the village of Gaytsa in Bumthang. It is about an hour drive through the dirt road which winds up from the village of Gaytsa. Gyalwa Longchen Rabjampa, a 14th century Tibetan master visited Tharpa ling and perched a dharma called Yodsel Dorji Nyingpo. In the course of his teaching, he liberated many followers and gradually the place came to be known as 'Tharpa ling' or the place of liberation. Today it is one of the important monastic bodies of Kagyu and Nyingma sects of Buddhism in Bhutan. Popularly known as the 'Great cannon of Tharpa ling,' the Tharpa ling cannon, is a massive phallus-carved of stone and cement. This seven foot wonder has a seemingly-strange but interesting history behind it.

According to the curator of the temple, the massive phallus was erected with its tip pointed towards the valley. Legend has it the valley facing temple, is in the shape of a female organ. As a result of this strange setting, it posed a threat to the sanctity of the temple there were incidences when monks from the monastery gave up their monkhood, resulting in the decline of the number of monks in the monastery. The great cannon was erected in the dawn of the early 12th century and has, since, miraculously curbed the problem that had long been a threat to the sanctity of the temple.

## **Day 7 : Drive Bumthang to Gangtey – approx. 6 hrs. drive**

Drive for about six hours to reach Gangtey which is situated at the height of 2,900 metres above sea level. On arrival, enjoy the immense views of the remote Phobjikha Valley and the Black Mountains. Move onto visit Gangtey Gumpa (one of Bhutan's oldest and recently renovated monasteries) and explore the valley where the villagers continue to live a traditional Bhutanese rural lifestyle. This is the site where black-necked cranes visit in their hundreds in November of each year, after spending the

summer in Tibet. Explore the colorful, recently-restored Gangtey Gumpa, a monastic college famous for its annual festival to welcome the migration of black-necked cranes.

### **Day 8 : Hike around Gangtey village**

This morning, venture out on a day walk in the valley known as the Shasi La Nature Trail. The trail is used by the people of Sha Ngawang and Chitokha to migrate between their summer and winter homes in Gangtey. It was also an important trail used by the Gangtey Truelku and his followers in the past, when migrating between his winter residence in Sha Chitokha and Gangtey Gumpa. The walk takes around six hours for casual trekkers to reach Kheylyakha from Phobjikha, and is especially great for bird lovers as there's an abundance of wildlife in the area.

### **Day 9 : Drive Gangtey to Paro – approx. 4/5 hrs. drive**

Hike up to the hilltop village of Rinchengang and learn about its interesting history. Rinchengang is picturesquely situated on a steep ridge near Wangdi and then drive to Paro. Upon arrival at Paro, you can visit impressive Paro Dzong, one of the finest examples of Bhutanese architecture.

### **Day 10 : Departure**

Ending our trip, you will be transferred to the airport for your flight back to home. During the flight you will enjoy breathtaking views of the Himalayan peaks that include sacred Bhutanese mountains such as Jomolhari and Jitchu Drake.

## **Inclusions**

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### **What is included?**

Airport pick up & drop by private vehicle as your require.

Private vehicals for round trip.

Standard accommodation twin sharing bed basis for the duration of tour.

All meals fixed breakfast, lunch & dinner with Tea and Coffee for whole duration of your stay in Bhutan.

Mineral water supply for the trip.

Local licensed English speaking Bhutan Tour Guides.

All sightseeing tours, Monument /Museum entrance Fees as per itinerary.

Country Presentation & Tour Briefing on arrival evening.

Bhutan Visa Fees and Visa Processing assistance.

The required number of trekking & touring staff.

All trekking access, route permits logistics & fees.

Government tax which goes to the country's health & education projects.

### **What isn't included?**

Your travel insurance.

Bottled/alcoholic/cold drinks room service.

International airfares and airport departure tax.

Personal Equipment.

Tips to staffs-Tipping is expected.

Any others expenses which are not mentioned on Price Includes section.

### **Complimentary**