



## Focus on Bhutan – 12 nights

We love Bhutan....it really is the most wonderful, rewarding destination! We are very fortunate to travel to Bhutan annually to ensure our itineraries and inclusions are the very best possible for our valued clients. Below is an itinerary designed for private travellers and can be tailored to suit your exact requirements.

### Tour Itinerary Overview.

- 2 nights Thimphu with sightseeing, hiking and shopping options
- 2 nights Phobjikha valley for hiking and exploring
- 2-3 nights Bumthang valley – Lhakhangs, monasteries, hiking & weaving\*
- 1 night Trongsa with Dzong, museum visit and hiking.
- 2 nights Punakha valley with sightseeing, monastery & Dzong visits & hiking.
- 2-3 nights Paro valley with Taksang Monastery hike, sightseeing & shopping\*

\* We will guide you whether a 3rd night in either Bumthang or Paro is best for you.

OR CALL THE BHUTAN TRAVEL EXPERTS ON  
AUS [toll free](tel:1300367875), James – [0412 416 111](tel:0412416111), Nicola – [0413 598 669](tel:0413598669)

### Why Book with Bhutan & Beyond?

- 16 years experience, service & knowledge.
- We personally visit Bhutan at least once every year.
- Competitive pricing and luxury hotel upgrade options.
- Exceptionally well constructed & flexible itineraries.
- We provide a comprehensive Bhutan visitor guide
- Experts at combining Bhutan with India & Nepal.
- ATAS Accredited via our parent company MTA Travel
- Access to our exclusive travel app COMPANION

### Your Bhutan Land Package Inclusions:

- Personal guide & driver with SUV or minibus.
- All touring & transfers throughout.
- Traditional 3 star hotels with private bathrooms.
- All meals and bottled water daily.
- All sightseeing & entrance fees.
- Bhutan Govt royalties & taxes.
- Bhutan visa fees.
- Bank transfer & communications fees.
- Professionally operated by Bhutan Tourism Corp.
- Comprehensive Bhutan visitor guide & full support from Bhutan & Beyond.



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### Optional Activities:

Please ensure your travel insurance covers you for these activities.

- White Water Rafting – Punakha Valley. US\$250.00 for up to 5 persons.
- Archery in Paro town @ US\$7.00 pp.
- Mountain bike hire in Paro & Thimphu from US\$25 pp per day.

### Your Bhutan land package excludes:

- Airfares to/from Bhutan.
- Personal items incl laundry, drinks, phone, tips etc.
- Upgrade costs for luxury hotels are additional.
- Travel Insurance – mandatory to enter Bhutan.

### Cancellation Conditions

Deposit date until 60 days prior to departure – Loss of deposit

From 60 days prior to arrival in Bhutan – No refund permitted

### Day 1:

#### Paro Valley to Thimphu Valley (1 hr 30 mins)

After clearing immigration and customs you will be greeted by your BTCL guide and driver and transferred to Bhutan's capital Thimphu, travelling through the spectacular countryside en-route. All the houses and buildings in the Kingdom are painted and constructed in traditional Bhutanese style.

On arrival into Thimphu check-in to your hotel and take lunch. Enjoy the remainder of the day to explore Thimphu, both by vehicle and on foot. Your options include visits to the National Memorial Stupa; the celebrated Royal Textile Academy and the Takin Preserve – home to Bhutan's most unusual national mammal.

#### Overnight Thimphu – [Bhutanese Style 3\\* Hotel](#)



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### Day 2:

#### Sightseeing in Thimphu.

This morning visit the majestic Trashichhoe Dzong and the newly consecrated Tara Lhaden Zhingkhram lhakang (temple). Continue on to the awesome Golden Buddha which also offers an excellent 3 km hike option with sensational valley views. Next visit the 'Simply Bhutan' traditional display village followed by a Bhutanese lunch. At 'Simply Bhutan' you can try ara tasting (local spirit); suja tasting (butter tea); try your hand at archery and enjoy a cultural performance of song & dance during the lunch.

Other recommended places to visit are Zorig Chusum – the Institute of the 13 Arts & Crafts of Bhutan (closed over school holidays and weekends); the Folk Heritage Museum; the National Library, which holds a vast collection of ancient Buddhist manuscripts; the hand-made paper making factory & the colourful weekend markets (Fri-Sun) where everyone goes to buy an array of fresh fruits & vegetables, home-wares, handicrafts and clothes.

Don't forget to take a wander along Thimphu's main street, Norzin Lam, which offers good shopping and the Craft Bazaar. For those who have an interest in quality weavings and local art check out the Gagyel Lhundrup weaving centre, where you can interact with the weavers, and the adjacent S. Bishwa art gallery. The city bars are also worth a visit. Your guide will advise you the best options. Please note Tuesday is 'dry day' in Bhutan and most bars in the city will remain closed.

#### Overnight Thimphu – Bhutanese Style 3\* Hotel.

### Day 3:

#### Thimphu to Phobjikha Valley (4+ hrs)

This morning you will be transferred by road eastwards to the Phobjikha Valley. En-route pass the Semtokha Dzong. This was built in 1629 & is the oldest fortress of its kind that guarded the Thimphu valley. Today it is a monastery.

Continue ascending to Dochu La (pass) to view the 108 Stupas, commissioned by a former Queen as a memorial to those who lost their lives during the low intensity conflict in late 2002. This was when Bhutan evicted Indian rebels camped in the jungle on the Bhutan – Indian border. On a clear day you will witness a breathtaking view of the eastern Himalaya. Depending on the time of the year the vista can vary from alpine snow (November – February) to a profusion of blossoms (March – May).

When the Wangdue Phodrang Dzong comes into view notice the large cacti that cover the hillside below. These were planted long ago to discourage invaders from climbing the steep slope to the Dzong. From the road view Rinchengang, one of Bhutan's oldest villages, which did not have access to water, electricity or schooling until the early 1990's. The craftsmen of Rinchengang are sought after for their skills in construction of Dzongs and Lhakhangs (temples).



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### Day 3 – continued

Potatoes are Phobjikha's primary cash crop and mainly exported to India. Phobjikha is a glacial valley on the western slopes of the Black Mountains and is one of the most beautiful open valleys in Bhutan. Furthermore it is also one of the most important wildlife preserves in the country. It is the winter home (late October to early February) of the rare black necked crane which annually flies in from Tibet. There are also muntjaks (barking deer), wild boar, sambar, Himalayan black bear, leopard and red foxes.

Overnight Phobjikha Valley – [Bhutanese Style 3\\* Hotel.](#)

### Day 4:

#### Sightseeing & Hiking in Phobjikha.

While you are in Phobjikha you will visit the Black Crane nature information centre and the sacred Gangtey Monastery.

Also enjoy time to wander through Gangtey village and hike the Gangtey Nature Trail.

There are many additional hikes available in this beautiful valley and your guide will advise you the best options. One is the remote Phobji area further up the valley. Here you can take an easy, flat hike through temples, farm houses and small villages.

Overnight Phobjikha Valley – [Bhutanese Style 3\\* Hotel.](#)

### Day 5:

#### Phobjikha Valley to Choekhor Valley (3-4 hrs)

This morning depart Phobjikha to the central Bumthang region comprising the 4 valleys Choekhor, Tang, Ura and Chhume. Traverse the Pele La (Pass) which crosses through the Black Mountains National Park and divides western and central Bhutan and stop for lunch near Trongsa, where you will spend more time on your return journey. Keep a watchful eye out for Rhesus Macaques (Brown Monkeys) on the side of the road. The Trongsa Dzong is perched at the end of a ridge and seems to hang in space at the head of the valley. The Dzongs location afforded it great power over this part of the country as the only foot and mule trail between east and western Bhutan leads straight through Trongsa and through the Dzong itself.

On arrival in the Bumthang region notice the large fields of buckwheat that cover the valleys....buckwheat noodles and pancakes are a Bumthang speciality. Enjoy the remainder of the afternoon at leisure. There are short walks and hikes to choose from and your guide will be happy to make recommendations.

Overnight Choekhor Valley – [Bhutanese Style 3\\* Hotel.](#)



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### Day 6:

#### Sightseeing in the Bumthang Region.

Today your sightseeing includes visits to the Wangdicholing Palace (exterior access only) and one or both of the Jambay & Kurjey Lhakhangs. These are the oldest two monasteries in the kingdom and all the former Kings of Bhutan are cremated at Kurjey Lhakhang. Other options include the Tamshing Monastery where about 95 Monks reside – most are under 15 and from poorer families who cannot afford to send their children to state school; drop in at the Swiss Farm to taste sweet cheese, apple brandy and locally brewed wine and beer.

Alternatively enjoy one of the hikes available in this region or find a nice quiet spot at the hotel to catch up on some reading.

#### Overnight Choekhor Valley – Bhutanese Style 3\* Hotel.

### Day 7:

#### Day Trip to Ura Valley. (4-5 hrs drive round trip)

Ura valley is the cradle of Buddhism in Bhutan and is one of the earliest settled valleys in the Kingdom. The stony paths of Ura village lend an almost medieval feel to the area. Consider an easy downhill hike from the road into the valley itself, with a picnic lunch at the local lhakang (temple).

\*Choose to stay in Ura tonight at a local farmhouse and interact with the family or return to your hotel in Choekhor valley.

#### Overnight Choekhor Valley – 3\* Hotel or Ura Farm Stay.

### Day 8:

#### Choekhor Valley to Trongsa (2 hrs)

Today transfer back towards Trongsa via the Chhume valley for the opportunity to shop for excellent local handicrafts and textiles. This region is renowned for its exceptionally high quality weavings. The Trongsa Dzong is the ancestral home of the Royal Family of Bhutan and has added the excellent Tower of Trongsa museum into it's ancient watchtower, which you will visit this afternoon, followed by an excursion to the Dzong itself.

Alternatively there is a good 2 hour valley hike below the Dzong that your guide will advise you on.

#### Overnight Trongsa – [Bhutanese Style 3\\* Hotel](#).



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### Day 9:

#### Trongsa to Punakha Valley (4+ hrs)

Depart early this morning to the Punakha Valley which holds the title as the winter capital because of its more temperate climate. Take lunch at a cafeteria en-route. Arriving into the Punakha valley visit Chimi Lhakhang, a monastery built by Lama Drukpa Kuenley (also known as the Divine Madman or Mad Monk), which is a pleasant, easy 20 minute walk across paddy fields. It is believed that childless women who visit the temple will conceive after receiving a “wang” (blessing) from the resident monk.

Visit the local nunnery and, time permitting consider a very scenic excursion to either the small village of Nobgang, original home to the 4 former Queens of the 4th king, OR the small village of Talo where you can wander through the beautiful and serene gardens of the local monastery. Don't forget the weekend market if you are in Punakha on a Saturday morning.

Overnight Punakha Valley – [Bhutanese Style 3\\* Hotel](#).

### Day 10:

#### Sightseeing & hiking in Punakha.

This morning visit the dramatic Punakha Dzong, which formerly served as the seat of the government and is still the winter residence of the Dratsheng (Central Monk Body). Furthermore it is an excellent example of how a medieval fortress, and a centre of both monastic and administrative functions, has evolved for modern day use.

After lunch at a local restaurant we recommend a fascinating hike to Khamsum Yulley Namgyel Chorten. The hiking trail is through fields of vegetables, rice paddies and tiny hamlets. This Chorten holds very special significance. It was consecrated in 1999 and dedicated to the protection of the former Crown Prince – today's current King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck.

Overnight Punakha Valley – Bhutanese Style 3\* Hotel.

### Day 11:

#### Punakha Valley to Paro Valley (4 hrs +)

Depart Punakha early this morning for your transfer westwards to the Paro Valley. Once again traversing Dochu La and arriving in Paro for lunch at a local restaurant.



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### Day 11 – continued.

This afternoon enjoy an orientation tour of the major features in Paro town. These include Rinpung Dzong, with its cantilever bridge, and the National Museum. Here you will view the fine collection of ancient Thangka paintings, textiles, weapons and other artefacts. Finally we recommend a wander along the main streets which offer good shopping for jewellery and handicrafts.

Overnight Paro Valley – [Bhutanese Style 3\\* Hotel](#).

### Day 12:

#### Sightseeing & hiking in the Paro Valley.

Early this morning take a pilgrimage hike to the very revered Taktsang Monastery, also known as Tigers Nest. All Bhutanese Buddhists strive to make this pilgrimage at least once in their lives. Each step they take on the trail counts accrues merit points for their future. Choose between a 1.5 hour round trip hike to the Monastery viewpoint, or a longer 5 hour (and more strenuous) hike into the Monastery itself.

Tigers Nest clings impossibly to a cliff of rock at 800 m above the valley floor and is where Guru Rinpoche flew on the back of a tigress to subdue the local demons. That was followed by 3 months meditation in a cave still visible in the monastery. In 1998 the monastery was seriously damaged by fire and has since been painstakingly reconstructed to its original condition and consecrated by the 4th King in 2005.

Take a Bhutanese vegetarian lunch at the Taktsang Viewpoint cafe before finishing your hike. Finally visit the nearby Kyichu Lhakhang – one of Bhutan's oldest and most beautiful temples boasting an orange tree that perpetually bears fruit.

Overnight Paro Valley – Bhutanese Style 3\*Hotel.

### Day 12:

#### Day of departure.

Early morning departure from your hotel to Paro Airport for your onward flight.



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