



## Black Crane Festival Tour – 10 nights 08-18 November 2021

### Introduction:

After the awesome flight into Paro experience the 4 valleys of Paro, Thimphu, Phobjikha & Punakha. You will be amazed by the colour & spectacle of the famous Black Necked Crane festival. Also, this small group tour caters to a maximum of 8 persons. Furthermore it features the most important sights in Thimphu city; the remote beauty of the Phobjikha valley and the splendour of the magnificent Punakha Dzong. Finally a special pilgrimage hike to Taktsang Monastery (Tigers Nest) in Paro. This tour combines the very best the Kingdom of Bhutan has to offer in western Bhutan.

### Tour Itinerary Overview.

- 2 nights Thimphu with sightseeing, hiking and shopping options.
- 3 nights Phobjikha valley for hiking and exploring & witness the Black Necked Crane festival.
- 2 nights Punakha valley with monastery & Dzong visits.
- 3 nights Paro valley with Taktsang Monastery hike, shopping & sightseeing.

### Reasons To Book This Small Group Tour

- This tour is a guaranteed departure.
- We only take a maximum of 8 persons on our tours.
- Witness the spectacle of the Paro Tshechu (festival).
- We tailor our tours for less driving and more sightseeing!
- 17 years experience, service & knowledge.
- Competitive pricing & well constructed itineraries.
- Access to our exclusive travel app COMPANION
- Our comprehensive Bhutan Visitor Information planning guide
- ATAS Accredited via our parent company MTA Travel.

### CALL THE BHUTAN TRAVEL EXPERTS ON

AUS [toll free](tel:1300367875), James – [0412 416 111](tel:0412416111), Nicola – [0413 598 669](tel:0413598669)

### Tour Inclusions:

- English speaking guide, driver & private coach.
- All touring & transfers throughout your journey.
- Bhutanese style 3\* hotel accom with private bathrooms.
- All meals including bottled water daily.
- Entrance fees, hiking & sightseeing.
- Bhutan visa fees & visa processing.
- Government tourism royalties & local taxes.
- The spectacle of the Black Necked Crane festival.
- Bank transfer & communication fees.
- Professionally operated by Bhutan Tourism Corp – BTCL.



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### Tour Exclusions:

- Flights to/from Paro are additional.
- Personal items: phone calls, laundry, drinks etc.
- Tipping – we will advise your tipping regime.
- Travel Insurance – mandatory to enter Bhutan.

### Available On Request:

- Upgrade to Business Class on your flights.
- Ex-Australia airfares.
- Stopovers & additional Asian arrangements.

### Cancellation Conditions:

Deposit date until 60 days prior departure – Loss of deposit.  
From 60 days prior arrival in Bhutan – No refund permitted.

### DETAILED TOUR ITINERARY - 08-18 November 2021

#### Monday 08 November:

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

After clearing immigration and customs you will be greeted by your BTCL guide and driver. Transfer 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 take lunch. Enjoy the remainder of the day to visit the celebrated Royal Textile Academy, the National Memorial Stupa; and the Takin Preserve – home to Bhutan's most unusual national mammal.

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

#### Tuesday 09 November:

##### Thimphu Sightseeing.

This morning visit the awesome Golden Buddha which also offers an excellent 3 km hike option with sensational valley views. Continue on to the majestic Trashichhoe Dzong and the beautiful Tara Lhaden Zhingkhram Lhakhang (temple). 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.



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Tuesday 09 November - continued

This afternoon visit Zorig Chusom – the Institute of the 13 Arts & Crafts of Bhutan is adjacent. Here you can interact with the students. 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. Finally some free time to check out Thimphu's main street, Norzin Lam, featuring the Craft Bazaar.

**Overnight Thimphu – Bhutan Style 3\* Hotel.**

Wednesday 10 November:

**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).

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 – [Bhutan Style 3\\* Hotel](#).**

Thursday 11 November:

**Phobjikha Valley Sightseeing & Festival Visit.**

Today you are free to spend as much time as you wish watching the spectacle of the Black Necked Crane festival, held at the sacred Gangtey Goenpa, en-route to the festival wander through the quaint Gangtey village.



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## Black Crane Festival Tour – 10 nights 08-18 November 2021

Thursday 11 November - continued

This afternoon perhaps enjoy a walk along the Gangtey nature trail.

**Overnight Phobjikha Valley – Bhutan Style 3\* Hotel.**

Friday 12 November:

**Phobjikha Valley Sightseeing.**

This morning visit the Crane information centre and watch the cranes from the hide.

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 or simply spend a little downtime relaxing in this very serene valley.

**Overnight Phobjikha Valley – Bhutan Style 3\* Hotel.**

Saturday 13 November:

**Phobjikha to Punakha Valley (2+ hrs)**

Depart this morning to the Punakha valley. This holds the title as the winter capital because of its more temperate climate. Arriving into the valley firstly visit the markets at Mesina. After that we visit Chimi Lhakhang, a monastery built by Lama Drukpa Kuenley (also known as the Divine Madman), which is a pleasant 20 min 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.

After lunch at a local restaurant take an excursion along a scenic country lane to the very traditional village of Talo. Here you can stroll through the beautiful & serene gardens of the local monastery. Finally, time permitting, visit the Sangchen Dorji Lhuendrup Lhakhang & Nunnery.

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

Sunday 14 November:

**Sightseeing & hiking in Punakha**

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



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

### Overnight Punakha Valley – Bhutan Style 3\* Hotel.

#### Monday 15 November:

Punakha Valley to Paro Valley (4+ hrs)

Depart Punakha early morning for your transfer westwards to the Paro Valley, once again traversing Dochu La, and arriving in Paro town in time for a late lunch at one of the local restaurants.

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

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

#### Tuesday 16 November.

#### Sightseeing and Hiking in the Paro Valley.

This morning hike to the Taktsang Monastery, also known as Tigers Nest. This is Bhutan's most revered monastery and all Bhutanese strive to make the pilgrimage here at least once in their lives. This visit is much more than 'just a hike' and each step gains merit points for the next part of life's journey. Choose between a 2 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 where Guru Rinpoche flew on the back of a tigress to subdue the local demons 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 lunch at the Viewpoint Cafe on the hiking trail and this afternoon visit Kyichu Lhakhang – one of Bhutan's oldest and most beautiful temples, boasting an orange tree that perpetually bears fruit. Take the remainder of the day at leisure.

### Overnight Paro -Bhutan Style 3\* Hotel



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**Wednesday 17 November:**

**1/2 day trip to Chele La.**

Today enjoy a trip to Chele La (pass) on Bhutan's highest motorable road at 3988 metres. Enjoy one of the ridge top hikes near the pass which can afford spectacular mountain vistas on a clear day. Visit nearby Kila Nunnery, the oldest in Bhutan, before returning to Paro for a late lunch.

This afternoon spend some time exploring Paro town and do any last minute souvenir shopping.

**Overnight Paro Valley – Bhutan Style 3\* Hotel.**

**Thursday 18 November:**

**Day of Departure.**

Late morning transfer to Paro Airport for your onward flight.



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