



BHUTAN & BEYOND

Paro Festival Tour – 10 Nights 14-24 April 2022

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 Paro Tshechu (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.
- 2 nights Phobjikha valley for hiking and exploring.
- 2 nights Punakha valley with monastery & Dzong visits.
- 4 nights Paro valley with Taktsang Monastery hike, shopping & sightseeing.

Reasons To Book This Small Group Tour

- 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!
- 18 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](#), James – [0412 416 111](#), Nicola – [0413 598 669](#)

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.
- Sustainable development fee (SDF) & local taxes.
- The spectacle of the Paro Tshechu (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, designer coffee 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 35 days prior arrival in Bhutan - Land tour deposit is refundable less B&B service fees.
- 35 days or less prior to arrival in Bhutan - No land tour refund permitted.

Please note: - These conditions cover land travel arrangements only, not airfares, which are subject to their own cancellation conditions.

DETAILED TOUR ITINERARY – 14 – 24 APRIL 2022

Thursday 14 April:

Paro Airport to Paro (20 mins)

After clearing immigration and customs you will be greeted by your BTCL guide & driver and transferred to Paro town. Here you can enjoy a wander through the colourful festival markets. You will mingle with the local Bhutanese before taking lunch at a local restaurant.

This afternoon witness the colour & spectacle of the Paro Tshechu. The festival is held annually at the Rinpung Dzong, just as it has been for hundreds of years. Because the local Bhutanese dress in their finest clothes the proceedings are raucous & joyous affairs. Finally check in at your Paro hotel.

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



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Friday 15 April:

½ day trip to Chele La & Festival

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 make a return visit to the festival, or enjoy the afternoon at leisure.

Alternatively, for those keen to spend as much time as possible at the festival, have the option of spending the entire day here. (A picnic lunch will be provided to enjoy while at the festival.)

Overnight Paro – Bhutanese Style 3* Hotel.

Saturday 16 April:

Paro Valley to Thimphu (1 hr 30 mins drive time)

Firstly, consider the early morning option to attend the festival for the unfurling of the Thongdrel. This takes place at the Rinpung Dzong at around 3.00 am. It is an intensely religious experience for the Bhutanese. The extremely large thongdrel is a painting (Thangka) which is not allowed to be struck by the direct rays of the sun. Therefore, it must be rolled back up by 7:30 AM. The mere sight of the Thongdrel is said to cleanse the viewer of sin.

After a leisurely breakfast back at your hotel, transfer to Thimphu city, Bhutan's quirky capital. Firstly, stop at the Iron Bridge and temple en-route, before arriving into the city. On arrival in Thimphu visit the celebrated Royal Textiles Academy, followed by a 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.

Remainder of the afternoon at leisure to explore Thimphu on foot perhaps enjoy a wander along Thimphu's main street Norzin Lam and visit the craft bazaar.

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

Sunday 17 April:

Exploring in the Thimphu Valley

This morning visit the awesome Buddha Dordenma statue located at Kuenselphodrang. The statue is made of bronze and gilded in gold. It is considered the largest Buddha Shakyamuni statue in the world. There is also an excellent 3 km hike option through Kuenselphodrang Nature Park which offers sensational valley views.



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Sunday 17 April - continued

Continue on to the majestic Trashichhoe Dzong and visit the beautiful Tara Lhaden Zhingkhom lhakang (temple) Before making a visit to the colourful weekend markets (Fri-Sun) where everyone goes to buy an array of fresh fruits & vegetables, home-wares, handicrafts and clothes.

After a relaxing lunch at a local Thimphu restaurant, visit the National Memorial Chorten followed by the Takin Preserve – home to Bhutan’s most unusual national mammal.

Overnight Thimphu – Bhutanese 3* Hotel.

Monday 18 April:

Thimphu to Phobjikha (4+ hrs)

This morning drive eastwards to the Phobjikha Valley. Ascend to Dochu La (pass-3116 m) to view the 108 Stupas. These were commissioned by a former Queen as a memorial to those who lost their lives during the low intensity conflict in late 2002. This is when Bhutan evicted Indian separatist rebels camped in the jungle on the Bhutan-Indian border. On a clear day you will witness a breathtaking view of the eastern Himalaya.

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.

Phobjikha is a glacial valley on the western slopes of the Black Mountains. It is one of the most beautiful open valleys in Bhutan and, in addition, also one of the most important wildlife preserves in the country. Phobjikha is the winter home (late OCT to early FEB) of the rare black necked crane which annually flies in from Tibet. There are also barking deer, wild boar, sambar, Himalayan black bear, leopard and red fox.

While you are in Phobjikha you will visit the Black Crane nature information centre & the sacred Gangtey Goenpa (monastery). Furthermore enjoy time to wander through Gangtey village and hike the Gangtey Nature Trail. Time permitting you can take an excursion to the remote Phobji area of the valley. Here you can take an easy, flat hike through farm houses and temples.

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

Tuesday 19 April:

Sightseeing Phobjikha Valley

Explore the Phobjikha valley as per the above suggestions.

Overnight Phobjikha Valley – Bhutanese Style 3* Hotel.



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Wednesday 20 April:

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.

Wednesday 20 April – continued.

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 – [Bhutanese Style 3* Hotel](#).

Thursday 21 April:

Sightseeing & hiking in Punakha

This morning visit the Punakha Saturday morning market, 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.

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 – [Bhutanese Style 3* Hotel](#).

Friday 22 April:

Punakha Valley to Paro Valley (4 hrs)

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

This afternoon visit the National Museum featuring a wide range of historic artefacts. After that check in at the hotel and enjoy the remainder of the afternoon at leisure.

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



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Saturday 23 April:

Taksang Monastery Hike

After early breakfast we take a 'pilgrimage' hike to the Taksang Monastery, also known as Tigers Nest. All Bhutanese Buddhists desire to make this pilgrimage at least once in their lives. As a result, each step they take along the trail counts as merit points towards their future.

Choose between a 1.5 to 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 800 m above the valley floor. Furthermore, this is where Guru Rinpoche flew on the back of a tigress to subdue the local demons. This 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. It was then consecrated by the 4th King in 2005.

Take lunch at the Viewpoint Cafe on the hiking trail. Head back to your hotel via the revered Kyichu Lhakhang (temple). This is one of Bhutan's oldest and most beautiful temples. Furthermore it boasts an orange tree that perpetually bears fruit. After that take the rest of the afternoon at leisure. Or consider more shopping or sightseeing in Paro town.

Overnight Paro – Bhutanese Style 3* Hotel.

Sunday 24 April:

Day of departure.

Early morning transfer to Paro Airport for your onward flight.



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