

Bhutan Mini Explorer Itinerary – 9 nights

BHUTAN & BEYOND

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 nights Punakha valley with monastery & Dzong visits.
- 3 nights Paro valley with Taktsang Monastery hike, shopping & sightseeing.

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?

- 17 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.
- Sustainable development fee & local taxes.
- Bhutan visa fees & processing.
- Bank transfer & communications fees.
- Professionally operated by Bhutan Tourism Corp.
- Comprehensive Bhutan visitor guide & full support from Bhutan & Beyond.



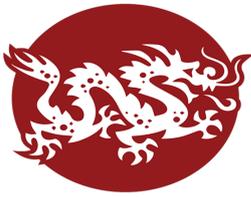
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Optional Activities:

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 @ 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, tel calls, designer coffee's tips etc.
- Upgrade costs for luxury hotels are additional.
- Travel Insurance – mandatory to enter Bhutan.

Cancellation Conditions – Land Tour:

- 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.

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 Chorten; the celebrated Royal Textile Academy (closed Sun/PH) and the Takin Preserve – home to Bhutan's most unusual national mammal.

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



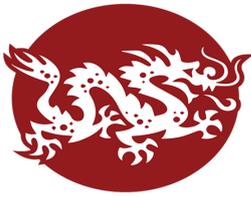
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Day 2:

Exploring in Thimphu.

Today we highly recommend you visit the following.

The Buddha Dordenma statue located at Kuenselphodrang (just outside the city). 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 the adjacent Kuenselphodrang Nature Park which offers sensational valley views.

View the majestic Trashichhoe Dzong (visits are only possible after business hours on weekdays or at the weekend) and visit the (nearby) beautiful Tara Lhaden Zhingkhams lhakang (temple).

Visit the 'Simply Bhutan' display village including a traditional Bhutanese lunch. At 'Simply Bhutan' you can experience a tasting (local spirit); suja tasting (butter tea); try your hand at archery and enjoy a cultural performance of song & dance during the lunch, plus much more.

Other recommended places to visit, depending on your preference, & in consultation with your guide are.

- Zorig Chusum – the Institute of the 13 Arts & Crafts of Bhutan (closed Sat/Sun/PH & sometimes closed to visitors at other times)
- The National Library, which holds a vast collection of ancient Buddhist manuscripts. (closed Sat/Sun & PH)
- Hand-made paper making factory. (closed Sat/Sun & PH)
- Visit the Thimphu Post Office to get your personalized postage stamp printed. (Mon-Fri & Sat am)
- The weekend market (Fri-Sun) where everyone goes to buy an array of fresh fruits & vegetables; home-ware, handicrafts and clothes.
- Take a wander along Thimphu's main street, Norzin Lam, which offers good shopping and the Craft Bazaar.
- For those interested in quality weavings and local art visit the Gagyel Lhundrup weaving centre. Here you can interact with the weavers.
- The adjacent S. Bishwa art gallery is also worth a visit. (both closed Sat/Sun)
- The city bars & coffee shops are also worth checking out. 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.
- Travel up the valley & hike to Tango Monastery which houses a university of Buddhism for monks.
- There are other 1/2 day/ day hikes possible in the Thimphu valley & your guide will recommend suitable hike options depending on the season and your prior hiking experience.

Overnight Thimphu – Bhutanese Style 3* Hotel.



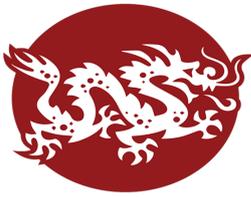
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Day 3:

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).

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](#).



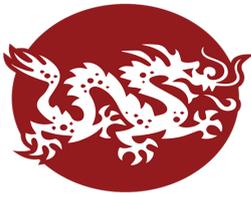
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Day 5:

Phobjikha Valley to Punakha Valley. (2+ hrs)

Depart early this morning to the Punakha Valley which holds the title as the winter capital because of its more temperate climate.

Arriving into Punakha check out the markets at Mesina. After that visit Chimi Lhakhang, a monastery built by Lama Drukpa Kuenley (also known as the Divine Madman or Mad Monk), which is a pleasant 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.

Take lunch at a local restaurant before an orientation tour of the valley. This includes the nunnery and the small village of Talo. Here you can wander through the serene grounds of the monastery with its beautiful gardens.

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

Day 6:

Exploring & 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 7:

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 7 – 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 Thangkha 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 8:

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 9:

Chele La & Haa Valley Excursion.

Travel to Chele La (pass) on Bhutan's highest motorable road at 3980 m and choose to take an awesome ridge hike to the Kila Nunnery or continue down into the remote and hidden Haa Valley.

Haa is a most beautiful valley, only opened up to tourists since 2004, and a visit is especially recommended between March and November. During the winter months DEC-FEB the road can become impassable and during this period. For those who prefer to stay at a lower altitude your guide will recommend a number of lower valley hikes in the Paro area.

Overnight Paro Valley – **Bhutanese Style 3* Hotel.**



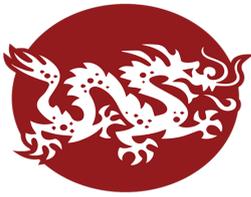
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Day 10:

Day of departure.

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



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