



## DISCOVER CENTRAL BHUTAN - 11 DAYS

### Overview:

This program captures the best of Bhutan. An immersive way to uncover its culture, people and landscapes with magnificent monasteries, fortresses and shrines perched on mountain cliffs. It also takes you to discover the central region that is kept untouched to conserve its unparalleled beauty of flora and fauna. Bhutan is a rich mosaic of different cultures, traditions, lifestyles, ethnic groups, languages, and belief systems. It is astounding that a country with a population of just over half a million speaks as many as nineteen different dialects and a few major languages.

### Trip Facts:

Destination: Bhutan  
Theme: Culture  
Activity: Tour  
Difficulty: N/A  
Max Altitude: 3,100 m/ 10,170 ft  
Best Season: September – April

### Highlights:

- Drive and hike through quaint hamlets and towns.
- Get in touch with spirituality while visiting Dzongs (fortresses) and monasteries around Bhutan.
- At Bumthang, visit ancient monasteries and meet the inhabitants of this central town.



## Itinerary at glance:

Day	Program	Accommodation
1	Arrive in Paro and drive to Thimphu	Hotel
2	In Thimphu	Hotel
3	Sightseeing & drive to Paro	Hotel
4	In Paro	Hotel
5	Fly to Bumthang	Hotel
6	Day excursion to Ura Valley	Hotel
7	Drive to Trongsa	Hotel
8	Drive to Gangtey	Hotel
9	Drive to Punakha	Hotel
10	Drive Punakha to Paro	Hotel
11	Final Departure	

## Detailed Itinerary:

### Day 1: Arrive in Paro and drive to Thimphu

Distance: 53kms/ 32 miles

Drive Time: 1 hour approx.

Altitude: 2,350 m / 7,709 ft

On arrival at the Paro International Airport, our representative will receive and escort you to the hotel in Thimphu, the capital city of Bhutan. The drive takes you through the picturesque winding road along the Paro River.

En route visit **Tashichho Dzong**, an impressive building also known as 'the fortress of the Dharma Raja'. It has traditionally been the seat of the Druk Desi, the head of Bhutan's civil government.

*Note: Tashichho Dzong is open during weekdays after office hours (5pm onwards) and from 9am to 5pm on weekends.*



*Overnight at Hotel [-/L/D]*

## Day 2: In Thimphu

In Thimphu, visit **Memorial Chorten** (Buddhist funeral monument), **Changangkha Lhakhang Temple** with a wonderful view of the city, **Motithang** a small zoological park where they have Takin, the national animal of Bhutan.

Also visit the **National library of Bhutan** that carries a magnificent collection of Buddhist traditional texts. Visit the school of art and handicraft that houses the famous Thangka paintings and mud statues.

*Overnight at Hotel [B/L/D]*

## Day 3: Sightseeing & drive to Paro

Distance: 53kms/ 32 miles

Drive Time: 1 hour approx.

Today we will visit some sites in Thimphu and on our way to Paro visit Simtokha Dzong. Once in Paro visit Paro Dzong.

**The Folk Heritage Museum** is the first structure to incorporate both monastic and administrative facilities. Since 1961 it has been the home of the Rigney School for Dzongkha and monastic studies. Its students are both monks and ordinary people.

According to a legend, **Simtokha Dzong** was constructed to subdue an evil spirit that was harassing the people in the region and guard the place. Hence, Simtokha translates as 'Atop a Demon'. Simtokha is believed to be the first dzong built in Bhutan and is the gateway to Thimphu Valley.



In Paro visit **Paro Dzong**, also known as Ringpung Dzong meaning 'Fortress on a heap of jewels'. This impressive dzong is the finest example of Bhutanese architecture and is one of the most popular and well known dzongs in Bhutan.

*Overnight at Hotel [B/L/D]*

#### Day 4: In Paro

Hike Duration: 4.5 hours approx. (round trip)

Hike to Taktsang Monastery and later visit KyichuLakhang.

Perched on the side of a vertical cliff at 3000 m altitude north of Paro, the beautiful **Taktsang Monastery** also known as 'Tiger's Nest' is the most famous and an unofficial symbol of Bhutan. Paro Taktsang is the best known of the thirteen caves in which Guru Padmasambhava meditated.

Located close to the Paro Airport, the **Kyichu Lhakhang** is an important Himalayan Buddhist Temple. Built in the 7th century, this is one of Bhutan's oldest religious sites in Bhutan.

*Overnight at Hotel [B/L/D]*

#### Day 5: Fly to Bumthang

Flight Duration (Domestic Flight): 30 minutes approx.

Altitude: 2,580 m / 8,464 ft

After breakfast at the hotel, transfer to the airport and fly to Bumthang.

Freshen up and visit several ancient and important monasteries such as Jakar Dzong, Jambay Lhakhang, Kurjey Lhakhang and Tamshing Lhakhang.



**Jakar Dzong**, which means 'Fortress of the White Bird', is the first place in Bhutan that Guru Rinpoche visited and subsequently as the ruler converted into Buddhism. Jakar is also considered as the birth place of Buddhism in Bhutan.

**Jambay Lhakhang**, built in the 7th century is the oldest monastery in the country.

**Kurje Lhakhang** located further along the valley comprises of three temples. The one on the right was built in 1652 by Trongsa Penlop (Governor of Trongsa) against the rock face where Guru Padmasambhava meditated in the 8th century.

The **Tamshing Lhakhang** located across the river from Kurje Lhakhang and was founded in 1501 by Terton Pema Lingpa, re-incarnation of Guru Padmasambhava. There are very old religious paintings around the inner walls of the temple, which was restored at the 19th century.

If time permits, also visit the sacred Mebar Tsho (The Burning Lake).

The **Mebar Tsho** (or The Burning Lake) is more of a gorge than a lake. This is a sacred lake for the Bhutanese who believe that Terton Pema Lingpa discovered religious treasures from this lake in the 12th century.

*Overnight at Hotel [B/L/D]*

#### **Day 6: Day excursion to Ura Valley**

**Distance: 50kms/ 31 miles**

**Drive Time: 2.5 hours approx. (each way)**

**Altitude: 3,100 m / 10,170 ft**

Day excursion to the Ura Valley, the highest valley in Bumthang and is said to have been home to the earliest inhabitants of Bhutan. Cobbled streets, villages and farm houses give this place a medieval feel with an unusual attractive atmosphere.



After visiting Ura Valley and its surrounding, drive back to Bumthang and transfer to your hotel.

*Overnight at Hotel [B/L/D]*

### Day 7: Drive to Trongsa

Distance: 68kms/ 42 miles

Drive Time: 2 hours approx.

Breakfast will be served at the hotel. After breakfast, we begin our drive to Trongsa. **Trongsa** meaning 'the new village' in Bhutanese comprises of retreats, temples and hermitages of monks.

Visit the majestic **Trongsa Dzong** which is the largest dzong in Bhutan. The Trongsa Dzong is a particularly important part of Bhutanese history since the present ruling dynasty in Bhutan was established from here.

Also visit **Ta Dzong**; a watch tower built towering the east side of the Trongsa Dzong. It has now been converted into a state-of-the Art Museum (National Museum) and is perhaps the most fascinating museum of the nation.

*Overnight at Hotel [B/L/D]*

### Day 8: Drive to Gangtey

Distance: 120 kms/ 74.56 miles

Drive Time: 4.5 - 5 hours approx.

Altitude: 3,000 m / 9,842 ft

After an early breakfast, we begin our drive to **Gangtey**, a beautiful place situated at an altitude of 3000m. From Gangtey, one can closely view the picturesque black mountain



ranges as well as the beautiful Phobjikha valley which is one of the biggest and the most beautiful valleys in the country.

En route visit Wangdue Dzong. Perched in a ridge overlooking the Punatsangchu and Dangchu rivers, this monument dominates the whole town of **Wangdue Phrodang**.

Once in Gangtey, explore Phobjika Valley and Gangtey Monastery.

The **Phobjika Valley** is a vast U-shaped glacial valley, also known as the Gangtey Valley named after the impressive Gangteng Monastery. This broad valley is the best-known marshland in Bhutan and is popular for its scenic splendor and cultural uniqueness.

Transfer back to the hotel.

*Overnight at Hotel [B/L/D]*

### Day 9: Drive to Punakha

Distance: 78kms/ 48 miles

Drive Time: 3 hours approx.

Altitude: 1,300 m / 4,265 ft

After breakfast drive to Punakha. In Punakha, visit **Punakha Dzong**. The majestic Punakha Dzong is also known as 'the palace of great happiness or bliss' and is the second largest dzong in Bhutan.

**Chimi Lhakhang**, flanked with hundreds of prayer flags sits on a round hillock near Punakha. The monastery, built in 1499 is dedicated to Lama Drukpa Kinley, also known as 'the Divine Madman' or the 'Mad Saint'.

*Overnight at Hotel [B/L/D]*



## Day 10: Drive Punakha to Paro

Distance: 143kms/ 88 miles

Drive Time: 4.5 - 5 hours approx.

Altitude: 2,250 m / 7,382 ft

After breakfast at the hotel, drive to Paro. Once we arrive in Paro, transfer to the hotel where rest of the day will be at leisure.

*Overnight at Hotel [B/L/D]*

## Day 11: Final Departure

Today you will be transferred to the airport for your onward journey. [B]

### Trip Ends

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**Note:** All information in this itinerary is accurate to the best of our knowledge but please note that changes to our trips can and do occur. This may be due to our effort to improve our program or logistical reasons such as changes in flight schedules, traffic conditions, weather conditions, or government policies. Dharma Adventures will make every effort to keep you informed of any changes but cannot be held liable for any alterations made to the published itinerary.

[B= Breakfast, L= Lunch, D= Dinner]



### Trip Includes:

- All necessary arrival and departure transfers.
- 10 night's hotel accommodation in Paro, Thimphu, Punakha, Bumthang and Gangtey in sharing twin on full board basis as per the itinerary in standard tourist class hotels in the respective places.
- All the sightseeing tour and transfers as per the itinerary with English speaking guide.
- Private transfers by land cruiser/SUV.
- Bhutan Visa fee.
- Tourism development fund & Entrance fee in Bhutan.

### Trip Extras:

- Domestic & International airfare.
- Items of personal nature such as bar bills, alcoholic beverages, laundry, telephone calls, extra mileage, personal gratuities as tips to guide, porters, drivers etc.
- Personal insurance policy – suggested a comprehensive travel insurance covering tour and flight cancellations, loss of valuables, thefts, illness, accidents and hospitalization.
- Excess baggage.
- Expenses incurred by re-routing, inclement weather, floods, famine, political disruptions, strikes, riots and other disturbances.
- Any items and services not mentioned on program inclusions.