



PARO SPRING FESTIVAL - 8 DAYS

Overview:

Bhutan is known as a country of sprawling forests, venerated monasteries, overpowering fortresses, lush green valleys fed by bountiful rivers and age-old practices, deeply rooted religious beliefs and vibrant festivals.

The Paro Spring festival makes way for various cultural dances and displays. The main highlight of this festival is the unfolding of the gigantic Thangka (embroidered painting) at dawn just before sunrise which is breathtaking. Colorful Bhutanese attire and their spicy and zesty food are some of the other highpoints.

Trip Facts:

Destination: Bhutan
Theme: Special Interests
Activity: Tour
Difficulty: N/A
Max Altitude: 3,000 m/ 9,842 ft
Best Season: September – April

Highlights:

- Attend the Paro Festival, an ancient festival where locals and monks dressed in elaborate costumes perform dances, plays and sing folk songs.
- Witness the unfurling of the Throngdrel (a giant thangka painting).
- Explore the serene Phobjika Valley where black-necked cranes gracefully fly here during winter.



Itinerary at glance:

Day	Program	Accommodation
1	Arrive in Paro	Hotel
2	Hike to Taktsang, attend Paro Festival	Hotel
3	Drive to Thimphu	Hotel
4	In Thimphu	Hotel
5	Drive to Punakha	Hotel
6	Day excursion to Gangtey	Hotel
7	Drive from Punakha to Paro	Hotel
8	Final Departure	

Detailed Itinerary:

Day 1: Arrive in Paro

At the Paro International Airport, one of our representatives will receive you and escort you to the hotel. Rest of the day will be at leisure.

Overnight at Hotel [-/L/D]

Day 2: Hike to Taktsang, attend Paro Festival

Hike Duration: 4.5 hours approx. (round trip)

Today we will hike to Taktsang Monastery, attend Paro Festival and later visit Kyichu Lhakhang.

Taktsang Monastery: Perched on the side of a vertical cliff at 3000 m altitude north of Paro, the beautiful Taktsang Monastery also known as the 'Tiger's Nest' is the most famous and an unofficial symbol of Bhutan.



Return to hotel to freshen up. Afterwards, attend the festival. Later, visit **Kyichu Lhakhang**. 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 3: Drive to Thimphu

Distance: 53kms/ 32 miles

Drive Time: 1 hour approx.

Altitude: 2,350 m / 7,709 ft

Wake up early morning to view the unfurling of the thongdrel (3-6 am), if it is to occur this year—it cannot be guaranteed. A thongdrel is a giant thangka. Most dzongs have one of their own which they exhibit only once a year or once in three years. We cannot know in advance if it will be shown this year. Viewing it is supposed to help accumulate great merit as well as liberate the viewer from the world of samsara (reincarnation or rebirth in Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism and other related religions). The thongdrel is unfurled before dawn and at the first rays of sunshine it is packed away. Afterwards, there are some dances and prayers.

After the unfurling, we return to the hotel for breakfast and drive to Thimphu. En route to Thimphu, visit **Simtokha Dzong**, which is believed to be the first dzong, built in Bhutan.

Once in Thimphu, check into the hotel. After freshening up visit the School of Traditional Arts and Crafts & the Memorial Chorten.

Visit the **School of Traditional Arts and Crafts**. The traditional crafts represent hundreds of years of knowledge and ability that has been passed down through generations.



Visit the **National Institute of Traditional Medicine**: Established in 1988, the National Institute of Traditional Medicine strives to merge the allopathic and traditional systems of healing.

Also visit the **Memorial Chorten**, also known as the Thimphu Chorten is a large Tibetan-style Buddhist Monastery with golden spires and bells. It is a popular landmark and one of the most visible religious structures in Thimphu.

Overnight at Hotel [B/L/D]

Day 4: In Thimphu

Today we will visit the following places in Thimphu.

Visit the **Motithang Takin Preserve Center** and the **Kuensel Phodrang** or the Buddha Point - the world's largest sitting Buddha statue, the statue is 167 feet high.

The National Library of Bhutan is a four-storied eight-cornered traditional building, which looks like the central tower temple of a Bhutanese Dzong.

The Folk Heritage Museum is set inside a 19th century three-storied traditional building and was established in 2001. The museum houses different tools, materials, objects, equipments and artifacts from rural Bhutanese households and gives a good insight of the traditional Bhutanese lifestyle.

Visit **Tashichho Dzong**. This dzong is 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 the 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 [B/L/D]



Day 5: Drive to Punakha

Distance: 76kms/ 47 miles

Drive Time: 3 hours approx.

Altitude: 1,300 m / 4,265 ft

Today we will visit the Dochula Pass on the way to Punakha and later visit Chimi Lhakhang and Punakha Dzong.

On the way to Punakha from Thimphu, the **Dochula Pass** offers a 360-degree of beautiful panoramic view of the Himalayan mountain range, especially on clear winter days.

Once in Punakha visit **Chimi Lhakhang** flanked with hundreds of prayer flags seated 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'.

Also visit the majestic **Punakha Dzong**, also known as 'the palace of great happiness or bliss' which is the second largest dzong in Bhutan.

Transfer to the hotel after the sightseeing.

Overnight at Hotel [B/L/D]

Day 6: Day excursion to Gangtey

Distance: 78kms/ 48 miles

Drive Time: 3 hours approx. (each way)

Altitude: 3,000 m / 9,842 ft

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



Visit Wangdue Dzong on the way. Perched in a ridge overlooking the Punatsangchu and Dangchu rivers, **Wangdi Dzong** dominates the whole town of Wangdue Phrodang. The cultural wonders of the area also lie in the villages of Wangdi.

Once in Gangtey, explore the **Phobjika Valley**, a vast U-shaped glacial valley, also known as the Gangteng Valley named after the impressive **Gangteng Monastery**. It is the chosen winter home of the rare and graceful black necked cranes that flock here annually from the Tibetan plateau.

Transfer back to Punakha after the sightseeing.

Overnight at Hotel [B/L/D]

Day 7: Drive from Punakha to Paro

Distance: 143kms/ 88 miles

Drive Time: 4.5 - 5 hours approx.

Altitude: 2,250 m / 7,382 ft

Drive back to Paro after breakfast and visit the National Museum and Paro Dzong.

The National Museum of Bhutan is a unique circular building also known as Ta-dzong which is an ancient watchtower above the Paro Dzong.

Paro Dzong, also known as Ringpung Dzong means '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.

Evening is at leisure to stroll around in Paro.

Overnight at Hotel [B/L/D]



Day 8: Final Departure

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

Trip Ends

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:

- Arrival and departure transfers with assistance from our representative.
- 3 nights' hotel accommodation in Paro in a twin sharing room on full board basis.
- 2 nights' hotel accommodation in Thimphu in a twin sharing room on full board basis.
- 2 nights' hotel accommodation in Punakha in a twin sharing room on full board basis.
- All transfers and tours as per the above program.
- Entrance fees at the monuments during sightseeing as per the program.
- Bhutan Visa Fees.
- Bhutan Tourism Development fees.

Trip Extras:

- International airfare.
- Photography charges in monasteries and monuments.
- Expenses of personal nature such as bar bills, laundry bills etc.
- Any expenses occur due to flight cancellation, road blockades, landslides or any other mishaps.
- Any other services and expenses not mentioned in the above program.