

# Mystical Bhutan

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## Day 1

### **Day 01: Arrive Paro (Bhutan) & transfer to Thimphu (55km, approx. 1.1/2-hour drive)**

The flight to Paro is one of the most spectacular in entire Himalayas. Flying along the Himalayan range from Kathmandu, the journey offers fascinating views and an exciting descent into the Kingdom. Bhutan's first gift to you as you disembark from the aircraft will be cool, clean fresh mountain air. After immigration formalities and baggage collection, you will be met by our representative, and afterwards drive to Thimphu, the capital town of Bhutan with en-route stop at Chuzom, the confluence of Thimphu and Paro rivers. Three different style of stupas; Tibetan, Nepalese and Bhutanese adorn this confluence. On arrival in Thimphu, check-into the hotel. Dinner and overnight at the Hotel in Thimphu (Altitude 2400m).

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## Day 2

### **Day 02: Thimphu**

Morning after breakfast take a short drive to the north of town to Buddha Point (Kuensel Phodrang). Located at a short drive from Thimphu city centre, visitors can get a good overview of the Thimphu valley from the Buddha point (Kuensel Phodrang). You can pay your obeisance and offer prayers to the Buddha, the largest statue in the country and then walk around and take a glimpse of the valley. Visit Changangkha Lhakhang, a fortress like temple and monastic school perched on a ridge above Thimphu. The temple was established in 12th century on a site chosen by Lama Phajo Drugom Shigpo, who came from Tibet. The central statue here is Chenrezig in a manifestation with 11 heads. From the temple courtyard, admire the fascinating view of Thimphu valley. Return to your hotel for lunch. This afternoon there are plenty of opportunities to immerse in the rich culture this kingdom has to offer. In the evening visit King's Memorial Chorten continuously circumambulated by people, murmuring mantras and spinning their prayer wheels. Construction of this landmark was the idea of Bhutan's third king, His Majesty Jigme Dorji Wangchuk ("the father of modern Bhutan") who has wished to erect monument to world peace and prosperity. Completed in 1974 after his untimely death, it serves both as a memorial to the Late King and as a monument to peace. Your final visit before returning to your hotel is visit Trashichhoe Dzong, an impressive fortress/monastery which houses the Secretariat building, the throne room of His Majesty, the King and various government offices. It is also the summer residence of Chief Abbot and central monk body. Dinner and Overnight at the hotel in Thimphu.

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## Day 3

### **Day 03: Thimphu – Punakha (75 km, 3 hrs approx)**

After breakfast, visit to the National Library which houses an extensive collection of Buddhist literature, with some works dating back several hundred years as well as modern academic books mainly on Himalayan culture and religion. National Textile Museum, these museums have been open in 2001 and provide a fascinating insight into Bhutanese material culture and art of textile. visit to Simply Bhutan - an exclusive project under the Bhutan Youth Development Fund. It is a living Museum and Studio encapsulating the cultural heritage of the Bhutanese people. The infrastructure portrays ancient Bhutanese architecture which is

being lost to modernization. Later drive up to, Dochu-la pass (3,088m/ 10,130 ft) stopping briefly here to take in the view and admire the chorten, mani wall, and prayer flags which decorate the highest point on the road. If skies are clear, the following peaks can be seen from this pass (left to right): Masagang (7,158m), Tsendagang (6,960m), Terigang (7,060m), Jejegangphugang (7,158 m ), Kangphugang (7,170 m ), Zongphugang (7, 060 m ), a table mountain that dominates the isolated region of Lunana - finally Gangkar puensum, the highest peak in Bhutan at 7,497m. Continue further to Punakha, which served as the capital of Bhutan until 1955 and is still the winter seat of the Je Khenpo (Chief Abbot). Blessed with a temperate climate and fed by the Pho Chhu (male) and Mo Chhu (female) Rivers, Punakha is the most fertile valley in the country. En route take a short hike to the Fertility Temple or Chimmi Lhakhang, 'Chimmi' literally means 'No Dog'. The 15th century Buddhist Master Drukpa Kinley (Divine Mad man) reached the place chasing the demon from Do Chula who took the form of a dog. It is here on this spectacular hill the Divine mad man caught the demon, killed her, buried her and built a black stupa marking as the seal on the evil. The trail to Chemi Lhakhang takes about 30 minutes and passes through farm lands of Lobesa Village. As you walk along you will get the opportunity to see farmers at work. After check in , later drive through Punakha town to the 17th Century fortress, Punakha Dzong. The fortress is located on the junction of the two rivers and is the 2nd oldest of Bhutan's Dzongs. For many years until the time of the 2nd King, it served as the seat of Government. During its life, it has survived six fires, two floods, two earthquakes and endless sieges from Tibetan armies. Dinner and overnight at the Hotel (Punakha Altitude 1300m)

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## **Day 4**

### **Day 04: Punakha – Paro (125km, 4.5 hrs drive)**

After breakfast, transfer to Paro. The beautiful valley of Paro encapsulates within itself a rich culture, scenic beauty and hundreds of myths and legends. It is home to many of Bhutan's oldest temples and monasteries, National Museum and country's only airport. Mount. Chomolhari (7,314m) reigns in white glory at the northern end of the valley and its glacial water plunge through deep gorges to form Pa Chhu (Paro river). Paro is also one of the most fertile valley in the Kingdom producing a bulk of the locally famous red rice from its terraced fields. Stop at Dochu la Pass shortly for freshening up. On arrival check in to your hotel followed by lunch. After lunch, your first visit from Paro will be to Ta Dzong. Once a watchtower, built to defend Rinpung Dzong during inter-valley wars of the 17th century, Ta Dzong was inaugurated as Bhutan's National Museum in 1968. Today it holds a fascinating collection of art, relics, religious Thangka paintings and Bhutan's exquisite postage stamps. The museum's circular shape enhances its varied collections displayed over several floors. Drive to visit Rinpung Dzong, which has a long and fascinating history. Built in 1646 by Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal, the first spiritual and temporal ruler of Bhutan, the Dzong houses the monastic body of Paro, the office of the Dzongda (district administrative head) and Thrimpon (judge) of Paro district. The approach to the Dzong is through a traditional covered bridge called Nemi Zam. A walk through the bridge, over a stone inlaid path, offers a good view of the architectural wonder of the Dzong. Visit Kyichu Lhakhang, one of the oldest and most sacred shrines of the Kingdom dating back to 7th century. The lhakhang complex is composed of two temples. The first temple was built by Tibetan King, Songtsen Gampo in the 7th century and in 1968, H.M. Ashi Kesang, the Queen Mother of Bhutan, built the second temple in same original pattern. Return to your hotel or take an evening stroll. Dinner and overnight at the Hotel in Paro.

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## **Day 5**

### **Day 05: Paro**

On arrival at trail-head point, embark on a walking excursion to Taktshang Monastery: It is one of the most famous of Bhutan's monasteries, perched on the side of a cliff 900m above the Paro valley floor. It is said that Guru Rinpoche arrived here on the back of a tigress and meditated at this monastery and hence it is

called 'Tiger's Nest'. This site has been recognised as a most sacred place and visited by Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal in 1646 and now visited by all Bhutanese at least once in their lifetime. On 19 April 1998, a fire severely damaged the main structure of building but now this Bhutanese jewel has been restored to its original splendour. Lunch will be enroute at the Taktshang Cafeteria. Afternoon at leisure for personal activities / exploring the charming traditional architecture town in Paro, along with some shopping opportunities. Overnight at the hotel in Paro.

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## **Day 6**

### **Day 06: Depart Paro**

After breakfast at the hotel, drive to the airport for flight to your onward destination. Our representative will help you with exit formalities and then bid you farewell.

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