

ULTIMATE BHUTAN

15 NIGHTS IN BHUTAN

West to East & Vice Versa - Year round

Day 1: Paro

Arrival into Paro (on Druk Air) in the morning. Clear customs and immigration formalities. You will be met by your guide and driver and transferred to your hotel. Afternoon sightseeing may include visits to the National Museum, Rimpung Dzong (monastery) and Kyichu Lhakhang.

Dinner and overnight at the Hotel Olathang or similar

Day 2: Paro - Thimphu

This morning hike to Taktsang Monastery (Tiger's Nest), spectacularly located on the edge of a precipitous gorge. Lunch at the cafe offering the best view of the monastery and then return to the valley. Transfer by road to Thimphu, a pretty drive mostly by the river along the valley floor; a taste of what's to come. In the late afternoon drive to Thimphu (1 hour).

Overnight at Hotel Jhomolhari or similar, 3 nights. Dinner at a local restaurant

Day 3: Thimphu

Visit the vibrant weekend markets, a magnet for local residents and villagers from other parts of the valley selling their merchandise. You will see local produce as well as wares from all over the country for sale - from Yak tail dusters to Turquoise from Tibet. Thimphu valley sightseeing includes visits to National Memorial Chorten to the 3rd King Jigme Wangchuk III, the Sangaygang view point, the Textile Museum, the Folk Heritage Museum and Handicrafts Centre. Dinner at the Golf Course Restaurant.

Day 4: Thimphu

A morning hike to a local monastery with fabulous views over the Thimphu Valley. The afternoon is free for more independent sightseeing and shopping. Thimphu is the best place to buy textiles, Thankas and religious artefacts from all over the country. Dinner at a local restaurant.

Day 5: Thimphu - Punakha

Leaving the Thimphu valley, drive to Punakha via the Docchu-la pass (3050m). This pass offers magnificent views of the Himalayan Ranges on a clear day. Visit the magnificent Punakha Dzong spanning the Mo Chu and Po Chu rivers. This monastery is the winter home to the monks from Thimphu.

Dinner and overnight at Meri Puensum Resort or similar

Day 06: Punahka - Gantey – Trongsa

After breakfast continue our drive over the Pelela Pass in the Black Mountains, on to Gangtey Gumpa (Phobjikha) home of the Black Necked Cranes and one of the oldest Pema Lingpa monasteries in Bhutan. The scenery changes dramatically on entering the valley and is typified by dwarf bamboo on the higher pastures. Continue the journey to Trongsa via the Chendebji Chorten. The Dzong spanning the valley can be seen for 22 kilometres before our arrival as we zig zag along the valley walls.

Dinner and overnight at Yangkhil Resort

Day 08: Bumthang Valley

There are several valleys to visit in this area, many monasteries and local industries, from cheese making to cider distilleries. Hydro electricity is also generated to power the valley and to sell to India. Sightseeing includes visits to Jambay Lhakhang, Kurjey Lhakhang, Konchosum Lhakhang, Tamshing Lhakhang and an afternoon hike to the Thangbi Mani valley.

Dinner and overnight at Rinchenling lodge, 2 nights

Day 10: Bumthang Valley

A further day in the valley to complete your sightseeing.

Day 11: Bumthang - Mongar

Today marks the start of the journey to Eastern Bhutan, rarely visited by westerners or other Bhutanese who are not originally from the East. Travel via a series of switchbacks through the Thrimshingla pass (a national park for west Bengal tigers), taking about 8 hours to reach Monga, built high on a ridge overlooking the narrow valley below.

Dinner and overnight at Mongar Tourist Lodge, 2 nights

Day 12: Mongar - Lhuentse - Mongar

In the morning visit Mongar Dzong and then drive north of the valley to visit Lhuentse, a district renowned for its exquisite weaving, and in particular Kushutara, a finely woven brocade dress. It is also the ancestral home of the Bhutanese monarchy. Return to Mongar in the evening.

Day 13: Mongar - Trashigang

After breakfast drive to Trashigang via the Kori La pass and the Yadi Loops, a series of amazing switchbacks which weave their way to the valley floor. In the afternoon visit Trashigang Dzong, situated on a spur overlooking the river. The weather is much warmer here and you will see banana groves along the roadside. It is the most heavily populated district in Eastern Bhutan. Merak and Sakreng tribal groups visit Trashigang to trade yak butter and can be identified by their distinctive Yak hair hats.

Dinner and overnight at Kelling Tourist Lodge or similar, 2 nights

Day 14: Trashigang - Trashi Yangtse - Trashigang

Morning drive to Trashi Yangtse with a picnic lunch en route. Visit the temple of Gom Kora, a famous meditation site of Guru Rimpoche and also the Nepalese style Chorten Kora. Most of the people here are farmers and produce good quality bamboo and wood works.

Dinner and overnight at Kelling Tourist Lodge

Day 15 Trashigang - Samdrup Jongkhar

After a leisurely breakfast, drive to Samdrup Jongkhar about 4 hours away. Samdrup Jongkhar is the border between India and Bhutan. It was closed to westerners until recently due to militant unrest.

Dinner and overnight at Hotel Peljoring or YT Lodge

Day 16: Samdrup Jongkhar - Gawhauti

After breakfast we leave Bhutan and drive to Gawhauti , where your guide and driver will bid you farewell - about 3 hours away in time to make connections on Jet Airways to Calcutta or Delhi and thence to International flights

Travel Notes:

This itinerary can be taken on any day of the week, although starting in Paro on a Friday allows a visit to the weekend markets in Thimphu on a Sunday.

Accommodation in Eastern Bhutan is more basic than in the West, but is clean and comfortable.

Any festivals that are on during your visit can be incorporated into the itinerary. Our itineraries are completely flexible and can be altered to suit your requirements.

COSTS EX BANGKOK – Inclusive of Druk Air flights and Jet Airways flights – per person

Twin Share:	USD 4750
Group (3 or more):	USD 4210
Single supplement:	USD 615

INCLUSIONS: REFER TO BOOKING CONDITIONS