

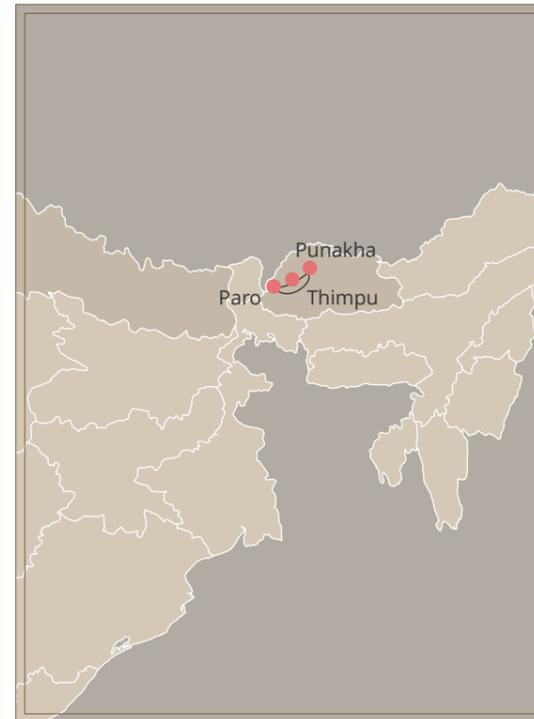
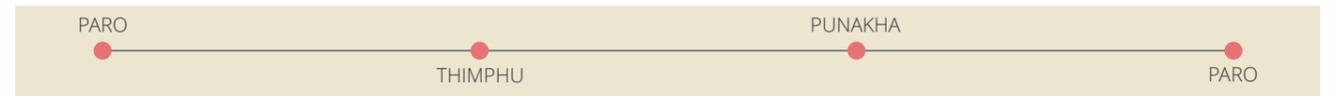


BHU01 > 7 DAY TOUR

ESSENTIAL BHUTAN

Nestled in the arms of the mighty Himalayas, this tiny Buddhist kingdom is often referred to as the 'abode of the Gods' or 'home to the immortals'. Visit some of the finest ancient fortresses and monasteries of the country. Immerse in the myth and legend that permeates the land and delight in the forest of blue pine, fir, oak and rhododendron. Look out over spectacular panoramas of the Himalaya with fluttering prayer flags dotted across the landscape. This is quintessential Bhutan!

Druk Yul, as the Bhutanese people have called it since the 13th century, is one of the ten bio-diversity hot spots in the world. Its eco-system harbours some of the most exotic species of the eastern Himalaya. An estimated 770 species of birds can be spotted here along with exotic animals such as the *takin*, the elusive snow leopard, golden *langur*, blue sheep, tiger, water buffalo and also the elephant. It is only recently that the country has opened its door to tourism and even now, the government still carefully monitors and controls the number of people who visit. While this may appear to be overly strict, it has meant that traditional culture and lifestyle have remained vibrantly alive and much of the country retains a distinctly pristine charm.



Insider Tips:

- Best time for this itinerary: Mid-November to April.
- Best time for mountain views in Bhutan: Mid-November to mid-March.
- December, January, February is the time for thanksgiving in Bhutan and a great insight into how the Bhutanese have retained some of their pre-Buddhism animist tradition. The thanksgiving ceremonies take place in the ancestral homes in the countryside.
- Best time to see Rhododendrons bloom: April to May. The drive from Thimphu and Punakha via the Dochu-la Pass during the month of April and May is a riot of colours with blooming Rhododendrons.
- Bhutan's festivals are some of the most colourful and exciting festivals in the world. Paro and Punakha celebrate their annual festivals in the month of March and February respectively. It is a great time to be in Bhutan. But, do keep in mind that accommodation and flight tickets have to be secured at least a year in advance.
- Most Bhutanese establishments such as the Textile Museum and the Zorig Chosum are closed on Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays. Similarly the lowering of the National Flag and the March of the Guards in Thimphu doesn't take place on Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays.





TRADITIONAL COSTUME

The relative isolation of the country has kept it traditional. The people of Bhutan still favour their traditional clothing. The men wear a gho, a long voluminous robe tied at the waist by a small kera (belt). The ankle length dress worn by women is called a kira and is made of brightly coloured fabric with traditional patterns.



TOUR ITINERARY | BHU 01

DAY 01 ARRIVAL PARO – THIMPHU

Warm welcome at the airport by our representative and transfer to the hotel in Thimphu, the capital city of Bhutan. Later in the evening, visit the Trashichho Dzong in time to watch the lowering of the National Flag and the March of the Guards.

DAY 02 IN THIMPHU

Visit the Buddha Dordenma Statue sitting on top of a hill overlooking Thimphu. Later in the morning, learn about Himalayan Buddhism and create a Mandala art with an expert. Continue to the Memorial Chorten of Thimphu, the Textile Museum and the Zorig Chosum where traditional art and craft are taught.

DAY 03 THIMPHU – PUNAKHA

Drive to Punakha, the winter home of the monks. Admire the magnificent 17th century Punakha Dzong at leisure.

DAY 04 IN PUNAKHA

Explore the Punakha Valley visiting its monasteries and picturesque villages. End the day with a cup of tea in a private orchard which has great views of the Punakha Dzong.

DAY 05 PUNAKHA – PARO

A bit of adventure to enjoy rafting (6 kms/2 hours) on the river Mochhu today. The rapids are classified as Level III. Enjoy the crystal clear water and the beautiful 360° views of Punakha Valley. Continue to drive to Paro. In the afternoon, visit the ruins of Drukgyel Dzong. This is as far as

anyone can go on a paved road in Paro. On a clear day, there is a splendid view of Mt. Jomolhari from the approach road. In the evening, interact with a Bhutanese author.

DAY 06 IN PARO

Hike up to the Tiger Nest Monastery, spectacularly located on the side of a cliff, 900m above the valley floor. The hike up to the most famed meditation site in the world is strenuous. The path is steep, yet at the end, rewarding. The air is thin, dry and crisp. Afternoon at leisure.

DAY 07 PARO – ONWARDS

Transfer to the international airport for the onward flight.



All our Guides are fluent in the local language – Dzongkha.



Bhutan is extremely cold in the winter and pleasant and warm in the summer.