



ITINERARY

Bhutan Tourism Corporation LTD

A WEEK IN WESTERN BHUTAN (8 DAYS)

All Seasons all Year, 2023

THIS TRIP OFFERS a relaxed holiday covering western Bhutan. Western Bhutan is known for its stunning scenery, with rice paddies, apple orchards, and rivers flowing down the mountain valleys. Most of the houses are painted with traditional designs and offer the visitor the opportunity to discover arts, architecture, and the day-to-day activities of the Bhutanese. The trip covers spectacular dzongs (fortresses) and monasteries in Paro, Thimphu, and Punakha.

Programs during a festival period must be confirmed 100 days prior to arrival and are

subject to any hotel supplement levied by the hotel for that particular festival.

Recommended for non-festival period: Thursday to Tuesday, or Friday to Wednesday program.

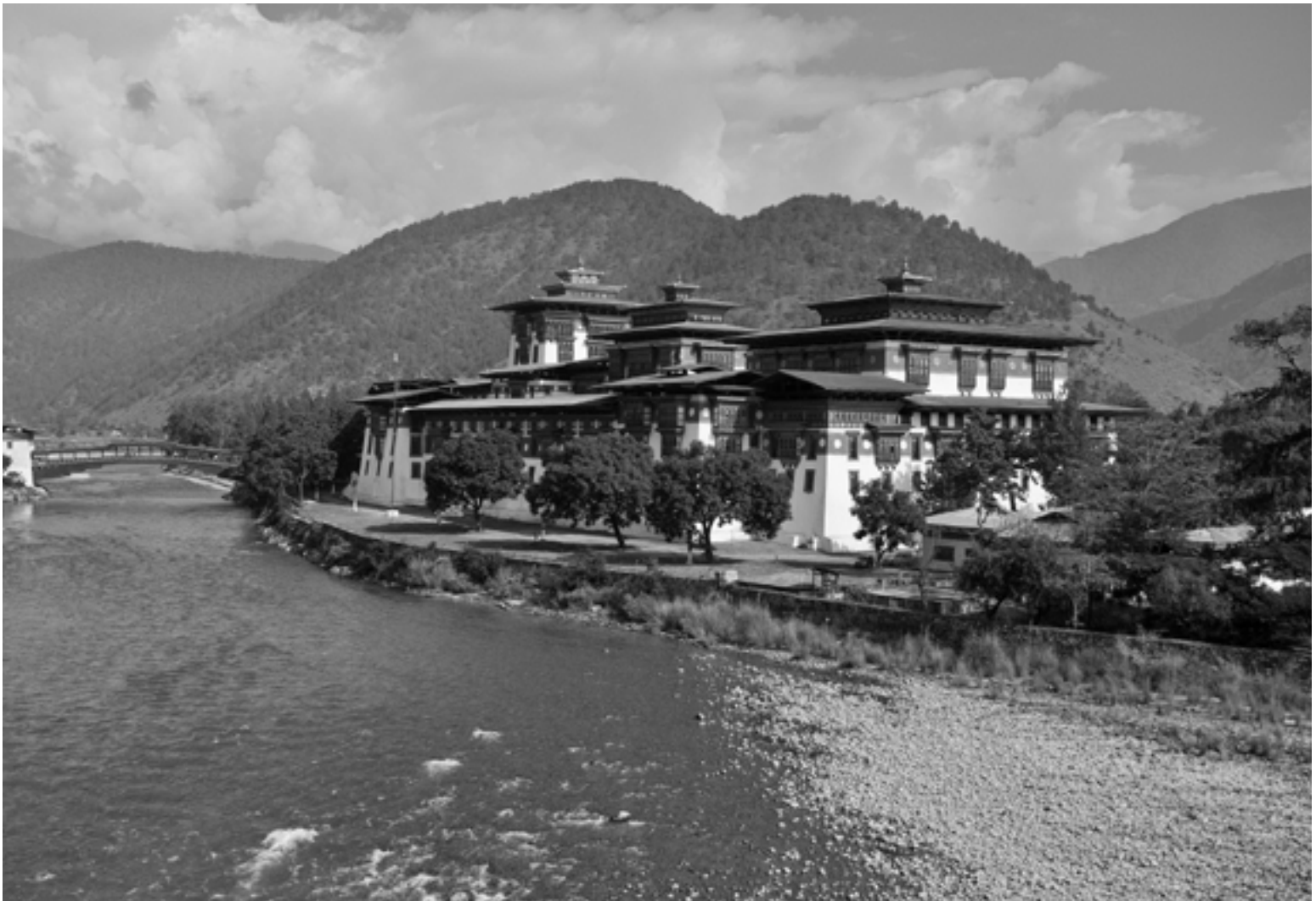
- *Paro Festival: April 2 to April 6, 2023*
- *Thimphu Festival: Sept 24 to 26, 2023*
- *Jambay Lhakhang Festival: October 28 to November 1, 2023*



WESTERN BHUTAN

Day One (Arrive Paro–Thimphu)
Arriving at Paro International airport and upon clearing immigration and customs, you will meet with your guide and driver. Drive about 1 hour 30 minutes to *Thimphu* (2,286m), the capital of Bhutan.

After lunch at the hotel, visit the *Memorial Chorten*, built in 1974 in loving memory of the Third King, *His Majesty Jigme Dorji Wangchuck*, where a multi-storied Stupa and





Tantric Buddhism. *The Black Hat Dance, the Lord of Cremation Dance,* and the Drametse Drum Dance are just a few of the main dances as government institutions will be closed such as the National Library.

Day Two (Thimphu Tour) Visit the *National Library*, established in the 1960s, which holds a vast collection of ancient Buddhist manuscripts and a small collection of books.

Institute of *Zorig Chusum* (commonly known as the Painting School) where you can see young children learning and practicing the ancient arts and crafts of Bhutan. Zorig Chusum literally means the thirteen traditional arts and crafts.

numerous paintings are exhibited providing an insight into Buddhist philosophy.

Visit *Changangkha Lhakhang*, an ancient temple built in the thirteen century by *Lam Phajo Dugom Zhigpo*, situated on a ridge above the city.

Visit the *Takin Preserve*, where you can see the national animal of Bhutan (Takin).

In the evening, you will visit *Tashichho Dzong* (the fortress of the glorious religion). Tashichho Dzong houses His Majesty's Secretariat and the Central Monk Body. You can see the National Assembly building across the river.

Thimphu Festival: If you are traveling during the period of the Thimphu festival, our compelling program showcases some of the most sacred and spectacular dances performed by monks and laity, invoking the deities of

Visit the *Royal Textile Academy*, which provides an excellent introduction about the techniques, style of various textiles woven in the country along with exhibition of the national dress 'gho' for men and 'kira' for women.

Visit the *Handicraft Emporium* which offers a wide range of colorful, hand woven textiles and other products.

If your visit falls from Friday till Sunday, then visit the weekend vegetable market held at the *Centenary Farmers Market*. The market provides an opportunity to mingle with the local people and sample local organic produce. Local arts and crafts are also available.

(THIMPHU FESTIVAL)

Day Two (Thimphu–Punakha Sightseeing)

The first stop after leaving Thimphu is *Dochula pass* at 10,007 ft. (23km from Thimphu–45 minutes' drive), where you can see one of Bhutan's most enchanting views. If weather permits, from this pass, the breathtaking peaks of Bhutan's northern border can be viewed.

At Dochula, you will also see a unique cluster of *108 Namgyel Khangzang Chortens* that spiral up to the main Chorten known as the "Druk Wangyal Khangzang Chortens". Her Majesty The Queen Mother, *Ashi Dorji Wangmo Wangchuck*, dedicated these chortens as a tribute and monument to the selfless service and visionary leadership of our Fourth King, His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck. The Chortens are also a celebration of the stability and progress that His Majesty the King brought to the nation. These chortens are a new landmark for travelers as they cross Dochula, the first mountain pass into the interior of the country.

Reaching the village of *Sopsokha*, you can walk about 20 minutes across the rice fields up to the monastery, *Chimi Lhakhang*. It was built by *Lama Drukpa Kuenley* (also known as the Divine Madman by the West). It is believed that childless women who visit the monastery will conceive after receiving the 'wang' (blessing).

Blessed with a temperate climate and drained by the *Phochu* and *Mochu* rivers, is the fertile valley of Punakha. The District has hosted several historical events such as: It was the Capital of Bhutan since 1651 till 1956. The First King, *Gongsar Ugyen Wangchuck* was enthroned in 1907 and the first session of the National Assembly was held in 1955. It is still the winter residence of His Holiness the *Je Khenpo* (Chief Abbot of Bhutan) and





Zhung Dratshang (the Central Monk Body).

Day Four (Punakha Sightseeing) Drive towards Nezerang and hike about 1hour 30 minutes to *Khamsum Yuley Namgyel Chorten*, built by The Queen Mother, Her Majesty *Ashi Tshering Yangdon Wangchuck*, in 1999 for the protection of the country and universal peace in the world.

Visit *Punakha Dzong* located strategically at the junction of the Pho Chu and Mo Chu rivers, built in 1637 by *Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyel*. The Dzong served as the religious and administrative

center of Bhutan until the mid-1950s. It was here that the dual system of government was introduced in the early 17th century and where the Bhutanese enthroned the First King.

Day Five (Punakha–Paro) In Paro, visit *Kyichu Lhakhang*. It is said to have been built by *King Songtsen Gampo* of Tibet. According to legend, it is believed that the *lhakhang* holds down the left foot of an ogres, so large that it covers Bhutan and most of

eastern Tibet. It is one of the 108 temples built by the Tibetan King in one day throughout the region of the Himalayas; according to legend. The temple also houses a museum dedicated to late *Dilgo Khyentse Rimpoche* and hosts a range of artefacts belonging to the *Rimpoche*.

Day Six (Paro) Tour In Paro, visit *Rinpung Dzong* (the fortress on a heap of jewels). The dzong was built by *Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyel* in 1646.

(PARO FESTIVAL)

If you are traveling at the time of the Paro festival, our compelling program showcases the Paro festival with its sacred dances performed by monks and laity, invoking the deities of Tantric Buddhism. A popular one is the sacred Black Hat Dance, which re-enacts the death of the anti-Buddhist King, and symbolizes victory over the enemy. The festival takes place in the Rinpung Dzong.

Drive to the end of the valley and visit the ruins of *Drugyel Dzong*. It was built by *Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyel* in 1649 to commemorate the victory over the Tibetan invaders. The ruined fortress helped to defend Bhutan from numerous invasions in the 17th century.

Day Seven (Paro Taktshang Excursion) Day hike to *Taktang Monastery*. *Taktang* meaning “Tiger’s Nest”, is built around a cave in which *Guru Rimpoche* (also known as *Guru Padmasambhava*) meditated. The monastery clings seemingly impossible to a cliff at 914m above the valley floor.

For the local people it is a place of pilgrimage, but for a tourist, a hike up to the viewpoint opposite the monastery is exhausting, thrilling and mystical. Legend





has it that Guru Rimpoche is said to have flown to the site of the monastery on the back of a tigress and meditated in the cave.

Day Eight Departure Transfer and departure from Paro International Airport.

Approximate land price \$2840: per person sharing a room. Minimum of two people to operate trip, or \$3400 for single person.

The package rate is the minimum rate applicable per tourist per night in Bhutan. Any additional services or a higher grade room/hotel would contribute to a higher cost for the package.

Druk Airlines: from \$1000 per person round-trip from Bangkok to Paro.

Druk Airlines from other gateway cities: prices available upon request.

INCLUDED:

- Bhutan tourist visa
- 3-Star hotels & resorts
- All meals [B, L, D]
- Tax & tariff
- All transportation
- Professional guide
- All entrance fees
- Visa processing fee \$40.00

NOT INCLUDED:

- Airfares.
- Insurance premiums.
- Cost incurred due to weather, strikes, and so on...

- *Cancellation charges:* Tour program booked and subsequently canceled shall be subject to cancellation charges based on total land/air program and service fee:
 - a. For cancellations received on or before 60 days prior to date of arrival: 50%
 - b. For cancellation received less than 60 days from the date of arrival: 75%
 - c. For cancellation received less than 45 days/no shows/early departures after arrival in Bhutan: 100%
 - d. All cancellations have to be sent in written form (fax/e-mail) before the stipulated time.
- Due to severe cancellation and interruption penalties, we highly recommend travel insurance.
- Due to the ongoing Covid-19 situation, we also recommend Cancel for Any Reason travel insurance.

- Tips & bellboy charges.
- The higher grade/luxury hotels are Taj Tashi, Zhiwa Ling, Uma (Paro & Punakha), Le Meridien (Paro, Thimphu), Six Senses, DusitD2 (Thimphu), Dhensa Resort, Drupchhu Resort (Punakha), Amankora Lodges, and other deluxe properties.

• Except for Amankora Lodges, the hotels all are based on bed and breakfast only. Supplemental charge for lunch, dinner, and superior category of room requested will be applicable as per their rates for non-packaged tours.

• *Far Fung Places: Service fee for handling your booking for Bhutan Tourism Corporation Ltd (BTCL): \$400 per person.*

Includes prepayments to BTCL, wire transfer fees, visa and processing, coordinating your booking with BTCL including Druk Airlines and/ or Bhutan Airlines, providing pre-trip support, and answering questions prior to your trip. Toll-free number for your convenience (USA only).



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