

The Essential

BHUTAN

Travelog

Dive into the magic of Bhutan
with our abridged version of Bhutan Travelog.
Find out the important things that you need to know
as you prepare to embark on your journey to
the Land of the Thunder Dragon

KUZUZANGPO LA

Bhutanese greetings commonly used to say "Hello".

Dive into the magic of Bhutan with our abridged version of Bhutan Travelog, a comprehensive Bhutan travel guidebook. Over the past 15 years, we've explored every corner of this magical Himalayan Kingdom, from the vibrant city of Paro to the hidden gems of Trashigang.

Come along and discover the endless possibilities that Bhutan has to offer! Whether you're in the mood for some royal pampering with traditional massages and hot stone baths or seeking thrills amidst breathtaking mountain vistas, there's something here for everyone. And for those craving a spiritual journey, you'll find solace in the tranquil monasteries and temples that dot the landscape.

Get ready for an adventure of a lifetime in Bhutan, where every greeting is warm and every moment is filled with wonder!

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Discover Breathtaking Bhutan.





NATIONAL ANIMAL

Bhutan's national animal is the **Takin**, or gnu goat – a rare mammal that is often associated with religious history and mythology.



NATIONAL FLOWER

The national flower of Bhutan is the **Himalayan Blue Poppy**. These exotic and rare flowers grow at an elevation of 3,700 - 4,300 metres above sea level.

GROSS NATIONAL HAPPINESS

Bhutan is famous for being the first country to measure progress based on happiness. The 4th Druk Gyalpo, King of Bhutan, coined the term Gross National Happiness (GNH), and it now measures development rather than Gross National Product (GDP).

The happiness of the Bhutanese is prioritized over material growth, and Bhutan seeks a balance between the two. The GNH Commission takes an annual measure based on an index of nine domains: living standards, education, health, cultural diversity and resilience, community vitality, time use, psychological well-being, ecological diversity, and good governance.

BHUTANESE ARCHITECTURE

Bhutan has stunning architectural buildings made from traditional method using stones, pounded mud, timber and shingled roofs. Most of the buildings are constructed without any nails!



Dzongs were built in the 17th century as ancient fortresses to defend the country from invasions. Presently, dzongs are used as government administrative offices and district monastic body for the 20 districts.



Lhakhangs in Bhutan are sacred Buddhist temples or monasteries, characterised by their distinct architecture and intricate murals, such as the Wheel of Life.



Goembas are larger monasteries or hermitages with an autonomous community, for religious practice, meditation and Buddhist study. Goembas, like all religious buildings, have a khemar, or red stripe, beneath the roof.



In Bhutanese architecture, intricate woodwork plays a central role, with skilled artisans crafting detailed carvings and decorations that adorn the exteriors and interiors of buildings. These carvings often feature traditional motifs such as auspicious symbols, mythical creatures, and religious iconography, showcasing the country's deep-rooted cultural

heritage and spiritual beliefs. They are often adorned with vibrant paintings and murals, depicting scenes from Buddhist mythology, historical events, and everyday life. These not only enhance the beauty of the structures but also serve to convey religious teachings and cultural narratives.

2

CULTURE & FESTIVALS

Bhutan's cultural festivals offer colorful displays of tradition.

For generations, Bhutan has isolated its culture and society from outside influences. This drive is to ensure the protection of ancient teachings. Today, these teachings are passed on through festivals and other events that tell stories of their ancestry. Bhutanese participate in elaborate festivals to create detailed recreations and dances that entertain and bestow onto others the Bhutanese spiritual life story.



Among these festivals, a unique and special feature is the **Thongdrel**, a large religious applique. Thongdrels are carefully made with great detail, making them holy artifacts with deep spiritual and artistic value. The Thongdrel is usually displayed early in the morning and rolled up before the sun touches it, representing the Buddhist idea of life's impermanence. This tradition highlights the holy nature of the Thongdrel and the deep respect it commands.



BHUTANESE FESTIVALS

Tshechu literally means 'tenth day' and is considered the most important religious festival in Bhutan. It is held annually in the monasteries and dzongs of all the 20 districts. In the different months of the year, the festival honours Guru Rinpoche, who brought Buddhism to Bhutan in the 8th century. A tshechu typically lasts for four or five days. It is celebrated on the tenth day of the Bhutanese lunar calendar, corresponding to the birthday of Guru Rinpoche. Hence, the exact dates of the tshechu in the different

districts vary from year to year.

For Bhutanese, attending this religious festival is an integral part of their spiritual devotion to Buddhism. They believe that by attending the festival, they can accumulate spiritual merits and move towards enlightenment.





STATE RELIGION

Bhutan is the only country in the world where **Vajrayana Buddhism**, known as the 'Thunderbolt Vehicle' or 'Diamond Vehicle', is practiced as the state religion. Ever since

Buddhism was introduced to the country, religion has been very prevalent in every facet of Bhutanese life. Buddhist values are often inculcated in the younger generations during their formative years.



MOST POPULAR FESTIVALS

The most popular tshechus for tourists to attend are **Paro Tshechu** during spring (March to May) and **Thimphu Tshechu** and **Bumthang Tshechu** during autumn (September to November).

The highlight of the festival is the sacred **Cham** performances by both laity and monks dressed in ornate costumes. The ancient dances have been transmitted in Bhutan from person-to-person, for hundreds of years. Young monks undergo an extensive apprenticeship to learn the precise steps and positions for the performance.

Ritual music is played using cymbal, drum, flute, and yak-horn to accompany the dances. Dancers usually wear wooden masks that represent animals and fearsome deities.



ATSARAS

The Atsara — a comical character in a red mask and a big phallus on top of his head — plays a vital role in Bhutanese festivals. These humorous figures are often associated with clowns due to their wittiness and burlesque appearance at tshechus. However, these Atsara figures are more than clowns for entertainment. The Atsara holds the responsibility of being the master of ceremony to ensure that the festival runs smoothly and, more importantly, helps the audience put their worries behind.

You're encouraged to book your trip at least six months in advance should you wish to visit Bhutan during the festival period.

For the most updated festival calendar, visit s.bn.sg/festivalcal



PRAYER WHEELS

You can find prayer wheels across Bhutan! They are commonly crafted from materials such as wood, stone, brass, tin, or coarse cotton. There are many types of prayer wheels and the prayer wheels can be activated manually, by water, or through fire.

Spinning the prayer wheels can bring enlightenment to all sentient beings. When spun clockwise, the wheel releases prayers into the world, purifying negative energies and bestowing blessings and wishes.

3

OUTDOOR ADVENTURES

Experience unique adventures like no other in Bhutan.



Adventures in Bhutan offer a unique blend of natural beauty and cultural richness. Bhutan's commitment to preserving its environment and heritage ensures every adventure is both exciting and meaningful.



FUN FACT

In Bhutan, archery, the national sport, is more than just a sport. It is a way of life. Traditional Bhutanese archery has a range that is 145 metres long, double the length of an Olympic range. Archery tournaments are social events filled with songs, dances, and taunts.



TREKKING

Bhutan is home to some of the most magnificent Himalayan trails. Whether you are an experienced hiker or a novice, you will find trails in Bhutan that suit your fitness level. Bhutan offers treks of various durations. There are short treks ranging from a few days to month-long expeditions.



CYCLING

Many of the biking trails are on paved roads, but there are quite a few off-road trails. Some of the terrain may be more challenging as you enter the mountainous region. Biking in Bhutan can take you through towns and small villages where you can experience the Bhutanese culture.



WHITEWATER RAFTING AND KAYAKING

White water rafting and kayaking in Bhutan offer an exhilarating way to explore the kingdom's pristine rivers, which flow from the high Himalayas. The Pho Chhu rivers provide a range of rapids suitable for both beginners and experienced adventurers.

MORE ACTIVITIES

Bhutan also caters for a variety of activities including **Birding** in Zhemgang, **fly-fishing** in her pristine rivers for trout and Golden Mahseer (seasonal), **safari visits** to the southern Manas National Park, **horse-riding** in Bumthang and mushroom gathering during the **mushroom festival**.

Do speak with our travel consultants about your interest to get the most out of your trip to Bhutan.

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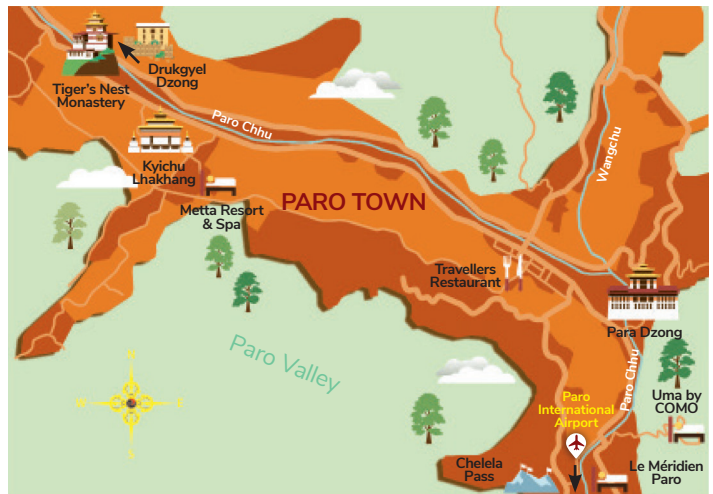
PARO

The gateway to Bhutan. Home to Paro Airport, the only international airport. This is where your journey begins.



Paro is the gateway to the kingdom where the international airport is located. Bhutan's most iconic landmark, **Taktsang Monastery** and many sacred sites and historic buildings are also located within Paro.

Paro has the perfect blend of ancient beauty and modern charm. It is one of the most vibrant and dynamic districts in Bhutan. In Paro town, you can find stretches of western-style cafés alongside traditional handicraft shops.



Bhutan tourism started in 1974.

PLACES TO VISIT IN PARO

1 TAKTSANG

A trip to Bhutan is incomplete without a visit to this iconic monastery, popularly known as **Tiger's Nest**. The temple is perched atop the cliffside about 900 m above Paro valley.

The hike up to the Tiger's Nest is an experience not to be missed in Bhutan! The trek up and down Taksang Monastery can take anywhere between 3.5 hours to 9 hours, depending on your fitness level.



TIPS:

- Upon arrival at Tiger's Nest Monastery, you will need to leave cameras, phones and other belongings in a locker for security.
- You can rent walking sticks at the trailhead before you start your hike.
- Apply sunscreen
- Bring along a water bottle and snacks.
- Please respect the local culture by putting trash in the garbage bins.

2 PARO DZONG (RINPUNG DZONG)

Paro Dzong, also known as Rinpung Dzong, or the 'Fortress of the Heaps of Jewels', is a very distinguished building in the Paro district. You can catch a glimpse of it while your flight is landing at Paro International Airport. The dzong was **built in 1644** under the instruction of Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal, the founder of Bhutan.



3 KYICHU LHAKHANG

The **7th century** Kyichu Lhakhang, also known as Lho Kyerchu or Kyerchu, is the oldest and one of the most beautiful temples in Bhutan. Bhutanese revere the temple as a sacred jewel of Bhutan. The original temple was said to have been built overnight and used to be a smaller structure before the monastery was expanded.

BHUTAN FACT: BHUTAN CURRENCY

Ngultrum (NU) is Bhutan's currency. Until the 1960's, Bhutanese bartered goods and services because there was no paper money. Today, in addition to ngultrum, you can use Indian rupees at different shops and restaurants around the country.

4 CHELELA PASS

Chelela Pass offers visitors a stunning vista of the sacred Mount, Jomolhari in addition to Jichu Drake. Prayer flags flutter in the wind, and roses of many colors blanket the pass throughout spring.



5 DRUKGYEL DZONG

The ancient ruins of Drukgyel Dzong is a famous archaeological site in Bhutan, located on a ridge in the upper Paro valley. It was constructed in 1649 and served as an important defence base in the region until 1951, when fire almost destroyed it completely.



TIP: Drukgyel Dzong is a great picnic spot. On clear lucky days, you will see the highest peaks in Bhutan.

WHERE TO STAY IN PARO



1 LE MÉRIDIEN PARO

Le Méridien Paro, Riverfront is the largest five-star hotel in Paro with the highest room inventory in the area. Located just 10 minutes away from Paro Airport, you can hop off the plane and arrive at your hotel in a jiffy. The resort is situated on the edge of the Paro River, offering panoramic views of the eastern Himalayas. The resort is a popular choice for international business travellers as it has the most outstanding meeting spaces in the kingdom.



2 ZHIWALING

Built in the classic Bhutanese style of heavy tapered stone walls with fine, hand-painted facade details, the main building and eight two and three-story cottages are fine examples of Bhutanese hospitalities.



3 COMO UMA PARO

COMO Uma is an ideal accommodation if you are looking for a deluxe stay. COMO Hotels and Resorts offer luxury travel experiences with personalised service in elegant properties, each individually curated to reflect its location.

The luxury rooms combine colourful accents of traditional Bhutanese craftsmanship with the clean-lined contemporary design for which COMO Hotels and Resorts are known.

F&B RECOMMENDATIONS IN PARO

Paro Valley, often called the Gateway to Bhutan, may be quieter than Thimphu, but it's quickly carving out a name for itself in the culinary scene. Whether you're refuelling after a hike to Tiger's Nest or winding down after sightseeing, these are our top picks for places to eat in Paro.

POPULAR RESTAURANTS IN PARO

1 SONAM TROPEL RESTAURANT, PARO TOWN

A beloved family-run eatery serving hearty Bhutanese classics and crowd-pleasers like fried rice, chilli chicken, and momos since 1993.

2 MOUNTAIN CAFÉ & MOUNTAIN CAFÉ AND ROASTERY, PARO TOWN

Two outlets, one name. The vegetarian café offers hoentey and Oreo cheesecake, while the roastery serves BBQ pork ribs and homegrown Bhutanese coffee roasted on-site.

3 BRIOCHE CAFÉ, PARO TOWN

A charming patisserie known for organic, locally sourced bakes. Try the croissants, apple crumble, or seasonal ice cream with a cup of masala tea.

4 COFFEE POINT CAFÉ, SATSAM CHORTEN

A cozy café located next to the Silver Cloud Hotel, run by the same owners. It's the perfect stop after your hike up Tiger's Nest, serving locally grown coffee along side a selection of fresh pastries, pizzas, and burgers.

5 PHANGGUU PARO, OPPOSITE PARO DZONG

A warm, traditional setting with delicious home-style Bhutanese food. Try the buckwheat pancakes (khuley), spicy aeze, and dried pork (sikam paa).

6 MY KIND OF PLACE, PARO TOWN

A colourful, plant-filled café offering a mix of Bhutanese and Pan-Asian dishes. Don't miss the bhaley with ema datsi or Vietnamese and Thai options.

7 MOMO CORNER, PARO TOWN

Quick, delicious, and budget-friendly. This local favourite is a top contender for the best momos in town — try the fried beef momo with soup.



POPULAR BARS IN PARO

1 PARK 76 CAFÉ AND PUB, PARO TOWN

Just off the main street, Park 76 is a lively favourite with locals and travellers alike. Expect live music, craft beers, and hearty plates like sizzlers and burgers.

2 CLUB INSOMNIA, BELOW PARK 76

Tucked in the basement of Park 76, this late-night spot keeps the party going with DJs spinning everything from English hits to Dzongkha and Hindi remixes.

3 NAMGAY ARTISANAL BREWERY, DUMSIBU



Bhutan's beloved microbrewery offers eight craft beers on tap and stunning valley views. Try the Red Rice Lager or go for a tasting flight to sample them all.

4 UMA BAR, COMO UMA PARO



Start your evening in style at this upscale bar with signature cocktails and a curated Bhutanese menu. Refined, cosy, and perfect for a classy night out.

5 ROADSIDE BAR AND KITCHEN, CHUZOM-PARO HIGHWAY

A hidden gem near the highway, this quirky bar serves local drinks, greenery-filled interiors, and fun snacks like koka chowmein in a laid-back setting.

6 OLD FACTORY RESTAURANT AND BAR, JANGSA

A Thimphu favourite now in Paro, known for signature cocktails, nachos, wings, and occasional live music. Follow them online to catch a performance night.

7 OPPIA'S PUB, BELOW UGYEN TSHONGKHANG BUILDING

Swanky and playful, Oppa's is known for live music, themed nights, and fun drinks like the 'Pink Dream' mocktail. Don't miss the crispy pork belly.

5

THIMPHU

The capital and largest city of Bhutan. A modern city which still retains its' cultural identity and values.



Thimphu is the capital of Bhutan and the largest city in the country, located in the western region. It is also the political and economic hub of the country that houses most of the important government buildings and constitutional agencies.

Many of the locals from rural places migrate to Thimphu to seek employment. This vibrant city contains a rustic charm that has much to offer to travellers. It is the seat of government of Bhutan, with an ancient dzong and a more recent House of Parliament nearby. You can also find many cafes and handicraft shops around Thimphu town.



FUN FACT: Thimphu is one of the few capital cities in the world without traffic lights, relying instead on elegantly dressed traffic police to control the traffic.



PLACES TO VISIT IN THIMPHU

1 THIMPHU DZONG

Tashichho Dzong, or commonly known as Thimphu Dzong, is an impressive structure situated in the northern part of Thimphu city that plays the dual role of housing the administration of the state and the clergy. It has been the seat of the government since 1952 and currently houses the throne room and offices of the Royal Government of Bhutan.



2 BUDDHA POINT

Buddha Dordenma, also known as Buddha Point, is a famous attraction in Bhutan. This sitting Buddha statue that measures 51.5 m in height is one of the largest sitting Buddha statues in the world. The statue is made of solid bronze and gilded with paint, as are all of the 125,000 smaller Buddha statues placed within the giant statue.



3 DOCHULA PASS

Located between Thimphu and Punakha at an elevation of 3,100 m, the view from Dochula Pass is breathtaking. You can even see the Himalayan mountains from the pass, including Gangkar Puensum, the highest unclimbed mountain on a clear day.



4 FOLK HERITAGE MUSEUM

The Folk Heritage Museum is set inside a three-storey 19th-century traditional house. The museum provides visitors with a glimpse of the traditional Bhutanese lifestyle and artefacts in a conventional household.



5 ROYAL TEXTILE ACADEMY

RTA is Bhutan's sole textile museum, a treasure trove of exhibitions that continuously unveil the fascinating world of Bhutanese weaving. Immerse yourself in the intricate and captivating realm of Bhutanese textiles, where every thread carries stories of tradition, craftsmanship, and symbolism.

BHUTAN FACT: LANGUAGES IN BHUTAN

The official language in Bhutan is Dzongkha. Bhutanese also speak Tshanglakha and the Lhotshamkha. There are at least 19 dialects of Dzongkha that are spoken all over Bhutan. Most young people in Bhutan can speak fluent English as it's the medium of instruction in schools.

6 SIMPLY BHUTAN

Simply Bhutan is an interactive museum that offers you an excellent guided introduction to different aspects of traditional Bhutanese life. This is an excellent place for your induction into Bhutan.

You will learn how to dress up in Bhutanese traditional dress, distil ara (rice wine), and understand how Bhutanese construct their homes out of rammed earth.



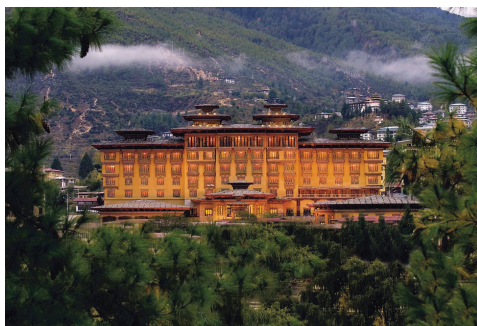
WHERE TO STAY IN THIMPHU



1 SIX SENSES

Six Senses is a luxury brand renowned for its focus on wellness and sustainability. The five Six Senses Bhutan lodges have been thoughtfully designed to fully immerse travellers in the kingdom's natural beauty and culture, offering a contemporary take on traditional Bhutanese architecture and form.

The lodges, which vary in style from valley to valley, showcase each location's diversity and special character.



2 PEMAKO THIMPHU HOTEL

Located in the heart of town, this five-star hotel boasts a stunning facade that resembles a Dzong (Fortress), a hallmark of Bhutanese architecture. Each of its 66 luxuriously appointed rooms and suites offers panoramic views of Bhutan's pristine natural beauty.

The hotel has an in-house spa and four exquisite dining venues, ensuring a blend of relaxation and culinary delight for guests.



3 THIMPHU CENTRAL HOTEL

Thimphu Central Hotel offers a harmonious blend of modern comfort and traditional charm. This three-star certified hotel boasts 34 thoughtfully designed rooms. Guests can savour a delightful dining experience at the hotel's multi-cuisine restaurant, located on the third floor, which offers panoramic views of the city. The hotel also features a bar catering to both leisure and business travellers.

F&B RECOMMENDATIONS IN THIMPHU

Thimphu's food scene offers a little bit of everything — from centuries-old heritage kitchens to hip cafés and spicy Indian buffets. Whether you're after a full Bhutanese spread or a quick comfort meal, these favourites are worth a visit.

POPULAR RESTAURANTS IN THIMPHU

1 FOLK HERITAGE RESTAURANT, KAWAJANGSA

Tucked near the Folk Heritage Museum, this spot serves seasonal Bhutanese dishes in a traditional farmhouse-style setting.

2 BABESA VILLAGE RESTAURANT, BABESA

Step back in time at this 600-year-old home-turned-restaurant. Enjoy authentic Bhutanese flavours by the hearth.

3 PHANGU, TABA

Known for cosy, themed private rooms decorated with traditional Bhutanese art. Ideal for group dining with a local touch.

4 SEASONS PIZZERIA, HONGKONG MARKET

A go-to for wood-fired pizzas and fusion plates. Great for families or anyone craving a Western-style meal.

5 AMBIENT CAFÉ, NORZIN LAM

A relaxed, vegetarian-friendly café loved for its wholesome menu, great coffee, and community vibe.

6 T.C. RESTAURANT, CLOCK TOWER AREA

A reliable local favourite for casual meals — fast, tasty, and affordable with a variety of Bhutanese and Asian dishes.

7 DRUK HOTEL, NEAR CLOCK TOWER

This hotel restaurant is best known for its Indian buffet on Fridays — think buttery naan, rich curries, and classic desserts.

POPULAR BARS IN THIMPHU

1 DRUNKEN YETI, OPPOSITE MY MART



Famous for bold drinks like the 'Moscow Mule', 'The Yeti' (a mix of 7 spirits), and the saffron-infused 'Sildenafil' shot. Not for the faint-hearted.

2 URBAN DUMRA, LOWER CHANGZAMTOG

Bhutan's first beer garden offering creative cocktails like 'Pho Chu Mo Chu' and 'Lychee Dewa'. Known for its spacious vibe and beer festivals.

3 O' CAFÉ AND BAR, OSEL

A café by day, party spot by night. Hosts beer pong nights and serves fun cocktails like 'Si Madrid' and 'Stolen Sea Water'.

4 THE ALCHEMY PUB, CHANGLAM

A Gen Z hotspot with live music and karaoke. Known for playful drinks like the 'Syringe Shot', served in— you guessed it—a syringe.

5 RIVERSIDE GARUDA, CHANGYUL PARK

Tucked in a scenic park by the river. Best for a quiet drink like a classic 'Tom Collins' or 'Hot Toddy' after a stroll through the rose garden.

6 OLD FACTORY, CHANGLAM

Industrial-chic and buzzing with character. Try the 'White Lady' or the popular 'Denkar's Cocktail' — named after a popular local travel vlogger.

7 THE GREY AREA, HOGDZIN LAM

Stylish and artsy, this bar draws the creative crowd. The cocktail list includes quirky hits like 'The English Rose', 'The Horny Fawaz', and 'Gangnam Girls'.

8 BLACK SHEEP RESTO BAR, OPPOSITE DRUK SHOPPING COMPLEX

Where tradition meets taste — one of the few spots in town serving 'Tongba', a hot millet-based brew with a rustic kick.

9 THE ROOF AT THE PEMA BY REALM, THORI LAM

A rooftop lounge with mountain views and firepits for chilly evenings. Best enjoyed with a glass of mulled wine under the stars.

POPULAR CAFÉS AND BAKERIES IN THIMPHU

Did you know traditional Bhutanese cuisine doesn't include dessert? For generations, meals were all about rice, spice, and cheese. But in Thimphu, things are getting sweeter. Cafés and bakeries are popping up everywhere — and here are some of our favourites.

1 TOWER CAFÉ, CLOCK TOWER SQUARE



A city staple with the best people-watching view in town. Try the Tower Burger or go classic with their big breakfast spread.

2 GAZOM DESSERTS, TABA

A cosy spot just outside the city, serving Japanese-style comfort food and elegant desserts. Favourites include the shogayaki, crispy katsu, and dreamy shortcake.

3 GIKUNA VILLAGE, ABOVE JICA OFFICE

A minimalist café known for bakes. Get there early — the cinnamon rolls, filled doughnuts and banana bread go fast!

4 NYING BAKER'S BASEMENT

The go-to for thoughtful gift boxes. Balanced bakes like carrot cake, cream horns, and a great dark choc cake — plus salads, sandwiches, and pasta.

5 COFFEE CULTURE, CHANGLAM SQUARE

A long-time favourite for lunch or evening tea. Locals love their spicy ema datsi momos, sesame chicken and irresistible desserts.

6 BHUTANESE BOULANGERIE, TARA PHENDEYLING HOTEL

A charming pitstop en route to Paro or Punakha. Grab a Paris-style croissant or macaron with your coffee from this bakery-on-wheels.

7 KAY DEE CAFÉ, KAY DEE CARWASH

Yes, it's in a carwash — and yes, the desserts are worth the visit. Don't miss the banoffee pie or red velvet cupcakes.

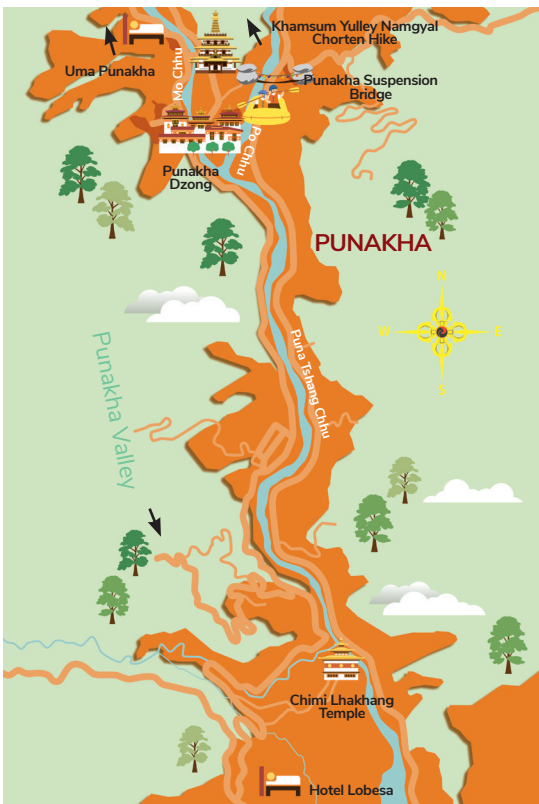
8 AU PASSA'S CAFÉ, NORLING BUILDING

A tiny, nostalgic gem serving budget-friendly classics like éclairs and lamingtons. Old-school charm and big flavours.

6

PUNAKHA

The former capital of Bhutan, a quaint little town with much to offer.



Located 3 hours away from Thimphu, Punakha offers a different climate compared to the other Dzongkhag. Owing to its lower elevation, the winter and summer in Punakha are generally warmer. Punakha is also the main district for rice production in Bhutan.

Once upon a time, Punakha used to be the capital of Bhutan. It was the seat of government until 1955 when the administration moved to Thimphu.

Lush beautiful paddy fields and rice terraces will greet you as you enter Punakha. The pleasing landscapes and significant sites in the district make Punakha one of the most popular tourist destinations in the country.

MOST POPULAR

Our 7-day Essential Bhutan is our most popular travel itinerary. You are always welcome to further customize the itinerary to your preference. s.bn.sg/7daystour



PLACES TO VISIT IN PUNAKHA

1 PUNAKHA DZONG

The magnificent dzong is the second-oldest and second-largest dzong in the country. Punakha Dzong is one of the top attractions in Bhutan due to its beautiful architecture and significant history. The building was the seat for the Royal Government of Bhutan before the capital relocated to Tashichho Dzong in Thimphu in 1955.



2 KHAMSUM YULLEY NAMGYAL CHORTEN

Take a morning hike to Khamsum Yulley Namgyal Chorten, a picturesque chorten built by the third Queen Mother, Tshering Yangdon Wangchuck. You can reach this charming monastery with just a one hour hike through the woods and paddy fields. The chorten is an example of magnificent Bhutanese architecture. The Queen Mother built this four-storey pagoda-style stupa to protect Bhutan and bring peace to all sentient beings and the world. It offers a spectacular view of the whole Punakha valley.



3 PUNAKHA SUSPENSION BRIDGE

If you're not afraid of heights, definitely check out the Punakha suspension bridge, the longest suspension bridge in Bhutan. It's the perfect spot for you to capture all your beautiful social media photos. The bridge measuring 160 m long is located above the broad and rapid Pho Chhu River. Traditionally, the bridge was constructed for the monks of Punakha Dzong to visit nearby villages.

4 CHIMI LHAKHANG

Chimi Lhakhang, also known as Chime Lhakhang or the Fertility Temple, is one of the highlights of a trip to Bhutan. This sacred temple is associated with the famous spiritual adept, Drukpa Kuenley, the 'Divine Madman', a term used with respect and even fondness. He is known for his bizarre and unorthodox teachings that challenged preconceived notions of society.



Chimi Lhakhang, built as a memorial to Drukpa Kuenley, is a popular pilgrimage site.

Couples from all over the world and many Bhutanese who have trouble conceiving children visit the temple to pray in the belief that Drukpa Kuenley will bless them with children.

Check out

www.chimilhakhang.com

to learn more about Drukpa Kunley, the symbolism of the phalluses that you see across Bhutan, and the history of this sacred temple.



WHERE TO STAY IN PUNAKHA



2 &BEYOND PUNAKHA RIVER LODGE

&BEYOND Punakha River Lodge, nestled deep within the lush green Punakha Valley and positioned along the banks of the Mo Chu river, is a remarkable retreat. For those seeking relaxation, the lodge offers a selection of soothing treatments and wellness therapies, set amidst the serene surroundings of the spa, which is situated in an orange orchard near a tranquil perennial stream.

1 COMO UMA PUNAKHA

COMO Uma Punakha, an intimate luxury lodge, earned its title as the #1 Resort in Asia: Condé Nast Traveller Readers' Choice Awards from 2017 to 2020. The hotel is located in the far western end of the picturesque Punakha valley overlooking a snake-like bend in the Mo Chhu river.

TIP: The resort is very popular! So do book at least 3 months in advance if you'd like to stay here.



7

BEST TIME TO VISIT BHUTAN

Bhutan is a travel destination that can be visited year-round, with spring and autumn being the most popular times for tourists.

If you prefer smaller crowds, summer and winter have fewer visitors. Aside from the weather patterns, something to consider when planning a trip to Bhutan is the festival schedule. Festivals are great opportunities to immerse yourself in the local culture.

TOWN (ELEVATION/M)		JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
Paro (2,280)	Hi	9	13	14	17	23	25	26	25	23	18	13	11
	Lo	-5	1	0	4	10	14	14	14	11	7	1	-1
Thimphu (2,320)	Hi	12	14	16	20	22	24	28	25	23	21	17	14
	Lo	-2	0	3	7	13	15	13	15	15	10	5	-1
Punakha (1,300)	Hi	16	19	21	24	27	31	32	31	29	27	22	15
	Lo	4	5	9	11	14	19	21	19	20	18	13	7
Wangdue (1,350)	Hi	17	19	22	26	29	29	28	29	27	26	22	19
	Lo	4	7	10	12	17	20	16	20	19	14	9	6
Trongsa (2,316)	Hi	13	13	16	20	21	22	25	23	22	21	19	18
	Lo	-0	0	4	6	11	13	15	15	14	11	6	6
Bumthang (2,600)	Hi	10	10	16	18	21	22	24	23	21	19	16	12
	Lo	-5	-1	3	3	9	9	10	13	12	5	0	-2
Mongar (1,830)	Hi	15	15	20	22	25	26	26	25	24	22	19	15
	Lo	8	8	11	14	17	19	15	19	19	15	11	9
Trashigang (1,150)	Hi	20	21	24	28	30	30	31	30	30	29	26	23
	Lo	10	11	14	17	20	22	23	22	23	17	13	11

SEASONS IN BHUTAN



SPRING

Spring is a botanist's dream as rhododendrons, wild azaleas, edelweiss, and fields of wildflowers carpet the meadows. Pear and apple blossom across the valleys adding wonder and excitement.



SUMMER

Summer is present as flowers bloom and valleys are carpeted in green. Weeping willows sweep the river banks and pine cones bursting with resin glisten in the sun before plummeting to the ground.



AUTUMN

Autumn casts a bright golden glow across the stunning landscape in Bhutan. In fall, rice fields ripen to a golden brown while pink and white cosmos blossoms dot the fields under crisp azure skies.



WINTER

Winter offers days full of sunshine and chilly evenings. The winter landscape contrasts beautifully with the majestic mountains as clouds hang over the summits, waiting for spring and the return of new life.

8

HOW TO GET TO BHUTAN

A two steps process of planning a visit to Bhutan — choosing the mode of entry and a tour agency to arrange for Visa and lodging.



BHUTAN FACT:

NATIONAL CARRIER

The best way to travel to Bhutan is through the Wings of the Dragon.

Established in 1981, Drukair, Royal Bhutan Airlines, began as a small, single-strip airline company. As interest to Bhutan grew, so did the airline. Aside from Paro Airport, there are three domestic airports in Bhutan — Bathpalathang Airport (Bumthang), Gelephu Airport (Sarpang), and Yonphulla Airport (Trashigang).

Drukair has a professional team that provides quality, reliability, and safe travel for both domestic and international flights.

GETTING TO BHUTAN

Travelling to Bhutan is relatively easy. There is currently only one international airport in Bhutan, Paro Airport. You can either travel to Bhutan via international flight or through land crossing via India.

1 VIA FLIGHT

Drukair, Royal Bhutan Airlines, offers direct flights from major hubs including Singapore, Bangkok (Thailand), Kathmandu (Nepal), Dhaka (Bangladesh), and Dubai (UAE), as well as several Indian cities such as Delhi (India), Kolkata (India), Bagdogra (India), Gaya (India), and Guwahati (India).



As the official representative of Drukair, we will be able to assist you with reserving your flight tickets for up to 30 days without fee or penalty.

2 VIA LAND

You can also travel to Bhutan by land through the border towns via Phuentsholing, Samdrup Jongkhar or Gelephu.



Phuentsholing is located in southern Bhutan and is connected to the town of Jaigaon in India. It will take approximately six hours to drive 180 km from Phuentsholing to Bhutan's capital, Thimphu.

Do check the border status before embarking on your journey if you decide to travel via land.

For the latest flight schedule, check out

www.drukair.com



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BHUTAN VISA & TOURISM TAX

We make your trip to Bhutan seamless by handling all processes.
Leave all the hassle to us and simply turn up to enjoy the magic of Bhutan!



BHUTAN VISA APPLICATION

All tourists, except for visitors from India need a visa to enter Bhutan. Indian visitors require a permit which can be acquired on arrival. There is **no quota for number of travellers to Bhutan**.

BHUTAN VISA REQUIREMENTS

- A digital copy of a valid passport with at least six months of validity.
- A recent digital passport photo.
- Arrival and departure dates.
- A one-off visa application fee of USD50.
- Sustainable Development Fee (SDF)



For the latest Sustainable Development Fee and visa application process, check out

s.bn.sg/bhutansdf



WHAT IS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FEE?

The Bhutan Sustainable Development Fee (SDF) is a mandatory fee imposed on all tourists visiting Bhutan. It is intended to contribute to the country's sustainable development initiatives, including the preservation of culture and the environment, as well as **funding free education, healthcare, and infrastructure development projects**. Additionally, it helps the Kingdom manage tourism in sustainable numbers, ensuring that visitors can continue to enjoy tranquility and an intimate experience while exploring Bhutan.



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FEE (SDF)

- USD100 per night per adult
- USD50 for children aged 6 to 11
- SDF is waived for children aged 5 and below

Regional tourists from India are required to apply for a permit and pay INR 1,200/night.



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THINGS TO DO IN BHUTAN

Bhutan offers a wealth of fun and interesting activities for visitors. From exploring its pristine natural landscapes and trekking through the Himalayas to discovering ancient monasteries and temples, there is something for everyone.



SOAKING IN TRADITIONAL HOT STONE BATH

Pamper yourself with a traditional hot stone bath, an iconic Bhutanese experience renowned for its therapeutic benefits. The bath involves soaking in a wooden tub filled with fresh river water, heated by large stones that have been roasted in a fire until they are red-hot.



VISITING A HOMESTAY

Immerse yourself in the local Bhutanese culture by visiting a homestay, where you can experience the authentic lifestyle and traditions of Bhutanese families. Staying in a traditional Bhutanese home offers a unique opportunity to engage with the warm and hospitable locals, learning about their daily routines, customs, and values.



SAVOURING LOCAL DISHES

Tasting local dishes in Bhutan is an essential part of immersing yourself in the country's rich cultural experience. One of the most iconic Bhutanese dishes is Ema Datshi, a spicy chili and cheese stew often referred to as the national dish. In addition to Ema Datshi, you'll find a variety of other traditional dishes that highlight the unique flavors of Bhutan.



PARTICIPATING IN A SPIRITUAL RETREAT

Participating in a meditation and spiritual retreat in Bhutan is a transformative experience that allows you to connect deeply with your inner self and the serene environment. These retreats often include guided meditation sessions led by experienced monks or spiritual teachers (Rinpoches) who share their wisdom and practices rooted in centuries-old Buddhist traditions.

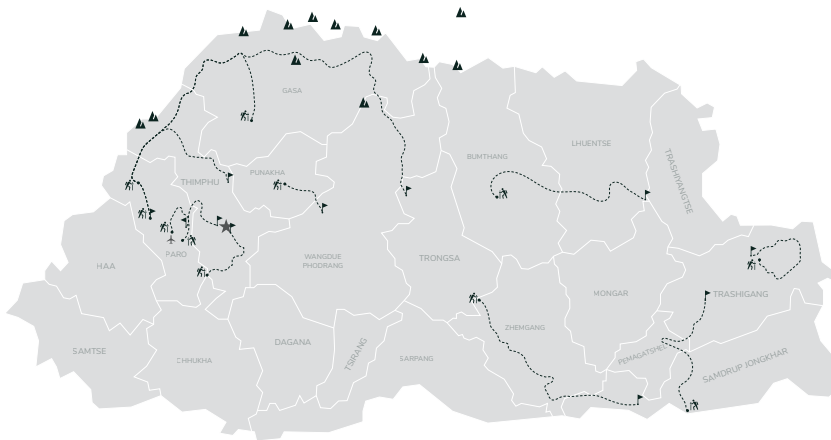
SIM CARDS You can get tourist SIM cards on arrival at Paro International Airport.

CURRENCY Major currencies like USD, EUR, SGD and AUD are widely accepted in Bhutan for exchange to Bhutanese Ngultrum. Indian Rupee below 500 denomination are accepted too.

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TOP 3 TREKS IN BHUTAN

Bhutan, with its untouched landscapes and sacred mountain trails, offers some of the most rewarding trekking experiences in the Himalayas. From short escapes to challenging adventures, explore Bhutan on foot.



Check out

www.bhutantreks.com

For treks in Bhutan



1 Bumdra Trek

DURATION: 2 Days (Doable within a 7-day cultural tour) | **LEVEL:** Easy to Moderate

ALTITUDE: Up to 3,800m

START/END POINT: Sang Choekor to Taktsang Monastery (Paro)

The Bumdra Trek is a perfect short adventure that combines scenic hiking with spiritual serenity. Beginning at Sang Choekor, this overnight trek takes you through pine forests and open meadows to the Bumdra Monastery, perched high above Paro Valley. Camp under the stars with panoramic Himalayan views, then descend via the iconic Tiger's Nest Monastery. Ideal for travellers seeking a taste of Bhutanese trekking with a unique, offbeat experience.

2 Druk Path Trek

DURATION: 5–6 Days | **LEVEL:** Moderate

ALTITUDE: Up to 4,200m

START/END POINT: Paro to Thimphu

One of Bhutan's most popular short treks, the Druk Path Trek links the valleys of Paro and Thimphu via a scenic high-altitude trail. The route passes through ancient lhakhangs, alpine lakes, and yak herder camps, with stunning views of Mount Gangkar Puensum on clear days. With its relatively short duration and cultural highlights, this trek is perfect for beginners or those short on time but eager to experience Bhutan's wild beauty.

3 Jomolhari Trek

DURATION: 7–9 Days | **LEVEL:** Moderate to Challenging

ALTITUDE: Up to 4,930m at Nyile La Pass

START/END POINT: Shana to Gunitsawa (Paro region)

The Jomolhari Trek is a classic Himalayan journey that takes you deep into Bhutan's mountainous wilderness. The trail offers dramatic views of Mount Jomolhari (7,326m), one of the kingdom's most sacred peaks, revered as the abode of the goddess Jomo. Trekkers traverse remote valleys, high passes, and ancient fortress ruins, with chances to spot blue sheep, marmots, and even the elusive snow leopard. A true adventure for nature lovers and experienced hikers.

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WHY TRAVEL WITH DRUK ASIA

Choosing Druk Asia for your Bhutan trip ensures a well-organized, enriching, and enjoyable experience, allowing you to fully immerse yourself in the unique culture and natural beauty of the country.

1 Guaranteed VISA Approval

We take care of your visa application from end-to-end and we've had a track record of **100% visa approval** rate. Leave all the administrative and hassles to us. You'll get 100% of your money back if your visa is not approved.

2 Most Trusted Bhutan Travel Agency

Druk Asia is a pioneer tour agency in Bhutan and also the largest tour operator in the Kingdom. With more than a **decade of experience** handling solo trips, private tours to unique corporate meetings, you can be assured that we will be able to provide you with the best recommendations based on your needs and interests.

3 Customize Your Travel Itinerary

We understand that each traveller has different needs and interests, hence, we provide customization of itineraries **based on your preferences**. If you are celebrating a special occasion such as birthday, anniversary, proposal, or wedding photoshoot, we'll be able to arrange for the necessary.

4 Experienced Tour Guides and Drivers

The team at Druk Asia knows Bhutan inside out. From the vibrant mythical history of Bhutan to the winding roads, you can trust our team to handle it. You can have peace of mind knowing that you're in safe hands when you're travelling in Bhutan and focus on embracing the magic of Bhutan.

5 OOTDs

When you travel with Druk Asia, you'll be provided with a set of traditional costumes, either the kira (for women) or gho (for men) upon your arrival. We understand that beautiful photographs are important. The costumes are provided for you to take a ton of amazing OOTDs while you're in the country. You can return it on your last day of the trip.

6 Comprehensive Packages

Druk Asia offers a range of packages that include accommodations, meals, transportation, and guided tours. These comprehensive packages provide excellent value for money and ensure that all aspects of your trip are covered. Among the most popular options are our cultural and trekking tour packages, which are highly favoured by our guests.

7 Guide Who Speaks Foreign Languages

Guide for the following languages are available: Chinese, Spanish, Portuguese, Korean or Japanese. However, there will be an additional charge of USD150 per day. Please speak to your travel consultant should you require a guide who speaks those languages.

8 Giving Back To Bhutanese Society

Just like Bhutanese values of compassion, we believe in the value of giving back. Druk Asia pledges to donate SGD25 to any of our Non-governmental Organisation (NGO) partners for every feedback we receive from our travellers. Travellers can choose to donate the money to any of the NGO partners of your choice.

9 Official Representative of Drukair

Druk Asia is also the official General Sales Agent (GSA) of Bhutan's national carrier, Royal Bhutan Airlines, Drukair. Thus, we are able to handle all flight reservations and ticketing, offering you an **end-to-end management of your Bhutan trip**. All you have to do is show up and enjoy your trip!



13

WHAT OUR TRAVELLERS SAY

Over the decades, we have served over 18,000 travellers from diverse backgrounds and various parts of the globe.

“

Druk Asia is the best travel agency ever! **Fuss free, reliable and honest!** They provided me and my friend with a magical Bhutan experience and our lovely guide Ms.Tshewang and driver Mr.Sonam has been nothing short of incredible and caring. Love you guys and we hope to visit Bhutan again! - Evie P

“

The entire experience with DrukAsia had been nothing but **top class from the day we started** interacting with Mr.Sangay Dorji. He was extremely patient with our queries and answered every single email in depth and never failed to make himself available for assistance until the day we depart.

“

We embarked on an unforgettable 11-day cultural/ trekking journey through Bhutan, thanks to the invaluable assistance of Druk Asia and SoulTrips. Everything, from beginning to end, was just **excellent and exceeded all of our expectations.**

Our trip ended up being **more than a holiday - it was a life-changing, enlightening experience.** Kinley and Yeshe went above and beyond to ensure we could fully experience Bhutan's enchanting culture and beautiful landscape, their amazing local food and, above all, the warmth of their people. We will go back to Bhutan again this year. We will never get enough of this country! - Laura & Germaine

Our Bhutan trip was made even better by the 2 top guys assigned to us, Kinzang and Leki. Such **service and hospitality deserve to be commended** and we sincerely recommend their services to each and every prospective visitor to Bhutan with DrukAsia/Soultrips. - Junhao Huang



“

I really enjoyed my time in Bhutan, thanks to Druk Asia. The tour was **well organised**, there hadn't been issues with the hotels, and everyone was punctual. We had a minivan for the trip which was very comfortable as it had ample space for us 3. There was a suggested itinerary, but was also **customisable**. I **highly recommend Druk Asia** if you are planning a trip to Bhutan. - lbw



TRIPADVISOR REVIEWS
4.9 ●●●●●



GOOGLE REVIEWS
5.0 ★★★★★



★★★★★ 4.8
VERIFIED COMPANY



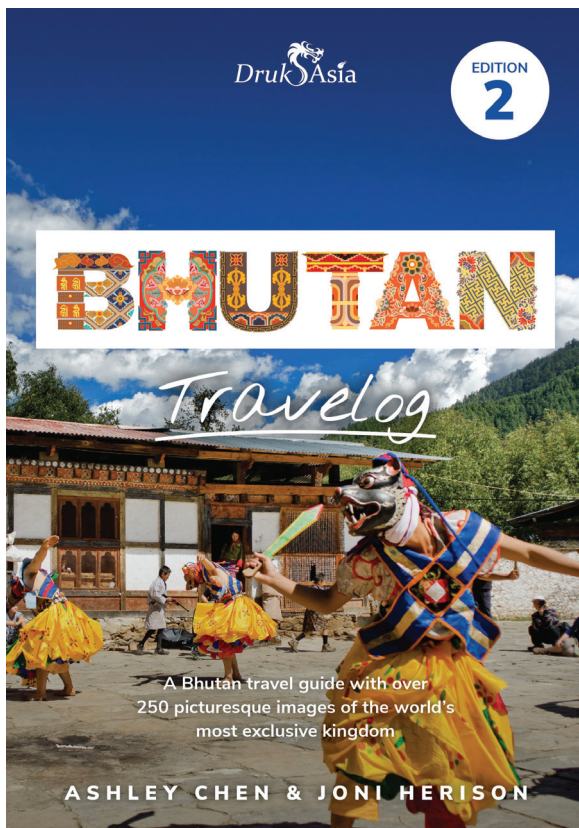
FACEBOOK REVIEWS
Rating · 4.9

Bhutan Travelog is the most comprehensive and pictorial travel guide book to Bhutan with over 250 stunning images of the most exclusive kingdom in the world.

Until recently, Bhutan has been relatively unknown. In many minds, it is a mystical secluded place. Bhutan is gaining popularity as a travel destination, owing to the credits of international media features and Bhutan's skilful management of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Over the past fifty years, Bhutan has gradually emerged from centuries-long self-isolation to meet modernisation demands. It has been careful with its choices and decisions on the road of development and progression. While Bhutan has opened its doors to the world, a 'High value, Low volume' tourism policy still guides the country to ensure that its unique culture, identity and natural environment will continue to be protected from external influence.

Bhutan Travelog aims to provide readers with insights into the country's history, values, customs, as well as travel tips and recommendations. This book also includes 8 exclusive first-hand stories from diverse travellers who have been to Bhutan to provide a glimpse into this idyllic country.



CONTENT

- Updated Bhutan Tourism Policy 2023
- Exclusive first-hand experiences sharing by 8 diverse travellers
- Bhutanese cuisine, culture and identity
- Top attractions in Bhutan
- Most popular trekking routes
- Travel tips to Bhutan
- Dos and Don'ts in Bhutan
- Basic conversational phrases in Dzongkha
- And many more

For the full travel guide, check out

www.bhutantravelog.com



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PACKING CHECKLIST

ESSENTIAL DOCUMENTS AND CASH

- ☐ Valid passport (6 months' validity)
- ☐ Bhutan visa clearance letter (issued before arrival)
- ☐ Travel insurance
- ☐ Copies of flight tickets & hotel confirmations
- ☐ Money for exchange to Ngultrum (BTN) - Do note that Bhutan only accepts 10 major foreign currencies: 10 major currencies: U.S. Dollar, Pound Sterling, Euro, Japanese Yen, Swiss Franc, Hong Kong Dollar, Canadian Dollar, Danish Kroner, Australian Dollar and Singapore Dollars.

CLOTHING

- ☐ Layered clothing (temperature varies by altitude)
- ☐ Warm jacket (especially for mornings/evenings)
- ☐ Lightweight shirts and trousers
- ☐ Thermal innerwear (for higher altitudes)
- ☐ Waterproof jacket or windbreaker
- ☐ Hat/cap and sunglasses
- ☐ Gloves, scarf, and beanie (Oct–March)
- ☐ Comfortable walking shoes or hiking boots
- ☐ Sleepwear and casual clothes for the hotel

TOILETRIES & HEALTH

- ☐ Sunscreen and lip balm with SPF
- ☐ Personal medications including motion sickness pills
- ☐ Insect repellent (especially in summer)

ELECTRONICS

- ☐ Universal power adapter (Bhutan uses Type D, G, F sockets)
- ☐ Mobile phone and charger
- ☐ Camera and extra memory cards

EXTRAS

- ☐ Reusable water bottle
- ☐ Small daypack for excursions
- ☐ Snacks (for treks or road journeys)
- ☐ Lightweight umbrella or rain poncho (summer months)
- ☐ Earplugs if you're a light sleeper (there may be dogs barking at night)

With its serene landscapes, peaceful monasteries, and deep-rooted culture of Gross National Happiness, Bhutan offers a one-of-a-kind setting for **Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions (MICE)**.

MICE Bhutan is your trusted partner for curating exceptional Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions in the Kingdom of Bhutan. Rooted in the country's values of harmony, sustainability, and well-being, we bring a fresh perspective to corporate events – combining strategic planning with immersive cultural experiences.

A division under SoulTrips, we design and execute unique MICE programmes that inspire, connect, and rejuvenate. Whether it's a **high-level executive retreat in the mountains**, a **regional conference with cultural flair**, or an **incentive trip packed with adventure and insight**, MICE Bhutan handles everything from concept to completion. Our team combines Bhutanese hospitality with international event management experience.

OUR SERVICES INCLUDE:

- Bespoke itinerary planning for MICE groups
- Venue sourcing (from luxury hotels to heritage sites)
- Event logistics, technical support & on-site management
- Cultural and wellness activities
- Team-building & CSR experiences
- VIP handling and travel arrangements



For more information, check out www.micebhutan.com.

Museums of Bhutan

TRANSFORMING BHUTAN'S MUSEUMS INTO LIVING CULTURAL HUBS

The Museums of Bhutan, comprising the National Museum of Bhutan in Paro, the Royal Heritage Museum in Trongsa, and Ta Dzong, Trashigang are poised to transcend the traditional museum experience through a series of regenerative enhancements.

The Department of Culture and Dzongkha Development, **Ministry of Home Affairs**, Royal Government of Bhutan is fundraising **to create outdoor museum spaces** that seamlessly blend with Bhutan's Himalayan landscapes, fostering a deep sense of interconnectedness between cultural heritage and the natural environment.

Druk Asia is supporting the Ministry of Home Affairs in fundraising efforts **to transform Bhutan's Museums into Living Cultural Hubs**, with plans to build an outdoor amphitheatre at the National Museum of Bhutan, and an archaeological site in Trashigang. These outdoor museum venues are envisioned as sanctuaries for restorative healing, mindfulness, and community connection.

Visit museums.gov.bt
to be part of something
timeless — and to create
a lasting legacy in the
precious Land of the
Thunder Dragon.





Established in 2009, Druk Asia stands as a trailblazing tour operator with a profound passion for Bhutan. Over the past 15 years, we have thrived as a tight-knit team of 20 dedicated tour guides who share a deep affection for this enchanting land and a common mission: ensuring our customers' utmost satisfaction.

Our guides are more than professionals, they are our cultural ambassadors, beacons of sincerity, earnestness, and unrivalled knowledge, earning the admiration of all our cherished guests. At Druk Asia, **every tour we craft is a private and personalized adventure**. Whether you're a solo explorer in search of a life-changing journey through Bhutan's mystical landscapes or part of a sizable group, our extensive experience allows us to cater to your unique needs, preferences, and interests.

Beyond conventional sightseeing, we offer a variety of **special tours** that infuse excitement into your Bhutan experience. Explore the world of guided-sketching tours, find inner peace through meditation tours, capture **unforgettable memories** with pre-wedding photoshoot tours, or sharpen your photography skills on our specialized photography tours. For corporate entities and social clubs, we also offer MICE services, ensuring memorable events against Bhutan's breathtaking backdrop.

Since 2012, we have proudly served as the official **Representative for Royal Bhutan Airlines (Drukair)**. This enduring partnership symbolises our commitment to making Bhutan accessible to travelers from across the globe, sharing in the wonder and magic of this remarkable kingdom.



Drukair.com

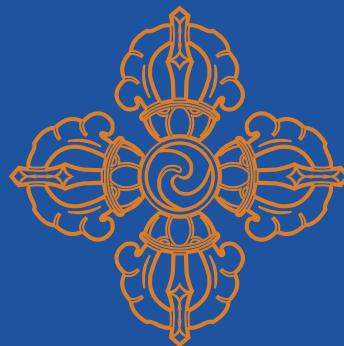


Soultrips.co



BhutanTravelog.com

- Bhutanese culture and festivals
- Places in Bhutan
- Travel tips to Bhutan
- Treks in Bhutan
- Guide and reviews
- Weather
- Visa and SDF



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