

Bhutan Tours and Travels
P.O. Box 225
Thimphu



THIMPHU TSECHU
Sept 24 to Sept 30
2012

DETAILED ITINERARY

DAY 01: ARRIVE PARO – THIMPHU
DAY 02: THIMPHU
DAY 03: THIMPHU
DAY 04: THIMPHU – PUNAKHA
DAY 05: PUNAKHA – THIMPHU – PARO
DAY 06: PARO
DAY 07: DEPART PARO

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE TOUR

The 'Thimphu Tsechu' festival tour attends one of Bhutan's biggest festivals. Join locals in a colorful celebration of Bhutanese culture and faith. This tour also explores all of the highlights of Glimpses of the Bhutan Tour – Western Bhutan Tour, and is ideal for those with a limited time frame. Witness sacred dances and rituals performed by monks and laymen in elaborate, colorful costumes. Join in with locals in a special occasion of celebration, blessings and socializing. Discover some of the most sacred Buddhist monasteries and temples in the Himalaya. Visit many cultural attractions including medieval fortresses (Dzongs), markets and museums. Hike up to the famous Taksang Monastery, perched on a cliff 900m above the valley floor. Marvel at the elaborate and ancient wall paintings and carvings in Dzongs and temples.

DAY 01: September 24, 2012 ARRIVE PARO – THIMPHU

The flight to Paro is one of the most spectacular mountain flights in the world, with a constantly changing panorama of some of the highest mountains on earth. Bhutan Tours and Travels representative will meet you at Paro airport exit doors following customs formalities. After lunch enjoy afternoon sightseeing around Paro, including a visit to the Ta Dzong Museum housing many religious relics, works of art and handicrafts offering a great orientation into Bhutan's historical, cultural, and religious past. Next, visit the Rinpong Dzong: Dzong's are large monasteries and district administrative centers, which were once strategic forts. After the visit you can take a walk back to Paro town where you will meet your driver. Later, drive to the capital, Thimphu (1.5 hours) following the Pachu River. Before dinner at the hotel there will be an orientation on Bhutanese etiquette by your guide. Halt at the hotel of your choice in Thimphu.

DAY 02: September 25, 2012 THIMPHU

After breakfast, drive to Tashichhodzong to attend the Thimphu Tsechu. You will see locals dressed in their finest colorful clothes who have walked from miles around to attend the festivities. They come to watch masked dances, to pray, and to feast. While the underlying purpose of the festival is spiritual, dances are more often like plays, telling stories where good triumphs over evil, or depicting significant historical events, especially surrounding the life of Bhutan's patron saint, Padmasambhava (also known as Guru Rinpoche). There is inevitably a great deal of socializing as well.

Tashichhodzong, 'the fortress of the glorious religion'. Initially erected in 1641 by Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal, it was rebuilt in the 1960s during the reign of Bhutan's third king in the traditional style, without plans or nails. Tashichhodzong houses some ministries, His Majesty's secretariat, and the central monk body. Halt at the hotel of your choice.

Tel: 975-2-322594; Fax: 975-2-323515; Mobile: 975-17114790 or 17116025

www.bhutantoursandtravels.com



DAY 03: September 26, 2012 THIMPHU

Enjoy a morning of sightseeing, including a visit to 12th century Changangkha Lhakhang (temple), and the National Memorial Chorten depicting the Buddhist faith in the form of paintings and statues. This temple was first initiated by the Third King as a protection from the negative elements of modernization, and as a monument to world peace. The Royal Queen Mother completed it as a memorial stupa for the Third King who passed away in 1972.

In the afternoon return to Tashichhodzong to further experience the colorful events of the Thimphu festival.

Halt at the hotel of your choice.

DAY 04: September 27, 2012 THIMPHU – PUNAKHA

On the last day of the festival, rise before dawn to attend the display of the great Thongdroel, an intricately appliquéd and embroidered silk scroll measuring 40 x 60 feet. This work of art pictures the eight manifestations of Guru Rinpoche, the second Buddha and the founder of Tantric Buddhism.

Drive over the Dochu-La pass (3,100 meters), which on a clear day offers an incredible view of Himalayan peaks before descending into balmy Punakha valley (about 3 hrs total driving time). The drive through the countryside affords a glimpse of everyday life in this most remote of Himalayan kingdom. In the Dochu-La area there are vast Rhododendron forests that grow to tree size and bloom in late April/early May covering the mountains in a riot of glorious spring color. Punakha was the ancient capital of Bhutan. On arrival, visit Punakha Dzong, the "Palace of Great Happiness" built in 1637 by the Shabdrung, the 'Unifier of Bhutan'. It is situated at the confluence of the Mo Chu and Pho Chu (Mother and Father Rivers) and is the winter headquarters of the Je Khenpo and hundreds of monks who move en masse from Thimphu to this warmer location. The three story main temple of the Punakha Dzong is a breathtaking example of traditional architecture with four intricately embossed entrance pillars crafted from cypress and decorated in gold and silver. It was here in 1907 that Bhutan's first king was crowned.

After lunch, enjoy a walk to Chimi Lhakhang, temple of the Drukpa Kuenly who is also known as the Divine Madman. He inherited the Divine Madman title since he revolted against the orthodox Buddhism in his time. He taught the people that religion is an inner feeling and it's not necessary that one should be an ordained monk. He is also considered a symbol of fertility and most childless couples go to his temple for blessing.

Halt at the hotel of your choice in Punakha.

DAY 05: September 28, 2012 PUNAKHA – THIMPHU – PARO

In the morning you can visit local farm houses in Punakha and experience the farmer's life style and engage in farm activities. (optional).

Drive back to Thimphu where you will visit The National Library housing the collection of Bhutanese scriptures dating back to the 8th century and a fascinating replica of a medieval farmhouse at the Folk Heritage Museum. You will also have an opportunity to visit handicraft and souvenir stores. If your visit to Thimphu coincides with the weekend, you can walk through the Thimphu Market to see the variety of food of Bhutan, including basket upon basket of fiery chillies, fresh cheese and a variety of fresh greens. In addition, many stalls contain Bhutanese handicrafts and household items.

Afterwards, you continue your journey to Paro, On arrival in Paro, check into the hotel.

Halt at the hotel of your choice.

Bhutan Tours and Travels
P.O. Box 225
Thimphu



DAY 06: September 29, 2012 PARO

Early morning, you set out to make a pilgrimage to one of the most important religious sites in the Himalaya, Taktsang Lhakhang, known as Tiger's Nest. This magical monastery clings to a vertical granite cliff 2000 feet above the valley floor. The legend of Taktsang dates back to 747 AD when Padmasambhava, in the wrathful form of Guru Dorji Drolo, is believed to have flown here on the back of a tiger to subdue the evil spirits of the region. Tantric Buddhist mythology tells that the vanquished spirits were transformed into protectors of the dharma. One of them, Singye Samdrup, is recognized today as the guardian deity of Taktsang. After about an hour of rather steep hiking, you reach a small tea house that has a wonderful panoramic view of the temple. For those interested, it is possible to get a closer view by hiking another hour (each direction) to reach the temple. Otherwise we can relax at the tea house and enjoy the breathtaking views. Halt at the hotel of your choice.

DAY 07: September 30, 2012 DEPART PARO

Breakfast at the hotel and your journey ends with us in Bhutan till you visit again!
Airport Drop.

TASHI DELEK!

Tel: 975-2-322594; Fax: 975-2-323515; Mobile: 975-17114790 or 17116025

www.bhutantoursandtravels.com