



BHUTAN SHORTSTAY

Extension | 5 Days | Physical Level 4

Paro - Thimpu (2N) - Paro (2N)

Feel the warm embrace of the Bhutanese people and embark on an adventure of a lifetime in this nation that values happiness over wealth.

TOUR INCLUSIONS:

- Accommodation
- Meals as stated
- Daily tours and entrance fees
- Transportation and transfers as stated
- English speaking guide

ITINERARY

Day 1: Paro to Thimpu

Meals: L, D

Upon arrival at Paro Airport, you will be met and transferred by private car to your Thimpu Hotel. The drive will take approximately 1.5 hours and is a very pleasant journey with numerous scenic spots en route.

Please note: You will be at a moderately high altitude throughout most of the tour; it is recommended that you rest and drink lots of water to help acclimatise.

Thimpu is at 2,200 - 2,650 metres in altitude.

**Destination Information**

Thimphu - The centre of government, religion and commerce in Bhutan and is located in a valley with the Wang Chhu River running through the centre of town. Thimphu is the busiest town in Bhutan but remains the only capital in the world without traffic lights. They were once installed but removed after only one day because too many people complained about them being impersonal. Local police have now taken their place.

Day 2: Explore Thimpu

Meals: B, L, D

Spend the day touring Thimpu.

Start with a visit to the National Library, the institute for Zorig Chusum (painting school), the National Memorial Chorten.

Later visit the Folk Heritage and National textile museums and explore Trashi Chhoe Dzong.

**Destination Information**

National Library - Serves to preserve Bhutan's literacy history. Established in 1967, the library contains ancient Dzongkha and Tibetan texts and is a good example of traditional Bhutanese architecture.

Institute for Zorig Chusum - Also commonly known as the Painting School. The institute offers a six year course on the 13 traditional arts and crafts of Bhutan

National Memorial Chorten - The building of this chorten was originally the idea of Bhutan's 3rd King, H.M. Jigme Dorji Wangchuck ('the father of modern Bhutan'), who had wished to build a monument dedicated to world peace and prosperity. After His Majesty's untimely death in 1972, the royal family and cabinet resolved to fulfil his wishes and build the memorial.

Folk Heritage Museum - This museum is basically an old farmhouse built and decorated in traditional design and preserved as a reminder of the traditional way of life.

National Textile Museum - View the traditional dress of the various minorities found in Bhutan.

Trashi Chhoe Dzong - The 'Fortress of the Glorious Religion', which was initially erected in 1641. It now houses some ministries, His Majesty's secretariat, and is also the summer residence of the Dratshang (the central monk body). It is open to visitors while the Monk Body moves in winter to Punakha.

Day 3: Thimpu to Paro

Meals: B, L, D

Today you will be transferred approximately 1.5 hours back to Paro by private car.

En route visit Simtokha Dzong. Upon arrival, explore Ta Dzong, an ancient watch tower and afterwards walk down a hillside trail to Rinpung Dzong, home of the Paro Festival (27-31 March).

Please note: Paro is at 2,200 metres in altitude.

**Destination Information**

Simtokha Dzong - The oldest fortress of the Kingdom, the Dzong overlooks the entire Thimphu Valley. Built by Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyel, who built many dzongs in Bhutan.

Ta Dzong - Located on a ridge immediately above Rinpung Dzong. Ta Dzong was originally built as a watchtower to protect Rinpung Dzong; 'Ta' means 'to see' in Dzongkha, so the watchtower of a Dzong was called 'Ta Dzong'. On account of their function, watchtowers are always round in shape. In 1968, Paro's Ta Dzong was inaugurated as the National Museum and now holds a fascinating collection of art, relics, religious thangka paintings, Bhutan's exquisite postage stamps, coins and handicrafts, together with a small natural history collection.

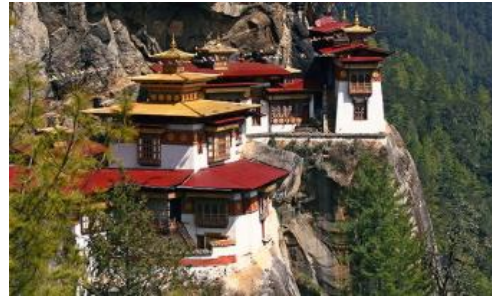
Rinpung Dzong - The 'fortress of the heap of jewels', built in 1646 by Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal. The approach to the Dzong is through a traditional covered bridge (called the Nemi Zam) and then up a paved stone path running alongside the imposing outerwalls.

Paro - Paro's beautiful valley encapsulates a rich culture, scenic beauty and hundreds of myths and legends. It is home to many of Bhutan's oldest temples and monasteries, the country's only airport and the National Museum. The Paro valley is one of the Kingdom's most fertile, producing the bulk of Bhutan's famous red rice from its terraced fields.

Day 4: Paro

Meals: B, L, D

After breakfast drive to the starting point for your hike to the Taktsang Monastery. Known as the 'Tiger's Nest', it is one of the most famous monasteries in Bhutan. The hike takes all morning and you will have lunch at the cafeteria, run by the monks located halfway up the trail overlooking the Tiger's Nest. Lunch at the cafeteria is a vegetarian meal prepared by the monks.



Tigers Nest Trek Information

The climb is very steep in some places and can be unstable on foot, particularly on the downward legs as the steps (close to 800 of them) are only found between the view point and the monastery with the remainder of the path being dirt. Despite this, the journey is certainly worthwhile on account of the superb views en route.

The hike to the monastery can be broken down into three stages.

The first stage is the trek to the cafeteria (where lunch will be served later today) which is situated on a rocky outcrop across a ravine from the monastery.

This leg of the trek takes approximately 45 - 60 minutes, depending on your level of fitness. At the cafeteria you will stop for some tea or coffee and biscuits whilst pondering the journey ahead and looking at the monastery in the distance above you.

The second stage of the walk is from the cafeteria to the lookout opposite the monastery. This leg of the trek takes close to one hour. At this point some may be content to snap photos and then return to the cafeteria.

The third stage is the trek down the 475 steps in the cliff face to the bottom of the ravine. You will cross over a stream and waterfall before the path again ascends another 300 or so steps to the entrance of the monastery (cameras are not allowed inside the monastery). The visit and climb to the entrance and back to the lookout will take approximately one hour.

On the way back to Paro, visit the ruins of Drukgyel Dzong and Kyichu Lhakhang.

Destination Information

Taktsang Monastery (Tiger's Nest) - One of the most famous monasteries in Bhutan. The monastery is perched on the side of a cliff, 900m above the Paro valley floor. It is said that Guru Rinpoche arrived here on the back of a tigress and meditated at this place, hence why the monastery is also called 'Tiger's Nest'. This site, which has long been recognised as a most sacred place, was visited by Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal in 1646, the religious and temporal ruler of Bhutan. It is a place of pilgrimage that Bhutanese try to visit at least once in their lifetime. In April 1998 a fire severely damaged the main structure of the building but it has since been fully restored to its original grandeur.

Kyichu Lhakhang - One of the oldest and most sacred temples of the Kingdom, Kyichu Lhakhang was built in 659AD by King Songtsen Gampo of Tibet; legend tells that it was built over the body of a giant 'demoness' who was preventing the spread of Buddhism.

Day 5: Depart Paro

Meals: B

After check-out this morning you will be transferred by private car to Paro Airport for your onward flight.



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