



# ESSENTIAL BHUTAN





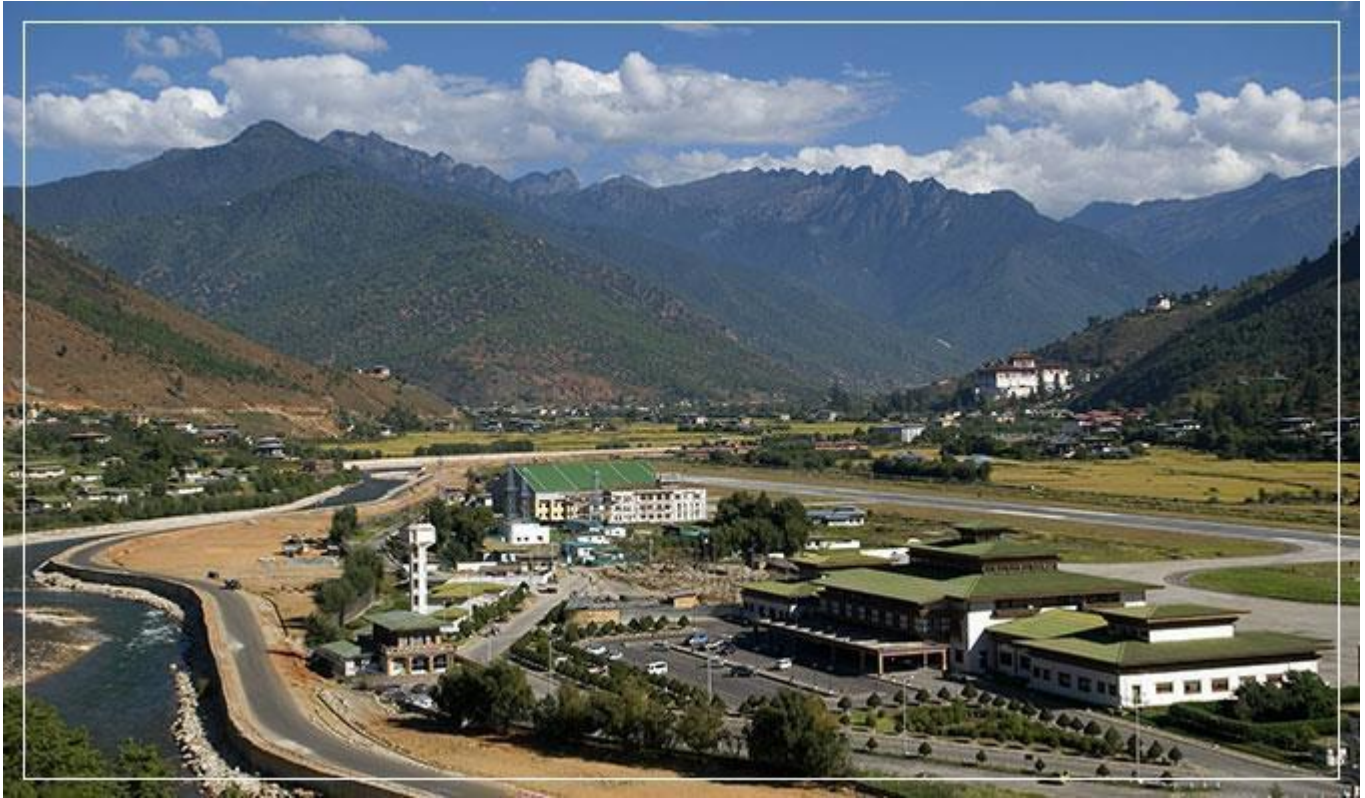
## Essential Bhutan

**Paro \* Thimphu \* Punakha \* Paro**

### Sketch Itinerary

DAY 1	:	Arrive Paro, Transfer to Thimphu	By: Flight/Surface
DAY 2	:	Thimphu Valley Exploration	
DAY 3	:	Thimphu – Punakha	By: Surface
DAY 4	:	Punakha - Paro	By: Surface
DAY 5	:	Paro	
DAY 6	:	Paro Valley Exploration	
DAY 7	:	Departure	By: Flight

\*\*\*\* End of Tour \*\*\*\*



## Detailed Itinerary

### Day 1

**Arrive Paro**

**By: International Flight**

**Transfer to Thimphu**

**By: Surface (1 hr. drive/54km)**

On arrival in Paro you will be met by your guide with whom you will head out along the Paro-Thimphu Road. Along the way, you will stop at an ancient **iron bridge**, built by one of Bhutan's great leaders.

In Thimphu a traditional welcome ceremony awaits you which is conducted for the King, the royal family, high ranking lama/monks /VIPs. A procession of singing men and women dancers in the traditional outfit accompanied by monks will chant prayers and play traditional religious musical instruments (cymbals, bells, horns etc). A monk will then conduct a short prayer to bless the auspicious occasion of your arrival and offer the blessed silk scarves to you.

In the afternoon, a quick stop to the **Textile Museum** provides a fascinating insight into the Bhutanese fabrics. You will also be able to witness the art of weaving here. (Closed on Sundays, Govt. Holidays).

Continue to the **Statue of Shakyamuni Buddha** sitting on top of Kuensel Phodrang hill. This site offers unobstructed views of the Thimphu Valley. Later visit the local **Art gallery called VAST Studio**. End your day with a leisurely stroll around Thimphu town. **The Craft Bazaar or Vegetable markets** open on weekends are definitely worth a visit!

**Overnight at Druk Hotel – Deluxe Room | Meals: Lunch at a local restaurant, Dinner at Hotel**





## Day 2

### Thimphu Valley Exploration

Thimphu, perhaps the most unusual capital city in the world, is the seat of Bhutanese government. This bustling town is home to Bhutan's royal family, the civil service, and foreign missions with representation in Bhutan. It is also the headquarters for a number of internationally funded development projects.

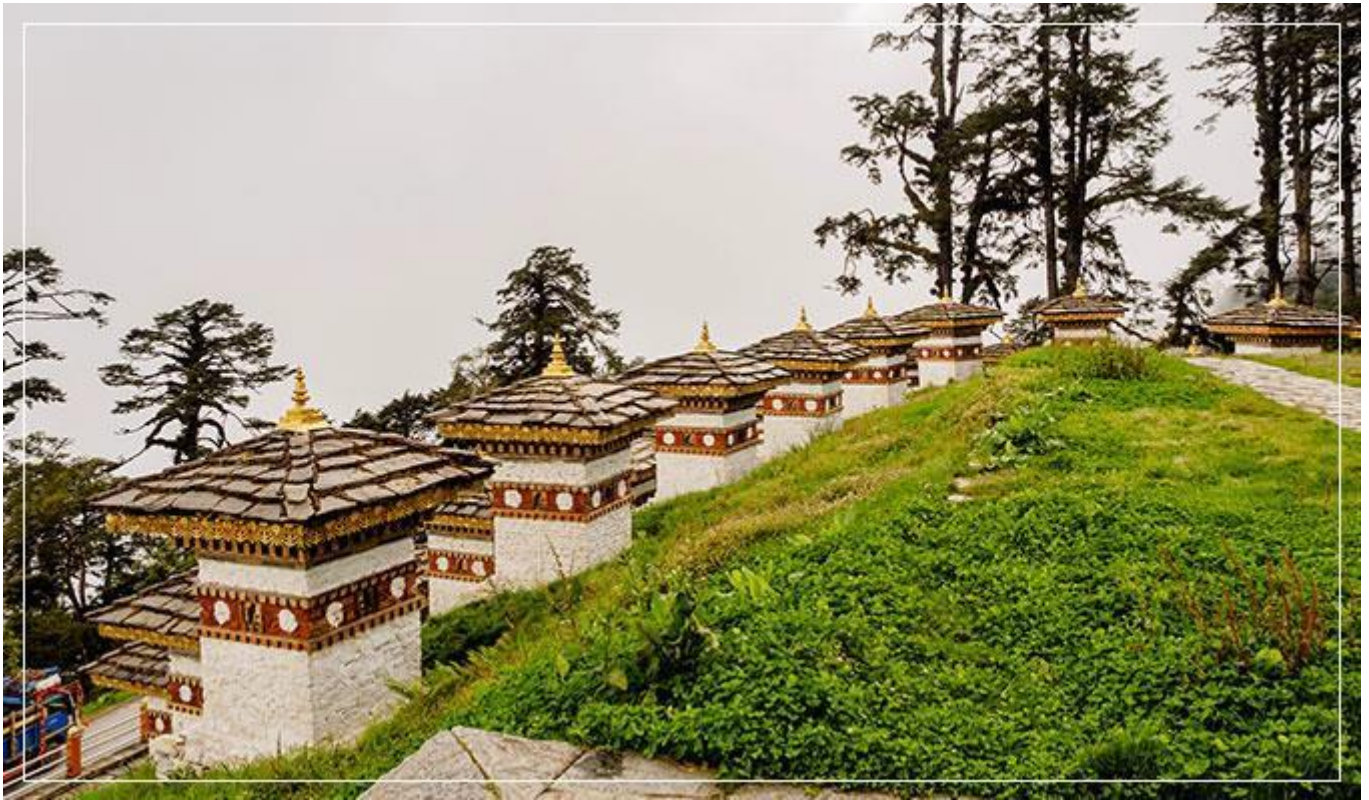
After an early breakfast, you will start your day with a Hike to the **Dodey Drak Monastery**. The hike to 12th century Dodey Drak Monastery in North Thimphu is an easy hike. It takes about 2 hour 30 minutes to climb to the monastery along the ancient hidden trail. It provides breathtaking views of multi-colored rhododendrons in spring and during other times you will see a variety of species of birds and butterflies as you walk along the pine leaves-carpeted trail. Enjoy the spectacular views of Thimphu fortress, Wangdi Tse Dzong, Dechen Phodrang temple, and Thimphu city as you climb further.

At the **Dodey Drak Monastery**, the monks will perform the sacred **Tshewang ceremony** for you. This sacred ceremony is dedicated to Amitayus/Amitabha, the Buddha of Longevity. The Buddha Amitayus/Amitabha is invoked to ward off all obstacles and negative energy. Monks will recite prayers, make their offerings and bless you. The entire ceremony will take about an hour. You will also get an opportunity to interact with the monks. There are around 200 monks that live and study here. The monks here are also learning how to speak English so they love to practice their English whilst interacting with visitors.

A high ranked monk will also bless a prayer flag which you will hoist on Day 3 enroute to Punakha

You can either choose to have a simple lunch prepared by the monks or enjoy a picnic lunch when heading back to Thimphu City.

In the afternoon, explore Thimphu valley and visit the following:



**Memorial Chorten** was originally envisaged by Bhutan's third king, His Majesty Jigme Dorji Wangchuk, who wanted to erect a monument to world peace and prosperity. Completed in 1974 after his untimely death, it is both a memorial to the Late King, and a monument dedicated to peace. During the mornings and evenings, it is a bustling place where people of all ages pray, turn the big prayer wheels, offer butter lamps, and bask in the sun as they socialize and mingle. *(Closes Daily Nov-Feb at 4pm & Mar-Oct at 5pm)*

**National Library:** The National Library was established in the late 1960s primarily to conserve the literary treasures which form a significant part of Bhutan's cultural heritage. It now houses an extensive collection of Buddhist literature some of which are several hundred years old. The library also displays one of the biggest books in the world. Besides its sheer size and weight, the continuously printed images (printed on a roll of paper which is bigger than a football field) are spectacular – the vivid colors and the human size portraits are fascinating to see. *(Closed Sat, Sun, Govt Holidays)*

During dinner, you will be joined by a local who is a specialist on the subject of Gross National Happiness (GNH). Bhutan pursues the GNH philosophy which considers the level of happiness of its citizens as an indicator of prosperity and progress rather than the GDP. Based on the four GNH pillars: sustainable and equitable socio-economic development, environmental conservation, good governance, and preservation and promotion of culture, this small country is showing the world a big example of sustainable socio-economic development implemented in harmony with nature.

**Overnight Druk Hotel- Deluxe Room | Meals: Breakfast at hotel, Picnic Lunch, Dinner the hotel**





## Day 3

### Thimphu – Punakha (3hr/76km)

Cross the high mountain pass of **Dochu La** (3,050m) enroute to Punakha. On a clear day, there is a panoramic view of the towering Himalayan peaks. After having your morning tea, you will hoist a prayer just like the locals would do when they embark on a journey. The prayer flag consists of colored square cloths strung together representing the five elements – Yellow (earth), green (wood), white (iron), blue (water), and red (fire). The prayers are written on the cloth. The prayer flags are usually hung outdoors in places where the winds are stronger. The wind is considered an expression of the mind and mental energy, so when the wind moves the prayer flags, it activates the blessings. The process of hanging the prayer flags can also be considered a meditative act where one concentrates on the different senses - sight (seeing the prayer flags), sound (fluttering in the wind), thought (prayers) and touch (the act of hanging the prayer flags).

Near the top of the pass, stop at the **Lamperi Botanical Garden**, Bhutan's first botanical garden. Here you will have a **picnic lunch**. Lamperi is noted for 46 different species of rhododendrons, which bloom usually between mid-March and early August. There are numerous hiking trails and a small lake. You can also stop in the visitor's center and see a short film on the area.

Punakha is located in a sub-tropical valley with warm summers and pleasant winters. It served as the capital of Bhutan until 1955, when the seat of government moved to Thimphu.



On arrival, visit the **Chimi Lhakhang**; the auspicious fertility monastery built in 1499. It is dedicated to Drukpa Kinley aka the "Divine Madman", an eccentric monk famous for his unusual teachings. Listen to the rest of the stories from your guide.

Later hike up to **Nobgang**, the native village of four Queen Mothers of Bhutan. Here you can find the Fourth King's palace, the residence of the *yab*, or the father of the four Queens, as well as two Lhakhangs (temples) that house some old war weapons and old religious statues. Above Nobgang is the picturesque village of Talo, with its monastery. The protector deity of the temple has an auspicious number – eight. Locals cast the dice in Talo to see whether luck or misfortune awaits them, and you might want to do the same!

End your day at the magnificent **Punakha Dzong**, built in 1637. It has weathered fires – some accidental, and some not – floods, and many earthquakes.

**Overnight at Kunzanzhing Resort – Luxury Room | Meals: Breakfast at hotel , Picnic Lunch, Dinner at local restaurant**





## Day 4

### Punakha - Paro (4 hr. drive/130km)

After breakfast proceed to Paro once again crossing the Dochu La.

The Paro 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 and the country's only airport. The glacial waters plunging through deep gorge of the Mt. Jhomolhari (7,300m) at the northern end of the valley form the Pa Chu (Paro River). The Paro valley is also one of the kingdom's most fertile, producing the bulk of Bhutan's famous red rice from its terraced fields.

On arrival, proceed to visit the **National Museum**. The museum's collection includes ancient Bhutanese art and artifacts, weapons, coins, stamps et al. *(Closed on Govt. Holidays)*

Later visit the **Kichu Lhakhang** one of the oldest temples in the country which marks the advent of Buddhism in Bhutan.

Check in to the **Bhutan Spirit Sanctuary** - the only all-inclusive wellness luxury resort in Bhutan. Officially open since August 2018, this unique 24 room property overlooks the beautiful Neyphu valley of Paro. The room rates include UNLIMITED food and beverages (excl. alcohol) and all wellness and special activities. On your arrival at the Sanctuary, you can sign up for the well-being treatments and adjust your itinerary according to the treatments.

**Overnight at Naksel – Deluxe Room | Meals: Breakfast at hotel, Lunch at a local restaurant, Dinner at local restaurant**





## Day 5

### At Leisure

Overnight at Naksel – Deluxe Room | Meals: Breakfast at hotel, Lunch at a local restaurant, Dinner at local restaurant

## Day 6

### Paro Valley Exploration

**Option 1:** Get ready for an experience like never before! After your breakfast, drive to a nearby village where you will join the locals in planting rice in knee deep waters.

Paro is at an altitude of 7545 feet and serves as an ideal spot for rice growing. Rice is a staple food of Bhutan and is cultivated throughout the country, with as little as 1% of the crop is marketed commercially. Bhutanese red rice is medium-grain rice that has been grown in Bhutan for thousands of years, grown at nearly 9,000 feet above sea level and irrigated with mineral-rich glacial waters. Grown manually without the use of chemicals and pesticides, Bhutan red rice is considered to be of superior quality with a distinctive earthy taste, a complex, nutty, soft texture and a beautiful russet color. Red rice also contains no gluten.

**Option 2:** If you're adventurous and physically fit, get ready for a memorable hike to the world-famous "**Tiger's Nest**" Monastery. Located on the face of a sheer cliff above the floor of the Paro Valley, it is a strenuous uphill climb. This sacred pilgrimage site is where the great tantric mystic, Padmasambhava brought the teachings Buddhism to Bhutan. The Monastery clings to a cliff soaring 3,000 feet above the valley floor at an altitude of 10,000 feet. Stop for lunch and admire the breathtaking views from the cafeteria before slowly descending.



End your day visiting a **traditional Bhutanese's farm house** where you can experience a quick and shortened version of the **traditional game of archery**. The normal archery game lasts a day and can extend to several days. Two teams of local archers (2-3 people per team) will demonstrate using the traditional bamboo bow and arrow. You are welcome to join the team.

You also have the opportunity to **dress as a Bhutanese** (Gho/Kira – traditional Bhutanese attire). It is a great photo opportunity!

During dinner, experience the colorful and lively dances and songs of Bhutan in a **private cultural show**. The one-hour performance gives you a quick insight into the various religious and secular songs and dances of the country.

**Overnight at Naksel – Deluxe Room | Meals: Breakfast at hotel, Lunch at a local restaurant, Dinner at a local restaurant**





## Day 7

### Departure Day

Drive to the airport for your flight back home.

Meals: Breakfast at Bhutan Spirit Sanctuary



# ESSENTIAL BHUTAN 6 nights tour |

## COST PROPOSAL

CITY	HOTEL	ROOM CATEGORY	NIGHTS
Thimphu	Druk Hotel or similar	Deluxe Room	02
Punakha	Kunzangzhing Resort or similar	Luxury Room	01
Paro	Naksel or similar	Superior Room	03

## INCLUSIONS & EXCLUSIONS

### THE TOUR COSTS INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING

#### Accommodation

- 06 night accommodation on twin sharing at the hotels mentioned above or similar.

#### Meal Plan

- Stay on Full Board basis: Breakfast at hotel, Lunch & Dinner at local tourist restaurants.
- Note: The above meals do not include any alcoholic / non-alcoholic beverages.

#### Transportation

- All transportation services using Toyota Minivan (maximum seats – 05).

#### Others

- Monument Entrance Fees (one time entry only) as per the detailed the itinerary.
- Services of English speaking Guides for sightseeing tours / excursions mentioned in the detailed itinerary.
- Government Royalty, Visa & Tourism Fee and All Permits.

#### Trek Nirvana Specials: -

- In the evening on Day 01, visit the Tashichho Dzong in time to watch the lowering of the National Flag and the March of the Guards.
- In the morning on Day 02, learn about Himalayan Buddhism and create a Mandala art with an expert.
- On Day 06 hike up to the Tiger Nest Monastery, spectacularly located on the side of a cliff, 900 metres 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.
- On Day 6 visit a traditional Bhutanese's farm house and also witness a shortened version of the traditional game of archery.
- Assistance by our Representatives during Hotel / Airport.
- 02 bottles of packaged drinking water (500 ml) per person per day basis during travel in vehicle/s
- All currently applicable taxes

### THE TOUR COSTS DO NOT INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING

- Tips
- All beverages including water consumed at hotels / restaurants
- Expense of personal nature like meals other than mentioned above, tips, laundry, telephone/fax calls, alcoholic/non-alcoholic beverages, still & video camera fee at monuments, medical expenses, airfare, airport departure tax, any insurance.
- Airfare on any of the Domestic or International sectors.
- Any other services not mentioned in the inclusions.





## SPECIAL NOTES

- **Tour Costs are valid from 01 October 2021 to 31 August 2022 except peak dates, festival period, sold-out or blackout dates.**
- Please note that some of the sights / itinerary may change due to season, weather, national holidays and special events. Please refer to insider tips printed in brochure.
- The standard Check-In time is 1400 Hrs and Check-Out time is 1200 hrs noon.
- Rates include only those items which are specifically mentioned in the detailed itinerary.
- Please note, the names of hotels mentioned above only indicate that our rates have been based on usage of these hotels. It is not to be construed that accommodation is confirmed at these hotels until and unless we convey the confirmations to you on receipt of your acceptance. However in the event of any of the above mentioned hotels not becoming available at the time of initiating the reservations. We shall book alternate accommodation at a similar or next best available hotel and shall pass on the difference of rates (supplement / reduction whatever applicable) to you.
- In case on any currency fluctuations or amendment in local Government taxes, or any fuel hike, we reserve the right to adjust the tour price accordingly. The due increase or decrease will be communicated accordingly.

## NEW NOTES

- Bhutan Office has not been able to give latest Air-fares and seat availability details due the Covid Pandemic. (Airlines have been shut down for tourism until government notification hence details of the latest schedule and the fares are not available as of now. Quoted fares are based on year 2019-20 data.

\*\*\*\* End of Tour \*\*\*\*