



## Bhutan Botanical and Cultural Tour

<b>Trip code</b>	
<b>Package name</b>	Bhutan Botanical and Cultural Tour
<b>Duration</b>	10
<b>Max. elevation</b>	3150 m
<b>Level</b>	MODERATE
<b>Transportation</b>	Private vehicals for all round trip.
<b>Accomodation</b>	3***hotel twin sharing bed basis during the tour.
<b>Starts at</b>	Paro
<b>Ends at</b>	Paro
<b>Trip route</b>	Paro - Thimphu - Punakha - Wangdue Phodrang - Phoblikha - Thimphu - Paro.
<b>Cost</b>	USD 2,550 per person

## Highlights

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## Overview

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**Bhutan is not only famous for Buddhist culture but also known as a paradise for naturalist and flora and fauna. The landscape of Bhutanese mountains is really a breathtaking one.**

Bhutan is a small land-locked country representing a Buddhist kingdom in south Asia. With its rich biodiversity, about 72% of the country is covered by intact forest. It is home to more than 60 percent of the common plant species found in the eastern Himalayas and also boasts of about 46 species of rhododendrons and all over 300 types of medicinal plants. Bhutan Botanical and Cultural tour offers sightseeing tour in the Land of the Thunder Dragon. Being the last remaining great Himalayan

kingdom, it was restricted to all outsiders until recent years. Bhutan offers an opportunity to experience something pure and untouched by tourists. It offers a glimpse into another way of living, where true values of life still exist and even prosper. You will become one of the few who has experienced the uniqueness and magic of the world's most enigmatic countries.

## Trip Itinerary

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### Day 1 : Flight to Paro. After arrival, sightseeing tour

Fly over to the dragon kingdom Paro passing by Mountains of 5500 meters to Paro. This flight offers you a mesmerizing aeronautical feat and offers exciting descent into the kingdom. Paro is a beautiful valley and is home to many of Bhutan's oldest monasteries and temples, and the country's only international airport. 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 including Mount Everest, Mount Kanchenjunga, Mount Chomolhari and Jitchu Drake peak. Paro Airport has been described as "the most difficult commercial airport in the world". 1980 meter runway length presents a double challenge, due to the extremely low density altitude at the site. So, only a handful of well experienced pilots are certified to operate commercial airplanes here thus, making least number of flights in a day. After immigration and custom formalities, check out from the departure lounge. There you will meet one of the representatives of Nature Trail Travels & Tours, Trekking & Expedition who will greet you and then escort you to your respective hotel where you will stay overnight. After lunch, at the hotel there will be an orientation on Bhutanese etiquette and description about the trip by our guide.

### Day 2 : Paro Sightseeing

Visit Rinpung Dzong, meaning 'fortress of the heap of jewels' to see the painting of the great saint Milarepa, considered as the master of meditation by the Bhutanese and believed to have attained enlightenment in a lifetime. The Dzong is now used as an administration center and school for monks. Dzong's are large monasteries and district administrative centers, which were once strategic forts. Walk up to Paro Chu River where *Rosa sericea* and *Lonicera glabrata* are found. Next, we visit Kichu Lhakhang, the oldest temple in the country built in 7th century by King Songtsen Gampo of Tibet. It is considered to be one of the holiest monasteries of Tibet. From here we will be taken to the Drugyal Dzong (Bhutan Victory Fort), which was built in 1646 to commemorate Bhutan's victory over Tibetan invaders during the 1600s. But it was destroyed by accidental fire. On a clear day enjoy splendid views of Mount Chomolhari (7314 m), Bhutan's second-highest mountain and Jichu Drake peak. Overnight in Paro.

### Day 3 : Hike to Tiger's Nest Monastery

On the eight day of our tour, we will have a short hike up to Taktsang monastery. Taktsang is a prominent sacred Buddhist site and temple complex perched on the edge of upper Paro Valley. It is also known as the Tiger's Nest. This magical monastery clings to a vertical granite cliff 300 meter above the valley. Legend has it that the great Guru Padmasambhava flew to this spot on

back of a tigress and meditated in a cave during the 8th century. When the Guru finished his meditation, he instructed that the monastery to be built. The temple was built around the cave and is a hallowed shrine for Bhutanese pilgrims. The spectacular view along the way and the historical sites draw many tourists to this imposing monastery. There are also a number of temples scattered along the route. Later we'll turn to the Paro Dzong, a large Buddhist monastery and fortress, which is considered the best example of Bhutanese architecture. Now it also houses the district Monastic Body and government administrative offices. On the hill above the Dzong stands an ancient watchtower called Ta Dzong, which is the National Museum of Bhutan. Visit Ta Dzong Museum housing many religious relics, works of art and handicrafts offering a great orientation into Bhutan's historical, cultural, and religious past. This Dzong was converted into the National Museum in 1968. The museum boasts antique thangkhas, textiles, weapons and armor, household objects and rich assortment of natural and historic artifacts. Here you can also learn about Bhutan's history.

#### **Day 4 : Drive Paro to Punakha 1310m**

This morning enjoy an exhilarating drive to Punakha via Dochu La Pass at an altitude of 3,088 meter through chir pine forest. On a clear day, you will see a breathtaking view of the snow-capped eastern Himalayas and also a magnificent distant view of the Gasa Dzong from this spot. Here you'll see the wild ginseng species along the old trading route and as we descend, discover the forest with Silk cotton trees and Jacaranda. Visit the Chimi Lhakhang, which is dedicated to the legendary Lama Drukpa Kinley (known as the Divine Madman). The monastery is also revered as a sanctum of fertility. Legend has it that the couples wishing to have a baby from across Bhutan and occasionally from overseas are blessed with a child after visiting the temple – Japanese and several American couples visited the temple and were blessed miraculously with children. Stay overnight at Punakha.

#### **Day 5 : Sightseeing around Punakha valley**

Enjoy a tour on foot through the sub-tropical forests in the upper Mochhu valley to explore some of the 46 orchid species including: *Coelogyne corymbosa*, *Dendrobium nobile* and *Dendrobium perardi* which are found in the vicinity of Punakha valley. Later, visit the Punakha Dzong with its flowering Jacaranda trees and sacred Bo tree, which is situated between the two rivers – the Phochhu (male) and Mochhu (female) riveres. If you like more, perhaps we'll take a 45 minutes excursion to Khamsum Yuelley Namgyal Chorten, which lies 7 kilometer up the valley. The temple was built in 1999 to promote the heath, happiness of the King and people. Overnight at Punakha.

#### **Day 6 : Drive Punakha to Gangtey via Wangdue Phodrang**

Drive a distance of 13 kilometer for about 45 minutes to Wangdue Phodrang. Enroute visit the ruined site of Wangdue Phodrang Dzong by fire in late June 2012, which is perched on a ridge overlooking the Punatshangchhu and Dangchhu River. We then continue a scenic drive for a distance of further 65 kilometers for about 3 hours to Gangtey in the beautiful glacial valley of Phobjikha at an altitude of 3000 meters. Phobjikha valley is one of the winter roosting grounds of the rare Black-necked Cranes, where they come in hundreds after spending their summer in

Tibet and then migrates to the Himalayas of Bhutan to spend their winter – they arrive in the months of September and October and fly back to Tibet between February and March. Admire splendid flora and trees, hopefully Dendrobiums along the highest motorable pass through dense spruce and larch forests. Afterwards, visit the picturesque Gangtey Gompa (monastery) and take in breathtaking views of this beautiful upland plain, stroll through the village and along a nature trail of the Phobjikha valley. Overnight at Gangtey.

### **Day 7 : Phobjikha valley**

Begin the day by walking 5 hours from Gangtey Gompa through scattered forest of red, pink and white rhododendrons (*Rhododendron hodgsonii*, *Rhododendron Keysii*, *Rhododendron kesangiae* & *Rhododendron ciliatum*) and also enjoy carpets of primulas. Explore this remote and beautiful valley, meet the local people and the nomads living in black yak-wool tents who rear yaks for their livelihood. Visit the Phobjikha Conservation Center for the Black-necked Cranes, established in 2003 by the Royal Society for the Protection of Nature. Bhutan is an important winter roosting place to the rare black-necked Crane, which breed in Tibet and then migrate over the Himalayas of Bhutan to spend their winter during the months of September and October and fly back to Tibet between February and March. They can be spotted in Phobjikha in Western Bhutan, Bumthang in central Bhutan and Bomdeling in Eastern Bhutan. Overnight in Gangtey.

### **Day 8 : Drive Gangtey to Thimphu**

We drive back to Thimphu today visiting the Royal Botanical Park enroute. The park is at Lamperi which is situated at an altitude range of 2100 meter to 3800 meter. The park is located within the Sinchula-Dochula-Helela zone under the Thimphu and Punakha Dzongkhags, which covers an area of 47 sq. km having a rich biodiversity of high conservation value. It is great learning destination for the students, researchers and nature lovers. The park features a variety of forest types: alpine, cool temperate broadleaf forest, old growth of broad leaf and conifer forests, etc. About 300 species of plants are found in the park including those species of plants and animals with conservation significance such as Himalayan yew (*Taxus battaca*), *Panax pseudoginseng*, *Tetracentron sinensis*, native rhododendron, Royal Bengal Tiger, Red Panda, Musk Deer, Himalayan Monal and Blood Pheasants. The park is also host to *Tetracentron* an ancient relic angiosperm with no vessel in its trunk. The park has 14.5 km of eco-trek trails that takes you through thick oak forest and mountain streams amidst the chirping of birds and the sound of leaves fluttering and falling in the gentle mountain breeze. Overnight in Thimphu.

### **Day 9 : Hike to Tango Monastery, Thimphu**

Drive to end of the road before climbing into the beautiful pine forest, where an incredible Tango monastery stands to the farthest north of Thimphu which is about 14 kilometer away. The present day monastery was built in the 13th century by Lama Gyalwa Lhanampa and was later renovated in 1977 by her Majesty the Queen Mother Ashi Kesang Choden Wangchuck. The word “Tango” in Bhutanese language means the “horse head” and is derived from the local main deity Tandin (Hayagriva) that features the head of a horse. Enjoy the breathtaking landscapes of valleys and mountains from this spot. After lunch, return to Thimphu for a visit to the National Institute of Traditional Medicine, where traditional medicinal herbs are processed. Leisure at evening.

## **Day 10 : Drive Thimphu to Paro**

Explore the fascinating tour to see the best of Thimphu city at an altitude of 2350 meter. First stop is at the National Memorial Chorten, built in memory of the late third King Jigme Dorji Wangchuk who was known as the “Father of Modern Bhutan”. Next visit the Paper Making Factory, a chance to witness the art of the Bhutanese paper making and then to the painting school to discover a glimpse of novices learning 13 traditional arts and crafts of Bhutan. Afterwards drive to Paro for your final overnight in Bhutan.

## **Inclusions**

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### **What is included?**

- Airport pick up & drop by private vehicle as your require.
- Private vehicals for round trip.
- Standard accommodation twin sharing bed basis for the duration of tour.
- All meals fixed breakfast, lunch & dinner with Tea and Coffee for whole duration of your stay in Bhutan.
- Mineral water supply for the trip.
- Local licensed English speaking Bhutan Tour Guides.
- All sightseeing tours, Monument /Museum entrance Fees as per itinerary.
- Country Presentation & Tour Briefing on arrival evening.
- Bhutan Visa Fees and Visa Processing assistance.
- The required number of trekking & touring staff.
- All trekking access, route permits logistics & fees.
- Government tax which goes to the country's health & education projects.

### **What isn't included?**

- Your travel insurance.

Bottled/alcoholic/cold drinks room service.

International airfares and airport departure tax.

Personal Equipment.

Tips to staffs-Tipping is expected.

Any others expenses which are not mentioned on Price Includes section.

## **Complimentary**