



BUDDHIST TOUR OF BHUTAN

09 Days – 08 Nights

Thimphu - Punakha – Gangtey - Bumtang – Trongsa - Phunaka - Paro

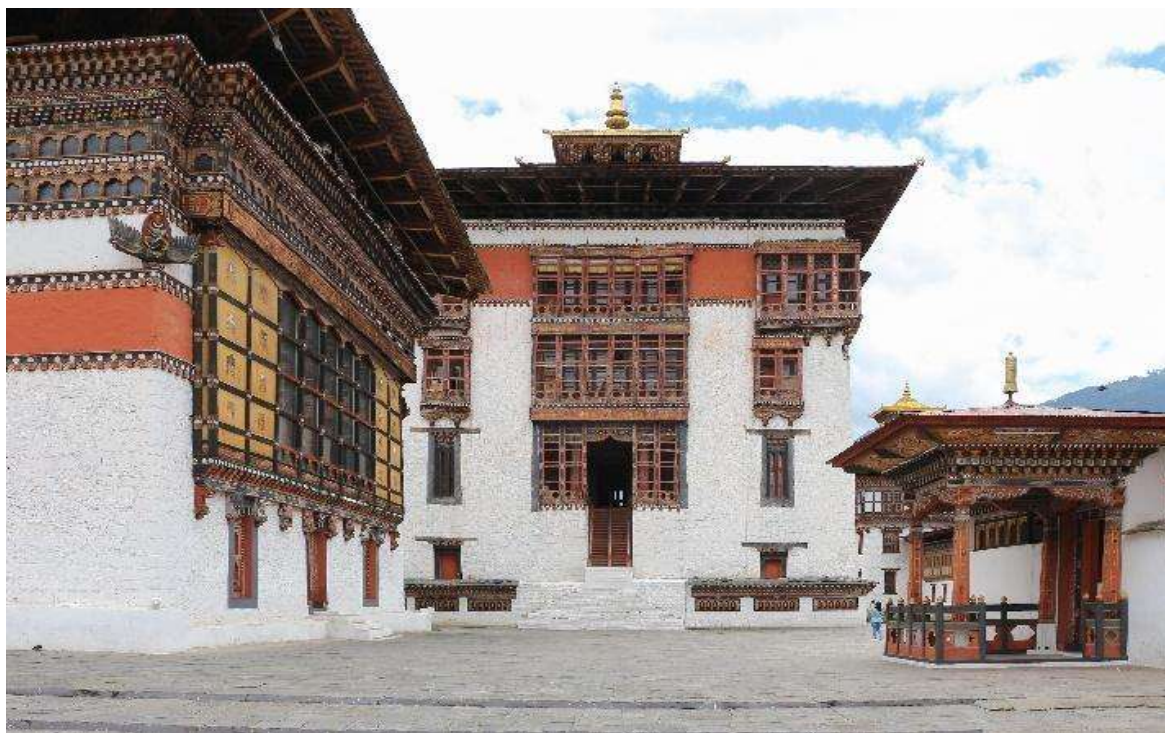


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DAY 01: ARRIVAL IN PARO BY FLIGHT AND TRANSFER TO THIMPU

Arrival in Paro International Airport after one of the most breath-taking flights in the world through Spectacular Mountain ranges of the Himalaya. Welcome at the airport and transfer to the hotel in **Thimphu** for check-in.



In the afternoon visit **Tashi Chho Dzong** – a Buddhist monastery on the western bank of **Wang Chu River**. It was first built in the 13th century, through the long-time of the history that was damaged by several factors. It was not until 1968, the dzong was restored and completed by His Late Majesty Jigme Dorji Wangchuck followed by the traditional architecture and became the seat of Government. Spend time to wander around the monastery to indulge in the fresh as well as the tranquil ambiance surrounded by the lush gardens and well-kept lawns.

Overnight stay in hotel.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Arrive at Paro International Airport and transfer to Thimphu
- Visit Tashi Chho Dzong Monastery in Thimphu

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DAY 02: THIMPHU SIGHTSEEING TOUR

After breakfast at the hotel, we will proceed for a city tour of Thimphu.

Today's first stopover is the **National Memorial Chorten** which is the most iconic relic of the kingdom. Holding the quintessence of Bhutan history, the stupas displays great Buddhist paintings and statues. Also visit **Takin Reserve**, which was originally a zoo. A few years ago, the fourth king decided that a zoo was not in line with the environmental and religious beliefs of Buthan and was therefore demolished. The animals were released in the wild, But the "Takins" were so gentle animals that they roamed the streets of Thimphu in search of food and the only solution was to put them back in captivity. Also visit the **Centenary Farmer's Market** to witness the lively atmosphere of local people selling their agriculture products on vendors and colorful stalls.



In the afternoon, visit **Tachogang Lhakhang temple** – the landmark of Paro holding important relics. With statues of Lord Buddha, Zhabdrung, Guru Padmasambhava and

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Chemrizg Avalokiteshvara. Then visit the fascinating suspension bridge nearby before returning to the hotel for dinner and overnight stay.

Overnight stay at hotel in Thimphu.



HIGHLIGHTS

- See the most popular sights of Thimphu on a city tour

DAY 03: PUNAKHA VALLEY TOUR AND TRANSFER TO GANGTEY

After breakfast, check out from the hotel. We will drive to Punakha, climbing up through oak, pine and rhododendron forest to reach Dochu La Pass (3050m).

After a short break we continue onto the spectacular **Punakha Valley**, where we enjoy a scenic 1.5 - 2 hour walk up to **Chimi Lhakhang Temple** dedicated to Lama Drukpa Kunley (also known as the Divine Mad Monk). After our hike, we visit the impressive **Punakha Dzong**, a massive structure built at the confluence of the Pho Chu and Mo Chu rivers, and an exemplary masterpiece of Bhutanese architecture.

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Later continue drive to **Gangtey** and check in at the hotel. In the afternoon, walk around the Gangtey village. The main village of the Phobjikha Valley, a glacial valley at 2900 meters above sea level on the western slopes of the Ner Mountains. This valley is the winter home of black-necked cranes, which migrate from the arid plains of Tibet in the north, which come to spend the winter months in milder weather.



Overnight stay in hotel in Gangtey.

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HIGHLIGHTS

- Visit spectacular Punakha Valley
- Transfer to hotel in Gangtey village and enjoy walking tour

DAY 04: TRANSFER TO BUMTHANG

After breakfast, visit **Gangtey Goempa**, perched on a small hill that rises from the valley floor, the Gangtey Monastery is the only Nyingmapa monastery on the western side of the Black Mountain's valley. It is also the biggest Nyingmapa monastery in Bhutan. The Monastery is surrounded by a large village inhabited mainly by the families of the 140 Gomchens who take care of the Monastery.

Later drive to Bumthang via the **Yutong La pass** which is 3400 meters high. Then descend through coniferous forests in a wide valley known as the **Chumey Valley** famous for the wool weaving called "Bumthang Yathra".

Upon arrival at Bumthang, check-in at hotel here. Being considered as a spiritual heartland in Bhutan, **Bumthang** is a religious center where there are several precious and oldest Buddhist sites. Some of Bhutan's oldest and most venerated temples are found



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here. Walk past a suspension bridge beyond a carved Buddha on a rock to Thankabi Monastery. **Thankabi goemba** is located amongst fields of buckwheat.

The trail continues through meadows and forests (blue pine and scrub bamboo) to **Ngang Lhakang (Swan Temple)**. The valley was originally inhabited by swans which gave the valley its name. A renowned lama (Lama Namkha Samdrup) had a vision of a monastery in that area. He shot an arrow and the monastery was built at the spot the arrow landed.

Dinner and overnight stay at hotel.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Visit to Gangtey Goempa
- Transfer to Bumthang and enjoy sightseeing tour

DAY 05: BUMTHANG

In the morning visit **Kurje Lhakang**, one of the most sacred places because Bhutan's "patron saint", Guru Rinpoche (Padmasambhava) meditated here. From Kurje monastery, a tarmac road heads south along the right bank of the river to **Jambey**



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Lhakhang. This temple, founded by the Tibetan king Songtsen Gampo in the 7th century, is one of the two oldest in Bhutan (the other being Kyichu Lhakhang in Paro).

After lunch, hike to **Tamshing Lhakhang**, founded in 1501 by Pema Lingpa. It contains interesting and ancient Buddhist wall paintings. Later, visit Jakar Dzong, “the castle of the white bird”, and then take a stroll through Bumthang’s market area before returning to the hotel for dinner and overnight stay.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Visit Bumthang and hike to Tamshing Lhakhang.

DAY 06: VISIT TRONGSA AND TRANSFER TO PHUNAKA

After breakfast, get ready for a long drive. En-route stop and visit **Trongsa**, the ancestral home of Bhutan’s royal family and from where the first two kings ruled Bhutan. You can see **Trongsa Dzong** From far as you drive towards valley centre. Its labyrinth of temples, corridors, offices and living quarters for the monks add up to a masterpiece in Bhutanese architecture preserved through professional restoration in 2004.



Trongsa, literally "New Town" in the Dzongkha language, is where the current monarchy had its origin in Bhutan. Each King in the line of succession has held the post

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of Trongsa Penlop or Governor before donning the Raven Crown. The foundations of Trongsa Dzong were laid in the 16th century by its founder, Pema Lingpa, and flourished during the 17th century under Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal. The impressive fortress is a massive structure, its wall looming high above the winding Mangde Chu Valley.

Later continue drive to Punakha. Check in at hotel upon arrival.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Visit Trongsa, the ancestral home of Bhutan's royal family
- Transfer to Punakha and check-in at the hotel

DAY 07: TRANSFER TO PARO

After breakfast, check out from the hotel. It is time to drive back to **Paro** today via the scenic Doch La Pass, enjoying spectacular views of the towering Himalayas along the photo stop route at the confluence of the Paro and Thimpu Rivers. Upon arrival check in at the hotel.



In the afternoon, enjoy a sightseeing tour of the **Paro Valley** and visit the **National Museum**, which is housed in an old Ta Dzong (watchtower) and holds an intriguing collection of artefacts. Discover **Dungtse Lhakang**, an incredible three story Chorten-style

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building which was constructed in 1433 and the beautiful 7th century **Kichu Lhakang**, one of the oldest and most sacred temples in Bhutan.

Overnight stay at hotel in Paro.



DAY 08: PARO - THE TIGER'S NEST

After breakfast, visit the most famous Taktshang Pelphung Monastery or popularly known as Tiger's Nest Monastery. It is one of the most venerated and famous of Bhutan's monasteries. It is located on the face of a sheer 900m cliff above the floor of Paro Valley.

Today it will be a scenic hike, to view this spectacular and unmissable sight. The monastery is only accessible on foot or you can ride a pony part of the way (this must be arranged in advance).

From the trail (2600m) we take a steep one hour walk up to a cafeteria where you can enjoy refreshments and the wonderful views of Taktshang (2940m). Those who wish to proceed further must travel on foot, the trail continues uphill for another 45 minutes to a high observation point (3140m) where there is a Chorten (stupa).

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From this vantage point, the lookout to the monastery is incredible and seems almost close enough to touch. Continuing down a flight of cliff-hanging steps on the narrow trail you'll reach a beautiful waterfall that plunges down the deep chasm and alongside is a retreat hermitage, jammed dramatically into a rock crevice. Then, the final climb up the flight of steep steps to the monastery. At any point during this walk, you can return if you find it too difficult, though we would like to note that client feedback highlights today's trek as one of the most rewarding and worth continuing to reach the top.



Once inside the monastery, there are several shrines and temples to explore, and you will see a few monks in residence too. After exploring the monastery, we walk back to the

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cafeteria for lunch before retracing our steps back to the road to journey back to Paro. Dinner and overnight at the hotel.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Visit the Tigers Nest Monastery.

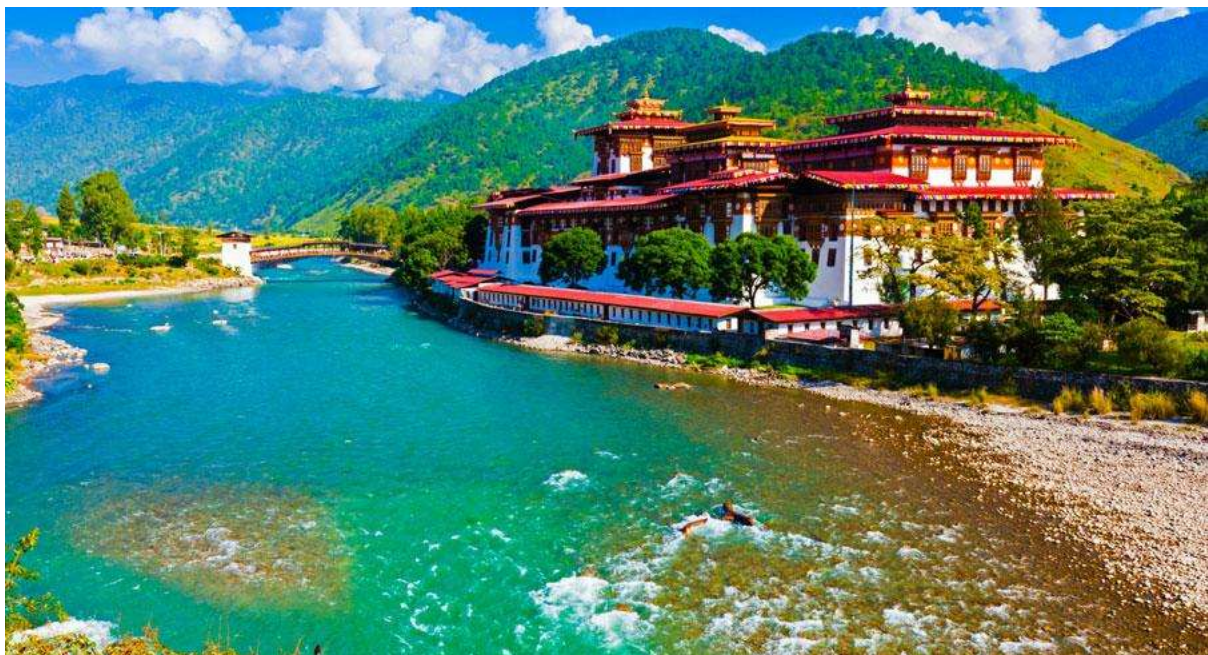
DAY 09: DEPARTURE

After breakfast, transfer to Paro Airport to catch your flight for onwards destination.

Arrive home with pleasant memories of your Bhutan tour organized by State Express Global Voyages, which we are sure you will treasure for a lifetime.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Board a flight to return to India



----- *End of service* -----

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