

The background of the entire page is a photograph of a traditional Bhutanese monastery, likely a dzong, built into a steep, rocky cliffside. The monastery features white walls, red window frames, and golden roofs. Below the main building, there are smaller structures and prayer flags. The surrounding landscape is lush green, with dense forests covering the hillsides. The sky is filled with soft, white clouds, suggesting a bright but slightly overcast day.

THE KINGDOM OF HAPPINESS

# Travel Guide for Bhutan







# KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

Culture

Religion & Language

Festivals

Cuisine

Best time

Experience

Souvenirs

Visa

Travel Tips

# CULTURE

Bhutan's culture is strongly based on its Tibetan form of Mahayana Buddhism, which contains a sprinkling of Tibet's ancient Bon shamanist religion. The country's rich heritage, protected by Bhutan's isolation from the modern world until the 1960's, is still very much in evidence. For most visitors to the country, Bhutan's traditions and uniqueness are the main attractions, just ahead of its spectacular and mostly unspoiled natural beauty.



# RELIGION & LANGUAGE

The Kingdom of Bhutan is one of the most spectacular places on earth and primarily known for one thing: its concept of “gross national happiness”.







## RELIGION

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The predominant religion in Bhutan is Buddhism, followed by Hinduism. As a result, Bhutanese culture is influenced a lot by sacred Buddhist values. Bhutanese live by their religious values and respect their gods and deities. The colorful prayer flags on hillsides and at the entrance of monasteries are considered sacred. The Dzong, a unique combination of a fortress and a monastery, is present in every district or Dzongkhag of the country.

1. Hello - *Kuzu Zangpo la*
2. Where - *Ga tey?*
3. Which - *Ga dee?*
4. Yes - *Inn*
5. No - *Men*
6. Thankyou - *Kaadin chhey La*

## LANGUAGE

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There are around 19 languages and dialects spoken in this small Himalayan kingdom. Spoken by half a million Bhutanese people, Dzongkha is a Sino-Tibetan language. It was declared the national and official language of Bhutan in 1971. Besides Dzongkha, there are three other well-known languages named Tshanglakha, Lhotshamkha and Bumthangkha.

# FESTIVALS

From famous tourist destinations to popular fairs and festivals in Bhutan, each aspect of the country is equally enthralling. Cultural tourism in Bhutan is a major contributor to the travel sector in Bhutan.







## PUNAKHA DRUBCHEN

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The glorious cultural festival of Punakha Drubchen is a celebration of the country's victory over the invading neighboring forces of Tibet. Celebrating the unification of Bhutan as a nation, the festive events reenact the scenes from the fights of Bhutan and Tibet. Starting as a celebration of Bhutan's victory, today this festival is an annual event, celebrated with great pride and joy.



## GOMPHU KORA FESTIVAL

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The Gomphu Kora Festival is of prime importance to the locals of Trashigang. The tale of the Ghompha goes back to 8th century when Guru Padmasambhava meditated in the cave for three days to vanquish the evil that was hiding in the cave. During the festival, the devotees take a trip around the cave and the festival marks the victory of good over evil.



## PARO TSHECHU

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One of the most popular cultural events in Bhutan, Paro Tshechu, is celebrated in the city of Paro, the festival witnesses thousands of locals and tourists gathering around the courtyard of the Dzong to celebrate the deeds of Guru Rinpoche. Marked by the masked dance performed by lamas and laymen, the festival is meant to thank deities for their blessings.



# CUISINE

A trip to Bhutan is incomplete without trying out Bhutan's Cuisine. What the Bhutanese are essentially in love with is a spice which comes across so boldly in a variety of their dishes.







## EMA DATSHI

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If there is one national dish to eat when touring Bhutan, this is it. It's so ubiquitous that some say if you haven't eaten ema datshi, you haven't been to Bhutan. The locals eat the stew, which is similar to a curry, daily along with red rice.



## JASHA MAROO

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Although this mix of chilies, onion, tomato, garlic, coriander leaves and ginger is usually made with finely diced chicken, you will occasionally find it made with beef. Like most Bhutanese food, it is served with red rice.



## MOMOS

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Throughout the Himalayas—from Nepal and Tibet to Bhutan—these steamed buns are eaten as treats. They may be stuffed with almost anything, but the typical fillings are minced pork or beef, cabbage, or fresh cheese mixed with spices such as garlic, ginger and coriander..



# BEST TIME

October to December is the ideal time to visit Bhutan as the air is clear and fresh with sunny skies. January and February are colder, but from then until April the climate remains dry and pleasant and in late spring the famous rhododendrons bloom spectacularly, flooding the valleys with color.



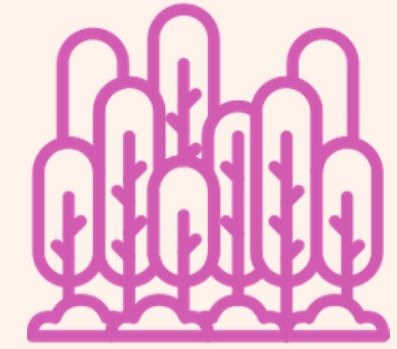


# EXPERIENCE

Starting from the countries largest capital city of Bangkok to the largest island of Phuket, Thailand is full of ancient museums and national parks, beautiful beaches, abundant wild life, fascinating nightlife , frantic city life and stop shopping spots. So, until you visit this mesmerizing country, let the idea of these places excite you to journey here.



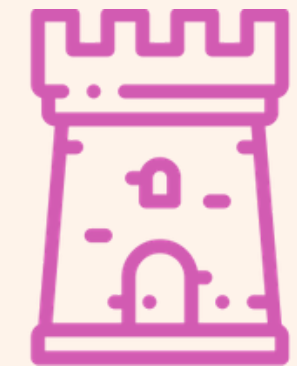
Culture



Nature



Religion



History



Hiking

# PARO



## TIGER'S NEST

The Tiger's Nest is Bhutan's most iconic sight and one of the most popular tourist attractions in Paro. The distinctive structure of the monastery combined with its remote location and the stunning green valley view makes it an unforgettable experience. Reaching this monastery requires a trek of 3-4 hours through the mountainous paths of this remote area.



## PARO DZONG

Rinchen Pung Dzong means 'Fortress on a Heap of Jewels,' once served as the meeting hall for the National Assembly. Now, Rinpung houses both the monastic body and district government offices, including the local courts.



# PARO



## NATIONAL MUSEUM

The National Museum captures the heritage of Bhutan, and promotes it through the well-preserved artefacts displayed from across the country. It is among the few educational institutes which capture the country's transition from as early as 4000 B.C, keeping its cultural inheritance intact.



## KYICHU LHAKHANG

Kyichu Lhakhang (also called Lho Kyerchu and Kyerchu) is a majestic seventh-century temple revered as one of the most magnificent sites of worship in Bhutan. Located in the town of Paro, some sources claim the temple as one of the oldest in the nation.



# PUNAKHA



## PUNAKHA DZONG

Punakha Dzong was built at the confluence of two major rivers in Bhutan, the Pho Chhu and Mo Chhu, which converge in this valley. It is an especially beautiful sight on sunny days with sunlight reflecting off the water onto its white-washed walls.



## KHAMSUM YULLEY NAMGYAL

Built in 2004 by the Queen of Bhutan, Khamsum Yulley Namgyal is a chorten, or stupa, overlooking the Punakha Valley. It was built with a specific function in mind: to ward off evil spirits in Bhutan and across the world, and to bring peace and harmony to all living things.



## 108 MEMORIAL STUPAS

In the snow-covered Himalayas within Bhutan are 108 memorial stupas known as "Druk Wangyal Chortens". The 108 memorial stupas were built in memory of the 108 Bhutanese soldiers from the Royal Bhutan Army, who were killed in the 2003 battle against Indian rebels. Apart from the stupas there is a monastery called the Druk Wangyal Lhakhang.



# THIMPHU



## MOTITHANG TAKIN PRESERVE

Located in the Motithang district of Thimphu, Motithang Takin Preserve is a wildlife reserve area for takin (*Budorcas taxicolor*), the national animal of Bhutan.

The reason for declaring takin as the national animal of Bhutan is attributed to a legend of the animal's creation in Bhutan in the 15th century by Lama Drukpa Kunley, popularly known as the Divine Mad Man.



## CHARI MONASTERY

Cheri Monastery, also known as Chakri Dorjeden, is a hermitage and monastery in the Upper Thimphu valley in Bhutan. It was built in 1619 by Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyel as his first monastery in Bhutan, where he established the first monastic body.



## NATIONAL MEMORIAL STUPA

Another unique structure is the prominent National Memorial Chorten. This stupa, which is predominantly white with spires of gold, was erected in 1974 in honor of the father of modern Bhutan, the third king of the country, His Majesty Jigme Dorji Wangchuck.



# BHUTAN'S WILDLIFE



## SNOW LEOPARDS

Snow leopards are easily recognized as one of the least known and elusive cats in the world. This solitary and nocturnal cat has found a home above the tree line where it hunts. Within this habitat, sighting a snow leopard is rare.



## ROYAL BENGAL TIGER

Bhutan is fortunate to be one of the remaining 13 tiger countries. With 72% of the country under forest cover and over 50% under protected area status, tigers can be found from the warm subtropical forests in the south to the cold alpine forests in the north; from 100 meters to 4200 meters above sea level, making them the highest altitude tigers in the world.



# BHUTAN'S WILDLIFE



## BIRDS

Given Bhutan's amazing natural diversity it is not surprising that the country is a key stronghold of such enigmatic birds like the White-bellied Heron, Blyth's Kingfisher, Ward's Trogon, Rufous-necked Hornbill, Blood Pheasant, Satyr Tragopan and Wood Snipe.



## PHOBJIKHA

Phobjikha is one of the last strongholds of the threatened Black-necked Crane, a close cousin to the endangered Whooping Crane of North America. The species is vulnerable and was only discovered in 1876 due to its remote alpine range in China, Tibet, Bhutan, and India.

# NATURAL



## HIMALAYA

One of the highest mountain reliefs on Earth can be found in the tiny country of Bhutan. Sandwiched between eastern India and the Tibetan plateau, Bhutan hosts peaks that reach between 5,000 and 7,000 meters (16,000–23,000 feet) in height. The impressive Bhutan Himalayas are permanently capped with snow, which extends down valleys in long glacier tongues.



## RHODODENDRON SEASON

Bhutan proudly possesses about 49 species of this plant and has also plenty of Bhutanese songs and works of art that use this flower as a symbol of pure and divine beauty. There are many places, both in a wild and within city borders, where you can enjoy the blooming season of rhododendrons.



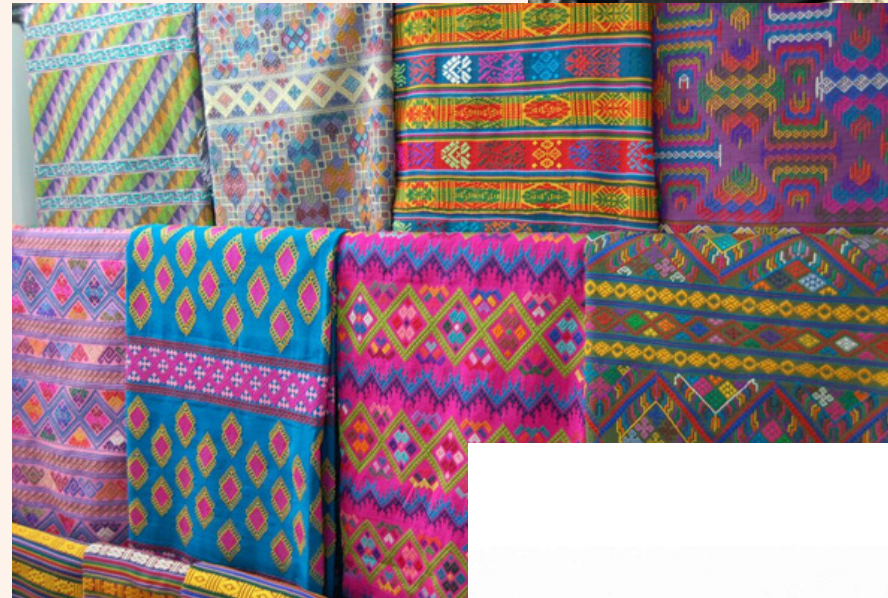
# SOUVENIRS

We all want our travel memories to remain fresh forever. But if only memories were left alone. It is human nature to possess material belonging as a reminder of their cherished memories. Whether you splurge on your travels, buy a cheap souvenir, pick a free memento or just take lots of photos, there is always something to look back to after your return.

Woodcarvings



Hand woven textiles



Traditional masks



Bhutan Honey

# VISA

All tourists, except visitors from India, Bangladesh and the Maldives, must obtain a visa clearance prior the travel to Bhutan. Visas are processed through an online system by your licensed Bhutanese tour operator or through a foreign travel agent. The visa will be processed by the Tourism Council of Bhutan (TCB) after the visa fee of USD \$40 has been paid. Once received, the visa clearance will be processed within 72 working hours.





# TRAVEL TIPS

- Travel during a festival in Bhutan
- consider an authentic Bhutan Home Stay
- Learn a few phrases in Dzongkha
- Buy handicrafts but not antiques
- Don't buy or sell tobacco products, its illegal
- US Dollars and Indian Rupees are accepted
- There are ATMs in Bhutan, but only in the main towns.
- Don't disrespect the Royal Family
- Most Bhutanese are fluent in English
- Tuesdays are considered the national 'dry day,' with the sale of alcohol prohibited• It's wise to always have a jacket when travelling in Bhutan, regardless of the seasons
- You can haggle in most shops but don't expect more than 10% discount
- Bring along a multi-purpose electrical plug and a universal travel adapter





# Explore the colours of life!

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