

CULTURAL WALKING TOUR

Bhutan

Himalayan Villages & Monasteries

CLASSIC JOURNEYS
THE WORLD'S FINEST WALKING TOURS



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*Classic Journeys
provides unbeatable
access to experiences
around the globe.”*

TRAVEL + LEISURE

Inside the Mysterious Kingdom

In all of Bhutan, there is not a single stoplight. Gross National Happiness is an official measure of the country's well-being. And the number of foreign visitors is strictly limited to protect the culture and environment. This is a destination on a higher plane in so many ways! Of course, there's the Himalayan factor, tucked as it is into a niche in the soaring chain. Bhutan is also one of the world's most Buddhist countries, and its historic dzongs (monasteries) perch serenely over sweeping expanses of terrain. Lush valleys are carpeted with rice and mustard fields and criss-crossed by footpaths. For an insider's look at this heavenly land, you'll meet the Bhutanese farmers, wood carvers, yak-herders and mask dancers for an unforgettable and immersive week.

The Classic Journeys Difference

- ACTIVE HIKING & WALKING
- LOCAL WELL-CONNECTED GUIDES
- PREMIERE HOTELS
- FOODIE FOCUSED
- HANDCRAFTED TRIP DESIGN
- MORE IS INCLUDED

What's Included

- 6 breakfasts, 6 lunches, 6 dinners
- Airport transfers in Paro on Day 1 and Day 7
- Bhutan Visa (issued 3-5 days prior to trip departure)
- Full-time experienced guide(s) who are with you throughout the trip and handle behind-the-scenes logistics
- Admissions to scheduled events as noted in the detailed daily itinerary
- Gratuities for hotels, meals, and baggage
- All land transportation during the trip

Above & Beyond Benefits

→ INVISIBLE CHECK-IN

When your group arrives, we whisk you and your bags to your room immediately. No waiting – no tipping.

→ PRIVILEGED ACCESS EVENTS

One-of-a-kind access to remarkable people, places and activities arranged just for you.

Terrain

Moderate on good trails. An average of 2 to 4 hours of walking per day, except on the transfer days.

CLASSIC JOURNEYS ITINERARIES MAY BE SUBJECT TO SLIGHT CHANGES, HOTEL SUBSTITUTIONS, AND OTHER MODIFICATIONS.

DAY 1 »

Paro Valley / Thimphu

You undergo a wonderful transition on this morning's included flight. Leaving behind one of the world's biggest cities, you step from your plane into a land of otherworldly calm.

Shrines dot the emerald-green Paro Valley. Terraced rice fields defy common sense as they climb the hillsides to forests of rhododendron and pine. Bhutan wears Buddhism on its sleeve, and you'll get early lessons in the vocabulary of its structures. Remember stupa. It's the Sanskrit word for a mound-like structure that shelters relics, and it's sometimes called a chorten. On a single stop, you'll see Tibetan, Nepalese and Bhutanese styles clustered at the confluence of two rivers. Your destination is Thimphu, the nation's capital, but along the way at Tamchog Lhakhang for picturesque photo opportunities.

After, you'll stroll through the streets of Thimphu with your local guide to the King's Memorial, circled by an endless string of Bhutanese, murmuring mantras and spinning prayer wheels. Your hotel was built in the dzong style, with a glamorous contemporary interior – a grand setting for your first two nights.

MEALS: L, D

OVERNIGHT: THIMPHU (TAJ TASHI)

DAY 2 »

Tango Gompa / Institute of Zorig Chusum

This morning's woodland trail is quintessentially Bhutanese. It wends past an enormous gold rock painting of Guru Rinpoche. You share the path with local pilgrims and pack ponies. And then your destination peeks through the trees above. It's Tango Gompa, where Drukpa Kunley (The Divine Madman) erected a monastery in the 15th century. You'll see a gathering of monks, arrayed in their best robes. Strings of multi-colored prayer flags catch the breeze so that their wishes for long life, prosperity and happiness can be caught by the wind and sent out into the world.

Later, you return to Thimphu for a fascinating afternoon visit to the Institute of Zorig Chusum – the Arts & Crafts School. Bhutan takes its traditions so seriously that 13 traditional crafts were formally categorized in the late 17th century. These same crafts – including weaving, paper-making, blacksmithing, slate carving and carpentry – are still taught here today, and you'll see how they're kept alive. You'll also visit Tashichho Dzong, the country's formal seat of government, to see the throne room of King Jigme Khesar Mangyel Wangchuck.

Note: The elevation gain to the Tango Monastery is 400 meters and the altitude is 2,800 meters.

MEALS: B, L, D

OVERNIGHT: THIMPHU (TAJ TASHI)

DAY 3 »

Pana Village / Punakha

After an early breakfast, you head to Buddha Dorden, located at the top of a hill in Kuenselphodrang Nature Park. You'll explore the park before driving up into the sky to Dochula Pass for views to some of the country's highest peaks.

Back at a lower altitude, you follow a path through mustard and rice fields. Along the way, you pass through the rural villages, pausing at the tiny settlement of Pana where your guide arranges meeting the people who live here.

As Bhutan's rivers tumble down from the mountains, they roll and smooth the rocks, creating white cobbled banks of stone. Where the Pho Chhu (Father River) and Mo Chhu (Mother River) meet, you see Punakha Dzong – one of the country's grandest structures –

standing guard. Damaged by fires and earthquake over the past four centuries, it has been fully restored by the current king.

Later, you visit a Chimi Lhakhang, a monastery renowned throughout Bhutan as a place which induces fertility for all the visitors who come here wishing for a child.

MEALS: B, L, D

OVERNIGHT: PUNAKHA

DAY 4 »

Khamsum Yulley Namgyal Chorten

This morning your guide leads you on a walk to Khamsum Yulley Namgyal Chorten, a classic example of Bhutanese architecture. Instead of being designed as a place for communal worship, it was built to fight off negative forces, and bring peace and harmony for all living beings.

It's no wonder the Paro Valley holds divine sway over Bhutan. Snow Mount Chomolhari soars over its northern reaches. Intensely blue glacial melt roars down through deep gorges to water the fertile valley, famous for its red rice. It seems like every pine copse and hillock comes with its own myth or legend. To breathe in the beauty, you take a woodland walk that leads you to one of the distinctively arched covered bridges, a stone inlaid path and Rinpung Dzong.

As at all of your meals, you'll dine on Bhutanese specialties. The nutty-tasting local rice is a staple. The national dish is ema datshi, a stew of chilis and cheese. Bhutan tradition has it that, when offered food, you cover your mouth and decline...after another invitation or two, you accept!

MEALS: B, L, D

OVERNIGHT: PARO

DAY 5 »

Tiger's Nest Monastery

Taksang (Tiger's Nest) Monastery doesn't look possible. How can it cling to such a slight toehold on the mountain's steep flank? Who could conceive of a place so graceful but commanding? How could it even have been built? Even more remarkable, Bhutan's most famous sight has already stood for more than 10 centuries.

You'll approach on a footpath that offers a succession of amazing views. The trail is divided into several stages, so you can relax at a lower-level vantage point or ascend all the way, over a stream, past a waterfall, then up to the monastery and cave where Buddhism in Bhutan is said to have been born.

Archery is to Bhutan as soccer is to Brazil. It's the national sport – and you'll be surprised how rowdy it can be, complete with cheerleaders, bulls-eye dances and chanting. Late afternoon, you'll see what it's all about at a demonstration of the locals' longbow skills.

Note: The hike to Tiger's Nest Monastery is 4 miles round trip. The elevation gain is 900 meters above Paro Valley and the altitude is 3,100 meters above sea level.

MEALS: B, L, D

OVERNIGHT: PARO

DAY 6 »

Kyichu Lhakhang / Chele La Pass

For Buddhists, 108 is a sacred number, and one of the most striking rituals is the morning lighting of 108 butter lamps to dispel the darkness of ignorance. We'll make the pilgrimage to beautiful Kyichu Lhakhang to witness the ceremony – an event you won't soon forget. And you'll feel another form of reverence – this time for the majesty of nature – when we make the drive to Chele La Pass, the highest in Bhutan. From this lookout point, you have an expansive view of the eastern Himalayas, including 22,000-foot Jhomolari.

Later in the afternoon, you may want to arrange a spa treatment or a meditation class at the resort. This evening, you'll enjoy a cultural performance, including the traditional mask dance that's been a part of local life since the 8th century.

MEALS: B, L, D

OVERNIGHT: PARO

DAY 7 »

Part company

You'll be transferred to Paro airport for your outbound flight.

MEALS: B

Tour Hotels



Taj Tashi

Set in Thimphu, this hotel is a blend of gold-hued dzong architecture with a serene, contemporary interior. It offers striking views of the mountains and great proximity to the bustling local markets.

NIGHTS: 2 nights



Dhensa Boutique Resort

Perched above the Punakha Valley, this hotel is gorgeous modern interpretation of traditional Himalayan design. Suites are set in six cottages, each with a private balcony. The views of the Punakha river and stairstep paddies are truly spectacular.

NIGHTS: 1 nights



Le Meridien Paro Riverfront

With a compelling location close to Paro International Airport and the riverfront, Le Meridien Paro is the ideal place to stay and explore Bhutan. Unlock this holistic destination with attractions including sacred fortresses and monasteries.

NIGHTS: 3 nights

Arrival & Departure

→ ARRIVAL DETAILS

START LOCATION: **Paro Airport (PBH)**
START CITY: **Paro**
START TIME: **7:45 AM**

→ DEPARTURE DETAILS

END LOCATION: **Paro Airport (PBH)**
END CITY: **Paro**
END TIME: **7:00 AM**