8 Days Bhutan Tour

Eight days buys you the crossing most visitors never make: over the Black Mountains at Pele La and into central Bhutan. This itinerary sleeps two nights in Phobjikha - the glacial valley of the black-necked cranes - and pushes on to Trongsa, whose dzong is the largest fortress in the kingdom and the ancestral seat of Bhutan's monarchy, before returning west. It suits travellers who want to feel the country change - vegetation, dialect, architecture - without committing to the long road all the way to Bumthang. The western essentials are all here too: Thimphu's capital sights, Punakha Dzong at the river confluence, Dochula's 108 chortens, and the Tiger's Nest hike on your final full day, when a week of mountain air has made you fittest for it.

LOCATION	DURATION
Paro, Thimphu, Punakha, Phobjikha, Trongsa	**8**

Highlights

- Buddha Dordenma - 51m tall statue
- Takin Preserve Center
- School of 13 Arts and Crafts
- Dochula Pass - 108 chortens (3140m)
- Chimi Lhakhang - Temple of Fertility
- Punakha Dzong - Palace of Great Happiness
- Phobjikha Valley - Black-necked Crane habitat
- Gangtey Gompa - 17th century monastery
- Black Necked Crane Center
- Trongsa Dzong - ancestral home of royal family
- Trongsa Museum (Ta Dzong)
- Weekend Market & Traditional Archery
- Tashichho Dzong
- National Museum (Ta Dzong) Paro
- Rinpung Dzong
- Tiger's Nest Monastery hike (2600m to 3100m)
- Kyichu Lhakhang - 7th century temple

Day-by-Day Itinerary

Day 1: Arrival in Paro - Drive to Thimphu

Paro to Thimphu | 2,320m | 1.5 hrs | 54 km

You will be received by a representative from Byways Tours and Travels at the airport and driven to Thimphu.

After lunch, visit **Buddha Dordenma**, the tallest Buddha statue in the world at 51 meters. Then visit the **Takin Preserve Center** to see Bhutan's national animal, followed by the **Nunnery** and the **School of 13 Arts and Crafts (Zorig Chusum)**, famous for traditional carving and freehand art. Here you will find students whose aptitude is more artistic than academic. After lunch, visit the **authentic Bhutanese Craft Market**. In the evening, stroll around Thimphu City for shopping. Dinner and overnight at the hotel.

Meals: L/D | Hotel in Thimphu

Day 2: Thimphu to Punakha via Dochula Pass

Thimphu to Punakha | 1,200m | 3 hrs | 77 km

After breakfast, drive to Punakha Valley via **Dochula Pass (3,140m)**. We stop at the pass to admire the 108 memorial chortens, and if the weather is clear, you will enjoy spectacular views of the Himalayan ranges.

Upon reaching Punakha Valley, visit **Chimi Lhakhang**, also known as the Temple of Fertility, built by Lama Drukpa Kuenley (the Divine Madman) in the 15th century. Then visit **Punakha Dzong**, built in 1637 by Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal, beautifully situated at the confluence of the Pho Chu (Male River) and Mo Chu (Female River). For many years until the reign of the second king, it served as Bhutan's capital. The construction was foretold by Guru Rinpoche in the 8th century. The Zhabdrung ordered his architect, Zowe Palep, to sleep before a Buddha statue; in his dreams, the Zhabdrung took him to Zangtopelri (Paradise) and showed him Guru Rinpoche's palace. From this vision, the architect conceived the design, never committing it to paper. The Dzong was named **Druk Pungthang Dechen Phodrang**, meaning Palace of Great Happiness. Punakha remains the winter residence of the **Chief Abbot (Je Khenpo)**, and King Jigme Dorji Wangchuk convened the first National Assembly here in 1952. Dinner and overnight at the hotel.

Meals: B/L/D | Hotel in Punakha

Day 3: Punakha to Phobjikha Valley

Punakha to Phobjikha | 2,900m | 3 hrs | 78 km

After breakfast, drive to **Phobjikha Valley** (approximately 2 hours 30 minutes) via **Wangduephodrang**. Along the way, stop to photograph the reconstruction of **Wangduephodrang Dzong**, which was destroyed by fire in 2012.

In Phobjikha, visit **Gangtey Gompa**, founded in 1613 by Gyaltse Pema Thinley, the grandson and mind reincarnation of Pema Lingpa. The temple was later expanded by Tenzin Legpai Dhendup, the second reincarnation. If interested, enjoy a beautiful 45-minute hike from Gangtey Gompa to the valley floor. Then visit the **Black-Necked Crane Center**, where you can observe these rare birds through telescopes. Two injured cranes are kept near the center. Black-necked cranes are rare migratory birds that winter in Bhutan and return to the Tibetan Plateau in summer. Dinner and overnight at the hotel.

Meals: B/L/D | Hotel in Phobjikha

Day 4: Phobjikha to Trongsa and Return

Phobjikha to Trongsa to Phobjikha | 2,180m | 4 hrs | 128 km

After breakfast, drive to Trongsa. Visit **Trongsa Museum (Ta Dzong)**, a former watchtower converted into a museum in 2008. Then visit **Trongsa Dzong**, built in 1643 by Chogyel Minjur Tempa, an official sent by Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal to unify eastern Bhutan. It was enlarged in the late 17th century by Desi Tenzin Rabgye. The official name is **Chhoekhor Raptentse Dzong**, also known as Choetse Dzong.

Trongsa Dzong is the **ancestral home of Bhutan's royal family**. The first two hereditary kings ruled from this dzong, and tradition still dictates that the crown prince serve as Trongsa Penlop (Governor) before ascending to the throne. The current king became Trongsa Penlop in 2004.

After lunch, drive back to Phobjikha Valley. Dinner and overnight at the hotel.

Meals: B/L/D | Hotel in Phobjikha

Day 5: Phobjikha Valley to Thimphu

Phobjikha to Thimphu | 2,320m | 4 hrs | 128 km

After breakfast, drive to Thimphu. After lunch, visit the **Weekend Market** and **watch an archery match** if available. In the evening, visit **Tashichho Dzong** (Fortress of the Glorious Religion), built in 1641 by Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal and reconstructed in 1961 by the Third King, Jigme Dorji Wangchuk, known as the Father of Modern Bhutan. Enjoy an evening stroll around Thimphu City. Dinner and overnight at the hotel.

Meals: B/L/D | Hotel in Thimphu

Day 6: Thimphu to Paro

Thimphu to Paro | 2,280m | 2 hrs | 65 km

After breakfast, visit the **National Library**, which houses a vast collection of ancient Buddhist manuscripts, followed by the **Folk Heritage Museum**.

After lunch, drive to Paro and visit **Ta Dzong**, an ancient watchtower built in 1656, renovated in 1968, and converted into the **National Museum of Bhutan**. Then visit **Rinpung Dzong (Paro Dzong)**, built in 1646 by Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal. The Dzong currently houses the administrative offices of Paro District and a monastery. Dinner and overnight at the hotel.

Meals: B/L/D | Hotel in Paro

Day 7: Tiger's Nest Monastery Hike

Paro | 3,120m | 5-6 hrs hike | —

After breakfast, embark on an excursion to **Tiger's Nest Monastery (Taktsang)**. The total distance is **7.4 km (4.5 miles)** round trip and takes a **minimum of 5 hours**. The elevation at the starting point is **2,600m**, and the monastery sits at **3,100m** above sea level.

A 25-minute drive from the main town of Paro takes you to Satsam Chorten, where the trail begins. The path climbs through beautiful pine forests, with many trees festooned with Spanish moss and occasional groves of fluttering prayer flags. We stop for rest and refreshments at Taktsang Cafeteria, then continue until we see Tiger's Nest Monastery clearly within reach. The history dates back to the 8th century when Guru Rinpoche, a tantric master, flew to this place on the back of a flying tigress—said to be his Tibetan consort Yeshe Tsogyal—and meditated in a cave nearby. The temple was built in the 17th century by Penlop Gyaltse Tenzin Rabgye. This incredible monastery clings to the edge of a sheer cliff that plunges 600 meters into the valley below.

After lunch, visit **Kyichu Lhakhang**, one of Bhutan's oldest Buddhist temples, built in 659 AD by Tibetan King Songtsen Gampo. In the evening, stroll around the charming town of Paro for final shopping. Dinner and overnight at the hotel.

Meals: B/L/D | Hotel in Paro

Day 8: Departure

Paro | 2,280m | — | —

Early morning, drive to Paro International Airport for your departure. Bid farewell to the Land of the Thunder Dragon. Tashi Delek!

Meals: B

What's Included

Included

+ Accommodation in 3* Hotels (1 Single room just for you).
+ All Three Meals (Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner). Lunch will be served in a local Tourist Restaurant.
+ Daily Tariff.
+ Visa Fee.
+ Royalty and Government Taxes.
+ SDF (Sustainable Development Fee) of USD 100 per night per person, which directly goes towards free education, Free Healthcare and infrastructure development.
+ Transportation from receive till drop.
+ Museum and Monument fee.
+ Bottle Water in Car.
+ Sightseeing.
+ English Speaking Guide.
+ Driver.

Not Included

- Air Fare.
- Insurance Premiums.
- Payment for service provided on a personal basis.
- Cost for any services not mentioned in the "Inclusive Head"
- Cost incurred due to mishaps, strikes, political unrest, etc.
- Personal expenses in items such as laundry, soft or hard drinks, camera charges, bottle water in restaurants or in hotels, Portage, bellboy charges.
- Charges for chartered flights necessitated by a sudden death or unforeseen mishap.
- Tips to guide and driver.

Ready to Book?

Contact our Bhutan travel experts to customize this itinerary.

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