

Magical Kingdom Tour

Day 01. Arrive Paro: Your guide from Bhutan Dragon Adventures will receive you at the airport and drive you the short distance to the hotel. After tea, we will drive to the ruins of the Drukgyal Dzong 16 km up the valley. Built in 1647 by the great Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal, father and unifier of medieval Bhutan, the Dzong was destroyed by accidental fire and left in ruins as an evocative reminder of the great victories it was built to commemorate. Explore the ramparts and on a clear day experience an unforgettable view of Mt. Jhomolhari. On the way back to Paro, visit Kichu Lhakhang, built in 659 A.D by the Tibetan King Srongsen Gampo. This Monastery is one of the 108 monasteries built across the Himalayan region by the Tibetan King to subdue the Demoness that lay across the Himalayan region. The rest of the monasteries lie in neighboring countries. Dinner and overnight in hotel.

Day 02. Paro, Excursion to Taktshang Monastery: This will be a very special day, with an excursion to view the spectacular Taktshang (Tiger's Nest) monastery. After breakfast a short drive takes us to Satsam Chorten and from there a two hour horse ride to the viewpoint point of the monastery. The trail climbs through beautiful pine forest, many of the trees festooned with Spanish moss, and an occasional grove of fluttering prayer flags. We stop for a rest and light refreshments at the Taktshang Jakhang (cafeteria) and then walk a short distance until we see, clearly and seemingly within reach, Taktshang monastery. The primary Lhakhang was built around Guru Rimpoche's meditation cave in the 1684 by the Penlop of Paro Gyaltse Tenzin Rabgay. This incredible monastery clings to the edge of a sheer rock cliff that plunges 900 meters into the valley below. Legend has it that Guru Padmasambhava, the tantric mystic who brought Buddhism to Bhutan, flew here on the back of a flying tiger, Dorji Drolu, said to be his favourite consort.

After Lunch, we tour Ta Dzong (built in 1656 and renovated in 1968), an ancient watchtower, which now houses the National Museum. Below the museum is the Paro Rimpung Dzong, literally meaning "Heap of Jewels," built in 1646 by Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal. It is the centre of civil and religious authority in Paro Valley. A short walk takes us to the base of the Dzong and across a traditional cantilevered, covered bridge. In the evening, we drive to Thimphu. Dinner and overnight in the hotel.

Day 03. Thimphu Sightseeing: The day begins with visits to the National Memorial Chorten (1974) built in honor of our late King Jigme Dorji Wangchuk and the Dupthop Lhakhang one of the few surviving nunneries in Bhutan. We then visit the National Library, stocked with ancient Buddhist manuscripts, and the Painting School where traditional art is kept alive through instructions in the art of painting Thangkas, sacred Buddhist religious scrolls, and other arts. After lunch we drive to the Traditional Medicine Institute where medicines are prepared according to ancient practices and to Lungtenzampa to observe the Royal silversmiths and a Bhutanese paper factory at work. Other highlights include a visit to the Tashichho Dzong, seat of the national government and the Central Monastic Body, including the summer residence of the Je Khenpo, the Chief Abbot of Bhutan. Finally we drive to Simtokha Dzong; the oldest Dzong of Bhutan, built by Shabdrung in 1627. The day ends with a visit to the Handicrafts Emporium followed by shopping for souvenirs in the shops of Thimphu. Overnight in the hotel.

Day 04. Thimphu – Punakha - Wangdue: (72 Kms, 3 hours drive). After breakfast, we drive to Punakha via Dochula pass. If the weather is clear, we will stop at the pass to view the higher Himalayas. On the way to Punakha, we visit Chime Lhakhang, which was built by Lama Drukpa Kuenley. He subdued the demons with his “Magical Thunderbolt.” This Temple is also known as the “Temple of Fertility.” In Punakha, we visit Punakha Dzong situated between Pho Chu, ‘Male River,’ and Mo Chu, “Female River.” It was built in 1637 by Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal and was for many years, until the time of the second king, the seat of government. The construction of the Dzong was foretold by Guru Rimpoche, who predicted, “...a person named Namgyal will arrive at a hill that looks like an elephant”. At the time there was a smaller building here called Dzong Chu, “Small Dzong,” that housed a statue of Buddha. It is said that Shabdrung ordered the architect, Zowe Palep, to sleep in front of the statue. While Palep was sleeping, the Shabdrung took him in his dreams to Zangtopelri and showed him the palace of Guru Rimpoche. From his vision, the architect conceived the design for the new Dzong, which in keeping with the tradition, was never committed to paper. The Dzong was named Druk Punghang Dechen Phodrang, “Palace of Great Happiness.” Here the war materials captured during the battle with Tibetans are preserved. Punakha is still the winter residence of Je-Khenpo and, in 1952, King Jigme Dorji Wangchuk convened the new national Assembly here.

After lunch, there will be an excursion to Khamsung Yulley Namgyal Choling Monastery. Then dinner and overnight in the hotel in Punakha.

Day 05 – Punakha - Gangtey: After breakfast we will drive to Gangtey. On the way we will be sightseeing in the valley of Wangdiphodrang, where we will visit the Wangdiphodrang Dzong built in 1638. Legend relates that as the people were searching for the site of the Dzong, four ravens were seen flying away in four directions. This was considered auspicious sign, representing the spread of Buddhist religion to the four points of the compass. The Dzong is situated at the confluence of Mo Chu and Tang Chu rivers. Then we drive further to Gangtey. While in Gangtey, visit Gangtey Gompa. Gyaltse Pema Thinley, the grandson and mind reincarnation of Pema Lingpa founded the Temple in 1613, and Tenzin Legpai Dhendup, the second re-incarnation, built the temple. The present Abbot, Kunzang Pema Namgyal is the ninth re-incarnation. It is a Nyingmapa monastery and is affiliated to other Nyingmapa monasteries including Tamshing in Bumthang. Explore Phobjikha valley, famous for the black-necked cranes during winter. After lunch, explore the valley. Dinner and overnight in guest house.

Day 06. Gangtey - Thimphu: After breakfast, drive to Thimphu. After lunch, visit Folk Heritage Museum and Excursion to Cheri Monastery. In the evening, drive to Paro. Dinner and over night in Hotel.

Day 07. Departure: Early morning, drive to the airport and farewell.