

Bhutan Sikkim combined Tour

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Tours to Buddhist monasteries and eastern Himalayas explore Sikkim Darjeeling and Bhutan. Two of the most isolated Himalayan regions with us. Centuries-old Buddhist monasteries cling to mountain cliffs and rice paddies stair-step down steep hillsides.

Your journey begins with an arrival transfer to Darjeeling, where we include a ride on the narrow gauge mountain railway and sunrise over Kanchenjunga from Tiger Hill. Visit the capital of Sikkim, Gangtok and passing on to Rumtek, visit the Karmapa's Monastery. Travel to Kalimpong, once an important trading post for these parts of the world. From Kalimpong our road then descends into the plains known as duars, filled with lush tea gardens. Cross into Phuntsholing.

Discover Bhutan's captivating cultural mix, reflected in its beautiful shrines, temples and handicrafts as you travel from south to western Bhutan; in the towns and villages of Paro, Thimphu and Punakha valley.

Explore the Dzongs, ancient fortresses that once protected the kingdom of Bhutan.

Itinerary

Day 01: Fly from Kathmandu Bhadrapur. Drive to Darjeeling.

Bhadrapur airport or Delhi to Bagdogra. On arrival at Bhadrapur /Bagdogra drive to Darjeeling. (5 1/2hrs) Overnight stay at Hotel.

Day 02: Darjeeling (2,100m)

Visit Himalayan Zoo- Himalayan fauna in natural habitat red panda, black bear, yaks and the famous snow leopard/ Himalayan mountaineering institute and Museum of Everest Expedition/ Tibetan handicraft, Darjeeling-pemayangeste, 102km.4 1/2 hrs) After lunch drive to Pemayangste, West sikkim. Overnight.

Day 03: Pemayangste

Visit the Pemayangtse Monastery. This is a premier monastery of Sikkim built in the 17th century. A short walk to Sangachoeling Monastery (2km/45mins) located on a hillock above the hotel. On a clear day the view of the mountain range is breathtaking. Overnight stay.

Day 04: Pemayangste-Gangtok (1,600mts./117km/41/2hrs).

Drive through a semi tropical forest, cardamom plantation and small villages to Gangtok, the capital of Sikkim. Overnight stay.

Day 05: Gangtok

Full day Sightseeing. Visit Enchey Monastery, deer park, Government Institute of Cottage Industry, Doderul Chorten, Research Institute of Tibetology.

Day 06: Drive to Chhangu Lake, 3780 mtrs. (2 hrs drive, 40 km.) & Back to Gangtok. Overnight.

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Day 06: Drive back to from Gangtok Rumtek Monastery (2 hrs)

This magnificent monastery was built by the late Gyalwa Karmapa, the head of the Kagyu sect. Overnight.

Day 08: Gangtok-Kalimpong (1,588m/85kms/2/12hrs.)

Drive along the Rangeet River to Kalimpong. Visit flower nurseries/local monastery/handcraft center. Overnight stay.

Day 09: Drive to Paro from Kalimpong via India Bhutan border. Arrive to Paro

The first thing you will notice as you disembark is the transparent purity of air and the absence of noise. The Paro valley has kept its bucolic nature in spite of the airport and the existence of development projects. Fields, brown or green depending on the season, cover most of the valley floor, while hamlets and isolated farms dot the countryside. The houses of Paro valley are considered to be among the most beautiful in the country. Paro is believed to be one of the first valleys to have received the imprint of Buddhism.

Afternoon: Visit the National Museum (Ta-Dzong). Once the watchtower for the Rinpung Dzong, it was converted into the National Museum in 1968. The museum stands on a promontory overlooking the Paro valley in all its glory.

Visit the Paro Rinpung Dzong. A flagstone path rises gradually from a beautiful wooden bridge with shingle roofing and abutted by two guardhouses, to the Dzong. Today, the Dzong is the seat of the district administration as well as the home for the monastic school. The central tower (Utse) of the Dzong, with its superb woodwork, is one of the most beautiful in the nation. The Dzong was built in 1645 A.D. overnight at Paro.

Day 10: Paro Sightseeing

Morning drive to Drugyel Dzong (a ruined fortress – 16 km away from Paro town). The Dzong, although in ruins, holds great historical significance. It was from this fortress that the Bhutanese repelled many Tibetan invasions. The name means the victorious Bhutanese. This spot offers a magnificent vista of Mount Chomolhari, “Mountain of Goddess” (7329 m). Visit a typical Bhutanese farmhouse on the way back. A short distance south of the road is Kyichu Lhakhang. This temple is said to have been built in 659 by King Songtsen Gampo of Tibet. It holds down the left foot of an ogress whose body is so large that it covers Bhutan and most of eastern Tibet. Overnight at Thimphu.

Day 11: Thimphu Sightseeing

Thimphu lies in a wooded valley, sprawling up a hillside on the West Bank of the Thimphu Chhu [Chhu means River]. Thimphu is unlike any otherworld capital. Small and secluded the city is quiet and there are never the traffic jams familiar in other Asian Capitals. It is often said that Thimphu is the only world capital without traffic lights. Thimphu’s main shopping street is a delight not so much for what you can buy there, but for the picturesqueness of the architecture and national costume. Beautiful weaves in wool, silk and cotton, basketwork, silver jewellery, thangkhas and other traditional crafts of the Kingdom are available in various Handicraft Emporiums.

Morning: Visit the Memorial Chorten, a huge stupa built in memory of the third King who reigned from 1952-1972.

Visit the National Library where ancient manuscripts are preserved.

Visit the Painting School where traditional art is still preserved. Artists are taught to paint Thangkhas here (sacred Buddhist scroll).

Visit the Handicrafts Emporium where one can buy Bhutanese textiles and other arts and crafts.

Visit the Weekend market where vendors from throughout the region arrive on Friday afternoon and remain till Sunday. Here you will find indigenous goods, handicrafts, locally produced goods, etc.

Afternoon: Visit Simtokha Dzong. This is the oldest fortress in Bhutan, built in 1629 A.D. by Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal. It also houses the largest monastic schools in the country. Visit Tashichho Dzong – the main secretariat building. It is from here that the King and other prominent civil servants run the country. The Head Abbot and the central monastic body also reside here during the summer.

Visit Pangri Zampa Monastery, situated just beyond Dechencholing Palace (5 km. from Thimphu). This temple was the first residence of Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal when he arrived in Bhutan in 1616 A.D. Ngawang Chogyel, the great ancestor of the Shabdrung, built it during the first quarter of the 16th century. Overnight at Thimphu.

Day 12: Thimphu sightseeing / Punakha valley/ Wangdue Phodrang

After breakfast, we will transfer to Punakha/Wangdue. En-route stops at Dochula Pass (3150 m), 30 km from Thimphu, for tea and biscuits and enjoy a view of the Eastern Himalayan Mountains. From Dochula to Wangdue, it's another two hours drive.

Wangdue Phodrang Dzong is perched on a spur at the confluence of 02 rivers. The position of the Dzong is remarkable as it completely covers the spur and commands an impressive view over both the north-south and east-west roads. The main road climbs the length of the spur and on the left, across the river, comes the first glimpse of the picturesque village of Rinchen gang whose inhabitants are celebrated stonemasons.

After lunch in Lobesa, visit the Punakha Dzong. This is the winter residence of Bhutan's spiritual leader, the Head Abbot, and the Central Monastic Body. The Dzong is built between two rivers known as "Phochu" (Male River) and "Mochu". Overnight at Wangdue.

Day 13: Wangdue Phodrang / Thimphu

After breakfast, we will drive to Metshina. On a hillock in the center of the valley below Metshina is Chimi Lhakhang (Fertility Monastery), built by lama Drukpa Kunley in 1499. He subdued the demoness of the Dochu la with his 'magic thunderbolt of wisdom.' A wooden effigy of the Lamas thunderbolt is preserved in the Lhakhang, and childless women go to the temple to receive a wang (blessing) from the saint.

It's a 20-minute walk across the rice fields from the road at Sopsokha to the temple. The trail leads across rice fields to the tiny settlement of Pana. There are very few monks at the temple, which is surrounded by a row of prayer wheels and some very beautiful slate carvings. Continue to drive to Thimphu across the Dochu la pass. Overnight at Paro.

Day 14: Thimphu sightseeing / Paro (Excursion to Taktsang Monastery)

Transfer to Paro for a 03 hrs hike to the Taktsang Monastery. Taktsang is the most famous of all Bhutanese monasteries. It is perched on the side of a cliff 900 m above the floor of the Paro valley, where the only sounds are the murmurs of the wind, water and the chanting of the monks. The name Taktsang means 'Tigers Nest'; the Guru is said to have flown on the back of a tigress to the site of the monastery where he meditated in a cave for three months.

The monastery itself is closed to tourists except by special permit. However the one-hour walk to the viewpoint, where there is a small wooden teahouse provides a close-up view of the monastery. It's also a good warm-up hike if you are going trekking. In the evening visit a farmhouse for "traditional hot stone bath" and local hospitality. Overnight at Paro.

Day 15: Departure to Kathmandu/ Delhi/ Bangkok from Paro

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