



# Bhutan - A nature and culture adventure - 20th April - 1st May 2025

📅 12 Days

📍 Locations Included

- Paro (4 nights)
- Punakha (3 nights)
- Thimphu (4 nights)

## Daily Schedule

Day	Highlights	Location
Day 1	Arrival in Paro, Paro - Transfer to Punakha	Paro Int. Airport (PBH) to Punakha
Day 2	Explore Punakha, Hike to Khamsum Yulley Namgyal monastery, Punakha Dzong, Chimi Lhakhang	Punakha
Day 3	Jiligang Pine Trail	Punakha
Day 4	Punakha - Thimphu, Rhododendron festival -Scheduled for 22-24 April	Punakha to Thimphu
Day 5	Explore Thimphu, Institute of 13 Arts and Crafts, Folk Heritage Museum, Kuensel Phodrang (Buddha Point), Tashichho-Dzong.	Thimphu
Day 6	Explore Thimphu, Dodeydra Hike	Thimphu
Day 7	Explore Thimphu, Meeting with RENEW, School of Astrology, Kaja Throm, Post Office	Thimphu
Day 8	Thimphu to Paro ( 1 hour, 20 minutes), Gawaling Happy Home, Paro Dzong, Ta Dzong	Thimphu to Paro
Day 9	Chumphu Nye Monastery Hike ( The flying Goddess Temple)	Paro
Day 10	Rest Day, Paro Town, Farmhouse visit & Lunch	Paro
Day 11	Hike to Tigers-nest Monastery	Paro
Day 12	Departure from Paro, Departure	Paro to Paro Int. Airport (PBH)

## Detailed itinerary

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### Arrive at Paro Int. Airport (PBH), Transfer to Punakha



#### Paro - Transfer to Punakha

Private

Landing in the Paro Valley is like entering another world. Cultivated fields cover most of the valley floor, and hamlets and isolated farms dot the landscape. After arrival, your Bhutanese guide will meet you outside the terminal and accompany you to the Punakha valley.

From Thimphu, the road ascends up to the Dochu la Pass (3,050m) , where we will stop over , have a cup of tea or coffee, and the opportunity to view the peaks of the eastern Himalaya. From the pass we descend into the beautiful Punakha Valley. The drive to Punakha takes about 3 hours.

**115 kms - Approx 3 hour drive**



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*No hotels selected yet in Punakha*

## Punakha



### Explore Punakha

Private

Punakha Valley has been inextricably linked with momentous occasions in Bhutanese history. It served as the capital of the country from 1637 to 1907 and the first national assembly was hosted here in 1953. October 13, 2011 marked an unforgettable wedding of the King of Bhutan, Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck to Jetsun Pema which was held at Punakha Dzong.

Punakha valley has a pleasant climate with warm winters and hot summers. It is located at an average elevation of 1200 m above sea level. Owing to the favourable climatic conditions, rice has become the main cash crop cultivated in the region. Today after breakfast we can embark on the following excursions.



### Hike to Khamsum Yulley Namgyal monastery

Private · 2 hours

After early breakfast, set out on a beautiful day hike to Khamsum Yulley Namgyal monastery.

A 30-minute drive from the Punakha Dzong will bring you to the base of the hill on which this temple is built. From the car park, you have to cross a suspension bridge and walk through rice fields before you start climbing a moderately inclined trail surrounded by pine trees. It takes about 1 hour from the car park to hike up to the temple, and 30 minutes to hike down. Soak into the serene natural beauty of the area and participate in rite of lighting butter lamps in the temple.



### Punakha Dzong

Private · 30 minutes

Punakha Dzongkhag has been inextricably linked with momentous occasions in Bhutanese history. It served as the capital of the country from 1637 to 1907 and the first national assembly was hosted here in 1953. Punakha Dzong is not only the second oldest and second largest dzong but it also has one of the most majestic structures in the country.

October 13, 2011 marked an unforgettable wedding of the King of Bhutan, Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck to Jetsun Pema which was held at 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.

In addition to its structural beauty, Punakha Dzong is notable for containing the preserved remains of Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal, the unifier of Bhutan as well as a sacred relic known as the Ranjung Karsapani. This relic is a self-created image of Avalokiteswara that miraculously emerged from the vertebrae of Tsangpa Gyarey, the founder of the Drukpa School when he was cremated.



### **Chimi Lhakhang**

Private · 30 minutes

We will traverse the Punakha countryside walking through paddy fields to the Pana Village to see the 'Chimi Lhakhang' built by the great Lama Drukpa Kinley in 1400 to subdue local demons. The temple is a popular pilgrimage point for all Bhutanese and is specially revered by women for its fertility powers. It is for him that every house and shop in the nearby village is decorated with protective phallus symbols.

Inside the lhakhang you'll see the central statue of the lama and his dog Sachi, as well as statues of the Zhabdrung, Sakyamuni and a 1001-armed Chenresig. To the right is a statue of Kunley's cousin, the founder of the temple. Make a small offering and you'll be rewarded with a blessing from the lama's wooden and bone phalluses and his iron archery set. Childless women come to receive a wang (blessing or empowerment) from the saint, while mothers-to-be select their future baby's name from a collection of bamboo slips, leaving with either Chimi or Kunley as one of their child's two names. Other women carry a large wooden phallus around the building perimeter in order to boost their chances of conception.



*No hotels selected yet in Punakha*

## Punakha



### Jiligang Pine Trail

Private · 6 hours

The first step of the Jiligang hike begins from the suspension bridge over Mochu, the female river which meanders along the valley until it meets her partner Pochu (male river) forming a confluence below the Punakha Fortress, Palace of Great Bliss. The breeze of the splashing glacier river and the swinging bridge will give you a prior taste of the adventure of the beautiful hike ahead. We will enjoy a relaxed hike through traditional Bhutanese houses replete with Bhutanese farm life. Hike uphill till you reach about 1,800 meters on the hilltop through the chirpine forest.

The moderately strenuous hike is through the cool shades of pine trees and serene environment with peeping views of the Punakha Dzong and valley below. As you hike up, the aesthetic view of the meandering river and the melodic chirping of the birds will welcome you all the way. During summer, numerous species of tropical birds can be spotted. As you climb a little higher, the view of Jiligang Monastery will wash away your weariness and a gush of newfound energy will greet you along with the warm smiles of the caretakers of the temple.

The trail passes through the Yebesa village and later ascending through the Pine trees above the village. Scenic views of the Yebesa Village, Khamsum Yuellay Namgyal Chorten and the meandering Mochu river can be observed while climbing uphill above the Yebesa village. Along the trail breathing scenic views of the meandering

Mochu river, Lakhu village, Kabesa village and Kabji Chorten Nyinpo Lhakhang can be observed at the other side of the Mochu River. Most prominent is the Punakha Dzong view.

Jiligang Lhakhang : It was built by Lam Ngawang Chogyel in the 15 th Century. According to legend , the name of the Lhakhang has been derived from the event when Lam Drukpa Kuenley asked his cousin brother

Lam NgawangChogyel to prove his spiritual attainment. In response to it Lam Ngawang Chogyel proved his spiritual attainment by sending a cat from beneath the mountain base of Sonagatsa, which came out from the top of the hill. Thus, the name 'Jili' which means cat and the 'gang' means mountain and when put together it means

'Jiligang' which means Cat Mountain.

From the hilltop you can enjoy 360 degree views of the nearby mountains, nine villages to be a precise and a spectacular view of the snowcapped mountains in the distance. Jiligang Monastery is believed to have the same values and blessings as Chimi Lhakhang, the Temple of Fertility located in Punakha.

Distance: Yebesa – Jiligang : 3.50 km, Jiligang – Punakha – 2.

6 kms ( 6 kms)

Altitude: 1257 m- 1820m – 1240m (Yebesa – Jiligang – Punakha)

Ascent: 536 m

Descent: 580 m

Duration: 6 hours approx



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*No hotels selected yet in Punakha*

## Punakha to Thimphu



### Punakha - Thimphu

Private

Leaving Punaka, we will drive back towards the Thimphu Valley, En route, we again cross the Dochu la Pass, where we can take in the views and visit the Dochu la Monastery and the superb cluster of 108 chortens. We descend to Thimphu after a drive of about 3 hours. (74 kms)

After arriving in Thimphu we will cover a few interesting sites or you may have the afternoon at leisure.



### Rhododendron festival -Scheduled for 22-24 April

Private

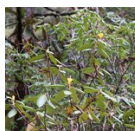
The Lamperi Rhododendron Festival is an annual celebration held amidst the breathtaking beauty of Lamperi Nature Park in Bhutan. Located below the scenic Dochula Pass, approximately 35 kilometers outside Thimphu on the way to Punakha, this festival is a vibrant showcase of Bhutan's rich biodiversity and cultural heritage.

First initiated in 2013, the festival is a tribute to the kingdom's diverse rhododendron species, with Bhutan boasting an impressive 46 varieties. Beyond its floral spectacle, the Lamperi Rhododendron Festival aims to promote eco-tourism and environmental conservation in the region.

Organized by the Nature Recreation and Ecotourism Division (NRED) of the Department of Forests and Park Services in collaboration with the local community group, Meto Pelri Tshogpa, the festival offers a multifaceted experience. Visitors are treated to traditional Bhutanese music and dance performances, providing a glimpse into the country's rich cultural heritage. Additionally, a variety of local delicacies are available, allowing guests to savor the flavors of Bhutanese cuisine.

However, the Lamperi Rhododendron Festival is more than just a celebration of nature and culture. It serves as a platform to raise awareness about environmental conservation and the importance of preserving Bhutan's pristine ecosystems. Through guided nature walks, educational exhibits, and interactive workshops, attendees gain a deeper understanding of the delicate balance between humans and the natural world.

Overall, the Lamperi Rhododendron Festival offers a unique opportunity to immerse oneself in the splendor of Bhutan's natural landscapes while celebrating the kingdom's rich cultural heritage. It is a testament to Bhutan's commitment to sustainable development and the preservation of its unique identity in harmony with nature.





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*No hotels selected yet in Thimphu*

# Thimphu



## Explore Thimphu

Private · 0 hours

Today, we will explore Thimphu, according to your own interests. The following are options for this day, which we will discuss with the group at the time to see which ones suit and the timings and order of the visits.



## Institute of 13 Arts and Crafts

Private · 30 minutes

Opened in June 1997, the institute reflects Bhutan's effort to provide opportunities for vocational training and preserve the arts and crafts of Bhutan. The National Institute of Zorig Chusum is the centre for Bhutanese Art education. Painting is the main theme of the institute, which provides 4–6 years of training in Bhutanese traditional art forms. The curricula cover a comprehensive course of drawing, painting, wood carving, embroidery, and carving of statues.



## Folk Heritage Museum

Private · 30 minutes

Folk Heritage Museum. This museum gives you a glimpse into traditional Bhutanese life. It displays an impressive collection of typical household objects, tools, and equipment. There are regular demonstrations of rural traditions, skills, habits, and customs, as well as educational programs for children.



## Kuensel Phodrang (Buddha Point)

Private · 30 minutes

The Buddha Dordenma is located atop a hill in Kuenselphodrang Nature Park and overlooks the Southern entrance to Thimphu Valley. The statue fulfils an ancient prophecy dating back to the 8th century A.D that

was discovered by Terton Pema Lingpa (Religious Treasure Discoverer) and is said to emanate an aura of peace and happiness to the entire world.

This massive statue of Shakyamuni measures in at a height of 51.5 m, making it one of the largest statues of Buddha in the world. The statue is made of bronze and is gilded in gold. 125,000 smaller Buddha statues have been placed within the Buddha Dordenma statue; 100,000 statues of which are 8-inches-tall and 25,000 statues of which are 12 inches tall. Each of these thousands of Buddhas have also been cast in bronze and gilded. The throne that the Buddha Dordenma sits upon is a large meditation hall.



### **Tashichho-Dzong.**

Private · 30 minutes

Also known as the 'fortress of the glorious religion', this dzong was initially built in 1641, and later rebuilt in its present form by King Jigme Dorji Wangchuk in 1965. The Dzong houses the main secretariat building with the Throne Room of His Majesty the King of Bhutan. The National Assembly Hall is housed in a modern building on the other side of the river. In the evening, take a walk along Thimphu's high street and get a feel for the culture of this small capital city



*No hotels selected yet in Thimphu*

## Thimphu



### Explore Thimphu

Private · 0 hours

Today, we will explore Thimphu , according to your own interests. The following are options for this day , which we will discuss with the group at the time to see which ones suit and the timings and order of the visits.



### Dodeydra Hike

Private

This beautiful monastery school hidden in the pristine valley above Thimphu town is excellent half day hike option. Apart form main temple with interesting mural paintings, there is also small museum with unusual artefacts. Monks speaks good English and will be happy to show you around. Nice hiking trail starts above Dechencholing while descend is better to Jungshina. Round trip takes about 5 hours for average hiker including the sightseeing on the spot.



*No hotels selected yet in Thimphu*

## Thimphu



### Explore Thimphu

Private · 0 hours

Today, we will explore Thimphu, according to your own interests. The following are options for this day, which we will discuss with the group at the time to see which ones suit and the timings and order of the visits.



### Meeting with RENEW

Private

Founded by Her Majesty the Queen Mother Sangay Choden Wangchuk in 2004, RENEW (Respect, Educate, Nurture and Empower Women) is a not-for-profit organisation which is the program partner of the Australian Himalayan Foundation in its vital and effective girls education and vocational training programs in Bhutan.



### School of Astrology

Private · 30 minutes

The Pangri Zampa Lhakhang was founded in the early 16th century, this riverside monastery complex houses Bhutan's most important college for traditional astrology. Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal stayed here after he arrived in Bhutan in 1616 because the temple appeared in the vision that directed him from Tibet. It's a photogenic stop even if none of the chapels are open, and the whitewashed buildings have colourful curtains on their eaves that ripple like the dress of a flamenco dancer in the breeze. Bhutanese parents visit this Lhakhang to get blessings for their newborns.



### Kaja Throm

Private

A line of stalls selling fresh seasonal fruits, vegetables and incense begins from the parking area of the old market and extends all the way to the VAST building. You can also see some stalls selling cereals, animal products and flowers. The covered pathway provides shelter for both vendors and shoppers alike from the natural elements. Even the sides of the footpath have various art installations by VAST Bhutan that seem to bring excitement to the little ones accompanying their parents. A small crepe station is also situated along the pathway next to wooden benches.

The Riverside market is a popular spot in Thimphu for families; locals can now do their weekly grocery shopping and, at the same time enjoy the various facilities available at the market. It tends to get more crowded towards the evening on the weekends.



### **Post Office**

Private · 30 minutes

Philatelists will be interested in the museum attached to the post office. Five galleries trace the development of the Bhutanese postal system, from the earliest mail runners to Bhutan's idiosyncratic and highly collectible modern stamps. Importantly, you can get your photo put on a Bhutanese stamp, and then use it to send mail back to friends.



## **Optional Activity**

Your specialist has selected this for you to consider.



### **Wangditse Lhakhang Hike**

Private · 2 hours

A great/easy acclimatization hike, To reach the monastery there are multiple routes and people can start from zilukha Nunnery, or Dechenphodrang Lhakhang, or from Sangaygang popularly known as BBS tower which is the most popular that hikers take. From Sangaygang it takes about 45 minutes to reach Wangditse Lhakhang and can exit from Dechenphodrang too. It is an easy hike with very less ascent or descent unless you decide to exit from Dechenphodrang. If you exit from Dechenphrang then its completely downhill from Wangditse Lhakhang which will take about 25 minutes.

The trail transverses through the mixed forest of Blue pine, rhododendrons, oak and other shrubs. And offers beautiful views of Thimphu city along with the Tashicho Dzong, the biggest fortress in the country.

The lhakhang houses the statues of the guardian deities Yeshey Goenpo (Mahakala), Palden Lhamo (Mahakali) and Tsheringma (the goddess of longevity). This Hillside Goemba was founded in 1750 but renovated in 2001.



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*No hotels selected yet in Thimphu*

## Thimphu to Paro



### Thimphu to Paro ( 1 hour, 20 minutes)

Private

The drive to Paro from Thimphu is about 55 km. The western branch of lateral highway from Thimphu, runs close to the Wangchu river in the valley floor, through the suburbs and villages of Thimphu to arrive at the river confluence of Chuzom, which is also the hub of road network going to Paro, Haa, Thimphu and Phuntsholing. From Chuzom, it is north-west for about 20 minutes, following Pa Chu river upstream, passing Tachogang temple on the other side of the river, then through relatively straight road, into the villages and farm houses of Paro valley.



### Gawaling Happy Home

Private

The RENEW Gawaling Happy Home provides an environment of physical and psychological safety for individuals - particularly girls and women - and families. The Happy Home offers counselling, legal aid and (where needed) emergency medical aid, crisis intervention, medication practices, and many livelihood training streams. AHF is proud to assist RENEW in regard to Happy Home operations, helping support and empower those affected by domestic, sexual and gender-based violence through its scholarship program (A visit to the Happy Home will be dependent on operational and security circumstances) .



### Paro Dzong

Private · 30 minutes

Also called Rinpung Dzong, the Fortress of a Heap of Jewels. Constructed in the early 15th century as a diminutive fort, it was presented to the religious and political authority of Shabdrung Ngawang, who developed it into a much more commanding fortress in 1646. This is, without a doubt, one of the kingdom's finest examples of traditional Bhutanese architecture. Once, great catapults here flung stones at invading Tibetans. Today the Dzong houses a monastic school. Two hundred resident monks take meals in a communal room. Several interesting paintings here include an unusual Bhutanese interpretation of a mandala, a diagram of the cosmos.







## Ta Dzong

Private · 30 minutes

Ta dzong (watchtower), built in 1649 to protect the undefended dzong and renovated in 1968 to house the National Museum. The unusual round building is said to be in the shape of a conch shell, with 2.5m-thick walls. Displays include an impressive collection of thangkas, both ancient and modern, depicting Bhutan's important saints and teachers, as well as fearsome festival masks grouped according to their tsechu dances. There's a natural-history gallery with a 3D map of Bhutan, while the Heritage Gallery contains such oddities as an egg laid by a mule and a horse horn attributed to Guru Rinpoche, plus a few original iron links from the iron bridge at Tamchhog. An underground tunnel is said to lead from the watchtower to the water supply below.



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*No hotels selected yet in Paro*



### Chumphu Nye Monastery Hike ( The flying Goddess Temple)

Private · 7 hours

Chumphu Nye is located on a secluded hilltop, detached from civilization. It is located at an elevation of 2800-2900 meters.

The total walking distance is approximately 14 km and takes around 4 to 5 hours to reach the monastery depending on your walking pace. The hike will begin at the sacred "Zee Go" opening gate formed by two special rocks.

The trail is a bit longer than the hike to the Tiger's Nest, and moderately strenuous, but less of an ascent. The pleasant hike through an enchanting forest, follows a beautiful river until you reach a Stupa (Chorten). The walk is on flat land with little gradient until the last part of the trail at a bridge located at the base of the hill. The last

hundred meters incline up to the monastery is fairly steep. During spring season, you can see rhododendron flowers, mountain lilies and other rare floral species blooming beautifully.

The sacred site is popularly known for the floating statue of Dorji Phamo (Vajravarahi). This 3191m statue is inexplicably floating in the air which the visitors can witness upon reaching the monastery. Some visitors test the belief by swiping a money note below the goddess' feet and see it passing through smoothly.

Legend has it

that when the statue was discovered from the lake, the statue was only about a foot tall. It is said that the statue magically grew to the present height and was placed in the Lhakhang as the main statue. The lake from where the statue was discovered is above the monastery.

The most enchanting thing about the statue is that it is not a manmade statue but Dorji Phamo herself who turned into this statue. It is believed that prayers and wishes made to the statue are bound to come true. The temple also has some exquisite wall murals depicting various saints and buddhist masters. A further 10-minute walk behind the monastery leads to a sacred waterfall (3246m) and a pool connected to Guru Rinpoche. A typical descent from Chumphu Nye takes about 3 hours.

Chumphu Nye Monastery

Altitude: (2200 m - 2900m)

Ascent: 700 m

Distance: 9 kms

Approx: 7 hours



*No hotels selected yet in Paro*

## Paro



### Rest Day

Private · 0 hours

Today is a day of leisure, at your discretion. You can choose to explore the quaint town at your own leisure or with others, and explore the market and stores for last minute shopping.



### Paro Town

Private

The charming town of Paro lies on the banks of the Paro (or Pa) Chhu, just a short distance northwest of the imposing Paro Dzong. The main street, only built in 1985, is lined with colorfully painted wooden shopfronts and restaurants, though these appear under threat as the town grows and multistorey concrete buildings continue to pop up. For now Paro remains one of the best Bhutanese towns to explore on foot and is worth an hour or two's stroll at the end of a day of sightseeing



### Farmhouse visit & Lunch

Private

Rich in history, the beautiful Paro Valley is a place where time stands still. In addition to a thriving commercial farming industry, the region is known for subsistence farming using time-honoured methods. Known fondly as the 'rice bowl' of the Bhutanese kingdom, the Paro Valley grows large amounts of red rice, the staple starch of the nation, farmed on its fertile fields and terraces. The region's commercial enterprises and family-owned farms also yield copious amounts of millet, wheat, apples, potatoes, as well as a range of seasonal vegetables native to the area. Witness the daily rituals and share an authentic Bhutanese farm lunch with the farmers and their families, washing it all down with Ara, the local rice wine.



*No hotels selected yet in Paro*



### Hike to Tigers-nest Monastery

Private · 7 hours

After breakfast, we drive around 25 minutes to Ramthanka base for a hike to view one of Bhutan's most revered pilgrimage sites in the Buddhist world, the Taktshang Lhakhang, popularly known as the "Tiger's Nest" Monastery. The trek offers spectacular views of this sacred monastery perched precariously on a sheer rock face 3000 ft above the valley floor. Legend has it that Guru Rimpoche, father of Bhutan's stream of Mahayana Buddhism arrived in the Paro valley more than a millennium ago on a back of a tigress. He meditated for 3 months in a cave which was converted into this monastery. The only sounds heard here are the murmurs of the wind, water and the chanting of monks. We begin our hike from the base to the cafeteria which will take us at least an hour and a half. From here it's about an hour's trek through some stunning landscape to reach the monastery. On our return, we stop by once more at the Cafeteria for lunch. Later, we begin our descent to Ramthanka base. The temple clinging at 3120 meters above the sea level on a vertical rocky cliff, Taktsang Monastery is a wonderful and impressive sight for visitors.

Taktsang Goenba Hike

Distance 8 km

Starting Altitude: 2200 – 3120 approx

Ascent 900m

Approx: 7 hours

Recommended: Sport shoes, Sun hat, camera, walking stick, sun glass, Umbrella if rain.

Note:

Ponies are available at an additional cost - This facility is for uphill climb/journey only and not for descent. There is the possibility of a marvellous, hot-stone bath after the Tiger's Nest walk, should this be available



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*No hotels selected yet in Paro*

## Transfer to Paro Int. Airport (PBH), Departure



### Departure from Paro

Private · 0 hours

Our guide and driver will drop you to Paro International Airport. It is essential to check - In 2 hours prior. Have a safe trip back home and we look forward to being in touch in future and re - living the fond memories.

Tashi Delek!

Hope you will visit us again!







