



## BHUTAN FALL FESTIVAL – 13 DAYS

### Detailed Itinerary

#### ||Day 01| Arrive in Paro and drive to Thimpu|

**Distance:** 53kms/ 32 miles

**Drive Time:** 1 hour approx.

**Altitude:** 2,350 m / 7,709 ft

At the Paro International Airport, one of our representatives will receive you and escort you to the hotel in Thimphu, the capital city of Bhutan. If your flight is scheduled in morning shift, we will be able to visit few places in Thimphu.

En route to Thimphu, visit **Simtokha Dzong**, which is believed to be the first dzong, built in Bhutan.

Once in Thimphu, check into the hotel. After freshening up visit the Memorial Chorten.

The **Memorial Chorten**, also known as the Thimphu Chorten is a large Tibetan-style Buddhist Monastery with golden spires and bells. It is a popular landmark and one of the most visible religious structures in Thimphu.

*Overnight at Hotel [-/L/D]*

#### ||Day 02| In Thimpu|

Morning attend the sacred **Thimphu Drubchen Festival**, popularly known as Thimphu Dromchoey, which is held in the courtyard of the Tahshichho Dzong.

This dzong is an impressive building also known as ‘the fortress of the Dharma Raja’. It has traditionally been the seat of the Druk Desi, the head of Bhutan’s civil government. The dzong was damaged in an earthquake in 1897 and was rebuilt in 1902 without using any nails or written plans.

You will see locals dressed in their finest clothes who have walked for miles to attend the festivities. While the underlying purpose of the festival is spiritual, dances are often like plays, telling stories where good triumphs over evil.



During the Drupchen, the deities are prayed to and dances are performed only by monks in costume, while in the Tsechu the dances are performed by monks and secular people.

The highlight of the day will be the Lhamoi Tshomi Kunchum, the dance dedicated to the Pelden Lhamo (female protecting deity of Bhutan, also called Maha Kale).

This afternoon, tour the city including visits to the Folk Heritage Museum, the School of Traditional Arts and Crafts and National Institute of Traditional Medicine. We will continue tomorrow visiting any places we do not get to today.

In Thimphu, visit the **Folk Heritage Museum**, the first structure to incorporate both monastic and administrative facilities. Its students are both monks and ordinary people. Also visit the **School of Traditional Arts and Crafts**. The traditional crafts represent hundreds of years of knowledge and ability that has been passed down through generations.

*Overnight at Hotel [B/L/D]*

### ||Day 03| In Thimpu|

**Distance:** 70kms/ 43 miles

**Drive Time:** 3 hours approx

**Altitude:** 1,310 m / 4,300 ft

Morning attend the sacred Thimphu Drubchen Festival, to witness a few significant religious dances.

Next, visit **Changakha Lakhang** the temple with its wonderful city's view and the oldest temple in Thimphu - built in 12th century.

After lunch, drive to Wangdue via **Dochula Pass**, the Dochula Pass offers a 360-degree of beautiful panoramic view of the Himalayan mountain range, especially on clear winter days.

Once arriving in Wangdue, check into the hotel. Later explore the town and farm houses.

*Overnight at Hotel [B/L/D]*



## ||Day 04| In Wangdue|

In the morning we go to an army ground, a five minute walk from the Dzong to observe **Wangdue Tsechu Festival**. 'Tse' means Date and 'Chu' meaning the Tenth is a religious festival conducted annually coinciding on the 10th day of the 10th month of the Bhutanese calendar.

Built in 1639, the **Wangdi Dzong** is the dzong of Wangdue Phodrang, which held a powerful position during the pre-monarchy days.

Afterwards, drive about 2 hours to the entrance of Phobjikha Valley, the **Phobjika Valley** is a vast U-shaped glacial valley, also known as the Gangteng Valley named after the impressive Gangteng Monastery. Further we continue an hour drive to Gangtey, a beautiful village at an altitude of 3000m. From Gangtey, one can closely view the picturesque black mountain ranges.

After freshening up, visit **Gangtey Gompa** the largest Nyingma Monastery in Bhutan.

*Overnight at Hotel [B/L/D]*

## ||Day 05| Drive to Trongsa|

**Drive Time (Gangtey-Trongsa):** 4.5-5 hours approx.

**Drive Time (Trongsa-Bumthang):** 2.5 hours approx.

After breakfast, we begin our drive to Trongsa. Trongsa meaning 'the new village' in Bhutanese comprises of retreats, temples and hermitages of monks. En route we can stop at the **Chendibji** stupa which is built in the style of the Boudhanath stupa in Nepal.

Further take a pleasant drive to **Bumthang**, one the most spectacular valleys in Bhutan and also the spiritual and historical heartland of the country.

Enjoy a visit to the Chumney weavers' workshop. Here you can see example of Bumthang's noted textiles.

*Overnight at Hotel B/L/D]*



## ||Day 06|In Bumthang|

After breakfast proceed to **Tamshing Village** to enjoy the **Tamshing Phala Chhoepa Festival**.

After lunch visit **Tamshing Lhakhang**. The Tamshing Lhakhang located across the river from Kurje Lhakhang and was founded in 1501 by Terton Pema Lingpa, re-incarnation of Guru Padmasambhava. In the evening, visit the **Mebar Tsho** (or The Burning Lake) more of a gorge than a lake.

Transfer back to the hotel.

*Overnight at Hotel [B/L/D]*

## ||Day 07|In Bumthang|

Visit several ancient sites and important monasteries in Bumthang.

Visit **Chakhar (Iron Castle) Lhakhang**, the site of the palace of the Indian King Sindhu Raja who invited Guru Rimpoche to Bumthang. The original palace was made of iron and hence the name Chakhar.

We visit several ancient and important monasteries such as Kurjey Lhakhang, Jambey Lhakhang and Jakar Dzong.

**Kurje Lhakhang** located further along the valley comprises of three temples. The one on the right was built in 1652 by Trongsa Penlop (Governor of Trongsa) against the rock face where Guru Padmasambhava meditated in the 8th century.

**Jambay Lhakhang**, built in the 7th century is the oldest monastery in the country.

**Jakar Dzong**, which means ‘Fortress of the White Bird’, is the first place in Bhutan that Guru Rinpoche visited and subsequently as the ruler converted into Buddhism. Jakar is also considered as the birth place of Buddhism in Bhutan.

*Overnight at Hotel [B/L/D]*



## ||Day 08| Day excursion to Ura Valley|

**Distance:** 50kms/ 31 miles

**Drive Time:** 2.5 hours approx. (both way)

**Altitude:** 3,100 m / 10,170 ft

Day excursion to the **Ura Valley**, the highest valley in Bumthang and is said to have been home to the earliest inhabitants of Bhutan. Cobbled streets, villages and farm houses give this place a medieval feel with an unusual attractive atmosphere.

After visiting Ura Valley and its surroundings, drive back to Bumthang and transfer to your hotel.

*Overnight at Hotel [B/L/D]*

## ||Day 09| Drive to Trongsa|

**Distance:** 68kms/ 42 miles

**Drive Time:** 2 hours approx.

After breakfast, drive to Trongsa. Later visit Trongsa Dzong.

In Trongsa, visit the majestic **Trongsa Dzong**. The Trongsa Dzong is a very important part of the Bhutanese history since the present ruling dynasty in Bhutan was established from here.

*Overnight at Hotel [B/L/D]*

## ||Day 10| Drive to Punakha|

**Distance:** 142kms/ 88 miles

**Drive Time:** 6 hours approx

**Altitude:** 1,300 m / 4,265 ft

We start early today and drive to Punakha via Pelela Pass.



In Punakha, visit **Punakha Dzong**. The majestic Punakha Dzong is also known as 'the palace of great happiness or bliss' and is the second largest dzong in Bhutan.

**Chimi Lhakhang**, flanked with hundreds of prayer flags sits on a round hillock near Punakha. The monastery, built in 1499 is dedicated to Lama Drukpa Kinley, also known as 'the Divine Madman' or the 'Mad Saint'.

*Overnight at Hotel [B/L/D]*

### ||Day 11|Drive to Paro|

**Distance:** 143kms/ 88 miles

**Drive Time:** 4.5 - 5 hours approx.

**Altitude:** 2,250 m / 7,382 ft

After breakfast at the hotel, drive to Paro. Visit the National Museum and Paro Dzong.

**The National Museum of Bhutan** is a unique circular building also known as Ta-dzong which is an ancient watchtower above the Paro Dzong.

**Paro Dzong**, also known as Ringpung Dzong means 'Fortress on a heap of jewels'. This impressive dzong is the finest example of Bhutanese architecture and is one of the most popular and well known dzongs in Bhutan.

*Overnight at Hotel [B/L/D]*

### ||Day 12|In Paro|

**Hike Duration:** 4.5 hours approx. (round trip)

Today we will hike to Taktsang Monastery and later visit Drukgyel Dzong and Kyichu Lakhang

**Taktsang Monastery:** Perched on the side of a vertical cliff at 3000 m altitude north of Paro, the beautiful Taktsang Monastery also known as the 'Tiger's Nest' is the most famous and an unofficial symbol of Bhutan.

**The Drukgyel Dzong** was an administrative centre till 1951, until a fire caused by a butter lamp engulfed the Dzong and completely destroyed it. All that remains of the



Dzong now are tokens of a haunted house, still robust walls and charred remains of gigantic wooden posts and beams.

**Kyichu Lhakhang:** Located close to the Paro Airport, the Kyichu Lhakhang is an important Himalayan Buddhist Temple. Built in the 7th century, this is one of Bhutan's oldest religious sites in Bhutan.

*Overnight at Hotel [B/L/D]*

### ||Day 13|Final Departure |

Today you will be transferred to the airport for your onward journey.

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