

# Welcome to Bhutan



## **6 Days 5 Nights Bhutan Tour** (ATBTN-6)

### ***A Glimpse of Bhutan***

A Glimpse of Bhutan is an ideal way to experience the glory and the myth of this Himalayan Kingdom at its most magnificent – a perfect blend of culture and nature exploration. It gives you a chance to meet people, enjoy the pristine forest with rare glimpse of wildlife and observe the ancient old traditions of arts and crafts while traveling through the less frequented areas of Bhutan.

### ***Day 01: Hong Kong - Bangkok***

Flying to Bangkok & stay 1 night.

Overnight –Novotel Suvarnabhumi Airport (<http://www.novotel.com/gb/hotel-6183-novotel-bangkok-suvarnabhumi-airport/index.shtml>)

### ***Day 02: Bangkok - Paro***

Flying into the country's only airport, in the beautiful Paro valley, the clear mountain air, forested ridges, imposing monasteries and welcoming Bhutanese people in their striking national dress, provides a breath-taking first impression.

On arrival at Paro airport, after immigration and custom formalities, your guide from Bhutan Excursions for the trip will receive you and transfer you to the hotel.

This beautiful valley encapsulates a rich culture, scenic beauty and hundreds of myths and legends. It is home to many of Bhutan's oldest temples and monasteries, the country's only airport, and the National Museum. Mt. Jhomolhari (7,300m) reigns in white glory at the northern end of the valley, its glacial waters plunging through deep gorges to form the Pa Chu (Paro River). The Paro valley is one of the kingdom's most fertile, producing the bulk of Bhutan's famous red rice from its terraced fields.

After having a bit of relaxation in the hotel, we'll visit the following places in Paro:

***Drukgyel Dzong:*** This Dzong, with a picturesque village nestling below its ramparts, was built by Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal in 1646, to commemorate his victory over the Tibetan invaders. Though largely destroyed by fire in 1951, the towering outer walls and central keep remain an imposing sight. On a clear day, there is a splendid view of Mt. Jhomolhari from the approach road to Drukgyel Dzong.

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**Rinpung Dzong:** Built in 1646 by Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal, the “fortress of the heap of jewels” stands on a hill above Paro Township. The approach to the Dzong is through a traditional covered bridge (called the Nemi Zam) and then up a paved stone path running alongside the imposing outer walls. The valley’s annual springtime religious festival, the Paro Tsechu, takes place in the courtyard of the Dzong and on the dance ground on the hillside above.

**Ta Dzong:** On a ridge immediately above Rinpung Dzong is Ta Dzong, built as a watchtower to protect Rinpung Dzong. (“Ta” means “to see” in Dzongkha, so the watchtower of a Dzong is always called a “Ta Dzong”). On account of their function, watchtowers are always round in shape.

In 1968 Paro’s Ta Dzong was inaugurated as the National Museum, and now holds a fascinating collection of art, relics, religious thangka paintings, Bhutan’s exquisite postage stamps, coins and handicrafts, together with a small natural history collection.

**Kyichu Lhakhang:** This Lhakhang, built in the 7th century, is one of the two oldest and most sacred shrines in Bhutan (the other being Jambey Lhakhang in Bumthang). Kyichu Lhakhang is composed of twin temples. The first temple was built by the Tibetan king, Songtsen Gampo in the 7th century. In 1968, H.M. Ashi Kesang, the Queen Mother of Bhutan, arranged for a second temple to be built alongside the first one, in same style.

**Farm Houses:** The natural beauty of Paro valley is enhanced by picturesque farm houses dotted about the fields and on the hillsides. The two to three-storied Bhutanese farm houses are handsome in appearance, with colorfully decorated outer walls and lintels, and are traditionally built without the use of single nail. All houses follow the same architectural style. A visit to a farm house gives an interesting glimpse into the lifestyle of a farming family.

Altitude at Paro: 2300m

Overnight – Tenzinling Resort in Paro ([www.tenzinling.com.bt](http://www.tenzinling.com.bt))

## **Day 03: Hike to Taktsang (Tiger’s Nest) Monastery**

Today, we hike up to the famous cliff-hermitage called Taktsang, the “Tiger’s Nest.” This monastic retreat is built into a sheer cliff face high above the Paro valley. Legend has it that the Tibetan Buddhist saint Padmasambhava flew across the Himalayas on the back of a tiger and landed here, bringing Buddhism to Bhutan. The trail to the monastery climbs through beautiful pine forest and an occasional grove of fluttering prayer flags.

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After visiting what is known as one of the most venerated pilgrimage sites in the country, we will go off the beaten track further up to the temples that are on the hill tops above Tiger's Nest. It's so peaceful there and you can really communicate with nature as you enjoy the views from the top be it that of mountains or the valley. No wonder that some monks have chosen this place to meditate for their life! To go down, we are following a different path that takes us through the pristine thick forest of oaks and rhododendrons festooned with Spanish mosses.

Approximate Walking time: 06 hours. Altitude at Paro: 2300m

Overnight – Tenzinling Resort in Paro ([www.tenzinling.com.bt](http://www.tenzinling.com.bt))

## ***Day 04: Paro – Thimphu***

We will take a drive to Thimphu which is perhaps the most unusual capital city in the world, is the seat of government, home to Bhutan's royal family, the civil service, and foreign missions with representation in Bhutan. It is also the headquarters for a number of internationally funded development projects. Thimphu has a special charm and it is fascinating to sit and watch a gathering of local people in the town square, wearing their traditional dress and going about their business in a typically unhurried Bhutanese way.

The sightseeing in Thimphu includes; Visit to the ***Institute of Traditional Medicine***; Bhutan has long and rich tradition of medicine based on natural remedies derived mainly from plants and earth, and some animals. This institute has facility for out patients, training, research and production of traditional medicine. The courses to become traditional doctors, called drungtsho, entail six to eight years of strenuous study after high school. The institute has an exhibition room that imparts excellent look into the tradition.

Visit to the School of ***Traditional Arts and Crafts***, the school offers a six-year course in the techniques of traditional art in religious and secular paintings, woodcarving, clay sculpture and traditional mask making. One can see students working through progressive levels practicing precise rules of Bhutanese art. The school also has a showroom from where student works are sold at very reasonable price compared to town for same quality of work.

Visit to the ***Folk Heritage Museum***; established in 2001, this is an interesting museum housed in a very old traditional house. The museum is a walk through the fast changing rural tradition, habits and skills, and those of the past. They organize special exhibitions annually on select subject pertaining to Bhutanese heritage.

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Visit the **National Memorial Chorten**; the building of this landmark was originally envisaged by Bhutan's third king, His Majesty Jigme Dorji Wangchuck, who had wanted to erect a monument to world peace and prosperity. Completed in 1974 after his untimely death, it is both a memorial to the Late King ("the father of modern Bhutan"), and a monument to peace.

Visit the government-run **Handicrafts Emporium** and privately owned crafts shops, which offer a wide range of handcrafted products, including the splendid thangka paintings and exquisitely woven textiles for which Bhutan is famous.

Approximate driving time: 01 hour. Altitude at Thimphu: 2400m

Overnight – Jomolhari Hotel in Thimphu ([hoteljumolhari.com](http://hoteljumolhari.com))

## **Day 05: Chele La Ridge Hike**

This morning, we will take a drive to Chele La (3750m) via Paro, the highest motor able pass in the country and hike up along the meadow to Kung Karpo La (4100m). Weather permitting; we will enjoy the breathtaking views of the snowcapped mountains while walking above the tree line along the ridge that divides Paro and Ha valley. The short steep descent from the top will take us to the nunnery of Kila Gompa. Here the nuns, called anims, live a life of contemplation and seclusion, with daily prayer and spiritual practice. The temple itself is surrounded by numerous meditation huts, and many hidden caves lie inside the rocky cliffs.

The gompa is surrounded by a lush forest dominated by tall firs. Sparkling mountain streams wind down the slopes, which are covered with a variety of wildflowers and plants.

About 30 anims, or nuns, live here, ranging in age from about 20 to 80 years. The community is one of the oldest of seven nunneries in Bhutan, and was initially established in the early 9th century as a meditation site. After being destroyed by fire, the temple was rebuilt and officially established in 1986 as an anim dratshang (religious community of Buddhist nuns).

Kila Gompa is historically significant as a sacred meditation site. Many renowned Buddhist saints have come here to find peace and seclusion. The main temple houses ancient statues of Chenrezig (Avalokiteswara) and Guru Rinpoche (Padmasambhava) among others.

Life here is simple. The day begins and ends with prayers. The anims arise at 3 AM and study Buddhist scripture until 8 AM when they go to the temple for prayers. The first simple meal of the day (rice, vegetables and tea) is eaten at 10 AM, after which studies continue until 9 PM when a simple supper is served. The nuns retire after a final session of prayer. Most of the nuns have given up

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properties and left their families to live with the bare minimum of material things. Their studies and subsistence are supported by the government.

Some of the older nuns have retired into meditation, while many of the younger ones pursue basic Buddhist studies and perform religious ceremonies. The course takes 5-6 years, after which they begin meditation, which can range from four months to three years. One young nun, when asked why she had chosen this life, replied “There is peace in thinking about others, apart from yourself.” Another said “If I was given back my youth, I would still choose this life but I would start it earlier. I have never been more at peace with myself.”

The walk down from here to the road is lined with small white chortens and it will take us about an hour.

Approximate walking time: 05 hours. Altitude at Paro: 2300m

Overnight: Tenzinling Resort in Paro ([www.tenzinling.com.bt](http://www.tenzinling.com.bt))

## ***Day 06: Paro - Bangkok – Hong Kong***

After breakfast in the hotel, drive to the airport in time to catch up your onward flight. Your escort from Bhutan Excursions will bid you farewell and soon the remote and legendary Dragon Kingdom disappears again behind its guardian mountains. You can choice stay behind at Bangkok or same day back to Hong Kong.

***GOOD LUCK & TASHI DELEK!***