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Bhutan Highlights and Domkhar festival – 11 DAYS

22 April to 2 May 2026

USD5500 twin share/single supplement USD500

Bhutan is a **mystical, spiritual kingdom** with unique customs, breathtaking landscapes, and deeply rooted traditions.

Day 1 - Wednesday, 22 April: Arrival in Bhutan – A Majestic Welcome

Arrive in the mystical, magical Kingdom of Bhutan through the awe-inspiring Paro International Airport, set against the backdrop of a lush valley at 2,280 meters! Your adventure begins with a scenic drive through the picturesque Paro and Thimphu river valleys to the bustling capital of Thimphu (2,320 meters), just an hour away. En route, we stop to marvel at the Tamchhog Lhakhang, a stunning temple dedicated to Bhutan's legendary iron bridge builder. We will walk through the Craft Bazaar which has an array of stalls run by local handicraft shops selling purely home-made articles with no imports. Later we gather for a trip briefing to prepare you for the unforgettable experiences ahead, followed by dinner. Overnight in **Thimphu**.

Day 2 - Thursday, 23 April: Sacred Temples and Scenic Walks

Early this morning visit the huge statue of Buddha Dordenma, which commands a tremendous view of Thimphu valley. The impressive 3-storey throne holds several chapels and the body itself is filled with 125,000 smaller statues of Buddha. We drive 25 minutes to Sangaygang (Radio Tower) where we take an easy walk for about 1 hour to Druk Wangditse temple which overlooks the whole Thimphu valley. Druk Wangditse Lhakhang is one of the oldest temples in Thimphu, and is considered an important heritage site of Bhutan. After visiting the temple we walk back to Sangaygang (Radio Tower) and then visit the Takin Reserve showcasing the unique national animal, the Takin. Starting elevation – 2670 metres Highest elevation – 2670 metres Ending elevation – 2430 metres

We pay a visit to Thangthong Dewachen Nunnery, popularly known as Zilukha Nunnery, located in Zilukha just above Tashichho Dzong. It was built by the 16th emanation of Thangthong Gyelpo in 1976 and currently about 50 to 60 nuns live there. We never miss a chance to do a spot of shopping, so next stop is the Cottage and Small Industry Market offering locally made and manufactured products. We pop into the farmers market where farmers display their vegetables etc. Nearby we will visit Zangto Pelri Lhakhang - the modern chapel was built in the 1990s as a representation of Guru Rinpoche's celestial abode by Dasho Aku Tongmi, the musician who composed Bhutan's national anthem. Finish the day with a leisurely walk through the town, with its busy shops and bazaars and photogenic citizens in national dress, soaking in the magic of Bhutan's capital. Overnight in **Thimphu**.

Day 3 - Friday, 24 April: Trek to Punakha – Where Legends Walked

Set off early for an exhilarating journey to the Dochu La Pass (3,050 meters), where a warm drink and jaw-dropping views of the Himalayan range await. We embark on a moderate trek through the “Divine Madman Trail,” following in the footsteps of Drukpa Kuenley, Bhutan’s legendary saint, who came to Bhutan from Tibet in the 16th century to fulfill his destiny of suppressing evil energies. Over the coming days, you will come across a number of important cultural sites and extraordinary stories related to the life of Drukpa Kuenley.

We continue our scenic walk through lush valleys and peaceful villages, making our way to Aum Toebzam Homestay, where a traditional Bhutanese cooking class awaits. Aum Toebzam will guide you through an engaging Bhutanese cooking class where you’ll learn to prepare traditional dishes using authentic techniques and ingredients.

We continue approximately 2 hours to the old capital, Punakha - notice the change of climate and vegetation as we approach low-lying Punakha at 1250 metres. On the way we stop to visit Chimi Lhakhang (Temple of Fertility) built in the 15th century by the ‘Divine Madman’ (Lama Drukpa Kuenley) and set amongst terraced fields in the village of Sopsokha. We also visit the imposing Punakha Dzong, “Palace of Great Happiness”. Built in 1637, it is strategically placed at the confluence of two rivers, the Po Chu and the Mo Chu. Overnight in **Punakha**.

Starting elevation – 3100 metres, Highest elevation – 3100 metres, Ending elevation – 1570 metres

Day 4 - Saturday, 25 April: Into the Heart of Bhutan

Punakha to Bumthang. We drive approximately 4.5 hours to Trongsa, the gateway to central Bhutan at 2180 metres. Set amidst spectacular scenery, Trongsa Dzong, the ancestral home of Bhutan’s royal family, commands the eye from miles away. We visit Ta Dzong, the museum in the watchtower dedicated to the Wangchuk dynasty, which tells the stories of the Dzong and the valley it has watched over for centuries and features personal belongings of the Kings and Queens of Bhutan. We continue a further 2.5 hours through some of Bhutan’s most beautiful landscapes to Bumthang, an area of high valleys at 2580 to 3100 metres. Stop on the way at Zungney village in Chumey, one of Bumthang’s four valleys. Here you can watch women weaving the traditional yathras, hand-woven wool strips with geometric patterns. These are used locally to produce blankets and bedcovers or are made into warm jackets for the cold winters. Browse the local shops that sell the yathras and buy directly from the makers. Overnight in **Bumthang**.

Day 5 - Sunday, 26 April: Beekeeping and Ancient Temples

This morning, we have an interesting visit to a local beekeeper from the Bee Keeping Cooperative - an initiative dedicated to promoting sustainable agriculture and supporting local communities. The cooperative specializes in producing high-quality honey and other bee-related products, contributing to the region’s economy while fostering environmental conservation.

We now venture into the Tang Valley, the most remote of Bumthang’s valleys, at 2700 metres where the sacred Membar Tsho (Burning Lake) awaits. This revered pilgrimage site is followed by a visit to the Tang Ogyen Choling Palace, a former aristocratic home but now a fascinating museum. We will either enjoy a picnic lunch or have lunch at Ogyen Choling Palace followed by a gentle stroll in the valley. If we are lucky there might be an archery match happening for us to see in the valley!

We journey back to Bumthang, passing through picturesque villages and past temples. We visit Ta Rimochen Lhakhang – this Nyingma monastery’s name is associated with the stripes of a tiger that are visible on the rock behind the temple. Legend holds that Guru Padmasambhava and his consorts meditated on this rock, leaving their footprints. Founded in the 14th century by Tertoen Pema Lingpa, its establishment was foretold by Longchen Rabjam. The temple was later restored by a descendant of Dorji Lingpa. The exterior features two large rocks representing male and female Garudas, and a throne seat of Guru Padmasambhava. There are also door-like markings on the rock’s face, believed to hold the keys to sacred hidden treasures. Overnight in **Bumthang**.

Day 6 - Monday, 27 April: Local Traditions and Festivals

Get ready for an immersive cultural experience as we attend the vibrant Domkhar Festival at the Domkhar temple. You will see locals dressed in their finest clothes who have walked from miles around to attend the festivities. They come to watch captivating masked dances, to pray, hear the powerful rhythms of traditional Bhutanese music, and to feast. While the underlying purpose of the festival is spiritual, dances are more often like plays, telling stories where good triumphs over evil, or depicting significant historical events, especially surrounding the life of Bhutan’s patron saint, Padmasambhava (also known as Guru Rinpoche). There is inevitably a great deal of socialising as well. The occasion provides an opportunity for people to relax and forget the daily routine, and to dress in their finest clothes and jewellery, but it is also an occasion for prayer and blessings. Later you can visit a local farmhouse for dinner allowing you to experience traditional Bhutanese village life. Those who are interested can help with cooking the evening meal. Overnight in **Bumthang**.

Day 7 - Tuesday, 28 April: Phobjikha Valley – A Remote Haven

Embark on a scenic 5-6 hour drive to Gangtey, where the Phobjikha Valley’s vast beauty and the Black Mountains beckon. Visit the historic Gangtey Gompa monastery, one of Bhutan’s oldest, and take a serene walk along the Gangtey Nature Trail (easy walk of 1.5 hrs). The valley is known for its annual visitor—the majestic black-necked cranes that arrive in November. Enjoy the peace and tranquility of this remote region before settling in for the night. Overnight in **Gangtey**.

Day 8 - Wednesday, 29 April: Return to Paro via Wangdi

Today we return to Paro, a drive of approximately 5 - 6 hours, via Wangdi. Wangdi (also known as Wangdue Phodrang) was originally considered Bhutan’s secondary capital and it commands an important central position. Wangdi Dzong was gutted by fire in June 2012, destroying in a few hours not only a magnificent building that had stood proudly for hundreds of years, but also the painstaking work that had been in progress for many months to rebuild damage from a recent earthquake using traditional construction methods. 10 years of renovation work is finally complete and it is now open to visit. After visiting the Dzong we continue to Paro where you can enjoy a relaxing afternoon wandering through the charming town’s handicraft shops and local markets. Overnight in **Paro**.

Day 9 - Thursday, 30 April: Exploring Paro’s Historic Treasures

This morning we visit Tashi Gongphel Handmade Paper factory which produces traditional Bhutanese paper from the daphne bush. You can watch the process of cooking and soaking the daphne bark before forming it into sheets of beautiful paper for pressing and drying. Here, you can also try your hand at making traditional Bhutanese paper (only available in A3 and A4 sizes). Next stop: the National Museum located in the Ta Dzong (watch tower) which was built on top of the hill above Rinpung Dzong to defend Rinpung Dzong and the Paro valley during times of war, in an

unusual circular construction resembling a conch shell. The Ta Dzong houses a magnificent collection of Bhutanese artefacts – costumes, religious paintings, arms, textiles and a fascinating collection of Bhutan stamps. From the National Museum, we take a leisurely 1-hour hike along the forested hillside to Zuri Dzong. The walk passes Gonsaka Lhakhang and then Zuri Dzong and provides wonderful views down over the valley and of Paro Dzong. Zuri Dzong dates from 1352 and is home to the valley's local protector gods. Continue your walk down to the Uma Resort junction where you turn right towards Paro Dzong and here again you should have a good view of Paro Dzong and town. Our driver will be waiting at the Paro bridge to pick us up. Later on we watch a sand mandala demonstration; you will also have the opportunity to try your hand at this. Later we will also visit the impressive Paro Rinpung Dzong, one of the finest examples of Bhutanese architecture. Overnight in **Paro**.

Day 10 - Friday, 1 May: The Sacred Tiger's Nest

Brace yourself for a challenge as you hike to the iconic Tiger's Nest Monastery (Taktshang), perched 900 meters above the valley floor. First, we drive for 20 to 45 minutes to the car park, where your hike to Tiger's Nest begins. From the car park to the cafeteria, the walk takes approx 1.5 to 2 hours. The cafeteria offers a spectacular view of the monastery and you can enjoy a cup of tea if you wish. From here, you will have the option to continue up to the monastery, which will take another 1.5 to 2 hours. Tiger's Nest is one of the most sacred places for Bhutanese people and is a highlight for many visitors. Guru Rinpoche is said to have flown to the site riding on a tigress, and he subsequently meditated there for three months. It is one of Bhutan's most holy sites, attracting pilgrims not only from Bhutan but also from neighbouring Buddhist countries.

After visiting the monastery, descend to the car park (which takes 2 to 3 hours) and drive to town for a late lunch. If the walk takes longer, we can take lunch at the cafeteria on the way down. Afterwards there should be time to visit the 7th century Kyichu Lhakhang, a temple of historical significance and one of the most sacred shrines in Bhutan.

This evening we indulge in a traditional hot stone bath, well known for its recuperative properties! Overnight in **Paro**.

Day 11 - Saturday, 2 May: Departure – Farewell to Bhutan

As your Bhutanese adventure comes to a close, your guide will accompany you to the airport, wishing you a heartfelt Tashi Delek (goodbye and good luck) as you take with you memories of this extraordinary journey!

INCLUDES

- Local English-speaking guide from arrival to departure
- All entrance fees including festival visit
- Transfers and sightseeing by Toyota Coaster bus (22 seats) or Toyota Hiace bus (7 to 9 seats) depending on group size
 - meet on arrival, airport transfers on arrival and departure and all overland transport
- Accommodation in standard hotels
- Full board throughout the trip in standard hotels and restaurants
- Hot stone bath
- Cooking class with Aum Toebzam

- Sand mandala demonstration and/or making
- Visa and permits (and all government fees and taxes)

EXCLUDES

- International flights
- Items of a personal nature such as soft drinks, alcohol, laundry and tips
- Insurance

BHUTAN VISA

We organise visas for Bhutan - we require a scanned copy of you passport (which must be valid for 6 months after the date of departure from Bhutan) and a scanned passport-sized photo, in colour, on a white background for each member of the group in order for the visa to be authorised.

NOTE: The trip price is USD5500 twin share/single supplement USD500. This price includes your SDF (Sustainable Development Fee) - a compulsory fee of USD100 per person per night. This fee supports free healthcare, education, infrastructure, and environmental conservation in Bhutan. Bhutan also regulates the number of tourists that can enter the country. We will also organise your flights into Bhutan from a neighboring country (this is an extra cost).