



## Itinerary

### 8 Day Happiness of Bhutan Small Group Tour

**\*IMPORTANT NOTE: Any extra nights, optional tours or other amendments, will not be visible on this itinerary.**

#### DAY 1: Arrive in Paro ~ Thimphu

Today you will fly in between steep Himalayan mountains and over scattered houses before landing at one of the most scenic airports in the world, where only 8 pilots are qualified to land on the 6,500m runway. Make sure you arrive in the morning.

Once you arrive and go through immigration, our representative will be waiting to receive you. We will drive to the capital-Thimphu where we will check into your hotel. After freshening up and lunch, we will venture out to see a few of Thimphu's most visited sites. National Memorial Chorten, Buddha point- where the 169 feet bronze statue of Buddha Dordenma resides, Jungshi handmade paper factory and the Takin reserve. For the remainder of the day we can walk around Thimphu town and check out the stores, bars and local hangout spots.

**National Memorial Chorten** - This is a large Tibetan style chorten built in honour of the late third king- King Jigme Dorji Wangchuck. The whitewashed chorten features elaborate mandals, statues and a shrine dedicated to the king. We will see people circumambulate the chorten throughout the day.

**Buddha Point** - The 169 feet bronze statue of the Vajra Throne Buddha is located on the way to Kuenselphodrang Nature Park. The view from the site is of the Thimphu valley, and it is an especially magical sight in the evening or early mornings. There is also the opportunity to take a short hike inside the nature park where the great fourth King is often sighted.

**Jungshi handmade factory** - We will be able to view the ancient process of traditional papermaking out of local tree species- Daphne and Dhekap. The traditional paper- Deh-sho was used by monks to write prayers and for printing back in the day. There will be opportunities to make your own paper or even choose from a range of different kinds of paper and souvenirs at their charming shop.

**Takin reserve** - The drive up to the Takin reserve is through dense pine trees where the local are often seen on walks. The Takin is the national animal of Bhutan known as "Drong Gemtse". They are said to look like a cross between a gnu and a bison. This was originally a minizoo but the king did not like the idea of such a facility so he set them free. However, they were seen around town looking for food hence the only solution was to put them at the reserve. You may also be able to spot a few barking deer.

**MEALS:** Lunch, Dinner

**OVERNIGHT:** Hotel Amodhara, Thimphu

#### DAY 2: Thimphu

We will explore more of what Thimphu has to offer. Our day will start off with an early morning visit to the Trashichhoe Dzong. Followed by a visit to the National Institute for Zorig Chusum commonly known as the “painting school” where craftsmen are taught Bhutan’s 13 traditional arts. The craft demonstrations are a photographer’s dream. We also offer separate private classes with individual craftsmen from our network if guests are interested. We will stop for lunch at one of our personal favourite restaurant for a typical Bhutanese meal. In the afternoon, we will tour the Folk heritage museum where you will be able to get a taste of life in rural Bhutan after which we will head to the Royal Textile Academy for a culturally rich experience in our national art of weaving. Our evening will be left flexible so guests have the choice of either going back to their hotel to rest and avail the many R&R services, or go on a walking tour of Thimphu where we will be able to visit the handicraft stores, the Changlimithang ground or the VAST art exhibition center.

*Tip: Take part in one of the many workshops to experience and learn more about the Bhutanese art and culture from the finest individuals.*

**MEALS:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**OVERNIGHT:** Hotel Amodhara, Thimphu

### DAY 3: Thimphu ~ Punakha

We will drive to Punakha in the morning. Punakha served as the old capital of Bhutan for over 300 years. However, before the journey we will visit Kundeyling Baazam, which is opposite the weekend market. You will be able to indulge in some shopping in the many stalls selling clothing, wooden bowls, beads and prayer wheels. Visiting the weekend centenary farmer’s market is also an option for a truly Bhutanese experience. We will then leave for Punakha, making a stop at Dochula pass to admire the majestic Himalayan mountains and the stunning 108 stupas at the Druk Wangyal Chorten built in memory of the Bhutanese soldiers that were killed in the 2003 battle against the Assamese militants. We will stop here for lunch.

After, we will drive for another hour before arriving at the Punakha dzong, situated in the middle of two river- Pho chhu and Mo Chhu. This is the second oldest and arguably the most beautiful Dzong in the country. Following this, we will check in to our hotel and then venture out to visit the Khamsum Yuley Namgyal Chorten which was built on the order of the third Queen Mother and it is dedicated to the fifth king. It is a 45 minute hike that starts by crossing a suspended footbridge adorned with colourful prayer flags and along the trail you will find yourselves amongst tingye (flower pepper) plants, fields of chilies and beans. After, we will head back to our hotel to rest for the night.

**MEALS:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**OVERNIGHT:** Hotel Pema Karpo, Punakha

### DAY 4: Punakha ~ Wangdue ~ Gangtey

We will start off early towards Phobjikha also known as Gangtey, which is a bowl shaped glacial valley known for its black-necked cranes who migrate here in the winter. On the way we will stop at Chimmi Lhakhang, dedicated to Lama Drukpa Kuenlay. The temple is known as a fertility temple where women often go to pray and it is believed that they get pregnant after. We will continue our drive which will include

passing the Wangdue town. The Wangdue Dzong once stood atop the ridge between the PunakTsang Chhu and the Dang Chhu. Currently, we are only able to see the reconstruction because the Dzong was destroyed by a fire in 2012. As we drive towards Gangtey we enter central Bhutan. This valley borders the Jigme Singye Wangchuck National park and it is considered one of the most important wildlife reserves in the country to see the famous black-necked cranes as well wild boars, sambars, himalayan Black bears, leopards and red foxes in the nearby hills. We will visit the Gangtey Goemba and the Black-necked crane information centre. After our long day, we will head back to the hotel for the night.

**MEALS:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**OVERNIGHT:** Dewachen Hotel & Spa, Gangtey

## DAY 5: Gangtey ~ Haa

Today we will drive to Haa via Cheli la pass. Our drive will be through blue pine and rhododendron forests. At the Cheli la pass, we will halt for lunch and you will be able to take in the view of Mount Jumolhari and Jichu Drakey. At this point, you also have Paro valley on one side and Haa valley on the other. After, we will continue on to our destination- Haa. Haa was only opened to tourists in 2002, so it is the least explored. Hence it holds its rural and traditional charm. We will visit the famous Lhakhang Karpo (White Temple) which houses the monk body and Lhakhang Nagpo (Black Temple).

**OPTIONAL:** *An exclusive option [at no extra cost] of spending a night camping under a brilliant star-scape in a luxury camping accommodation with the promise of merriment that will be catered through delectable local cuisine and entertainment from traditional musicians and dancers. Additionally, there will also be activities arranged such as horse riding, traditional games and traditional cooking opportunities as per your interests.*

**MEALS:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**OVERNIGHT:** Traditional Farmstay, Haa

## DAY 6: Haa ~ Paro

We will drive back to Paro today. On the way we will stop at Dobji dzong, which served as Bhutan's central prison from 1976. It now serves as a central religious school and the prison cells are now classrooms! We continue on until we reach Paro. We will check into our hotel and sit down for lunch. After, we will visit the Paro Dzong also known as the Rinpung Dzong, which serves as the administrative center for the Dzongkhag. Following that, we will also stop at the Ta Dzong (National Museum) which served as a watchtower for the Paro Dzong. It now holds an impressive collection of artifacts. In the evening we will try our hand at archery- the national game of Bhutan.

**MEALS:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**OVERNIGHT:** Mandala Resort, Paro

## DAY 7: Paro

Today we will be hiking to one of the most iconic and sacred spots in the world- Taktshang (Tiger's nest) built precariously on a hillside cliff. It is believed that Guru Rinpoche flew on the back of a tigress to

subdue the demons and meditated in a cave that is still visible today. You can either choose to hike to the vantage point where there is café or hike up all the way to visit the monastery and the cave where Guru meditated, and to enjoy the stunning view of Paro valley. After we will descend slowly, and once we arrive at the bottom we will drive to the hotel. After lunch we will visit the ruins of the Drugyel Dzong, which was built in 1947 by Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal to commemorate the Bhutanese victory over the Tibetans. On a clear day you will be able to see Mount Jumolhari from here. To end our day we will take a short trip to one of Bhutan's oldest and most beautiful monasteries- Kyichu Lhakhang. End the day with a traditional hot stone bath to soothe your muscles before you leave Bhutan.

**MEALS:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

**OVERNIGHT:** Mandala Resort, Paro

## DAY 8: End of Tour

After breakfast and check out you will be transferred to the airport for your return flight home. Your holiday to Bhutan has come to an end. We hope you had a magical time!

**MEALS:** Breakfast