

**BLACK CRANE FESTIVAL**  
**THE KINGDOM OF HAPPINESS**  
*6<sup>th</sup> – 15 November, 2023*

- Day 01: Arrival Paro – Thimphu (1.5 Hrs)**
- Day 02: Thimphu Sightseeing**
- Day 03: Thimphu – Punakha (2 Hrs)**
- Day 04: Punakha sightseeing**
- Day 05: Punakha – Phobjikha (2 Hrs)**
- Day 06: Phobjikha Festival (11<sup>th</sup> November)**
- Day 07: Phobjikha – Paro (5 Hrs)**
- Day 08: Paro Sightseeing**
- Day 09: Paro Sightseeing**
- Day 10: Departure**

**Day 01: Arrival Paro – Thimphu (1.5 Hrs. drive)**

Catch the early flight to **Paro, Bhutan**. Our guide will welcome you drive you to **Thimphu**.

Check in the hotel and lunch. After lunch visit the **Memorial Chorten** (temple) built in memory of the **late 3<sup>rd</sup> King**. This place now teems with elderly devotees chanting prayers. Visit **Changangkha Lhakhang**, the oldest temple in the valley offering a beautiful view of the valley. Continue to **Takin enclosure**, where, Bhutan's national animals are kept. Continue your drive to visit one of the world's largest sitting **Buddha Statue**, offering **bird eye view** of the **Thimphu city**. Visit the **Tashichho Dzong**, the fortress, which houses the throne of the king (open after 5pm and on weekends). Evening stroll at leisure vibrant **Thimphu Street**, which sells anything from red rice, sundried chilli peppers, handcrafts, souvenirs to modern utilities.

**Overnight: Thimphu | Altitude: 2300m**

**Day 02: Thimphu Sightseeing**

Morning visit the lively and colorful **Farmers Market** (Friday, Saturday, Sunday) where the locals from the surrounding villages come to sell their produce. Visit the traditional **Hand Made Paper Mill**. Visit the **School of Arts and Crafts**, where students learn 13 different arts and crafts used predominantly in Bhutan. Visit **Folk Heritage Museum**, which houses **Traditional Bhutanese house with life style**.

Lunch in the city and visit **the National Library**, which has a collection of Bhutanese rich religious text and the contemporary Buddhism books. Drive further up to visit the **Dechenphodrang Monastic School** where young monks fill the place. Continue to **Zilukha Nunnery**. After lunch you have two options for some nice hikes. If you prefer a short and easy one could go for **Wangditse temple hike**. If you prefer a longer hike, choose **Cheri Temple Hike**.

**Overnight: Thimphu**

### **Day 03: Thimphu – Punakha (2 Hrs. drive)**

Morning after breakfast drive to the old capital, **Punakha** crossing over **Dochula Pass (3200m.)**. If the weather permits one can enjoy a spectacular breath taking view of the highest mountain peaks of Bhutan at a sight that stretches almost 180 degrees. Walk around the newly built **108 temples** and continue driving through the vegetation that changes drastically. En route just before arriving Punakha, take a gentle hike through the paddy fields of an old village to visit **Chimi Lakhang**, the temple of fertility associated with religious art of phallus. Continue your drive to the hotel

**Overnight: Punakha| Altitude: 1350m**

### **Day 04: Punakha Sightseeing**

Morning drive to visit **Punakha Dzong (fortress)**, which houses the most elaborated temple in the country. On interest, one can hike half a day above the Dzong with a short climb offering a great view of the valley with houses spread all around and majestic turquoise **Punakha river** and it's sandy river beaches. The hike ends after crossing farm field and a newly constructed footbridge. Your car will be waiting across the bridge.

After lunch could relax in the balcony of the hotel to enjoy the view and the nature. Or could go for an hour hike (uphill) to the temple of **Khamsum Yuley Lakhang** overlooking the paddy field and the river valley.

**Overnight: Punakha**

### **Day 05: Punakha – Phobjikha (2 Hrs. drive)**

There are some walks to visit the **nunnery** and interact with the nuns and enjoy the magnificent view of **Punakha and Wangdi valley**. Later, after breakfast drive to **Phobjikha**. En route could stop for a short hike to the ancient **village of Rinchengang** overlooking the ruins of **Wangdi Dzong**. (now being rebuilt). If you are tired to hike, could do it on return from **Phobjikha**.

Lunch along the picturesque drive. This valley is protected being winter home for the endangered **Black Necked Cranes** migrating to Bhutan every end of Oct to end of Feb. This valley is an outdoor paradise. If you are too tired after the long drive, could relax in the hotel and enjoy the breathtaking view of the valley. **A Farm house** stay can be an option if interested.

**Overnight: Phobjikha| Altitude: 2900m**

### **Day 06: Phobjika Crane Festival**

Morning take a walk from your hotel and meet the school children, who cheerfully walk to the school. After late breakfast drive to the **Gangtey Goempa** temple, the largest monastery in the country belonging to a different sect of Buddhism to witness the most popular Black Necked crane festival where locals from around the valley come to witness the annual festival. It's a colourful festival dedicated to the Black Necked Cranes which is considered very sacred. Many other cultural and religious dances are also performed to commemorate the event.

Evening could go for **Phobjikha Nature trail**, through traditional villages and through the swamp of roosting place for **Black Neck Crane**. It can start after the festival from the hilltop overlooking the valley towards the valley.

Visit the **Black Neck Crane Center**, which has information, displays and photographs of the cranes. One can have an option to visit a village and a farmhouse for lunch/dinner. Most of the activities could be done on foot.

**Overnight: Phobjikha**

### **Day 07: Phobjikha – Paro (5 Hrs. drive)**

Morning after breakfast, retrace the drive back to **Paro**. En route, you could choose to stop in **Thimphu** for lunch. After lunch continue your drive to **Paro**. Upon arrival in Paro, visit **Paro Dzong (Fortress)** on foot and walk through **Nyemazam**, the oldest wood cantilever bridge still in use. If time permits visit the **Kichu Lakhang**, one of the oldest temples in Bhutan which marks the beginning of Buddhism in the country. Return to the hotel.

**Overnight: Paro | Altitude: 2200m**

### **Day 08: Paro Sightseeing**

Morning drive to **Chelela Pass, 3800m** one of the highest motorable road in Bhutan. If the weather permits one can view the most scared and the highest mountain peak in the country **Mt. Jomolhari (7314m)** overlooking the valley. Walk around the pass with prayer flag fluttering and enjoy the fresh air.

Either include a pack lunch or return to the town restaurant for lunch. After lunch, stroll around the **old Paro town** and peep into some friendly **shops**, which sells anything from red rice, sundried chilli peppers, handicrafts, and souvenirs to modern utilities local handicrafts stores. Could get an opportunity to see the traditional game of **Archery** in the ground located just south of the town assessable by foot.

**Overnight: Paro**

### **Day 09: Paro Sightseeing**

Morning drive to the base for the **Tigers Nest Hike, Taktsang Temple** is the most iconic and revered temple in the country. It literally hangs on a granite cliff over looking the **Paro valley**.

Hot lunch can be served in the hilltop cafeteria. Return to the Hotel. **Hot stone bath** can be made available at an additional cost. Farewell dinner with your guide.

**Overnight: Paro | Altitude: 2200m**

### **Day 10: Departure**

Your Tour Guide will drive you to the **Airport** for your departing flight

#### ***Some useful Bhutanese phrases***

*Hello: Ku - zu - zam -po - la (meaning good health)*

*Thank You: Ka - din - chey - la*

*See you: Lok - jey - gay*

*Good bye: Lus - la / Laso - la*

**Inclusions.**

- \*Return flight Bangkok/Paro All Airport Transfers
- \*Excellent ground transport in Bhutan,
- \* clean comfortable traditional hotels and guest houses twin share accommodation.
- \*3 first class meals per day whilst in Bhutan
- \*Bhutan Visa
- \*Government Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) All Sightseeing
- \*Museum/Monument Entrance fees,
- \*English speaking Bhutanese Guide.
- \*Comprehensive Trip Notes

**Not Included:**

International Airfare, Bkk/Paro/Bkk , Soft and Hard Drinks, Gratuities allow approx. Aust\$100 per person



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