



BHUTAN PUNARKHA 10 DAY FESTIVAL TOUR INCLUDING NEPAL 3 NIGHT STOPOVER

EX KATHMANDU 22 FEBRUARY 2026

Tshechu", Tshe Meaning date and Chu meaning the tenth is an annual religious festival conducted annually all around the country coinciding on the 10th day of the Bhutanese calendar. The festival commemorates the birth of Guru Rimpoche who born from a lotus flower came to Bhutan around 8th century, bringing Buddhism to the country.

Tshechus are the biggest festival in the country (lasting from 3 to 5 days) It is here that Bhutanese dressed themselves in their best outfits and flock the celebration with home cooked picnic lunch and witness various mask dances which signifies themselves from ground purification, victory over the evil spirits, conduction of one's Karma and 8 forms of manifestation Guru took to overcome various deities propagating Buddhism.

Tshechu usually ends with unfurling a giant thangka (a huge embodied cloth piece depicting a religious figure predominantly that of Guru. This is popularly known to Bhutanese as thongdrul...thong meaning to witness or see and durl meaning to free or release. Bhutanese believe that a look at the giant Thangka blesses them and releases them from the chain of cyclic sins.

Punakha is located in the western part of Bhutan is the winter home of the Je Khenpo, the Chief Abbot of Bhutan. Punakha has been of critical importance since the time of Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyel in 17th century.

Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal is known as the unifier of Bhutan as a nation state and he was the one who gave Bhutan and its people the distinct cultural identity that identified Bhutan from the rest of the world. During 17th century Bhutan was invaded several times by Tibetan forces seeking to seize a very precious relic, the Ranjung Kharsapani. Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal led the Bhutanese to victory over the Tibetans and to commemorate the triumph he introduced the Punakha Drubchen.

Since then Punakha Drubchen (also known as Puna Drubchen) became the annual festival of Punakha Dzongkhag.

The Punakha Drubchen is a unique festival because it hosts a dramatic recreation of the scene from the 17th century battle with Tibetan army. The 'pazaps' or local militia men, dress in traditional battle gear and reenact the ancient battle scene. This reenactment harkens back to the time when in the absence of a standing army, men from the eight Tshogchens or great village blocks of Thimphu came forward and managed to expel the invading forces from the country. Their victory ushered in a period of new-found internal peace and stability.

In 2005 another festival known as Punakha Tshechu was introduced by the 70th Je Khenpo Trulku Jigme Choedra and the then Home Minister His Excellency Lyonpo Jigme Yoedzer Thinley. The Tshechu was introduced in response to the requests made by Punakha District Administration and local people to host a Tshechu in order to better preserve Buddhist teachings and keep alive the noble deeds of Zhabdrung Rimpoche.

These two festivals not only play an important role in preserving Bhutan's rich culture and traditions but also provide devout Buddhists with an opportunity for prayer and pilgrimage. They reflect the richness of the Bhutanese cultural heritage and are very special in the eyes and hearts of both Bhutanese and tourists who visit Bhutan.

MAJOR ATTRACTIONS

PARO Accentuating the natural beauty are the many elegant, traditional-style houses that dot the valley and surrounding hills. Paro town has been growing rapidly in recent years and there are plenty of restaurants, bakeries and cafes to choose from. One of the distinctive features of Paro town is that Paro valley extends from the confluence of the Paro Chhu and the Wang Chhu rivers at Chuzom upto Mt. Jomolhari at the Tibetan border to the North. This picturesque region is one of the widest valleys in the kingdom and is covered in fertile rice fields and has a beautiful, crystalline river meandering down the valley.

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Visitors often spend several days in Paro as there are over 155 temples and monasteries in this area, some dating as far back as 14th century. Among them is the temple that is considered Bhutan's most iconic landmark Taktsang Monastery, the Tiger's Nest. This awe-inspiring temple was constructed upon a sheer cliff face, hundreds of meters above forests of oak and rhododendrons and the valley floor. Dzongdrakha Temple and Kila Gompa are secondary examples of cliff-side temples that are also located in Paro Dzongkhag.

The country's first international airport is in Paro. Due to the proximity of the airport and the many historical and religious sites in the region there are a large number of luxurious, high-end tourist resorts in Paro.

Paro is also home to the National Museum. The museum is set in Paro Ta Dzong, an ancient watchtower that now displays hundreds of ancient Bhutanese artifacts and

artwork including traditional costumes, armour, weaponry and handcrafted implements for daily life. The collection at the National Museum preserves a snapshot of the rich cultural traditions of the country.

Another site worth visiting Paro is Drugyel dzong or The Fortress of the Victorious Bhutanese. This dzong was constructed by Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal in 1646 to commemorate his victory over marauding Tibetan armies. Though the fortress was destroyed by fire in 1951, the ruins remain an impressive and imposing sight.

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THIMPHU

Thimphu is the most modern city in Bhutan with an abundance of restaurants, internet cafes, nightclubs and shopping centers, however it still retains its' cultural identity and values amidst the signs of modernization. Thimphu is one of the few towns in Bhutan that have been equipped with ATM...

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One of the most curious features of Thimphu is that it is the only capital city in the world that does not use traffic lights. Instead, a few major intersections have policemen standing in elaborately decorated booths (small pavilions), directing traffic with exaggerated hand motions. The juxtaposition of ancient tradition and modernity make Thimphu the ideal location for visitors to break away from their tour itinerary and just immerse themselves in the lifestyle of contemporary Bhutanese.

PUNAKHA

Punakha Dzongkhag has been inextricably linked with momentous occasions in Bhutanese history. It served as the capital of the country from 1637 to 1907 and the first national assembly was hosted here in 1953. It is the second oldest and second largest dzong in Bhutan and one of the most majestic structures in the country.

On October 13, 2011, the wedding of the King of Bhutan, Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck, and his fiancé, Jetsun Pema, was held at the Punakha Dzong. Punakha valley has a pleasant climate with warm winters and hot summers. It is located at an average elevation of 1200 meters above sea level. Owing to the favourable climatic conditions, rice grows very well in this region and is the main cash crop cultivated here.

Two major rivers in Bhutan the Pho Chhu and Mo Chhu converge in this valley. Punakha Dzong is built at the confluence of these two rivers and is an especially beautiful sight on sunny days with sunlight reflecting off the water onto its white-washed walls.

In addition to its structural beauty, Punakha Dzong is notable for containing the preserved remains of Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal, the unifier of Bhutan as well as a sacred relic known as the Ranjung Karsapani. This relic is a self-created image of Avalokiteswara that miraculously emerged from the vertebrae of Tsangpa Gyarey the founder of the Drukpa School when he was cremated.

Dochula pass is located on the way to Punakha from Thimphu. The pass is a popular location among tourists as it offers a stunning 360-degree panoramic view of Himalayan Mountain range. The view is especially scenic on clear, winter days with snowcapped mountains forming a majestic backdrop to the tranquillity of the 108 chortens gracing the mountain pass.

Known as the Druk Wangyal Chortens- the construction of these 108 chortens was commissioned by the eldest Queen Mother, Her Majesty Ashi Dorji Wangmo Wangchuk. The pass is also popular spiritual destination for both locals and tourists because an important temple is located on the crest of Dochula pass.

The Druk Wangyal Lhakhang (temple) was built in honour of His Majesty the fourth Druk Gyalpo, Jigme Singye Wangchuk. The past and future appears to merge in the details of the Lhakhang (temple) and its structure tells the story of a supreme warrior figure, whose vision pierces the distant future in a fine blend of history and mythology.

Bhutanese families enjoy visiting the pass during holidays and weekends to picnic and simply enjoy the scenery. It is common to see families and groups of friends seated amongst the chortens, enjoying a packed lunch and hot tea. For tourists this is ideal location to capture beautiful pictures of Himalayan Mountain range during clear, warm days.

Detailed itinerary

Day 01 Arrive Kathmandu airport meet your guide and transfer to your hotel in Patan (B) Flights with Singapore, Cathay, Thai usually arrive in the evening. 22 February 2025

Day 02 Full day sightseeing tour of Patan and Bhaktapur (BLD) 23 February 2025

Day 03| Transfer to the airport for your flight to Bhutan – Paro - Thimphu (1.2 Hrs)

Upon arrival at Paro airport your guide will receive you and transfer to Thimphu. One can wander on your own to stroll Thimphu streets or relax in your hotel.

Overnight: Thimphu | Altitude: 2300m 23 February 2025

Day 04| Thimphu sightseeing

Morning visits the weekend market (Thursday, Friday, Saturday & Sunday), Handmade paper Mill, School of Arts and crafts where students learn 13 different arts used predominantly in Bhutan, Lunch in town. Drive pass by Memorial Chorten (temple) built in memory of the late 3rd King. Visit Changangkha Lhakhang, the

oldest temple in the valley, Enclosure where national animal, Takin are kept and Zilukha Nunnery.

Overnight: Thimphu 24th February 2025

Day 05| Thimphu – Punakha (2.5 Hrs)

Drive through Dochula pass at 3010m. When the weather permits one can enjoy a spectacular view of the highest mountains of Bhutan at a site that stretches almost 180 degrees. After a short tea break continue to sub-tropical Punakha. Afternoon we will hike to Chimi Lhakhang, temple of fertility which is associated with religious arts of phallus.

Overnight: Punakha | Altitude: 1350m 25th February 2025

Day 06| Punakha Festival

We will spend whole day in the festival which will accompany with various mask dances and folk dancers along with jokers' actions in the crowd.

Overnight at Punakha 26 February 2025

Day 07| Punakha Festival

Whole day in the interesting Punakha festival or in the afternoon we can proceed for other sightseeing like visiting Khamsum Yulay Temple or Wangdue excursion visit Rinchingang.

Overnight in Punakha 27th February 2025

Day 08| Punakha – Phobjikha (3 Hrs)

Check out of the hotel and visit Chimi Lhakhang on foot, the temple of fertility associated with religious art of phallus. En route visit Wangdi town and continue to Phobjikha over the second highest road pass on your trip at 3140m. Visit Gangtey Gumpa, the largest and the only monastery of the Nyingmapa sect in western Bhutan. Evening relax in your hotel or take a stroll.

Overnight: Phobjikha | Altitude: 2900m 28th February 2025

Day 09| Phobjikha halt

Morning walk and meet the school children close to your hotel, who all walk for hours to reach their nearest school. Phobjikha is a paradise for nature lovers and hikers.

There are lots of great places for hikes around the valley. Visit Gangtey monastery, the richly renovated monastery offering rich architecture and paintings. Walk down to the valley through the village for your hotel.

Overnight: Phobjikha 29th February 2025

Day 10| Phobjikha – Paro (6 Hrs)

Start early retracing the drive to Paro. In Paro visit the National Museum, the first of its kind which has a collection from natural history to religious paintings. Visit 17 century Paro Dzong (Fortress) on foot and continue walking through the oldest wooden bridge still in use.

Evening stroll old Paro town and peep into some local handicraft's stores. One can also venture to try local restaurant for dinner.

Overnight: Paro | Altitude: 2200m 1st March 2025

Day 11 Paro Sightseeing

Visit Kichu Lhakhang, one from the 2 oldest temples in the country, historic Drukgyal Dzong (Fortress) and hike to Tiger's Nest, the most revered temple in the country that literally hangs on a granite cliff overlooking the Paro Valley. Evening at leisure
Overnight: Paro 2nd March 2025

Day 12| Paro – Kathmandu

Morning transfer to the airport for your return flight to Kathmandu. Met by your guide who will take you on a sightseeing tour of Boudhanath Named after its immense stupa, Boudhha is a pilgrimage destination for Tibetans. Devotees stroll around the gleaming white dome adorned with painted Buddha eyes and visit nearby monasteries and schools for prayers and seminars. Tucked-away eateries serve up momos and thukpa noodle soup, while more upmarket restaurants offer stupa views. Silk thangka paintings are a popular buy in the area's souvenir shops.. Later check. into your hotel and in the afternoon take rickshaw ride around Thamel which is the main tourist area of Kathmandu. (B) 3rd March 2025

Day 13 Kathmandu Today is yours free to explore around your hotel and do that last minute shopping before transferring to the airport for your flight home. 4th March 2025

COST \$5550 TWIN SHARE

INCLUDED

1. Accommodation on twin sharing basis in 3-star standard plus hotels whilst in Bhutan
2. Three meals a day
3. English speaking guide
4. Visa arrangement
5. Government royalty and taxes
6. Transportation and sightseeing as per the itinerary
7. Museum visiting fees
8. Bottled drinking water throughout the trip
9. Kathmandu/Paro/Kathmandu flight
10. 3 Nights in Nepal including guided sightseeing, airport transfers, breakfast and 1 dinner

NOY INCLUDED

1. Hard and Soft Drinks
2. Gratuities
3. Flight Australia/Kathmandu/Return approximately \$1650
4. Nepal multiple entry visa