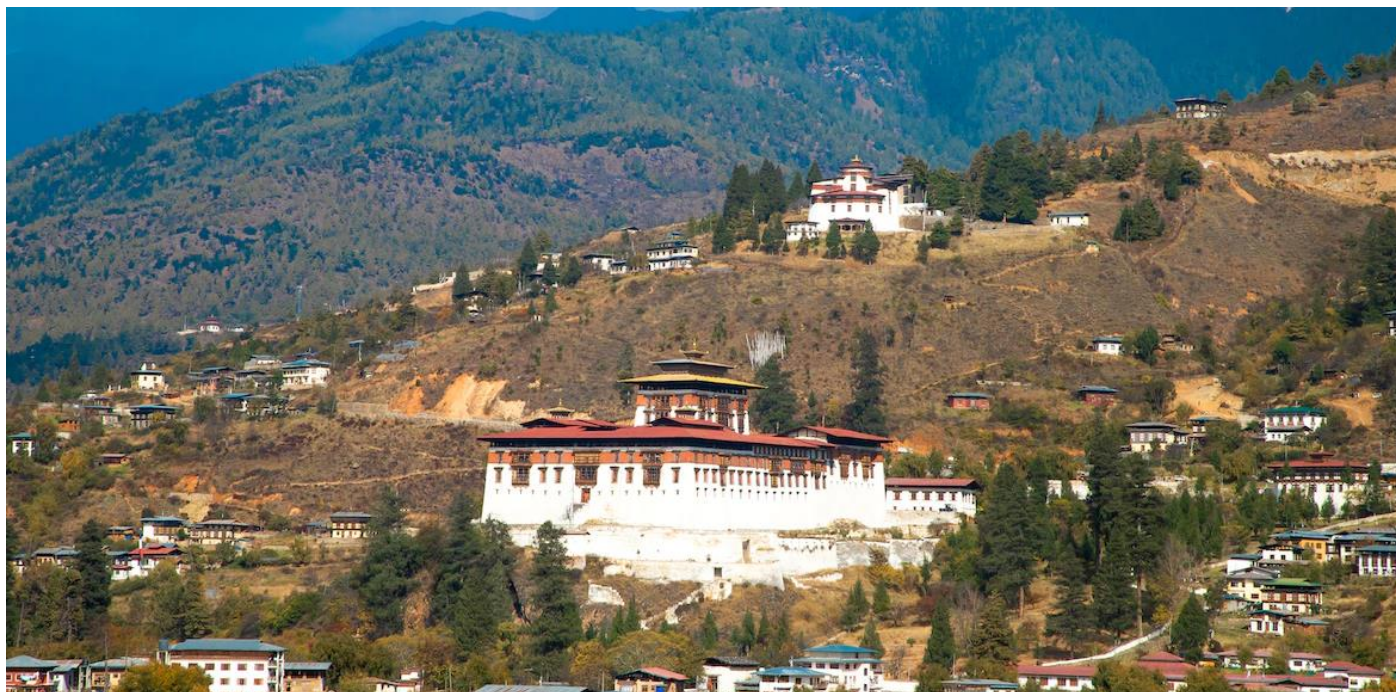


Bhutan Overland Package 7 N 8 D



Outline Itinerary

Day 01: Pickup from Bagdogra airport & drive to Phuentsholing

Day 02: Phuentsholing – Thimphu

Day 03: Thimphu

Day 04: Thimphu – Punakha

Day 05: Punakha -Paro

Day 06: Paro – Hike to Taktsang

Day 07: Paro – Phuentsholing

Day 08: Phuentsholing -Bagdogra

Detail Itinerary

Day 01: Road journey from Bagdogra airport to Phuentsholing. 155 Km, 4 Hrs

Once your flight reaches Bagdogra Airport in West Bengal, our eagerly waiting team will escort you easily to the waiting vehicle. We now set off for the border town of Phuentsholing, our entry point to wonderful Bhutan.

During this 4-hour road journey, after passing slowly through the dense traffic of Siliguri city, we'll experience the beautiful drive on the exemplary Coronation Bridge. This arched cantilever bridge in the Darjeeling district built during the British rule spans over the Teesta River. It connects West Bengal with the foothills of Bhutan amid the rugged Himalayas and over the superfluous Teesta.

After crossing the iconic bridge, we enter into open country and proceed on a comfortable, straight drive through and through till Phuentsholing. En route, we'll pass the many tea gardens, scenic hamlets, and national parks of the Doars floodplains region. This nature's paradise provides easy access to hill stations of Bengal and Bhutan.

As soon as we enter the Kingdom of Happiness in Phuentsholing, we can see the Bhutanese Himalayas from afar, beckoning us warmly for a delightful Bhutan experience. We arrive at our hotel in the Bhutanese town and spend the remaining day at leisure.

Day 02: Drive from Phuentsholing to Thimphu. Overnight stay in Thimphu. 145 Km, 6 Hrs.

After completing these immigration formalities at Phuentsholing, we're all set to tour Bhutan.

Post breakfast, we leave the hotel and head for Thimphu, the Bhutanese capital. It's a 6-hour road trip with worthwhile halts at some of the must-visit tourist places in Bhutan.

First in line is the incredible **Kharbandi Gompa monastery**. It's a famous Bhutan pilgrimage site built under royal patronage. As we explore this beautiful structure, we'll find the statue of Guru Rinpoche (an ancient mystic) and lovely paintings depicting Lord Buddha's life. From the monastery garden, enjoy fantastic views of Phuentsholing and the Indian plains.

On our journey upwards via several little towns, we'll take the next halt at Gedu town, home to a premier college offering full-time modern business education, which is indeed worth visiting.

We continue our drive uphill with a photo stop at the Taktichu Pass (2000 metres) at its huge, scenic waterfall. From this point, we can notice a transition in the forest scene - tropical vegetation giving way to coniferous trees. Halfway along our densely forested drive comes our next stop. It's the vast hydroelectric complex of Chukha District.

Now we enjoy a scenic drive beside the Paro River and then break our journey at Chuzom, the confluence of Rivers Paro and Thimphu. Let's walk on the Chuzom bridge and take in mesmerising sights of the countryside. Another major attraction at Chuzom is three chortens situated side by side, representing a different architecture - Nepali, Tibetan, and Bhutanese.

We resume our journey along the Thimphu River, taking in the beautiful countryside en route. We get the first glimpse of Thimphu city as the Simtokha Dzong appears. Our team has selected one of the best hotels in Bhutan for your overnight stay in Thimphu.

Day 03: Thimphu Tour. Stay overnight in Thimphu.

We hope you had a good night's sleep in beautiful Bhutan! Enjoy the hotel's satiating breakfast before we begin our Thimphu tour today.

First on the list is **Memorial Chorten**, dedicated to the founder of modern Bhutan. This tall, four-storeyed structure contains statues and symbols of several Tantric deities, undoubtedly ranking among the must-visit tourist places in Bhutan. Experience the fantastic sight of locals circumambulating the Chorten, holding prayer beads and murmuring the divine prayers. What better way to begin your day in wonderful Bhutan than visiting such a pious landmark?

Now we take you to the **National Library**. This 20th-century building houses major historical evidence in the form of documents and photos. Also, you'll find the world's biggest published book here that weighs 68 kg and is 2 metres in height.

Next stop is **Buddha Dordenma**, made in line with increasing the Bhutan happiness index. This sitting statue of Buddha measures 169 feet in height and is filled with 1,25,000 shorter Buddha statues. One of the world's most giant Buddha statues, Buddha Dordenma, with its peaceful and assuring appearance, draws innumerable tourists towards it. Also, this spot offers spectacular views of the Thimphu Valley.

After seeking the umpteen blessings of the Buddha, we drive towards Thimphu for lunch. By the way, did you see any traffic lights in your Bhutan Travel so far? This is the only nation worldwide that controls vehicular traffic without them. In Thimphu, you'll see a traffic policeman waving and signalling to the main traffic. Well-dressed and wearing white gloves, the traffic policeman's graceful mannerisms are sure to fascinate you. This unique traffic control system of amazing Bhutan might as well qualify for some sightseeing!

After this, visit **Simply Bhutan Museum**, an engaging 'living' museum that offers a brief overview of different facets of traditional existence in Bhutan.

Your next stop is at the **Takin Sanctuary** to witness the baffling and endangered Takin. This large mammal weighing up to 650 kgs is the national animal of wonderful Bhutan. The Takin's unusual appearance with its resemblance to a cow from the rear and a goat from the front interests many visitors. Won't you like to get close up on this mysterious creature while it feeds near the fence?

Late afternoon, we take you to **Tashichho Dzong**, an impressive structure located just on the outskirts of Thimphu. One of Bhutan's most iconic monuments, the Tashichho Dzong houses His Majesty's throne room and several government offices. This massive fortress is also the summer residence of the central monastic body.

Souvenir shopping is surely at the back of your mind. At the **Handicraft Market of Thimphu**, shop for souvenirs to your heart's content. Buy beautifully embroidered attires, scroll paintings, and precious jewellery at reasonable prices from one or more of the 100 government appointed shops here.

What a fulfilling day it's been! We still have plenty in store for you to celebrate Bhutan. But it's time to break at the hotel for a delicious dinner and a restful sleep before that.

Day 04: Thimphu - Punakha. Overnight stay in Punakha 83 Km, 3 Hrs

After breakfast, we check out of the hotel and head for Punakha. On the way we will visit **Lamperi Botanical Park** where we will see different species of rhododendron flowers. This 3-hour journey includes an ascending drive through the Dochula Pass at 3100 m amidst pines and junipers. This mesmerizing mountain pass with 108 stupas and bright-coloured prayer flags is indeed a visitor's delight.

If you're lucky to spend time here on a clear day, you'll get guaranteed superb views of the region's highest peaks. Stroll around the stupas dedicated to 108 brave soldiers who lost their lives in warfare.

Immerse yourself in nature as you capture beautiful Bhutan in your camera from great photography spots here. You must visit the intricately designed Druk Wangyal Lhakhang temple at **Dochula Pass** if you love ancient architecture.

Once rejuvenated, we continue with our journey and start descending towards Punakha. We'll break for lunch en route. Post lunch, we'll head straight to the 17th-century **Punakha Dzong**, a majestic structure inextricably associated with the momentous historical events of unforgettable Bhutan, such as the crowning of all the Kings of Bhutan. Punakha Dzong is also the central monastic body's winter residence.

This six-storeyed architectural marvel with towering, whitewashed walls is Bhutan's most beautiful dzong. Built on the banks of two rivers, the dzong turns into a spectacle in sunny weather, what with its whitewashed walls splashed in sunlight that bounces off the waters. Hope you can catch this extraordinary sight!

Last place in our list we have for today is to visit **Chimi Lhakhang Temple** which is a must-visit. You'll enjoy the leisurely walk-through scenic paddy fields to this temple. This is the perfect place to seek blessings for begetting children! That's it for today.

Day 05: Punakha – Paro. Overnight stay in Paro. 128 Km, 4 hrs.

This morning we start our journey towards Paro via the picturesque Dochula Pass. The confluence of rivers is always fascinating. So is Chuzom, the meeting point of Rivers Thimphu and Paro. We'll halt for a while and enjoy a walk on Chuzom's bridge. Also, noteworthy here are 3 different-styled chortens - Tibetan, Nepali, and Bhutanese. Take as many pictures as you want before we continue our travel.

At a short distance from Chuzom, you can spot the **Thamchok Lhakhang**, a private temple dedicated to the ancient saint Thangthong Gyelpo. He is famous for having built countless iron chain bridges to ease Himalayan travels and pilgrimages. The access to the temple is through an iron suspension bridge built by Thangthong Gyelpo, which is purely a photographer's delight.

Finally, after reaching Paro we will take you to the **Ta Dzong**, an ancient watchtower-converted- museum, also known as the country's National Museum. Indulge in Bhutan's rich culture as you see lovely exhibits of paintings, bronzes, 3-D stamps, silken stamps, textiles, and jewellery. Look out for the famed triangular stamp illustrating the ape-like yeti. Walk the galleries showcasing stuffed animals of amazing Bhutan.

Now let's go below the Museum. An architectural marvel and, indeed, a photographer's delight is awaiting you. That's **Paro Dzong**, a 17th-century, impressive fortress with a complex of preserved buildings. Also known as **Rinpung Dzong**, this square fortress is Paro's administrative centre and houses temples, courtyards, and offices with intricate Bhutanese motif works.

Next, we'll take you to Paro town. You can explore it at your leisure. But something is interesting on the way back from the dzong to our waiting vehicle. Take the experience of crossing the traditional cantilever bridge with a shingle roof and a couple of watch houses on each end.

In Paro town, enjoy local cuisine like steamy momos. Else, visit one of the finest restaurants that serve sophisticated Bhutanese foods, such as Ema Datshi (Bhutan's national dish). Shop for souvenirs at the Paro Craft Market.

Finally, we return to the hotel for a delicious dinner and a peaceful sleep.

Day 06: Paro- Hike to Taktsang

Today, it's all about Paro! Post breakfast, we take a short drive on a blacktop road of green Bhutan to the end of Paro Valley. This is where the 17th-Century **Drukgyel Dzong** stands. A symbol of victory over the Tibetan aggression, Drukgyel Dzong served as an excellent barrier for several years against further attacks. Today, we can see only the ruins of this fortress because it had caught fire and suffered heavy damage in 1951. However, the well-protected ancient ruins make an impressive sight, qualifying as Bhutan's most stunning archaeological spot!

We take you to the end of the blacktop road and then along a narrow path to Lingshi, a remote Bhutanese village that yak herders call home. Today, if Weather God is on your side, you'll be able to get a clear view of the snow-clad, towering (23,996 feet) Mt. Jomolhari. This spectacular mountain, also regarded as the holiest peak in beautiful Bhutan, provides a perfect backdrop to the Drugyel ruins and Lingshi.

Coming up is one of the best parts of your Bhutan Tour! From Lingshi, we retrace about 6 kilometres to take in breathtaking views of **Taktsang Lhakhang**, more popularly called "The Tiger's Nest". This iconic monastery is so-called owing to the myth that the medieval Buddhist saint Padmasambhava visited it, riding a flying tiger. The legend also says that he meditated in a cave that is now the Nest's lower storey. The monastery houses a wrathful emanation of Padmasambhava on top of a tiger.

You can reach this sacred place only through an uphill hike as it's perched on a precipitous rock face. It's a 5-hour trek through scenic pine forests, with the eluding view of the Nest beckoning you the whole time.

So, are you game? We'll take you uphill through the well-marked trail till we reach our lunch point after about 3 hours. Enjoy unique views of the monastery from here. If you're hell-bent on visiting the monastery, we'll take you further uphill for another couple of hours.

After the hike, retrace back to hotel and overnight stay at the hotel.

Day 07: Paro – Phuentsholing. Overnight stay in Phuentsholing. 145 Km, 5 Hrs

We take leave of beautiful Paro and retrace in the direction of Phuentsholing town. On our leisurely drive by the Paro River after crossing Chuzom and then towards Chukha, let's take in all the beautiful sights for one last time before descending towards our destination. After checking in to our hotel at the border town, we have the remaining time at leisure.

Day 08: Phuentsholing – Bagdogra Airport 155 Km, 3 Hrs

Post breakfast, we bid goodbye to the Kingdom of Happiness and set off on our journey home. After entering the Indian border at Jaigaon, we pass the scenic Bengal Countryside to arrive at Bagdogra Airport. We take the air journey with beautiful memories of our Bhutan travel.

****End of The Tour****