



Central Bhutan

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Best Views

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Why Go?

Central Bhutan's forested mountains and fertile valleys comprise the country's cultural heartland. The region boasts several of Bhutan's oldest and most significant temples and monasteries, great day hikes and short treks, and several spectacular festivals.

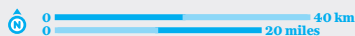
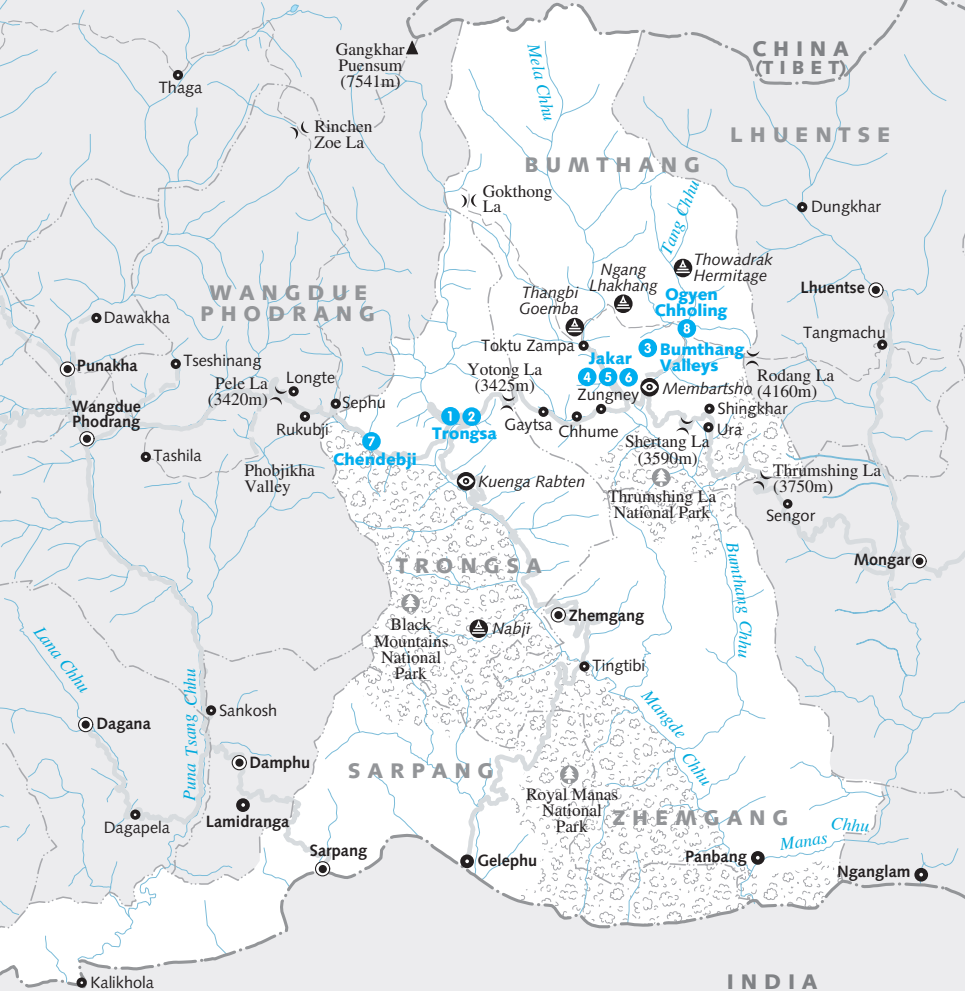
Across the 3420m-high Pele La and the Black Mountains is the large, fertile Mangde Chhu valley and the magnificent Trongsa Dzong. Commanding the junction of three major roads, Trongsa has long been the glue that holds the country together. Even today the Crown Prince must serve as the *penlop* (regional governor) of the dzong before he can rule as king.

From Trongsa, a short, steep drive over the Yotong La (3425m) leads to the four valleys of Bumthang, a magical region of saints and treasure-seekers, great demon-subduing struggles and fabulous miracles, rich with relics from the visits of Guru Rinpoche and Pema Lingpa. Because it takes a little extra time to get here, Central Bhutan sees fewer tourists than Thimphu, Paro and Punakha.

When to Go

Central Bhutan, particularly the fertile valleys of Bumthang, is a year-round destination: pleasant in summer, and ideal in spring (especially for the rhododendron displays on the mountain passes) and also in autumn. Winters can be very cold, so bring appropriate clothing and don't be surprised if snow temporarily closes the high passes.

Ideally you should time your visit to include at least one of the colourful and fascinating festivals, such as at Ura, Trongsa Dzong, Jampey Lhakhang, or Kurjey Lhakhang (see p19).



Central Bhutan Highlights

- 1 Explore sprawling **Trongsa Dzong** (p110), a dramatic example of traditional Bhutanese architecture
- 2 Discover the heritage of Trongsa at the **Tower of Trongsa Museum** (p111)
- 3 Take one of the many excellent hikes in the **Bumthang valleys** (p116)
- 4 Wander around the **Kurjey Lhakhang** (p121) complex, a legacy of Guru Rinpoche
- 5 Visit one of Bhutan's oldest and most significant temples at **Jampey Lhakhang** (p119)
- 6 Circumambulate **Tamshing Goemba** (p122) wearing a cloak of chainmail made by Pema Lingpa
- 7 Pause at **Chendebji Chorten** (p108): smaller than, but patterned after, Swayambhunath in Kathmandu
- 8 Detour up the Tang Valley to the 100-year-old **Ogyen Chholing Palace** (p125), now home to a superb museum and bucolic guesthouse retreat