



Central Bhutan

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Why Go?

Central Bhutan's evergreen mountains and neatly cultivated valleys comprise the country's cultural heartland, accented by several of Bhutan's oldest and most significant temples and monasteries. Spectacular festivals celebrate tradition and there are dozens of great day hikes throughout the region.

Across the 3420m-high Pele La and the Black Mountains is the magnificent and historically important Trongsa Dzong, commanding the junction of three major roads. 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, hermitages and sacred sites from the visits of Guru Rinpoche and Pema Lingpa.

Central Bhutan sees fewer tourists than western Bhutan, though Bumthang's airport makes travelling here easier than ever. To really get off the beaten track, head south to visit remote village lhakhangs and the wildlife-filled jungles of Royal Manas National Park.

Best Views

- ➔ Trongsa viewpoint (p123)
- ➔ Tower of Trongsa Royal Heritage Museum (p124)
- ➔ Jakar Dzong (p128)
- ➔ Pelseling Goemba (p139)
- ➔ Kunzangdrak Goemba (p140)

Best Hikes

- ➔ Nabji Trek (p202)
- ➔ Royal Manas National Park (p145)
- ➔ Mangdue Foot Trail (p123)
- ➔ Shingkhar (p142)
- ➔ Luege Rowe (p136)

When to Go

Central Bhutan, particularly the sunny 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 cold, especially in Bumthang, but days are usually sunny and there are few tourists – just bring some warm clothes and don't be surprised if the mountain passes are temporarily closed by snow for a day or two.

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.



Central Bhutan Highlights

- 1 Trongsa (p123)** Explore the dramatic, sprawling dzong and Tower of Trongsa Royal Heritage Museum.
- 2 Bumthang valleys (p139)** Stretch your legs on one of many excellent hikes.
- 3 Kurje Lhakhang (p135)** Wander around this legacy of Guru Rinpoche.
- 4 Jampey Lhakhang (p134)** Visit one of Bhutan's oldest and most significant temples.
- 5 Tamshing Goemba (p138)** Circumambulate this monastery wearing a cloak of chain mail made by Pema Lingpa.
- 6 Chendejhi Chorten (p122)** Pause for a picnic at this stupa, patterned after Swayambhunath in Kathmandu.
- 7 Ogyen Chholing Palace (p141)** Detour up the Tang valley to the superb museum of this 100-year-old palace.