



Bhutan



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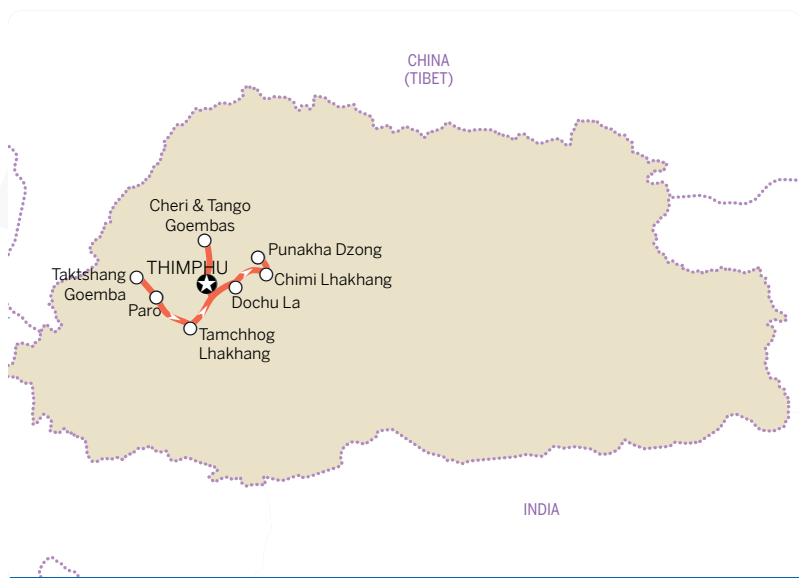
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Itineraries



A Long Weekend in Paro & Thimphu

If you have limited time or money, you can get a good impression of Bhutan in just four days by concentrating on Thimphu and Paro.

Count on two full days in picturesque **Paro**, visiting Paro Dzong and the National Museum. On the second day, hike up to the dramatic Tiger's Nest, **Taktshang Goemba**, and visit lovely Kyichu Lhakhang. After lunch, make the three-hour drive to **Thimphu**, stopping at the charming **Tamchhog Lhakhang** en route.

On day three you could squeeze in a long day trip over the **Dochu La** to **Punakha Dzong**, the most beautiful dzong in the country. In March, budget an hour to walk through the colourful rhododendron forests above Dochu La. On the way back to Thimphu, pop into the nearby **Chimi Lhakhang**, the temple of the 'Divine Madman'.

Day four is in **Thimphu**. Go to the weekend market and visit **Cheri Goemba** or **Tango Goemba** in the upper Thimphu valley. If handicrafts are your thing, hit the National Textile Museum and National Institute for Zorig Chusum. Late in the afternoon, drive back to Paro; most flights depart early in the morning.



7 DAYS

Haa to Punakha

If you're thinking about a four-day trip, consider a seven-day trip. It's not that much more money and, really, when are you next going to be in Bhutan? A week gives you more time to get a feel for Bhutanese culture and enables you to get off the beaten track in either the Haa or Phobjikha valleys, while still seeing the major dzongs and monasteries of western Bhutan.

Figure on two full days in **Paro**, including visits to **Taktshang Goemba** and Kyichu Lhakhang in the Paro valley, and a full day (or two) in Thimphu. A few tips: try to be in Thimphu on a Saturday or Sunday to see the weekend market and avoid Paro on Monday, when the National Museum is closed. If you're lucky, you may be able to catch a weekend archery tournament in Thimphu or Paro.

To get off the beaten track, add on an overnight trip to the **Haa valley**, on the road that links Paro to Thimphu. The road goes over the highest driveable pass in Bhutan, the **Cheli La**, and it's worth a short detour to visit Kila Nunnery or Dzongdrakha Goemba. Arrive in Haa at lunchtime, and spend an afternoon, and maybe the next morning, exploring the Juneydrak Hermitage and **Shelkar Drak**, before continuing on to **Thimphu**.

With the extra days you can definitely add an overnight trip over the mountains to **Punakha**. This way you'll have time to make the 1½-hour return hike to the nearby **Khamsum Yuelley Namgyal Chorten**, as well as visit Chimi Lhakhang, and maybe even a short rafting trip.

If you don't visit Haa, you might be able to add on a day trip to the **Phobjikha valley**, especially worthwhile in winter (November to February) when the valley's black-necked cranes are roosting. Bring some warm clothes and a torch (flashlight).

At some point during your trip, ask your guide to arrange a Bhutanese hot-stone bath, available in most tourist hotels (for a charge). Throw in a festival and you have the perfect introductory visit to Bhutan.



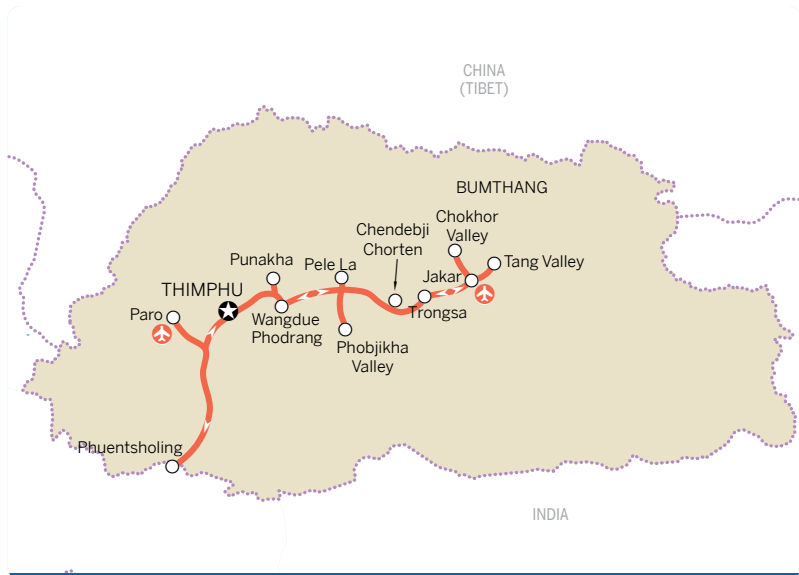
SAMIR POKETTI/IMAGES ©

Top: Bhutanese prayer
wheel

Bottom: Punakha
Dzong (p104)



PANTHEZ/GETTY IMAGES ©



2
WEEKS

Thimphu to Bumthang

A 10-day itinerary should just about allow you two or three days in Bumthang, with overnight stops in Paro, Thimphu and **Punakha** and a quick stop in **Trongsa**. But a full two weeks will let you see the same places in more depth, at a more relaxed pace, with time for a couple of day hikes.

If you are travelling before 2018, check with your agent to see whether the current roadworks will slow you down.

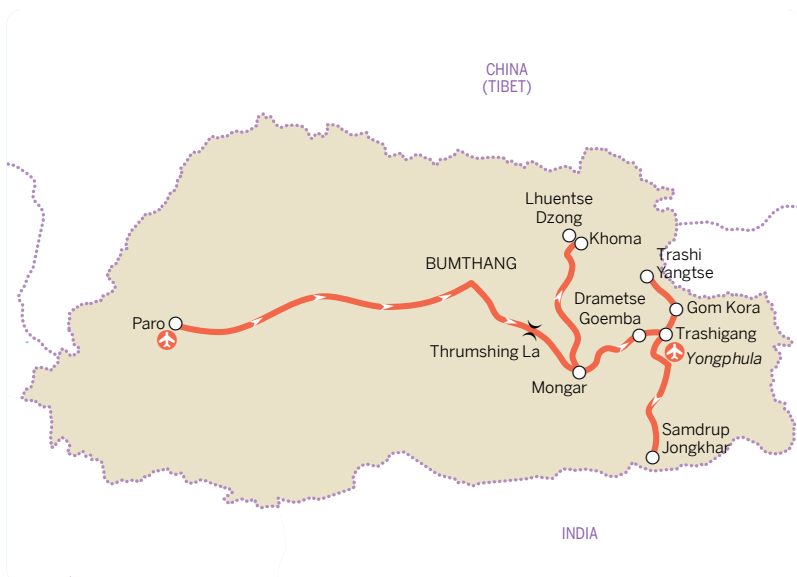
Follow the four-day itinerary for your first days. From **Thimphu**, a night in the **Phobjikha valley** will give you a chance to see Gangte Goemba and also view the rare and endangered black-necked cranes (November to February). Phobjikha is a great place to explore by mountain bike.

From Phobjikha, it's a day's drive over the **Pele La** to the superb dzong and museum at **Trongsa** and on to **Jakar** in Bumthang. Leave early, as there's lots to see en route, including the Nepali-style **Chendebji Chorten**, which is a perfect place for a picnic.

If you have two full days in Bumthang, spend one day doing a loop in the **Chokhor valley**, taking in the Jampey Lhakhang, Kurjey Lhakhang and walking to Tamshing Goemba. Your second day here should be spent exploring the **Tang valley**, visiting Membartsho (Burning Lake) and the interesting Ogyen Chholing Museum near Mesithang. If you have an extra day, overnight in the Ogyen Chholing Guest House and hike down to the road via the remote rural chapels of Choejam Lhakhang and Narut (Pelphug) Lhakhang.

The Bumthang valley is a great place for some hiking, so budget half a day to stretch your legs after a week's driving. From Jakar, it's a two-day drive back to **Paro**, so spend a night near **Wangdue Phodrang**. Alternatively, save some time by flying from Bumthang to Paro.

If you intend to visit India in conjunction with Bhutan, consider driving from Thimphu or Paro to **Phuentsholing** instead of flying, which will add a day to the itinerary. From here you are only a few hours from Darjeeling, Kalimpong and Sikkim, as well as the airport at Bagdogra, which has frequent flights to Delhi and Kolkata (Calcutta).



16
DAYS

Eastern Explorations

It takes at least two weeks to make a trip out to the little-visited far east and we'd suggest throwing in a couple of extra days to allow for some rest and recuperation.

There's a lot of driving involved (up to five hours a day in eastern Bhutan) but it should now be possible to fly back to Paro from **Yongphula** (near Trashigang). You could also avoid the long drive back to Paro by exiting Bhutan at Samdrup Jongkhar, as long as you have arranged an Indian visa in advance. This is a particularly good trip if you're interested in traditional weaving.

Follow the earlier itineraries from **Paro** as far as Bumthang (or fly there), from where you can see the highlights of the east in five or six days. From Bumthang, day one takes you on a dramatic drive over the **Thrumshing La** (3750m) and Bhutan's wildest road to **Mongar**. Stay here for two nights and make a scenic day trip up to remote **Lhuentse Dzong** and the nearby traditional weaving village of **Khoma**. To cut down on the driving, consider instead a day's hiking off the beaten track around Mongar.

Day three takes you on to funky **Trashigang**, with an optional two- or three-hour detour along the way to **Drametse Goemba**, Bhutan's most important Nyingma monastery. Accommodation standards in the east are not as good as western Bhutan, so bring a sense of humour as well as bug spray.

Figure on two nights at Trashigang, with another great day excursion to **Trashi Yangtse**, with stops en route at the pilgrimage site of **Gom Kora**, the old Trashi Yangtse dzong and the Nepali-style Chorten Kora. March and April bring two important pilgrimage festivals to this region. Spend a second day here to go crane-spotting in Bomdeling Wildlife Sanctuary or to hike via Dechen Phodrang pilgrimage site.

From Trashigang, it's a full day's winding drive down to the plains at steamy **Samdrup Jongkhar**. From there, take a three-hour taxi ride to Guwahati (check in advance for planned strikes) then fly to Kolkata, Delhi or Bangkok, or take the overnight train to West Bengal for Darjeeling and the Nepal border.

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LONELY PLANET **IN THE** WILD



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Map Legend

Sights

-  Beach
-  Bird Sanctuary
-  Buddhist
-  Castle/Palace
-  Christian
-  Confucian
-  Hindu
-  Islamic
-  Jain
-  Jewish
-  Monument
-  Museum/Gallery/Historic Building
-  Ruin
-  Sento Hot Baths/Onsen
-  Shinto
-  Sikh
-  Taoist
-  Winery/Vineyard
-  Zoo/Wildlife Sanctuary
-  Other Sight

Activities, Courses & Tours

-  Bodysurfing
-  Diving/Snorkelling
-  Canoeing/Kayaking
-  Course/Tour
-  Skiing
-  Snorkelling
-  Surfing
-  Swimming/Pool
-  Walking
-  Windsurfing
-  Other Activity



Sleeping

-  Sleeping
-  Camping

Eating

-  Eating

Drinking & Nightlife

-  Drinking & Nightlife
-  Cafe











Entertainment

-  Entertainment











Shopping

-  Shopping

Information

-  Bank
-  Embassy/Consulate
-  Hospital/Medical
-  Internet
-  Police
-  Post Office
-  Telephone
-  Toilet
-  Tourist Information
-  Other Information

















Geographic

-  Beach
-  Hut/Shelter
-  Lighthouse
-  Lookout
-  Mountain/Volcano
-  Oasis
-  Park
-  Pass
-  Picnic Area
-  Waterfall
















Population

-  Capital (National)
-  Capital (State/Province)
-  City/Large Town
-  Town/Village

Transport

-  Airport
-  Border crossing
-  Bus
-  Cable car/Funicular
-  Cycling
-  Ferry
-  Metro station
-  Monorail
-  Parking
-  Petrol station
-  Subway station
-  Taxi
-  Train station/Railway
-  Tram
-  Underground station
-  Other Transport







Routes

-  Tollway
-  Freeway
-  Primary
-  Secondary
-  Tertiary
-  Lane
-  Unsealed road
-  Road under construction
-  Plaza/Mall
-  Steps
-  Tunnel
-  Pedestrian overpass
-  Walking Tour
-  Walking Tour detour
-  Path/Walking Trail



Boundaries

-  International
-  State/Province
-  Disputed
-  Regional/Suburb
-  Marine Park
-  Cliff
-  Wall

Hydrography

-  River, Creek
-  Intermittent River
-  Canal
-  Water
-  Dry/Salt/Intermittent Lake
-  Reef

Areas

-  Airport/Runway
-  Beach/Desert
-  Cemetery (Christian)
-  Cemetery (Other)
-  Glacier
-  Mudflat
-  Park/Forest
-  Sight (Building)
-  Sportsground
-  Swamp/Mangrove

Note: Not all symbols displayed above appear on the maps in this book

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