

# On the Road





# Thimphu

02 / POP 95,100 / ELEV 2320M

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## Best Places to Eat

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- The Zone (p65)

## Best Places to Sleep

- Hotel Druk (p64)
- Hotel Jumolhari (p62)
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- Peaceful Resort (p62)

## Why Go?

The capital of one of the world's most intriguing destinations, Thimphu combines a natural small-town feel with a new commercial exuberance that constantly challenges the country's natural conservatism and Shangri La image. Vehicle traffic, unheard of a handful of years ago, now crawls through the centre of town during an equally new phenomenon – rush hour. However, the juxtapositions of old and new remain part of Thimphu's charm. Crimson-robed monks, government ministers clad in traditional dress and camera-wielding tourists all share pavements lined with shops selling SIM cards and Buddhist accessories.

For the visitor, Thimphu offers the best opportunity to briefly break away from the tour itinerary. In addition to its traditional Buddhist sights and attractions, it offers cafes, bars, nightclubs and restaurants. Finding a balance between the esoteric and espresso – the old and the new – is the key to getting the most out of this charming city.

## When to Go

- The post-monsoon autumn weather, clear skies and the colourful and exciting Thimphu *dromchoe* and tsechu festivities make September to November the peak season, when flight and accommodation bookings can be tight.
- In spring the rhododendrons in the surrounding hills erupt in blossom and the Je Khenpo leads the annual procession of monks from Punakha to their summer residence in Thimphu.
- Saturday is a good day to be in the city throughout the year, with archery tournaments, expanded opening hours at the dzong, the Weekend Market and the liveliest nightlife, though some sights and all government offices are closed.