

Complete Bhutan Expedition: From Paro to Laya & Gasa Hot Springs

Prepared by TourGrids

 Destination
Bhutan

 Duration
8 Nights 9 Days

 Starting from
Rs. 1,70,000 / person

ITINERARY ROUTE

 Paro · 2N

 Thimphu · 1N

 Punakha · 2N

 Gasa · 1N

 Laya · 2N

Overview

an immersive 8 nights / 9 days Bhutan Adventure tour package that combines cultural sightseeing, highland village life, and restorative hot springs. This Bhutan Adventure package takes you from the historic valley of Paro through the capital Thimphu, the picturesque Punakha, and the remote highlands of Gasa and Laya. Expect dramatic mountain drives, traditional villages, and authentic experiences off the beaten path.

Highlights:

- Taktshang (Paro Taktsang) – the iconic cliffside monastery
- Thimphu – national museum, Tashichho Dzong and vibrant markets
- Dochula Pass – panoramic Himalayan viewpoints
- Punakha Dzong & suspension bridge – historic fortress and river valley
- Gasa Hot Springs – natural alpine hot springs for relaxation
- Laya Village – high-altitude alpine culture and remote highland scenery

Note: This itinerary is designed for adventurous travelers with moderate fitness. High-altitude acclimatization and permits are required for Laya. Travelers should consult their physician and carry necessary medications.

✓ **What's Included**

- ✓ Accommodation as per the itinerary (hotels/lodges/guesthouses)
- ✓ All transfers, sightseeing, and road permits
- ✓ Licensed Bhutanese guide and driver
- ✓ Meals as specified (breakfast/lunch/dinner where indicated)
- ✓ Gasa Hot Springs entry and local guide fees
- ✓ Domestic road permits and Laya region permits
- ✓ All government taxes and service charges

✗ **Not Included**

- ✗ International airfare to/from Paro
- ✗ Bhutan visa fee and the mandatory Sustainable Development Fee (SDF) for applicable travelers
- ✗ Travel insurance and personal expenses
- ✗ Tips/gratuities for guides and drivers
- ✗ Optional activities (white-water rafting, special cultural performances) unless specified
- ✗ Emergency evacuation and medical expenses beyond basic first aid

Day-by-Day Itinerary

Day

1

Arrival in Paro — Welcome to Bhutan

Arrive at Paro International Airport. Meet your guide and driver. Transfer to your hotel for check-in and short rest. In the afternoon, visit Paro Town and the National Museum (Ta Dzong) for an introduction to Bhutanese art and history. Evening briefing about the expedition and permit formalities.

Tip: Flights into Paro offer spectacular views; window seats on the right side are recommended for best mountain vistas.

Day

2

Paro — Taktsang Hike and Local Sights

Early morning hike to the iconic Taktshang (Paro Taktsang) — the Tiger's Nest Monastery perched on the cliff. Enjoy panoramic views of the Paro Valley and spiritual ambience. After descending, visit Kyichu Lhakhang and stroll through Paro's craft shops.

Important: The Taktsang hike involves steep steps and can take 3–4 hours round-trip. Wear sturdy shoes and carry water.

Day

3

Paro to Thimphu — Capital City Exploration

Drive to Thimphu (about 1.5–2 hours). En route, stop at scenic viewpoints. In Thimphu, visit the Buddha Dordenma statue, Tashichho Dzong, and the Folk Heritage Museum. Explore the vibrant Thimphu Market and the craftsmanship of local artisans.

Note: Thimphu is Bhutan's administrative and cultural heart — expect lively markets and friendly locals.

Day

4

Thimphu to Punakha via Dochula Pass

Drive from Thimphu to Punakha with a stop at the scenic Dochula Pass (3,100 m) to view the Himalayan panorama and 108 chortens. Descend to the fertile Punakha Valley and visit the impressive Punakha Dzong, situated at the confluence of the Pho and Mo rivers. Afternoon at leisure or optional short hike to Chimi Lhakhang (Fertility Temple).

Tip: Weather at Dochula can be cold and windy—carry a warm layer.

Day

5

Punakha — Valley Activities and Cultural Immersion

Spend the day exploring the Punakha Valley: a riverside walk, visit local farms, and optional white-water rafting on the Pho Chu for the adventurous. Learn about Bhutanese agriculture and rural life. Prepare for the upcoming highland drive and ensure you have acclimatized sufficiently.

Important: Rafting is seasonal and requires prior arrangement. Consult your guide for fitness requirements.

Day

6

Punakha to Gasa — Hot Springs Retreat

Drive northwards to Gasa through scenic mountain roads, entering the remote highland region. Check into your lodge and relax in the natural Gasa Hot Springs — believed to have therapeutic properties. Evening free for rest and cultural exchange with local villagers.

Note: Roads to Gasa are rugged and travel time may vary. This stop is essential for relaxation before heading to Laya.

Day

7

Gasa to Laya — Entering the High Plateaus

Today's journey moves deeper into Bhutan's highlands toward Laya. Depending on road conditions and group fitness, this may include off-road driving and short hikes. Upon arrival, explore Laya Village, meet the Layap people, and witness traditional alpine architecture and yak herding culture.

Important: Laya is at high altitude (over 3,800 m). Allow time to acclimatize, limit strenuous activity, and stay hydrated.

Day

8

Laya — Cultural Immersion and Highland Exploration

Full day in Laya for cultural immersion: visit local homes, observe yak herding, and enjoy short walks around the alpine meadows for spectacular mountain views. Learn about traditional dress, music, and crafts. Evening cultural exchange and farewell dinner in the village.

Tip: Nights are cold — pack warm layers and a good sleeping bag if indicated by your operator.

Day

9

Return to Paro and Departure

Begin your return journey to Paro with scenic stops along the way. Arrive in Paro and, time permitting, visit any missed sights or shop for souvenirs. Transfer to Paro International Airport for your onward flight.

Note: Schedule depends on flight timing. Confirm departure transfer with your guide the evening prior.

🔗 Frequently Asked Questions

🔗 What is the best time to visit Bhutan?

The best time to visit Bhutan is during spring (March–May) and autumn (September–November). Spring offers blooming rhododendrons, wildflowers, and pleasant temperatures (12–24°C), making it perfect for trekking and photography. Autumn provides crystal-clear skies with stunning Himalayan views, major festivals like Thimphu and Paro Tshechus, and excellent weather for sightseeing. Winter (December–February) is ideal for those seeking snow-capped landscapes, fewer crowds, and cozy lodge stays, though temperatures can drop to -2°C in valleys. Monsoon season (June–August) brings lush greenery and better hotel rates but frequent rainfall. For first-time visitors, autumn is recommended for clear mountain views and cultural festivals.

🔗 How can Indian travelers reach Bhutan?

Indian travelers can reach Bhutan by road or air. By road (most popular): Enter at Phuentsholing border (adjacent to Jaigaon, West Bengal). From there, it's 5–6 hours to Thimphu or Paro. Take train to Hasimara (17km from border), New Alipurduar, or New Jalpaiguri, then taxi to the border. By air: Fly into Paro International Airport from Delhi, Kolkata, Guwahati, or Bagdogra via Drukair or Bhutan Airlines (seasonal schedules). Other road entry points include Gelephu and Samdrup Jongkhar from Assam. The road journey offers scenic mountain views, while flying provides dramatic Himalayan aerial views during the approach to Paro's challenging runway.

❓ **Do Indian citizens need a visa for Bhutan?**

Indian citizens don't need a visa but require permits and pay a Sustainable Development Fee (SDF). Required documents: valid passport or voter ID and recent passport photos. Minors need birth certificates. Entry permits cover Thimphu and Paro, while route permits are needed for other areas like Punakha, Phobjikha, or Bumthang. Permits can be arranged at entry points or through the official online system via licensed operators. The SDF is charged per person per night (rates vary – check latest official guidelines). Travel insurance is strongly recommended. Carry multiple photocopies of documents and permits for smooth checkpoint processing throughout your journey.

❓ **What are the local transportation options in Bhutan?**

Local transportation in Bhutan includes taxis (readily available in major towns with point-to-point fares), city and intercity buses (budget-friendly with fixed schedules), and private cars with drivers (most comfortable for multi-stop itineraries). Shared taxis are common for intercity routes. Limited domestic flights operate seasonally to places like Bumthang, weather permitting. Self-drive is possible but less common due to challenging mountain roads requiring experience. For tourists, hiring a private vehicle with driver is recommended for flexibility and comfort, especially when traveling between valleys. Mountain roads are winding with stunning views but require buffer time for transfers.

❓ **Where should I stay in Bhutan and what accommodation options are available?**

Bhutan offers accommodations across all budgets. Luxury options include Six Senses (eco-chic in multiple valleys), COMO Uma (boutique luxury in Paro/Punakha), Amankora lodges, and Taj Tashi Thimphu. Mid-range choices include Le Méridien properties, Naksel Boutique Hotel Paro, and Dewachen Hotel Phobjikha. Budget travelers can choose Hotel Norbuling Thimphu or local guesthouses. Stay in Paro for Tiger's Nest access, Thimphu for urban experiences, Punakha for riverside tranquility, and Phobjikha for nature immersion. Many properties offer traditional architecture, valley views, and cultural experiences. Book advance during peak seasons (spring/autumn) and festivals. Most hotels provide heating in winter and arrange cultural programs.

🔍 What are the must-visit attractions in Bhutan?

Must-visit attractions include Paro Taktsang (Tiger's Nest) – the iconic cliffside monastery requiring a scenic half-day hike. Punakha Dzong is a stunning fortress at river confluence, while Dochula Pass offers 108 chortens and Himalayan panoramas. Buddha Dordenma in Thimphu provides valley views, and Phobjikha Valley is perfect for black-necked crane spotting (winter) and tranquil walks. Don't miss Chimi Lhakhang fertility temple via village walks, Chele La Pass (highest motorable pass), and Tashichho Dzong in Thimphu. Bumthang valleys offer spiritual sites and traditional culture. The National Museum in Paro showcases Bhutanese heritage. Plan 7-10 days for a classic Paro-Thimphu-Punakha-Phobjikha circuit.

🔍 What local food should I try in Bhutan?

Bhutanese cuisine is known for its spiciness and cheese-based dishes. Must-try dishes include Ema Datshi (chilies with cheese – the national dish), Kewa Datshi (potatoes with cheese), and Shamu Datshi (mushrooms with cheese). Try Phaksha Paa (pork with chilies), Jasha Maru (spicy minced chicken), and regional specialties like Hoentay buckwheat dumplings from Haa and Puta buckwheat noodles from Bumthang. Enjoy red rice, suja (butter tea), and local ara (spirit). Bumthang is famous for cheese and honey. Note that Bhutanese food is quite spicy – chilies are considered vegetables, not just spices. Most restaurants also serve Indian, Chinese, and continental options for those preferring milder flavors.

★ Traveller Reviews



Nisha Awasthi

★★★★★ 5/5

Discovering the Spirit of Bhutan

Exploring the monasteries and learning about Buddhism here was enlightening. This package offers a great spiritual experience.



Vikas Bansal

★★★★☆ 4/5

Serene Himalayan Escape

The tranquility and beauty of Bhutan was such a peaceful escape from the hustle of daily life. It's truly a gem!



Radha Shetty

★★★★★ 5/5

A Fantastic Discover of Bhutanese Culture

This was a fantastic tour that let us discover Bhutanese culture in depth. We participated in a local festival—unforgettable!



Vinay Malhotra

★★★★★ 5/5

Bhutan: Truly the Land of the Thunder Dragon

I was captivated by Bhutan's rugged beauty and rich traditions. Each experience was enriched by our guide's storytelling. Loved it!



Chaitanya Joshi

★★★★☆ 4/5

Well-Structured Travel Itinerary

The itinerary was perfect, balancing sightseeing and relaxation. With so much to explore, this package was excellent value.

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