

Earthbound Expeditions

Bhutan tour, Exploring the Hidden Kingdom in the Himalayas

6 days, from US$1,897 per person

Duration	Group size	Country
6 days	**10 people**	**Bhutan**

Bhutan tour, Exploring the Hidden Kingdom in the Himalayas Overview

A 6-day cultural tour of Bhutan

A cultural tour of Bhutan

Bhutan is often described as the last Shangri-La.
This 6-day tour takes you to the main cultural and natural sites of Bhutan, the Hidden Kingdom in the Himalayas.

The tour is an introduction to Bhutanese heritage. You visit sacred pilgrimage sites, rural villages and temples, and camp on a farm in a rural setting to see how Bhutanese people live on the land. Bhutan is working to become the world's only fully organic country.
The itinerary includes many stops for panoramic views of the valleys and mountain peaks, and of the country's unspoiled nature. The route begins in Paro and takes you to Thimphu and Punakha Valley before returning to Paro.

Bhutan's tropical and alpine forests have a wide diversity of plants, and many consider the country a paradise for botanists. Throughout the journey, you can expect friendly people and fine views.

The tour gives you an insight into the people, culture, traditions, religion and ecology of the country. Bhutan is also working with Nissan to become the only country in the world with only electric cars, and it has no traffic lights.

Itinerary

Day 1

Arrive in Paro and drive to Thimphu

On a clear day, the flight into Paro gives panoramic views of the Himalayas, including Everest. The approach through the Bhutanese foothills is notable, with a few steep turns before landing at the small airstrip of Paro International Airport. After you complete your visa formalities, you are met by our representative. Visit Rinpung Dzong and have lunch in Paro town. After lunch, drive to Thimphu, the capital of Bhutan. The road follows the Pa Chu river down to its confluence with the Wang Chu river, then continues up the valley to Thimphu. Check in to the hotel. In the evening, visit Tashichho Dzong, "the fortress of the glorious religion", which houses the throne room of His Majesty the King. Overnight in Thimphu. Note: try to get a seat on the right-hand side of the aircraft (front or back), as it gives a better view of the Himalayas.

Altitude: 2,320 m On foot: None, arrival day Night: Hotel, Thimphu Meals: Dinner

Day 2

Drive from Thimphu to Punakha Valley

After breakfast, drive to Punakha. On the way you can see Semtokha Dzong, the first dzong in Bhutan, from the roadside. The road climbs a series of zigzags over the Dochula Pass (3,050 metres), which, weather permitting, has views of the snow-capped eastern Himalayas. From the pass the road descends gradually through varied forest into the cultivated valley of Punakha. Visit Chimi Lhakhang, a temple dedicated to Drukpa Kuenley, known in the West as the Divine Madman. The walk to the temple takes about 20 minutes through paddy fields and past a few local farmhouses. Visit Punakha Dzong, one of the most impressive dzongs in the country, at the confluence of the Pho Chu and Mo Chu rivers (meaning the male and female rivers). Punakha was also the former capital of Bhutan. In the evening, enjoy a hot stone bath at a farmhouse. Overnight in Punakha, camping on a farm (tent).

Altitude: 1,200 m On foot: None, 3 hr drive Night: Hotel, Punakha Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 3

Punakha hikes and farm camping

After breakfast, hike in Punakha for about 2 hours. After lunch, hike to Khamsum Yulley Namgyal Chorten (stupa), which stands on a ridge with wide views of the valley below. The stupa was built to overcome negative forces in a changing world. Overnight in Punakha, camping on a farm (tent).

Altitude: 1,200 m On foot: 3–4 hrs Night: Tented camp, Punakha Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 4

Drive from Punakha to Paro

After breakfast, drive to Paro. Check in to the hotel and visit Kyichu Lhakhang, the oldest temple in Bhutan, founded in the 7th century by the Tibetan king Songtsen Gampo. Free time in town afterwards. Overnight in Paro.

Altitude: 2,200 m On foot: None, 4–5 hr drive Night: Hotel, Paro Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 5

Hike to Taktsang (Tiger's Nest) Monastery

Take the trail to Taktsang Monastery, one of the most sacred places in Bhutan. The 3 to 4 hour walk through oak and pine forest gives views of the valley 1,000 metres below and of the temple built into the side of the cliff. People from all over Bhutan and neighbouring countries try to visit this monastery once in their lifetime, as it is believed that a visit brings merit. A less strenuous pony ride to the temple is available at extra cost. Overnight in Paro.

Altitude: 2,200 m On foot: 3–4 hrs Night: Hotel, Paro Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 6

Departure from Paro

In the morning, transfer to the airport for your departure flight to Bangkok, Kathmandu or Delhi, whichever you prefer.

Altitude: 2,200 m On foot: None, departure day Night: No overnight Meals: Breakfast

What's included

- All accommodation in Bhutan as listed in the itinerary, on a full-board basis
- Private transfers and sightseeing with a professional English-speaking tour guide
- All airport pick-ups and transfers
- Travel permit, Bhutan visa fees and entrance fees for major monuments in Bhutan (except photography fees)

Not included

- Personal travel insurance, all personal expenses, and any lunches and dinners not mentioned
- Flights to and from Paro
- Tips and gratuities for guides and drivers
- Mountain or road rescue, or any other emergency evacuation charges if needed
- Expenses arising from illness, landslides, political disturbance, re-routing, flight cancellation or any other unforeseen events outside our control
- Drinks with meals, telephone bills, laundry, postage and similar costs

Photos, videos and reviews of this trip:
earthbound.rajansimkhada.com/bhutan-exploring-the-hidden-kingdom-in-the-himalayas