



## Bhutan Highlights Tour

### TOUR OVERVIEW

August 1 – August 8/9 2020  
7 nights in Bhutan

### SUMMARY

Our Bhutan highlights tour is designed by Koryo tours and its local partners to give you a brief but insightful look into the Bhutanese way of life.

Join us on this exhilarating journey as we discover not only the untouched culture and tradition of Bhutan, but catch a glimpse of its unique and rich cultural heritage.

Your Bhutan travel adventure will take you on a journey around the highlights of Bhutan, as well as to see some exclusive and unexplored areas of this mysterious country. This includes a trip to a local families house in Bhutan where we will enjoy a feel for local life, and a trip to a school in Bhutan to see the local Bhutanese children studying (or playing) hard.

A tour to one of the worlds most unusual countries must strike first at its 50-year-old capital Thimphu, after landing in Paro Airport - Bhutan's only international airport and labelled as "the world's most dangerous flight landing". This vibrant young capital offers the old and the new. Enjoy a freshly brewed coffee whilst gazing at the red-robed monks mixing in with Bhutan's modern crowds with a snow-capped mountain background.

Our Bhutan tours continue to the lush green valleys of Punakha and beyond to Phobjikha.

Along the way, we'll visit homes, temples, a school and of course Bhutan's ultimate highlight; the Tiger's Nest Monastery. All the while travelling across the vast empty lands of this country surrounded by mountains and never-ending stunning landscapes.

Due to Bhutan's tourism policy, there are very few tourists to the Kingdom of Bhutan every year. We take it one step further, visiting Bhutan on the offseason period where tourism in Bhutan is at its lowest.

Enjoy the vast landscapes, history-rich sites and tranquil temples in peace!  
*Please note that the itinerary may differ slightly to what is below, but your tour leader will do their best to ensure that as much is covered as possible and will also add in extras when there is time.*

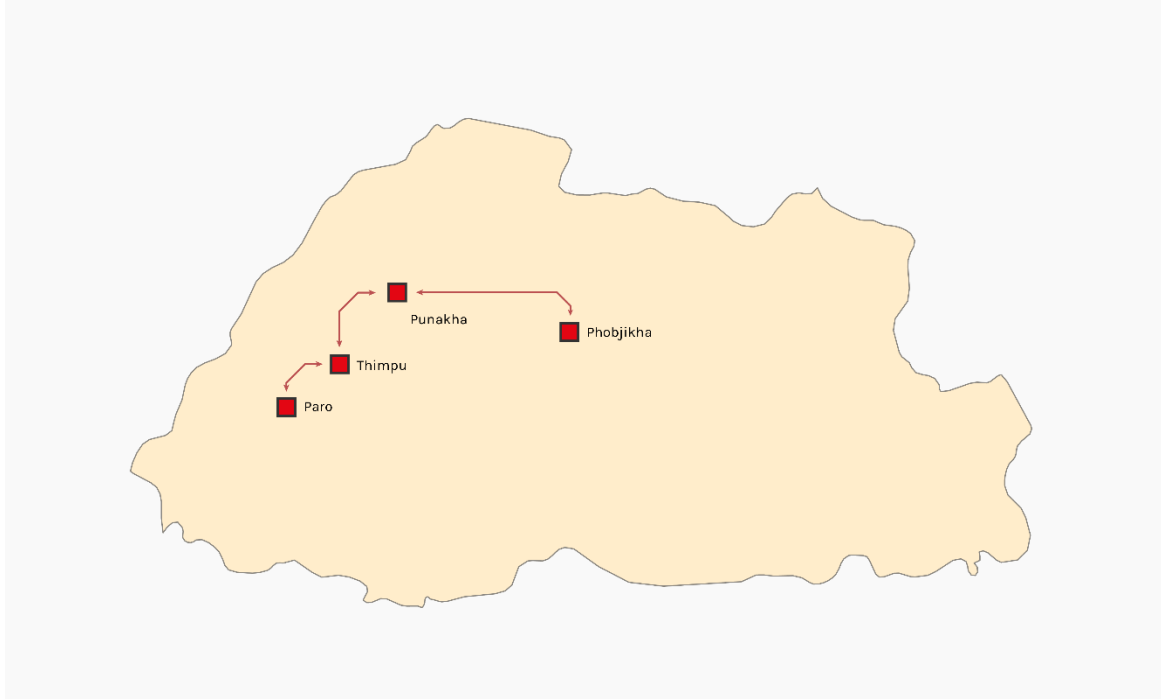
### SAFETY

At Koryo Tours our priority is yours and the groups safety. You are entering the country as a legal tourist, and therefore must obey the local laws and customs. One of our experienced Koryo Tours guides will accompany the

**The Experts in Travel to Rather Unusual Destinations.**

info@koryotours.com | +86 10 6416 7544 | www.koryotours.com  
27 Bei Sanlitun Nan, Chaoyang District, 100027, Beijing, China

## MAP & ITINERARY



Day 1	Arrive into Paro Airport
Day 2	Day in Thimpu
Day 3	Drive to Punakha
Day 4	Hike at Khamsum Yulley Namgyal Chorten
Day 5	Drive to Phobjikha
Day 6	Return to Paro via Dochula pass
Day 7	Hike to the Tiger's Nest
Day 8	Departure from Paro Airport

## DAILY ITINERARY

### AUGUST 1 – SATURDAY (Briefing Day)

#### **Briefing Day - Paro - Thimphu** **Welcome to Bhutan**

The tour begins as you fly into Paro Airport; Bhutan's only international airport. It's one of the world's most challenging, known as "**the world's most dangerous flight landing**". If you are lucky, you will have a glorious view of the snow-capped Himalayas.

After visa formalities and collection of baggage, you will be met as always by your Koryo staff and Bhutan tour guide who will be there to welcome you to this amazing country.

Due to the mountainous terrain, the national airport is located in Paro. We will then drive to Thimphu the nation's capital. Along the way we will stop to view **Tachog Monastery** built in the 15th century by **Thangthong Gyalpo**, Popularly known as **Lama Chazampa** the Iron Bridge builder.

- **Thang Thong Gyalpo** (1385 – 1464) was a Monk from Tibet who came to Bhutan in 1433 looking for Iron Ore. It is said that he built 50 - 108 bridges across Tibet and Bhutan, out of which 8 were built in Bhutan. His only surviving bridge here is located in Duksum. Interestingly he was also a physician, blacksmith, architect, and pioneering civil engineer. As well as being a reincarnation of Dolpopa Sherab Gyaltzen (a Buddhist master from Nepal), he was also known as the Madman of the Empty Valley.

Upon arrival into the capital we will take time to visit the:

- **Memorial Chorten**, a monument dedicated to the Third King of Bhutan King Jigme Dorji Wangchuck, for any visitor to Bhutan this is a must as his late majesty was responsible for not only moving the country forward to Democratization and modernization but allowing it to open up to foreign visitors. The Monument also contains some amazing statues and paintings which provide a very rare insight into Buddhist Philosophy.
- As we continue with our visit we stop for the **Weekend market** located near the **Wangchhu River**. **Thimphu's** weekend market is by far the largest domestic market for the farmers in Bhutan. Farmers come from all over the country to sell their farm products here, with its wide assortment of fresh, organic produce; the Farmer's Market has become a favourite spot for not only the locals to gather but also a great location for people watching, photography or to submerge one's self into local life.

Once we have checked into our hotel we will be off for our first group dinner and to mix it up with the locals.

**Meals:** Lunch & Dinner.



## AUGUST 2 – SUNDAY (DAY 1)

### Thimphu city tour

After our first hearty breakfast, we're straight out of our hotel for our tour around Thimphu the capital. Thimphu is located in the western central area of Bhutan and is now the largest city in this isolated country with a population of 115,000 people. Pre 1960, it was just a collection of small villages dotted across the valley. This was until the 3rd Druk Gyalpo Jigme Dorji Wangchuck moved the capital from Punakha to here.

The first site to visit is one of the world's largest Buddhist statues:

- **Buddha Dordenma**, this gigantic 52 meter statue is built in the form of the Shakyamuni (the Buddha). It was completed in 2015 celebrating the 60th anniversary of fourth king Jigme Singye Wangchuck.
- **Changangkha Lhakhang**. This amazing building is the oldest temple in the city. It was established in the 12th century. Its impressive fortress-like appearance atop a hilly ridge is a hum of activity as Locals come from all around to name their children and seek blessings from the protective deity Tamdrin.
- **Drubthob Gompa Nunnery**, home to around 60 -70 Nuns, obvious by their short hair. These pillars within the community play a vital role in the religious affairs of the area. The whole area is a must for visitors and photographers as the building offers great views over the (Sangaygang) of Thimphu valley.
- **Tashi Cho Dzong**, the final visit for the day is the seat of Bhutan's government since 1968. We will be allowed to visit this extraordinary place after office hours. From here, you will also get a glimpse of the Palace of the present King and the Queen observed nestled in the grounds nearby this area photography not allowed.
- **Jungshi Paper factory**, If you have ever wondered how paper is made then this is the factory for you, if you haven't it will still be an interesting visit. This factory makes traditional Bhutanese paper by boiling the bark from the Daphne bush. We will catch the whole production process from start to a product fit for a king, as this is where his highness own personnel paper is produced.
- We finish our day by visiting the local art gallery and weaving centre at Chamzamtog.

**Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

## AUGUST 3 – MONDAY (DAY 2)

### Thimphu – Punakha

After another fine breakfast, we load our tour bus as we prepared to leave the capital heading to Punakha the former capital of Bhutan although not before stopping for a rather strange visit.

- **National Postal Museum**, this unusual visit is located at the heart of Thimphu. At first glance, it's home to the history of the postal service in Bhutan. But after a second glance it also contains scented, talking, and musical stamps and for those that wish they will also add your own image to a stamp great for those postcards home.

As we drive onwards to Punakha, we stop for our many visits along the way.

- **Punakha Dzong** (palace of great happiness or bliss), this imposing building was built in 1637 by Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal. It is located between two large rivers Pho Chu (Male River) and Mo Chu (Female River). For many years until the time of the second king, it served as the seat of the Government. Inside the building, there are many historical relics including materials captured during the battle with Tibet.
- Not far from the palace is the **Punakha Suspension bridge**. One of the longest suspension bridges in Bhutan, a nail-biting 148m high above the Po Chhu River. This amazing bridge is made even more special as it is draped with prayer flags. The bridge connects the town of Punakha and Punakha Dzong.
- We stop for another temple visit **Chimi Lhakhang**, built by Lama Drukpa Kuenley (The Divine Madman), in the year 1499. It is said that he subdued demons with his magical Thunderbolts and thus built the temple on site. This temple is worthy of a visit seeing the way lined with prayer flags placed there by many local ladies who visit in the hope of conceiving a child.

**Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner.

## AUGUST 4 – TUESDAY (DAY 3)

### Punakha

After breakfast, we head out for our hike to **Khamsum Yulley Namgyal Chorten**, we will walk for around one hour uphill through rice terraces as we go stopping to admire stunning views and picnic next to the river nearby.

- **Khamsum Yulley Namgyal Chorten** is a newly built Stupa constructed at the bequest of her majesty the Queen Mother, Ashi Tshering Yangdon Wangchuck in 2004. This Chorten/ Stupa is unique in that it is not designed for community worship, educational or monastic purposes as with other Buddhist constructions. It is designed as a tool built by the Queen Mother for the protection of negative forces as well as to bring peace and harmony to all living beings. Aside from its design and function, the views from the top over the surrounding countryside are jaw-dropping and well worth the hike to the top.
- **Sangchhen Dorji Lhuendrup** nunnery is located on top of a hill overlooking the magnificent **Punakha**, Toebesa and Wangduephodrang valleys. For many, the temple is a true depiction of Bhutanese construction style expressing rich traditional values dating back to centuries.
- As we drive up the winding road, beautiful flowers line the way. The complex is home to a large bronze sculpture of Avalokiteshvara as well as housing other statues such as the 21 Taras, Padmasambhava, Buddha of Longevity, and Zhabdrung Ngawang. **Sangchhen Dorji Lhuendrup Nunnery** was constructed as a college for training nuns giving us a great opportunity to talk with its local students about life here and the study and commitment needed in their everyday life.
- This afternoon there is a **Rafting Option**. For those that wish we will raft on one of the rivers around Punakha. Depending on the weather it may be an exhilarating ride or a tame river relax. Both are enjoyable in the most beautiful area of Bhutan.

**Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner.

## AUGUST 5 – WEDNESDAY (DAY 4)

### Punakha- Phobjikha

Today we are off and out early as we continue our adventure on to Phobjikha with much to see on the way.

- The **valley of Wangdiphodrang**. This includes views of the **Wangdiphodrang Dzong/ fortress** (razed by fire in 2012), situated at the confluence of Mo Chu and Tang Chu rivers. It is now under renovation, originally built in 1638.
- This imposing construction stands guard over the surrounding valley. Passing through this beautiful valley we are rewarded with stunning views of traditional Bhutanese villages reminiscent of a long-ago national geographic article. This region is also well known for its craft people working with Bamboo and slate.
- **Gangtey** nature trek, we take this well known hike for around 90 mins trekking through the **Phobjikha Valley** passing local villages as we go. We walk from a hilltop overlooking **Gangtey Goemba**, heading downhill through flower meadows to Semchubara village and from there through beautiful forests and into the open valley. After passing a Stupa and **Khewa Lhakang** (built in the 15th century by Tibetan sculptors), the trek ends with a visit to a local farm..
- **Gangteng Monastery**, of course no visit to the Phobjikha valley is complete with out a visit to this amazing monastery. It is said to be so important that when the black necked cranes fly into and out of the valley they will always circle it 3 times.
- **Tractor Ride**, we'll meet one of the local farmers riding his tractor through this beautiful valley to visit his livestock and perhaps see how he milks his herd.
- After lunch we continue to explore the **Phobjikha valley**, even stopping by the roosting ground of the Rare Black-necked Cranes in winter and visit the Crane Information centre.

**Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner.



## AUGUST 6 – THURSDAY (DAY 5)

### Phobjikha to Paro

Today we complete our circuit travelling back to Paro - although not before more adventures along the way.

- Before we leave **Gantey** we have an appointment to join assembly at **Bayta primary school**, we have been invited to this amazing place by the school principle where we will help take an English class and deliver much needed supplies from Koryo tours. **Bayta school** was set up in 2005 with only 12 students in attendance now it has 186.
- **Dochula pass**, from here we view the **DrukWangyalChortens** - these 108 Chortens (stupas) were built by the Royal Queen Mother Ashi Dorji Wangmo Wangchuck, in the memory of the Bhutanese soldiers killed by Indian insurgents in 2003. If the weather is with us and the skies are clear, you can catch a glimpse of the beautiful Himalayas in their full glory and grandeur.
- After lunch, we visit **Ta Dzong** (built in 1656 and renovated in 1968), an ancient watchtower, which now houses the National Museum. Below the museum is the **Paro Rimpung Dzong** (Heap of Jewels). Built-in 1646, it was the centre of civil and religious authority in this valley. A short walk takes you to the base of the dzong and across a traditional cantilevered, covered bridge.
- **Srongsen Gampo** was a Tibetan king who married the Chinese princess Wenchen in 641 this cemented Chinese Tibetan relations at that time. In 659 when Srongsen was a small boy, he decided to build 108 Temples in a single day these temples were to pin an evil ogress to the earth forever - so the story goes. 6 of these temples are known to lie in Bhutan. The most prominent of them are Jambay Lhakhang and Kichu Lhakhang in Paro. Kichu Lhakhang is said to hold the left foot of an Ogress and Jambay Lhakhang houses pins from her left knee both of which we will stop to visit.
- **Namgyal Artisanal Brewery**, for those that have worked up a thirst this is a great place to visit as we see not only the brewing process of this microbrewery but sample some of its products.

**Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner



## AUGUST 7 – FRIDAY (DAY 6)

### (Paro) Hike to Tigers Nest

This is our last full day of adventure but we have a real Bhutanese highlight ahead of us as today we hike to the Tigers nest a short drive takes us to Satsam Chorten.

- **Taktsang Monastery/Tiger's Nest** is a prominent Himalayan temple complex located high on a cliff face. We will hike for around 2 hours following a trail through a beautiful pine forest, many of the trees festooned with mosses and lichens, as we climb we pass fluttering prayer flags.
- Stopping for refreshments at the Taktsang Jakhang (cafeteria) we then walk a short distance until we finally see, Taktsang monastery. Built around Guru Rimpoche's meditation cave in the 1684 by the Penlop of Paro Gyaltse Tenzin Rabgay, this incredible monastery clings to the edge of a sheer rock cliff plunging 900 meters into the valley below. Legend has it that Guru Padmasambhava, the tantric mystic who brought Buddhism to Bhutan, flew here on the back of a flying tiger, hence the name.
- For those who wish, prayer flags can be hoisted near the monastery, and you may offer your prayers inside the monastery.
- After the hike, one may also try out the traditional stone bath considered by many - the best way to unwind after a long day in Bhutan. It is not only practised as a comforting soak but also a way to treat various ailments.
- This evening over dinner we will also enjoy our final meal whilst watching a traditional show incorporating many of the mask dances.

**Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

## AUGUST 8 – SATURDAY (DAY 7)

Departure Day.

**End of Tour**



## FLIGHT INFORMATION

We will need information regarding your flight details upon booking, all customers will be met and transferred from the airport upon arrival as is the norm for any of our Koryo other destinations tours.

Flights for Bhutan are two fold as you will need to book a flight to any of the airports which either service Druk Airlines or Air Bhutan. These flights will then also need to be booked separate.

The national airline 'Drukair' operates. New Delhi & Kolkata in India, Kathmandu-Nepal and Bangkok-Thailand and Singapore. There is flight from Paro to Bangkok via Kolkata and Bangkok to Paro via Kolkata every day and there is flight from Delhi to Paro via Kathmandu on Monday, Thursday & Saturday and Paro to Delhi via Kathmandu on Wednesday, Friday and Sunday and fly back the same. There is flight from Singapore to Paro via Kolkata on Monday, Wednesday and Saturday.

We can if need be help with your Druk air reservations.

## MONEY

All meals are included on your tour to Bhutan meaning that you only need spending money for souvenirs, drinks and tips etc which are not included in the trip cost.

My recommendation would be to bring cash, as it is easily exchanged into local currency. ATMs are available in Thimphu and Paro but not other areas.

The official currency of Bhutan is the Bhutanese Ngultrum (BTN). It is also possible to use Indian Rupee although larger denominations may be refused.

Most major currencies can be exchanged at the airport on arrival but as with many countries in the region make sure you have only clean, crisp and undamaged notes.

## VISAS

For all travelling to Bhutan your Bhutanese visa must be applied for ahead of your travel plans through us and our partners in Bhutan. Once Koryo receive your tour booking and your tour payment is confirmed we will use the supporting documents provided to obtain your visa ready for your adventure!

## PACKING

### ESSENTIALS

Day pack: for carrying essentials when exploring destinations like water, camera, snacks, jacket, etc.

Lightweight clothing: A mixture of covering lightweight clothing and some warm layers are recommended. It is best to check the weather and seasonal information before travelling. Please also bring clothing that covers arms and pants/skirts that go past the knee for entry into local religious sites.

Temperatures can get very low overnight in some parts of Bhutan – be prepared for changes in temperature throughout the day

Comfortable shoes for full day walking/trekking: Closed-in shoes will help to protect your feet from cuts and scratches when walking through cities as well as bush/grasslands, and will also act as a barrier protection in rare cases against bites or stings

Wind and waterproof jacket

Sun protection: hat, sunscreen, sunglasses, and lip balm

In some areas it will still be cold so something warm, such as a fleece, should be brought along.



## **RECOMMENDED**

Personal medical kit - we recommend you carry items such as mild pain killers, electrolytes, Band-Aids and insect repellent.

Water bottle - we recommend a 1.5 liter capacity for which we can provide potable water. Bottled water is also available but we prefer to use safe drinking water rather than contribute to polluting the environment.

Spare batteries - our trips have access to power to recharge batteries for phones and cameras most days, but we recommend you take spare batteries for your camera.

Electrical travel adapter plug

Inner sleep sheet/bag for added comfort during overnight stays.

Money belt

Torch or flash light

Hand sanitizer

Neck pillow for those long, bumpy drives

## **OPTIONAL**

Ear plugs to guard against street noise and snorers.

A good book, a journal and music player for longer drives.

Images from home - during our trip there will be many opportunities for you to meet and talk with locals. One way to start any conversation is with pictures. We recommend that you bring some photos / postcards of your family, home, city or country where you live, animals peculiar to your country etc.



## TERMS & CONDITIONS

**CANCELLATION** Please note this tour is charged in US\$, If we receive any other currency this will be converted to US\$ on that day's exchange rate fixed by the Bank of China. Any refund will be made according to the US\$ amount we received and not the original currency sent. With all refunds Koryo Tours will not be held liable for any bank charges.

**STANDARD DISCLAIMER:** Koryo Tours reserves the right to withdraw service and cancel a tour at any time. In this eventuality a full refund of any monies paid by the customer will be made.

Koryo Tours cannot be held responsible for any mishap to yourself or your property and in particular any consequence or effects of flight/train cancellation/delay, robbery, sickness, Government intervention or other such happenings.

**INSURANCE** Koryo Tours insist that all of our travellers have full medical insurance. You are advised to insure yourself against any possible risk that may occur and in particular to ensure that sufficient insurance has been obtained in respect of any dependant relatives. It is your responsibility to be covered by insurance which must include medical expenses and the cost of repatriation should you become too ill to continue.

The prices on this website are correct at the time of website publication, however, Koryo Tours reserves the right to raise or lower its prices at any time. We also reserve the right to correct errors in both advertised and confirmed prices (both before and after your confirmation has been issued). Please note, changes and errors sometimes occur. Flight/train price increases are out of our control and any increase in fee may be passed on to the tourists