
GEEO ITINERARY

X-Bhutan

Day 1: Paro/Thimphu (D) Arrive at any time. Airport arrival transfer to Thimphu included.

As today is the arrival day, you may arrive at any time and an arrival transfer is included. Travel time from Paro to Thimphu is approximately 1.5 to 2 hours. There are no planned activities until an evening welcome meeting. Check the notice boards or ask at reception for the exact time and location of the group meeting, typically 6:00 p.m. or 7:00 p.m. After the meeting, you might take the opportunity to head out for a meal in a nearby local restaurant to get to know your tour leader and traveling companions further. Please make every effort to arrive on time for this welcome meeting. If you are delayed and will arrive late, please inform us. Your tour leader will then leave you a message at the front desk informing you of where and when to meet up.

Day 2: Thimphu (B, L, D) Visit the National Memorial Chorten, the Buddha Point, and Motithang Takin Preserve. In the evening, visit Tashichho Dzong.

Start the day off with a visit to the National Memorial Chorten. The chorten is one of the most prominent religious structures in Thimphu, and for local Bhutanese, it is a popular part of their daily prayers. Watch locals walk around the Chorten, spinning the prayer wheels and meditating in this lovely and peaceful spot. Make your way to your next stop, known as the "Buddha Point." The Buddha Dordenma is a massive Buddha statue in Thimphu made of bronze and gold. Take lots of pictures—it's beautiful. Later, enjoy a visit to the Motithang Takin Preserve, which was once a mini zoo. The area was converted into a preserve for Bhutan's national animal, the takin, which is a cross between a goat and an antelope. In the evening, visit the Tashichho Dzong, a Buddhist monastery and fortress. Its main building is typical of Bhutanese architecture, with whitewashed walls and a golden roof. The original structure was built in 1216 and now houses the civil government.

Day 3: Thimphu/Gangtey Gonpa (B, L, D) Drive through the Bhutanese countryside passing small villages and panoramic views of the Himalayas en route to Gangtey for a night in a family's farmhouse.

Settle in and scan the scenery from the convenience of a private vehicle. The road climbs steeply through forests, with hanging lichen up near the Dochula Pass (3,050m/10,007 ft). The pass offers panoramic views of the Himalayan Mountains. Stop for tea and check out the view before continuing on to Gangtey Gumpa. Get a true taste of local life and stay overnight in a traditional Bhutanese farmhouse. Opt to wander around the small town to see young monks from the nearby school meandering in the street. Please note facilities at the farmhouse are basic; there will be no showers or running water for this night. Simple bedding is provided. Approximate travel time: 6-7 hours by private vehicle

Day 4: Gangtey Gonpa/Punākha (B, L, D) Hike in the Phobjikha Valley and explore the Gangtey Gonpa Monastery. Afterward, travel to the ancient capital of Punakha and enjoy a short hike in Lobeysa to Chime Lhakhang, built-in 1499.

Enjoy a walk across Phobjikha Valley to the Gangtey Gonpa Monastery. Visit the monastery, built in the 16th century and renovated in 2008. Take in the architecture and be sure to check out the amazing relics inside—they are said to be the most sacred in all of Bhutan. Travel by private vehicle from Gangtey Gonpa to Punākha. Take a short hike to Chime Lhakhang, the temple of the "Divine Madman." Built-in 1499, it is mainly visited today by women, as it is known as the temple of fertility. Approximate travel time: 3-4 hrs by private vehicle; 30 min to 1 hr on foot

Day 5: Punākha (B, L, D) Visit Punakha Dzong, the winter capital of the Je Khenpo (chief abbot). Later, hike to Khamsum Yueley Chorten and take in the

views, followed by a visit to the Sangchhen Dorji Lhuendrup Nunnery.

Visit Punakha Dzong, the winter seat of the Je Khenpo and the Monk Body, remarkably located between the rivers of the Mo (female) Chu and Pho (male) Chu. It is the second oldest and second-largest dzong (fortress) in Bhutan and one of its most majestic structures, housing many sacred relics. It is also the winter capital of the Je Khenpo (chief abbot). Next, cross the suspension bridge and then hike to Khamsum Yuley Chorten. Enjoy a hike through rice terraces, farms, and deep pine forests until we reach the stupa, which was consecrated in December 1999. Take a moment to breathe and admire the view; it's superb. Enjoy a hike and visit the Sangchhen Dorji Lhuendrup Nunnery and Temple complex. Perched on a ridge amid pine trees and overlooking the 3 Valleys of Toebesa, Punakha and Wangdi Phodrang, the complex is a meditation and traditional arts training center for nuns. Enjoy the peace and quiet and learn about the nunnery which was established by the Royal Grandfather.

Day 6: Punākha/Haa Dzongkhag (B,L,D) Enjoy Punakha before driving to Haa Valley. Take in more scenic Himalayan ranges and valleys. Visit the White Temple (Lhakhang Karpo) before an evening walk around town.

Enjoy some morning time in Punakha before driving to Haa Valley. Wind through deep gorges and blue pine forests before reaching the valley. Here we'll visit the beautiful Lhakhang Karpo (White Temple) near Haa town, only recently opened to tourists. It is believed that a black and a white pigeon were released to select where to build the temples in Haa valley. The white pigeon landed in the foothills of the mountain Chenrizi where the White Temple now stands. In the evening, you'll be free to walk around Haa town. Approximate travel time: 6-7 hrs by private vehicle

Day 7: Haa Dzongkhag/Paro (B,L,D) Enjoy a short hike up to Kila Gompa, a nunnery perched on a cliff housing over 60 nuns. Continue on to Paro, with free time to wander the streets and pick up some souvenirs.

We start off the day with a hike through the deep forest of pine trees and rhododendrons to Kila Goempa nunnery (approx 2.5 hrs). It seems to cling to a rocky cliff and houses around 60-70 nuns. This is a moderate level hike through stunningly beautiful scenery. After visiting the nunnery, follow the trail down through the forest to the road to meet the van. Drive back to Paro with time in the evening to wander the streets and pick up some souvenirs before enjoying a dinner with your group. Approximate travel time: 2-3 hrs hiking, 2-3 hrs by private vehicle

Day 8: Paro/Bumdrak Camp (B,L,D) Trek through fluttering prayer flags, rhododendron trees, and conifer forests to reach Bumdrak camp at 3860m.

Today we begin the Bumdrak trek. Start with a short drive to the start point of the trek at 2950m. Climb steadily upwards for 2.5hrs to your picturesque lunch spot with stunning views of the Paro valley. Take your time and appreciate your surroundings as you go. The 18 different types of rhododendrons and lush conifer forest will give you plenty to look at. After lunch, continue on a more gradual incline for 1.5hrs to reach your home for the evening, Bumdrak Camp at 3860m. Approximate travel time: 4-5 hrs hiking

Day 9: Paro (B,L,D) Trek back down through grassy meadows and trees covered in wispy moss. Later, hike to the stunning Taktsang Monastery (Tiger's Nest) and the Kyichu Temple, one of the oldest in Bhutan.

After breakfast, we start the descent. The majority of the trekking will be downhill on a steep incline, so walking poles are helpful. Trek through spruce, hemlock, cypress, and fir. A fairytale-like meadow ends the trek, complete with wild edible strawberries if the season is right. Next, we hike up to the Taktsang monastery (Tiger's Nest); containing 13 holy relics, it's considered one of the most venerated pilgrim sites of the Himalayan world. It is also where Guru Padmasambhava is said to have landed on the back of a tigress in the 8th century. Take in the stunning views en route and the incredible vista from this monastery, which clings to the rock towering 2,953m above the valley. Then we visit one of Bhutan's

oldest and most beautiful temples. Built-in the 7th century, Kyichu Lhakhang Temple boasts stunning artwork inside and throughout the courtyards. Approximate travel time: 9-10 hrs hiking

Day: 10 Paro (B) Depart at any time. Airport transfer included.

Depart at any time. Your airport transfer is included. Your tour leader will help arrange your transfer to the airport and all exit formalities before your journey home. Want more adventure? Book two or more GEEO trips in the same year and receive a discount! GEEO will give you 10% off of the lesser value program(s) (up to 3 programs). If you don't see a program that interests you that pairs with this trip, but still would like to extend your time abroad, let us know. We will work with you to find a non-teacher trip from our tour operator's much larger catalog. Even better, if you are an educator, we can still offer you a discounted price on the trip you choose!