

Himalayan heartlands in Western Bhutan (8 days tour)

Day 01: Arrive at Paro

Afternoon sightseeing at Paro

Evening free after dinner. Overnight halt at the hotel in Paro

Day 02: Paro Full Day Sightseeing

The valley of Paro contains a wealth of attractions. In the morning, visit Ta Dzong. Once a watchtower, built to defend Rinpung Dzong during inter-valley wars of the 17th century, Ta Dzong was inaugurated as Bhutan's National Museum in 1968. Afterwards, walk down a hillside trail to visit Rinpung Dzong, which has a long and fascinating history.

After lunch, drive up along the valley to view the ruins of Drukgyel Dzong, 18 km. from Paro town on the north side of the valley. It was from here that the Bhutanese repelled several invading Tibetan armies during the 17th century. Also visit Kyichu Lhakhang, one of the oldest and one of the most sacred shrines of the kingdom built in the 7th century A.D.

In the evening, visit a traditional farmhouse for an opportunity to interact with a local family and learn something of their lifestyle. Later on, take an evening stroll along the main street, and perhaps visit a few handicrafts shops, or take refreshments at a local café or bar.

Overnight at the hotel in Paro.

Day 03: Paro Taktsang Excursion

Paro Taktsang Excursion is about 6 hours one day hike, For an average person, it takes about 3 hours walk uphill and 2 hours downhill walk. Taktsang is one of the oldest monasteries built on a rocky cliff by Guru Rinpoche.

Overnight halt at the hotel in Paro

Day 04: Drive to Haa, afternoon Haa Sightseeing, late afternoon drive to Thimphu.

Overnight halt at the hotel in Thimphu.

Day 05: Full Day Thimphu Sightseeing

Thimphu, perhaps the most unusual capital city in the world, is the seat of government. This bustling town is home to Bhutan's royal family, the civil service, and foreign missions with representation in Bhutan. It is also the headquarters for a number of internationally funded development projects.

In the morning visit to Tashichho Dzong (fortress), the main secretariat building which houses the throne room of His Majesty, the King. Tashichho Dzong is also the summer residence of the Je Khenpo (Chief Abbot) and the central monk body. Proceed to the National Library, which houses an extensive collection of Buddhist literature, with some works dating back several hundred years. The National Library in the neighborhood houses a huge book, called "Giant visual odyssey through the Kingdom of Bhutan", and was made by scientist Michael Hawley and is one of the eleven models available worldwide. It has a height of 1.52 meters and a length of 2.13 meters and weighs about 60 kilograms. In its 112 pages, the book offers stunning and high quality images of the Last Himalayan Kingdom, taken on four trips through Bhutan. The entire book requires 1 gallon of ink and 1 day to be printed. Visit the nearby Institute for Zorig Chusum (commonly known as the Painting School), where a six-year training course is given in the 13 traditional arts and crafts of Bhutan. Also visit (outside only) the National Institute of Traditional Medicine, where the medicinal herbs abundant in the kingdom are compounded and dispensed.

After lunch, visit the National Memorial Chorten (stupa). The building of this landmark was originally envisaged by Bhutan's third king, His Majesty Jigme Dorji Wangchuck, who had wanted to erect a monument to world peace and prosperity. Completed in 1974 after his untimely death, it is both a memorial to the Late King ("the father of modern Bhutan"), and a monument to peace. Visit the government-run Handicrafts Emporium and privately owned crafts shops, which offer a wide range of handcrafted products, including the splendid thangka paintings and exquisitely woven textiles for which Bhutan is famous. Also visit the Folk Heritage and National Textile Museums.

Overnight halt at the hotel in Thimphu.

Day 06: Drive Thimphu to Punakha, afternoon Punakha Sightseeing

Morning drive to Punakha and on the way you will cross over Dochu-La pass (3,088m/10,130ft) and see good view of the Eastern Himalayan peaks, if the weather is clear. Thimphu to Punakha is 3 hours comfortable drive.

Overnight at the hotel in Punkha.

Day 07: Morning Punakha Sightseeing, afternoon drive Punakha to Paro

Overnight at the hotel in Paro. Farewell dinner with your trip host.

Day 08: Fly to onward destination

After breakfast, drive to Paro airport for flight to onward destination. Your Far East Himalaya representative will help you with the exit formalities and then bid you farewell.

