

Thimphu Tsechu- (8 days Festival tour)

Day 01: Arrive Paro (altitude 2200 meters), Paro – Thimphu; 60 km [1.5 hours]

In clear weather, Druk Air's flight to Bhutan provides a wonderful view of Himalayan scenery. Whether flying along the Himalayan range from Kathmandu or over the foothills from Kolkata, it is a breathtaking journey, culminating in an exciting descent past forested hills into the kingdom.

On arrival at Paro airport, you will be met by Far East Himalaya representative. On completion of airport formalities, there will be a refreshing drive for about 1.5 hours towards Thimphu, the modern capital town of Bhutan. On arrival to Thimphu, check into the hotel. Today's tour program depends on your arrival time in Thimphu.

Evening free after dinner. Overnight at the hotel in Thimphu.

Day 02: Thimphu Festival

One of the biggest festivals in the country is the Thimphu Tshechu. This festival is held in the capital city for three days beginning on 10th day of the 8th month of lunar calendar. This Tshechu is witnessed by thousands of people many of which travel from neighboring Dzongkhags (districts) to attend the festivities. The actual Tshechu is preceded by days and nights of prayer and rituals to invoke the gods.



When it was initiated by the 4th Desi, Gyalse Tenzin Rabgay in 1867 the Tshechu consisted of only a few dances being performed strictly by monks. These were the Zhana chham and the Zhana Nga chham (Dances of the 21 Black Hats), Durdag (Dance of the Lords of the Cremation Ground), and the Tungam chham (Dance of the Terrifying Deities).

The Thimphu Tshechu underwent a change in the 1950s, when the third King Jigme Dorji Wangchuck, introduced numerous Boed chhams (mask dances performed by lay monks). These additions added colour and variation to the festival without compromising its spiritual significance. Mask dances like the Guru Tshengye (Eight Manifestations of Guru), Shaw Shachi (Dance of the Stags) are enjoyed because they are similar to stage-theater.

Equally important are the Atsaras, who are more than just mere clowns. The Atsaras are the dupthobs (acharyas), who provide protection. The dances and the jesting of the Atsaras are believed to entrance evil forces and prevent them from causing harm during Tshechus. Modern Atsaras also perform short skits to disseminate health and social awareness messages.

To farmers, the Tshechu is also seen as a break from farm life. It's an occasion to celebrate, receive blessings and pray for health and happiness.

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.

Thimphu Tsechu (festival) is also held at the courtyard of Tashichho Dzong (fortress)

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 thangkha 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

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Day 03: Thimphu Festival



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After lunch, Thimphu sightseeing.

Overnight halt at the hotel in Thimphu

Day 04: Thimphu to Punakha



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 2-5 hours journey

Overnight halt at the hotel in Punakha

Day 05: Punakha Halt.

Punakha served as the capital of Bhutan until 1955, when the seat of government moved to Thimphu. Originally situated on the riverbank and dominated by the towering walls of Punakha Dzong, the township was relocated to a safer site a few kilometers down the valley, consequent upon extensive flooding in the early 1990s. At the same time, extensive renovation work was undertaken on Punakha Dzong itself, which is now a breathtaking and glorious sight as you first glimpse it from the road. Although four catastrophic fires and an earthquake in past times destroyed many historic documents, Punakha Dzong still houses many sacred and historic artifacts and also the embalmed body of Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal. Visit Chimi Lhakhang, the fertility temple of the divine madman-Lama Drukpa Kuenley.

Punakha Dzong (monastery) was built in 1638 and was later the seat of the government. The monastery lies at the confluence of the Mo Chhu River (in the picture) and the Pho Chhu River.

Overnight at the hotel in Punakha

Day 06: Punakha to Paro

Drive to Paro, visiting Semtokha Dzong, Thimphu, en route. This dzong was built in 1627 and is the oldest in Dzong in Bhutan. It now houses the Institute for Language and Cultural Studies.

Arrive Paro and check into the hotel. Overnight at the hotel in Paro

Day 07: Paro sightseeing/visits



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. Farewell dinner with your trip host.

Day 08: Depart Paro

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.

2017 Thimphu Tsechu - September 30, 2017 – October 02, 2017

For booking the tour please contact us.