

BIM 10-Day Itinerary

Land Dates in Bhutan: February 19 – 28, 2015

Day 1, Thursday, February 19:

Arrival to Paro, Bhutan, and Transport to Paro Hotel.

If the skies are clear you'll be treated to some breath taking views of the highest peaks in the world including Mt. Everest, Makalu and Kanchenjunga. Paro stands at 7,500 ft. above sea level. You'll be met by our Bhutanese hosts who will transfer you to our hotel in Paro. After lunch you'll have the day free to wander, go for a run, do some shopping or rest. Dinner and overnight in Paro. Summary:

- Airport pick up – transport to Hotel, Paro
- Lunch in Paro
- Hotel in Paro
- Dinner in Paro

Day 2, Friday, February 20:

Travel to Thimphu and tour of Tashichho Dzong. Thimphu in time for lunch and an afternoon tour of the Dzong, shopping or take in the art and music activities of Bhutan Festival Week. The Tashichho Dzong in Thimphu is a Buddhist monastery and fortress and houses not only the King's office and throne room but Bhutan's civil government. The Dzong sits right next to the King's Palace.

Welcome dinner and local music and dancing for our group. Summary:

- Breakfast in Paro
- Lunch in Thimphu
- Celebration Dinner with local entertainment.
- Hotel in Thimphu

Day 3, Saturday, February 21:

Prayer ceremony in Thimphu, travel to Punakha via a stop at the Dochula Memorial Site. Afternoon excursion to Punakha Dzong. We'll start the day perched atop one of the lovely Thimphu Valley peaks with a morning Puja ceremony with the monks at a Paro monastery—for a safe trip and successful race. The most well known pass in Bhutan, Dochula Pass is located about 30 km away from the capital of Bhutan, Thimphu. The 108 chortens at Dochula were built by one of the Queen Mother's to honor the Bhutanese soldiers who were killed when fighting the Indian rebels in 2003. Though Bhutanese have wanted to build these chortens to mark the victory of the Bhutanese army, the King has rejected this offer and instead uses the chortens to commemorate the deceased.

The Punakha Dzong, "the palace of great happiness or bliss" is the second oldest and second largest Dzong in Bhutan and one of its most majestic. The Dzong is located at the confluence of the Pho Chhu (father) and Mo Chhu (mother) rivers in the Punakha-Wangdue valley and was the auspicious location for the marriage of the Fifth (current) King. It is also the location for the finish line of the Bhutan International Marathon as well as our Awards Celebration! Summary:

- Breakfast in Thimphu
- Drive to Punakha via Dochula Memorial
- Lunch in Punakha
- Dinner in Punakha
- Hotel in Punakha

Day 4, Sunday, February 22:

THE KING'S BIRTHDAY celebration, packet pick up and pre-race briefing in Punakha. The King's Birthday is a national holiday from February 21-23, and we'll be celebrating with locals in the Punakha Dzongkhag before our pre-race briefing and packet pick up in Punakha with the Bhutan Olympic Committee. Packet pick up is from 10:00 AM – 2:00 PM and the pre-race briefing is at 2:00 PM at Damchen Resort. In between race activities you can shop at the local market, rest or explore the beautiful Dzong area. Summary:

- Breakfast in Punakha
- Lunch in Punakha
- Dinner in Punakha
- Hotel in Punakha

Day 5, Monday, February 23:

Bhutan International Marathon and Half Marathon! The Bhutan Olympic Committee and the county and citizens of Punaka are honored to host you for this unique event. Our event will be capped off with an Awards Celebration, dinner, bonfires and traditional Bhutanese music and dancing right at the stunning Punakha Dzong. Summary:

- EARLY Breakfast in Punakha
- Travel to shuttle bus pick up at Damchen Resort by 6:00 AM
- Shuttle busses leave to the start line at 6:00 AM
- Half Marathon starts at 7:30 AM and Marathon starts at 8:00 AM
- Lunch at Punakha Hotel after the race
- 6:00 PM Event Awards Ceremony and dinner, traditional dance, music and entertainment next to the majestic Punakha Dzong.
- Hotel in Punakha

Day 6, Tuesday, February 24:

Morning hike to Khamsum Yulley Temple. Rafting option on the Mo Chhu. The rest of the afternoon to rest, recover or shop! We'll start our day with a brief trek to the Khamsum Yulley Namgyal Temple which stands majestically on a strategic ridge above the Punakha valley. It is a splendid example of Bhutan's fine architectural and artistic traditions and the only one of its kind in the world. Built over a period of 9 years, Bhutanese craftsmen including carpenters, painters, and sculptors consulted holy scriptures rather than engineering manuals, to construct this four-story temple. Offered by Her Majesty the Queen Mother, this temple is dedicated for the well being of the kingdom and the benefit of all sentient beings.

In the afternoon you'll have a choice to raft, or rest and recovery from the event. Summary:

- Breakfast in Punakha
- Morning Excursion to Khamsum Yulley Temple
- Picnic Lunch
- Half Day Rafting Excursion (optional)
- Dinner in Punakha
- Hotel in Punakha

Day 7, Wednesday, February 25:

Travel to Thimphu – Sightseeing and touring in Thimphu. Enroute to Thimphu we have the option to tour the Palace of the Divine Madman. Then there will be lots of sight seeing options in Thimphu! In-town options include a visit to the 169 foot Buddha Dordenma, the largest upright Buddha in the world, perched overlooking the entire Thimphu valley and the National Memorial Chorten built in 1974 in honor of the late King Jigme Dorji Wangchuk. Or, visit the National Library, stocked with ancient Buddhist manuscripts, and the Painting School where traditional art is still kept alive through instructions in the art of painting Thangkas (sacred Buddhist religious scrolls) or the Takin reserve. After lunch, you can check out the Traditional Medicine Institute where medicines are prepared according to ancient practices, and to Lungtenzampa to observe the Royal silversmiths and a Bhutanese paper factory at work. Other highlights include a visit to the Handicrafts Emporium followed by shopping for souvenirs in the shops of Thimphu.

Summary:

- Breakfast in Punakha
- Lunch in Thimphu
- Celebration Dinner in Thimphu at Terri's favorite – ZaSa restaurant
- Hotel in Thimphu

Day 8, Thursday, February 26:

Full Day Sightseeing, hiking, shopping or touring in Thimphu including the Tango and Cheri Monasteries and the Dechenphu Lhakhang Temple, an important spiritual guardian of the Bhutanese people. Hiking and shopping options are available upon request inclusive of Day 7 options.

If you don't opt to hike or shop, whatever you didn't get to see yesterday we'll try and take in today (much more detail upon arrival). Summary:

- Breakfast in Thimphu
- Lunch in Thimphu
- Dinner in Thimphu
- Hotel in Thimphu

Day 9, Thursday, February 27:

Excursion to Taktsang Monastery, Paro

Today we'll experience one of the highlights of your trip in Bhutan with an excursion to view the spectacular Taksang (Tiger's Nest) Monastery. After breakfast in Thimphu we'll drive through Paro to Satsam Chorten and from there do a two hour trek up to the viewpoint of the monastery. The trail climbs through beautiful pine forest, many of the trees festooned with Spanish moss, and an occasional grove of fluttering prayer flags. We stop for a rest and light refreshments at the Taksang Jakhang (tea house) and then walk a short distance until we see, clearly and seemingly within reach, Taksang Monastery. The first part was 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 that plunges 900 meters into the valley below.

Legend has it that Guru Padmasambhava (Guru Rimpoche), the tantric mystic who brought Buddhism to Bhutan, flew here on the back of a flying tiger, Dorji Drolo, said to be his favorite consort. Lunch is served at the completion of the trek. Drive down to Paro to spend the rest of the afternoon resting, sightseeing or shopping. Dinner and overnight at the hotel in Paro. Summary:

- Breakfast in Thimphu
 - Tea at Takseng Overlook
 - Picnic lunch at finish of Takseng trek
 - Dinner in Paro
 - Hotel in Paro
- Day 10, Friday, February 28:** Paro Departures
Summary:
- Breakfast in Paro
 - Transport to Airport