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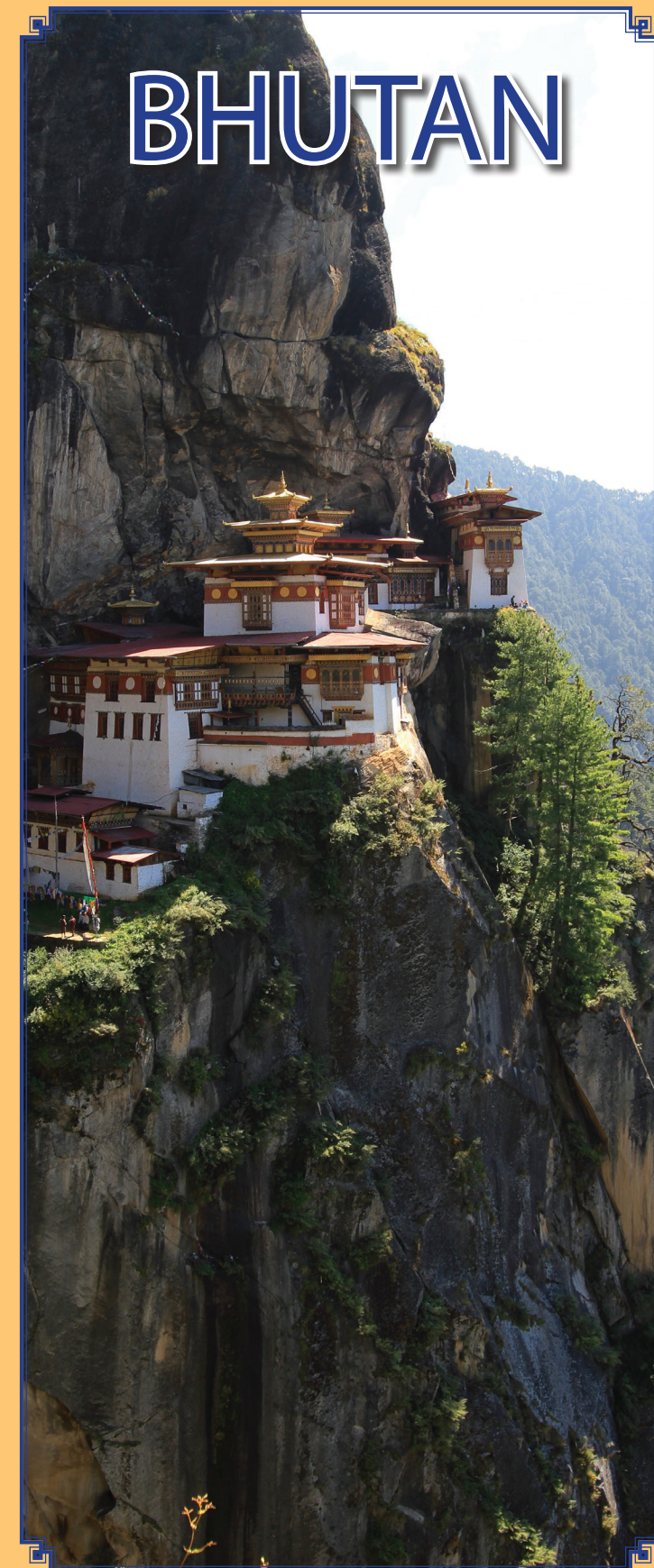
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**Attractions**



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Kuenselphodrang (Buddha Point)



Drukgyel Dzong



People at the Paro Festival



Tashichho Dzong

### Bhutan, Land of the Thunder Dragon

Nestled in the Eastern region of the Himalayas, Bhutan is a small country, roughly the size of Switzerland and fondly referred to as Druk Yul (Land of the Thunder Dragon) by the Bhutanese.

Bhutan has remained a country where age old customs and traditions are still part of everyday lives of the people, even while modernization, development and the strains of global influence are felt more and more.

**Paro** (Altitude: 1,800 - 5,400m approx.) The beautiful valley is home to many of Bhutan's old monasteries and temples. The valley is also home to Mount Jhomolhari (7,314 meters) situated at the northern end of the valley.

**Drukgyal Dzong:** Built in 1649 to commemorate the victory of Bhutanese over the allied Tibetan-Mongolian forces. The Dzong as a defense fortress is said to have housed the finest armory in the country.

**Ta Dzong:** Built as a watchtower it was converted into a national museum in 1968.

**Taksang Monastery:** The Taksang, popularly known as the "Tiger's Nest" is perched on the side of a cliff at a height of 900m above the Paro valley.

**Kyichu Lhakhang:** This monastery dates back to the 7th century and is one of the most oldest and sacred.

**Haa** (Altitude: 1,000 - 5,600m approx.) The valley of Haa is blessed by the presence of Meri Puensum, three small mountains symbolizing Rigsum Gonpo: Jampelyang (manjushri) Chana Dorjee (Vajrapani) and Chenrezi (Avaloketeshvara).

**Thimphu** (Altitude: 1,800 - 5,400m approx.) Thimphu, the capital city, is a bustling town on the banks of the river Wang Chhu. It is home to the Bhutanese Royal Family, the Royal Government and to several foreign missions and development projects.

**Tashichho Dzong:** The "Fortress of the glorious religion" houses the throne room of His Majesty the King, government offices and the central monk body.

**Memorial Chorten:** This stupa was built in 1974 in memory of the Third King, His Majesty Jigme Dorji Wangchuk by his mother.

**Semtokha Dzong:** Five miles from Thimphu, on a lofty ridge, stands Semtokha Dzong the oldest fortress in the Kingdom.

**The Institute of Zorig Chusum:** This is the Institute where students learn the 13 traditional Arts and Crafts.

**Kuenselphodrang (Buddha Point):** The Buddha Dordenma Statue which is 169ft is the world's tallest Buddha statue and it is located about 6kms from Thimphu city.

**The Folk Heritage Museum:** Founded by Her Majesty the Queen Mother Ashi Dorji Wangmo Wangchuck, the museum portrays the lifestyle of a genteel family in the Thimphu valley in the olden days.

**The Institute of Traditional Medicine:** The complex has the traditional medicine production unit, the treatment hospital and the school.

**Centenary Farmers' Market:** Every Friday, Saturday and Sunday the weekend market is held in the capital. Here villagers from the valley and other nearby places come to sell their agriculture products.

**Druk Wangyal Chortens at Dochula:** On the way to Punakha from Thimphu is the Dochula pass from where a beautiful panoramic view of the mountain range can be seen. The place is further enhanced by the Druk Wangyal Chortens -108 stupa built by the Queen Mother Ashi Dorji Wangmo Wangchuk.

**Punakha** (Altitude: 1,200 - 4,800m approx.) It served as the capital of Bhutan until 1955. It has a temperate climate and its rich fertile valley is fed by the Pho Chu and Mo Chu rivers.

**Punakha Dzong:** The Punakha Dzong was built by Zhabdrung in 1637. It stands majestically at the junction of the two rivers-Pho Chu and Mo Chu.

**Khamsum Yulley Namgyal Chorten:** Built by the Queen Mother Ashi Tshering Yangdon Wangchuck, this Chorten is a splendid example of the Bhutanese architecture. It was built over eight and a half years and its details have been drawn from religious scriptures.

**Wangdue Phodrang** (Altitude: 500 - 5,400m approx.) This town is located south of Punakha and is the last town before central Bhutan. The district is famous for its fine bamboo work, slate and stone carving.

**Gangtey Goenpa (Phobjikha):** The valley of Phobjikha is well known as the winter home of the Black-Necked Cranes (Grus Nigricollis), that migrate from the Tibetan plateau. The birds can be observed from early November to end of March. Overlooking the valley is the Gangtey Goenpa that dates back to 17th century.

**Trongsa** (Altitude: 800 - 4,800m approx.) It forms the central hub of the Kingdom and is historically the place from where attempts at unifying the country were launched.

**Trongsa Dzong:** It was the ancestral home of the Royal Family, built in 1648. All kings hold the post of Trongsa Penlop prior to being crowned as the King.

**Ta Dzong:** It served as the watchtower for Trongsa Dzong from internal rebellion and it is now a heritage museum.

**Bumthang** (Altitude: 1,800 - 5,400m approx.) The fascinating valley is the spiritual heartland of the nation and home to some of the oldest Buddhist temples and monasteries. The valley is famous for the production of honey, cheese, apples and the yatra (woollen materials).

**Jambay Lhakhang:** It is one of the 108 monasteries built by King Songtsen Goenpo in the 7th century to subdue evil spirits in the Himalayan region.

**Kurje Lhakhang:** It is dedicated to Saint Guru Padmasambava who was supposed to have meditated here in the 8th century.

**Tamshing Lhakhang:** It lies on the other side of the river opposite to the Kurje Lhakhang. It was built

in 1501 by Terton Pema Lingpa, a re-incarnated disciple of Guru Padmasambava.

**Jakar Dzong:** It was initially built as a monastery in 1549 and like any other administrative Dzong, it is used for civil and monastic administration.

**Mebar Tsho (Burning Lake):** It is a sacred lake for the Bhutanese who believe that Terton Pema Lingpa discovered religious treasures from this lake in the late 15th century.

**Zhemgang** (Altitude: 100 - 4,520m approx.) It is a region blessed with incredibly rich biodiversity. Its lush forests are home to 22 endangered animal species including the Golden Langur. Though much of the district has warm and humid climatic conditions, its northern regions have moderately cool temperatures.

**Lhuntse** (Altitude: 600 - 5,800m approx.) It is the ancestral home of our Kings and hosts several of the sacred sites of pilgrimage in the country. It is also one of the most isolated districts in Bhutan. The region is famous for its weavers, (generally considered to be the best in the country) especially at weaving a textile called Kishuthara. Picking up a Kishuthara here will be much cheaper than buying one from the capital.

**Monggar** (Altitude: 400 - 4,000m approx.) The journey from Bumthang to Monggar is one of the most beautiful in the Himalaya, crossing the 3,800m high Trumshingla pass. Monggar marks the beginning of eastern Bhutan.

**Trashigang** (Altitude: 600 - 4,500m approx.) This is the largest district in Bhutan. It was once the center of busy trade with Tibet and India. The nomadic people from Merak and Sakten use Trashigang town as their market place mostly during winter.

**Trashigang Dzong:** It was built in 1659 and it commands remarkable view of the surrounding countryside.

**Gom Kora:** It is said that Guru Padmasambava meditated in this place to subdue a demon that dwelt in a big rock. A temple was then built.

**Trashiyangtse** (Altitude: 500 - 5,400m approx.) It is also home to the Black-Necked Cranes especially found in Bumdeling. This is the eastern most part of Bhutan and borders Arunachal Pradesh in India.

**Chorten Kora:** It is similar to the stupa of Boudhanath in Nepal and was built in 1740 by Lam Ngawang Loday. During the second month of lunar calendar an interesting celebration known as "kora" takes place here. The people from neighbouring Arunachal Pradesh also join in the festivities.

**Pema Gatshel** (Altitude: 1,000 - 3,500m approx.) It translates to "Lotus Garden of Happiness" and is covered with broadleaf and coniferous forests. The district is famous for its artisans and weavers.

**Samdrup Jongkhar** (Altitude: 200 - 4,200m approx.) It is one of the land entry points to Bhutan. Tourists entering Bhutan through Samdrup Jongkhar will take you to Trashigang and other parts of Bhutan.



Paro Festival



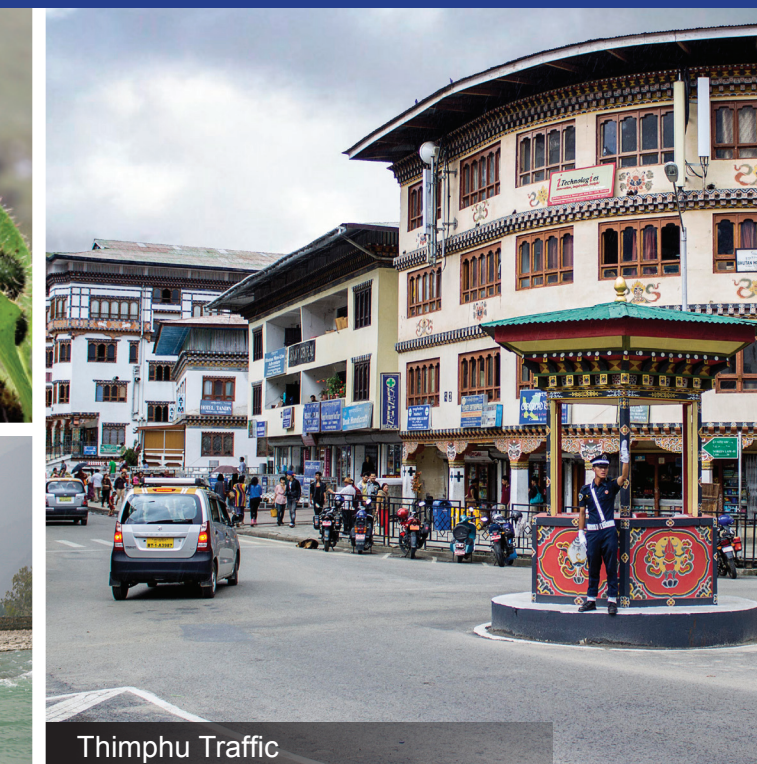
Blue Poppy, National Flower



Trashigang Dzong



Rafting



Thimphu Traffic