

Earthbound Expeditions

Festival Tour To Bhutan

9 days, from US$3,387 per person

Duration	Group size	Country
9 days	**10 people**	**Bhutan**

Festival Tour To Bhutan Overview

A tour timed around Bhutan's religious festivals, which are held in Paro in spring and in Thimphu and Bumthang in autumn. The festivals show a different side of Bhutanese culture and are enjoyable to attend.

Bhutan religious festival tour
Many visitors come to Bhutan for its most popular festivals, which are held in Paro in spring and in Thimphu and Bumthang in autumn. The festivals are well worth attending because they show a different side of Bhutanese culture, and they are enjoyable to watch. Because of the interest in the festivals, these are the busiest times of year for tourism in Bhutan. We also offer an all-inclusive Bhutan and Nepal tour if you would like to visit both Himalayan countries on one trip.

If you plan a festival tour to Bhutan, we strongly recommend booking well in advance, as seats on Druk Air are limited. A festival tour lets you see a tsechu, a religious festival held every year in different parts of the kingdom at different times of year. The most popular festivals are the Paro Tsechu (March or April), the Thimphu Tsechu (September or October) and the Jambay Lhakhang Drupchen in Bumthang (October or November). A Bhutan festival tour can also be combined with a Nepal festival tour.

A tsechu is celebrated at every dzong. The main event is the mask dance, known as cham, which takes place over 3 to 4 days in honour of Guru Rinpoche. The dances are performed by both monks and lay people, and by the end of the festival the audience will have seen 12 episodes. Bhutanese people consider it important to see and understand every dance, as this earns them merit and brings them luck. It is also a time when people from all over Bhutan leave their farm work, dress in their best clothes and jewellery, and celebrate together.

Bumthang festival (mid-November)

You walk at midnight to Jambay Lhakhang to watch the most sacred dance of the festival, in which dancers dance naked around a fire. The dancers are masked, and local people sing folk songs and mingle with one another.

Paro festival

The Paro Tshechu is one of the largest religious celebrations of the Bhutanese year and one of the busiest festivals in Bhutan. Dances are performed by trained monks and lay dancers in elaborate costumes. During the tour you also visit many historical sites and see everyday life in Bhutan.

Itinerary

Day 1

Arrive in Kathmandu

A representative of Earthbound Expeditions will meet you at Tribhuvan International Airport, Kathmandu, holding an Earthbound Expeditions sign. We then transfer you to your hotel.

Altitude: 1,400 m On foot: None, arrival day Night: Hotel, Kathmandu Meals: Dinner

Day 2

Kathmandu Valley sightseeing

After breakfast, we set off in an air-conditioned bus to visit the UNESCO World Heritage Sites of the Kathmandu Valley, including Pashupatinath, Boudhanath, Swayambhunath and Patan Durbar Square.

Altitude: 1,400 m On foot: Easy walking, 2–3 hrs Night: Hotel, Kathmandu Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 3

Fly to Paro

Flights to Paro operate from Bangkok, Delhi, Dhaka and Kathmandu. The flight offers fine mountain views. Bhutan is heavily forested, and the air on arrival is noticeably fresh. In clear weather, you can see the Paro valley under a clear sky. Overnight in Paro.

Altitude: 2,200 m On foot: None, flight day Night: Hotel, Paro Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 4

Paro Festival

The Paro Tshechu is one of the liveliest festivals in Bhutan. It consists of dances performed by trained monks and lay dancers in elaborate costumes and masks. The central event is the display of a large silk thangka, which is regarded as the most sacred blessing in Bhutan. It is believed that seeing this holy scroll brings liberation. You spend the whole day at the festival and also visit the inside of Rinpung Dzong.

Altitude: 2,200 m On foot: Easy walking, 2–3 hrs Night: Hotel, Paro Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 5

Drive to the Punakha valley

The drive from Paro to Punakha takes about 3 hours 30 minutes. The road follows the Paro Chu river to Chudzom, then follows the Wang Chu upstream to the small town of Simtokha. From there we turn right and climb to the Dochula pass, which has views of the Himalaya. From Dochula, the road descends to Wangdi and the Punakha valley. After the junction at Lobesa, the road heads north past villages and farmland to Punakha.

Altitude: 1,200 m On foot: None, 3–4 hr drive Night: Hotel, Punakha Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 6

Drive to Thimphu and sightseeing

Drive to Thimphu, the capital of Bhutan, which takes about an hour. Thimphu is the only capital city in the world without traffic lights, and it combines traditional culture with modern urban life. We visit Trashi Chho Dzong, the city's best-known landmark, and then the Buddhist temple of Changangkha Lhakhang, built in the 12th century, where many parents come to have their children named. If your visit falls on a weekend, you can also see the Thimphu Weekend Market, which sells a wide range of goods. Return to your hotel in the evening.

Altitude: 2,320 m On foot: None, 3 hr drive Night: Hotel, Thimphu Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 7

Hike to Taktsang Monastery

Taktsang Monastery is one of the best-known sites in the Himalaya. It is built on the side of a cliff 900 metres above the floor of the Paro valley and is the landmark of Bhutan. The walk up takes some effort, and at the top you have wide views and a quiet, peaceful setting. The monastery dates back to the 1600s. According to tradition, Guru Padmasambhava, who brought Buddhism to Bhutan, arrived here on the back of a flying tiger and meditated here for three months. You have time to explore the monastery and enjoy the views from it.

Altitude: 2,200 m On foot: 4–5 hrs Night: Hotel, Paro Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 8

Fly to Kathmandu

Fly back to Kathmandu. In the evening, you have dinner with a Nepali cultural show.

Altitude: 1,400 m On foot: None, flight day Night: Hotel, Kathmandu Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 9

Departure

Your tour ends today. Our representative will take you to the international airport for your departure.

Altitude: 1,400 m On foot: None, departure day Night: No overnight Meals: Breakfast

What's included

- All accommodation in Nepal and Bhutan (3-star hotels)
- Full board meals
- Private transfers
- Professional English-speaking tour guides
- All airport pick-ups and transfers
- Farewell dinner with a Nepali cultural show
- Return airfare Kathmandu to Bhutan to Kathmandu
- Travel permits
- Bhutan visa fees
- Entrance fees for major monuments in Bhutan

Not included

- Personal travel insurance
- All personal expenses
- A few lunches and dinners
- Tips for guides and drivers
- Mountain and road rescue
- Other emergency evacuations, which are charged if required
- Costs arising from illness, landslides, political disturbances, rerouting, flight cancellations and any other events outside our control
- Drinks, telephone bills, laundry, postage and similar expenses
- Nepal visa fees

Photos, videos and reviews of this trip: earthbound.rajansimkhada.com/festival-tour-to-bhutan