

Welcome to Bhutan.

Bhutan is known as the “**Land of the Thunder Dragon**”, Bhutan is a remote Himalayan Kingdom located east of Nepal and west of Burma, Between Tibet and India. On its Northern border, Bhutan is flanked by some of tallest mountains in the world.

Unified in the 1600s, Bhutan is the only existing vajayana Buddhist kingdom in the world. It is also one of the few countries in Asian that was never colonized. The vajrayana branch of Buddhism dates back saint Padmasambhava, known in Bhutan famous today for the preservation of its traditional culture, its pristine Environment, and its official policy of Gross National Happiness (GNH) in contrast to other countries focus on Gross National product(GNP).

Travel ahead of the masses and let yourself be immersed in a bath of beauty and wonder in the world’s last **Shangri-La**.

Places to Visit in Bhutan

- 1) Paro
- 2) Thimphu
- 3) Punakha
- 4) Wangduephodrang
- 5) Trongsa
- 6) Bumthang
- 7) Mongar
- 8) Trashigang
- 9) Trashiyangtse
- 10) Haa



BUMTHANG

This region that spans from 2,600-4,500m is the religious heartland of the nation and home to some of its oldest Buddhist temples and monasteries. Tales of Guru Padmasambhava and the tertons (“religious treasure-discoverers”) still linger in this sacred region.

Bumthang Dzongkhag consists of four main valleys URA, Chumey, Tang and Choekhor. Choekhor is the largest of the four mountain valleys and is widely considered as ‘Bumthang Valley’. The valleys are broad and gentle carved by the ancient glaciers. The wide and scenic valleys draws a large number of tourists each year.

The name Bumthang has two probable origins; the first is that it is named after a Bumpa, a vessel for holy water which the valley resembles in shape. The second origin implies that it is the Valley of Beautiful Girls as Bum translates to ‘Girl’ and Thang means ‘flat piece of land’.



Place to visits in Bumthang

i. **Jambay Lhakhang** : This monastery was built in the 7th century by Tibetan King, Songtsen Gampo. It is one of the 108 monasteries built by him to subdue evil spirits in the Himalayan region. Its present architectural appearance dates from the early 20th century.

ii. **Kurje Lhakhang**: .Situated before Jambay Lhakhang, Kurje Lhakhang consists of three temples. The one on the right was built in 1652 on the rock face where Guru meditated in the 8th century. Second temple is built on the site of a cave containing a rock with the imprint of Guru's body and is therefore considered the most holy. The third temple was built in 1990s by Ashi Kesang, the Queen Mother. These three temples are surrounded by a 108 chorten wall.

iii. **Tamzhing Lhakhang**: Located across the river from Kurje Lhakhang, this temple was founded in 1501 by Terton Pema Lingpa, the re-incarnation of Guru Padsambhava. The monastery has very ancient religious paintings like 1,000 Buddha's and 21 Taras (female form of Bodhisattva). The temple was restored at the end of the 19th century.

iv. **Jakar Dzong**: Founded by great grand-father of the first Shabdrung, the Dzong was initially built as a monastery in 1549. It was upgraded after the Shabdrung had firmly established his power in 1646. The Dzong is now used as administrative center for Bumthang valley, and houses the regional monk body.

v. **Koenchhogsum Lhakhang:** It was built in the 6th century but was renovated in 1995, which accounts for its fresh look. It contained a large bell and it is said that when this bell was rung it could be heard all the way in Lhasa in Tibet. During the 17th century a Tibetan Army tried to steal this bell but was too heavy and they dropped it and cracked it. It is now displayed at the National Museum in Paro.

vi. **Chankhar Lhakhang :** Beyond Jambay Lhakhang is Changkhar Lhakhang, the site of the palace of the Indian King Sindhu Raja. Because of its simplicity it looks like an ordinary village house. The original palace was built of iron and this is why it was named Chankhar, meaning iron castle. It was rebuilt in the 14th century by a Saint called- Dorji Lingpa.

vii. **Lhodrak Kharchhu Monastery:**

Located above the main town, about 3 km from Chamkhar town, the monastery was founded by Namkhai Nyingpo Rinpoche in 1984 who was recognized at a very young age by H.H. the 14th Dalai Lama and H.H. 16th Karmapa as the reincarnation of a Tibetan lama whose spiritual lineage dates back to the nearest disciples of the great 9th century master. Since then the monastery has developed considerably with increase in number of monks to almost four hundred. The monastery has become part of an extensive effort to preserve and revitalize Tibetan culture.

viii. **Tangbi Goemba:** A walk of half an hour north of Kurje Lhakhang leads to this monastery, founded in 1470 by Shamar Rinpoche of the Kagyupa religious school. The temple has two sanctuaries and a temple of terrifying deities. The sanctuary on the ground floor contains statues of past, present and future Buddha and three clay statues probably dating end of the 15th century. On the upper floor, the vestibule contains two remarkable paintings of Guru Rinpoche's heaven and the Buddha Amitabh's heaven.

ix. **Ngang Lhakhang:** A few hours walk from the Tangbi Goemba is the small region of Ngang Yul (Swan Land) and this temple here is 100 m above the valley floor. The site was visited by Guru Rinpoche and present temple was built in the 15th century by Lama Namkha Samdrup, a contemporary of Pema Lingpa. A three days festival is held here each winter with masked dances in honor of the founder of the temple.

x. **Ura Valley:** Jakar to Ura is 48 km, about one and a half hour drive. To reach here, the road climbs to Jakar valley Bhutan amazingly open countryside, only occasionally running into forest. Large sheep pastures line the road up to 20 km behind the southern tip of the Tang valley. The route crosses Ura (3,600m) with a magnificent view of Mount. Gangkhar Puensum. Villages in Ura have clustered houses, which is quite unusual in Bhutan. Above Ura village (3,100m) is a new temple dedicated to Guru Rinpoche. Inaugurated in 1986, it contains a huge statue of the master and remarkable paintings of the cycle of his teachings. Since last 25 years Ura has been transformed from a marginal community to prosperous valley.

xi. Tang Valley: Terton (treasure discoverer) Pema Lingpa, the famous saint, was born in the Tang valley of Bumthang. The people of this valley raise sheep and at higher elevation, yaks as the soil in this region is not so rich for agricultural activities. From Bumthang central, it is a short drive past the Dechenpelrithang sheep farm to an unpaved road that leads to the north. Just under a kilometer ahead, there is a rough track on the left and another kilometer ahead, there is junction where vehicle can be parked. From parking, it is a short walk down to the river.

The path is lined with prayer flags and ends up above a gorge where the river forms a pool before it rushes on. Images of Pema Lingpa and his two sons are carved on a rock here.

xii. Membartsho (The Burning Lake) : In Tang valley is a wide spot on the Tang Chhu (Chhu - water / river) and is considered to be one of the greatest pilgrimage sites of Bhutan. Pema Lingpa found several of Guru Rinpoche's hidden treasures here. The importance of this site is indicated by the extensive array of prayer flags and the small clay offerings called 'Tse Tsa' in rock niches.

xiii. Ugyenchholing Palace : Restored in 19th century, it is now housing the Family Museum, a place that will transport visitors to another world and time. The visitors will view permanent exhibits recreated to capture the ambience of the lifestyle of the Trongsa Penlop (Governor) Tshoki Dorji and his household. It also serves as retreat for those engaged in religious history. Bhutan's history truly unfolds here.

xiv. Tang Rimochen Lhakhang : sacred place of Guru Rinpoche. A rock in front of temple bears a body print of the Guru and two khandroms (female celestial being). The site is named after the tiger stripe markings on the cliff. Footprints of the Guru and his consorts Mandarava and Yeshe Chhogyal are found below the Lhakhang. Two large boulders nearby are said to be male and female jachungs (garudas).

xv. Kunzangdrak Goemba : It is two hours walk above Chel Tang Valley. It is one of the most important sites related to Pema Lingpa the great treasure discoverer in Bhutan, who also constructed the Goemba in 1488. Most of his sacred relics are kept here including the gilded stone bearing his footprint.

xvi. Pelseling Goemba Pelseling Goemba : It is a sacred monastery with rich historic values. Situated on a steep mountain, it is a half day trek (3-4 hours) from the area of Jakar. The trek starts off at a mild pace but later gains momentum. Along the trek route, travelers are gifted with breathtaking views of the valley and large species of flora and fauna. About two thirds of the way, there is a beautiful meadow which is the perfect picnic spot. The last part of the hike requires more uphill trek until eventually the destination is on sight.

From	To	Distance	Driving Time
Paro	Thimphu	65kms	1hr
Paro	Haa	65kms	1.5-2hrs
Thimphu	Haa	115kms	3-4hrs
Thimphu	Punakha	77kms	3hrs
Thimphu	Wangdue Phodrang	70kms	3hrs
Trongsa	Bumthang	68kms	2hrs
Bumthang	Mongar	198kms	7-8hrs
Mongar	Trashigang	91kms	3-4hrs
Trashigang	Trashiyangtse	55kms	2hrs
