

DAY 1: BANGKOK, THAILAND

A large, tree-covered park with a lake surrounded by the modern skyline of Bangkok, Thailand

Following your arrival at Suvarnabhumi International Airport (BKK), settle into the intriguing, Thai-influenced Novotel Suvarnabhumi Airport Hotel.

Accommodations: Novotel Suvarnabhumi Airport Hotel

DAY 2: PARO / THIMPHU

A person with a handheld Buddhist prayer wheel and prayer beads

After an early breakfast, meet your fellow Travelers, National Geographic Expedition Expert and your Expedition Leader to transfer to the airport for the flight to Paro.

Upon arrival in Paro, have lunch at a local restaurant, then visit a monastery where a monk will give you a blessing for safe travel before you continue to Thimphu, the capital of Bhutan. This blessing is a common Bhutanese practice and will be your introduction to local culture.

This evening, enjoy a welcome reception and dinner with government members, local dignitaries or respected professionals. This will also be the first formal introduction of your National Geographic Expedition Expert and Expedition Leader.

Meals Included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Accommodations: Taj Tashi

DAY 3: THIMPHU

A massive Buddha statue with a bowl sits atop a building overlooking a small temple in Thimphu

Begin the day with breakfast at the hotel, then visit the Zangdok Pelri Temple to learn about the rituals and beliefs of Buddhist practitioners. The temple is dedicated to Guru Rinpoche, the Buddhist master that brought the religion to Bhutan. During your visit, you will participate in the butter lamp lighting ceremony and learn of its significance to Buddhism. Then, journey to the massive Buddha Dordenma, a 169-foot bronze and gold statue that sits in the mountains overlooking the Thimphu Valley spread out below.

After lunch at a local restaurant, visit the Institute of Thirteen Arts and Crafts, where students undertake a 6-year course to master one of Bhutan's 13 traditional arts and crafts, each deeply rooted in their religion. While at the institute, you'll see a traditional painting demonstration.

The evening begins with an after-hours visit to the Folk Heritage Museum, a living museum housed in a 150-year-old building and dedicated to showcasing historic life in rural Bhutan. While at the museum,

you'll meet a member of the King's Court for a question-and-answer session followed by dinner at the museum

Meals Included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Accommodations: Taj Tashi

DAY 4: PHOBJIKHA VALLEY

A large monument stands at the top of stairs overlooking rows of smaller monuments on a mountain

Following breakfast at the hotel, join your National Geographic Expert for their first talk of the expedition. Then, depart for Phobjikha Valley, stopping at Dochula Pass on the way. At an elevation of over 10,000 feet, this location offers spectacular views of the highest Himalayan peaks in Bhutan. Next, take a short walk to the Druk Wangyal Chortens, the 108 Buddhist monuments built in honor of martyred Bhutanese soldiers. You will not only learn the history of this monument, but also of the importance of chortens or stupas—important religious monuments in Buddhism that symbolize Buddha's presence—in Bhutan.

After lunch at a local restaurant at Dochula Pass, continue your journey to Phobjikha Valley. Upon arrival, visit the Gangtey Goemba, an important 450-year-old monastery and the main seat of the reincarnations of Pema Lingpa, a Bhutanese saint and renowned treasure hunter. Attend a prayer ceremony followed by a butter lamp lighting ceremony. Then, return to the hotel for dinner.

Meals Included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Accommodations: Dewachen Lodge

DAY 5: PHOBJIKHA VALLEY

Houses and fields spread out in the Phobjikha Valley at the base of a tree covered hill

After breakfast at the hotel, head out on a morning hike through the forested areas along the Phobjikha Valley, keeping an eye out for any birds and wildlife that may be present. During the winter months, hundreds of black-necked cranes migrate over the Himalayan Mountains to roost in the valley. You'll also visit the various farming communities on the way, concluding with a visit to a local farmer's house for butter tea and lunch.

Next, visit the Black-Necked Crane Center to meet with a representative from the Royal Society for the Protection of Nature (RSPN), who will discuss RSPN's research of the black-necked cranes and their efforts to preserve and protect their roosting areas.

Return to the hotel for the second talk by the National Geographic Expert, then enjoy dinner

Meals Included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Accommodations: Dewachen Lodge

DAY 6: PHOBJIKHA VALLEY / PUNAKHA

Two people wearing hats stand among tall grass on a hill overlooking buildings in Sopsokha Village

This morning, following breakfast, drive to Punakha, stopping along the way to walk in the countryside, along farm fields and through villages, engaging with locals as you go. During a stop in a village, enjoy lunch at a local restaurant.

After lunch, take a walk through a rural village, interacting with residents, before arriving at Chimi Lhakhang Monastery—one of Bhutan’s most well-known monasteries. Known as the “Fertility Temple,” the monastery is a pilgrimage site for childless couples, as well as couples with newborns, seeking blessings.

Upon arrival back at the hotel, meet with a Buddhist scholar, a Khenpo (male) or Khenmo (female), for a discussion on the Buddhist religion, followed by meditation and a water purification ceremony. Afterwards, enjoy dinner at the hotel.

Meals Included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Accommodations: RKPO Green Resort

DAY 7: PUNAKHA

Two Buddhist monks walk in a temple courtyard at Punakha Dzong, Bhutan

Once you’ve had breakfast at the hotel, embark on a hike through a farm field and uphill to the Khamsum Yulley Namgyal, a Buddhist temple honoring wrathful deities dedicated to destroying forces hostile to compassion and peace. The temple offers spectacular views of the Punakha Valley.

Enjoy lunch on the banks of the Mo River before exploring the awe-inspiring Punakha Dzong, the most important fortress in Bhutan. Learn about traditional Bhutanese architecture, as well as the province’s governmental and religious center. Then, after a short drive and walk on a dirt path, you’ll arrive at the Punakha Suspension Bridge—a perfect place for a photo as you make a trip across and back. This 520-foot-long suspension bridge is adorned with prayer flags and connects the local villages from across the Po River to the Punakha Dzong.

This evening, dinner will be at a local restaurant

Meals Included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Accommodations: RKPO Green Resort

DAY 8: PUNAKHA / PARO

A staircase leads to the round, stone National Museum of Paro building with a valley below

After breakfast, meet with your National Geographic Expert for their third and final talk. Then, enjoy a scenic drive to Paro, where, upon your arrival, you'll have lunch at a local restaurant. Following lunch, visit the National Museum, located in the Ta Dzong, to view the finest examples of Bhutanese art, with an impressive collection that contains over 3,000 pieces spanning over 1,500 years of Bhutanese history.

Next, transfer and settle into Zhiwa Ling Heritage, a 5-star property that was built over the course of 4 years, utilizing traditional Bhutanese materials and building methods. Spend the afternoon enjoying the grounds of the Zhiwa Ling Heritage, where a variety of cultural activities are offered for you to participate in, including archery—Bhutan's national sport. Later, enjoy dinner at the hotel

Meals Included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Accommodations: Zhiwa Ling Heritage

DAY 9: PARO

Performers in masks and costumes perform a Masked Dance Ceremony

Upon finishing breakfast, head out on a half-day hike to Paro Takstang, also known as the Tiger's Nest Monastery. Bhutan's most well-known site is perched on a cliffside over 2,500 feet above the valley. This visit brings the story of Bhutanese Buddhism full circle from the first visit temple visit of your trip, which was dedicated to Guru Rinpoche. This iconic monastery is a complex of 4 temples built around a cave that is believed to be the first place in Bhutan that Guru Rinpoche, the founder of Bhutanese Buddhism, visited and prayed in order to subdue the demons of Paro Valley. Enjoy a picnic lunch at the base of Tiger's Nest Monastery before returning to Zhiwa Ling Heritage.

Tonight, enjoy a Masked Dance Ceremony before a farewell reception and dinner at the hotel in your honor

Meals Included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Accommodations: Zhiwa Ling Heritage

DAY 10: PARO / BANGKOK

The silhouette of an airplane flying above the sky as the sun sets

After breakfast at the hotel, transfer to Paro International Airport (PBH) for a group flight to Bangkok. Overnight rooms will be available in Bangkok for travelers with connecting flights later in the day.

Meals Included: Breakfast

Accommodations: Novotel Suvarnabhumi Airport Hotel

DAY 11: BANGKOK

Travelers will depart for home based on their flight schedules.

Meals Included: Breakfast