

# 6 Days Rhododendron Festival Tour

Rhododendron Festival (13th – 14th April)

| LOCATION                      | DURATION      |
|-------------------------------|---------------|
| <b>Paro, Thimphu, Punakha</b> | <b>6 Days</b> |

## Highlights

- Rhododendron Festival celebrations
- Hike to Tiger's Nest Monastery
- Visit Punakha Dzong
- Buddha Dordenma statue
- School of 13 Arts
- Dochula Pass blooms

## Day-by-Day Itinerary

### Day 1: Arrive at Paro

Paro | 2280m

You will be received by the Representative from Byways Tours and Travels at the airport and transfer you to your hotel.

After lunch, visit Ta Dzong, an ancient watchtower, which was built in 1656 and renovated in 1968 and converted into a National Museum of Bhutan, then visit Rimpung Dzong (Paro Dzong) built in 1646 by Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal. The Dzong presently houses administrative offices of Paro District and Monastery.

Then visit Kyichu Lhakhang, one of Bhutan's oldest Buddhist temples, which was built in 659 AD by a Tibetan king Tshongchen Gyampo. In the evening, stroll through the charming town of Paro. Dinner and overnight at the hotel.

### Day 2: Paro - Tiger's Nest - Thimphu

Paro | 5h hike | 7.4 km

**After breakfast, an excursion to Tiger's Nest Monastery.** Total distance **7.4 km (4.5 miles)** round trip, and takes **approximately 5 hours** round trip. Elevation at the starting point of the hike **2,600 meters** and elevation at tiger's nest monastery is **3,100 meters** above sea level.

A short drive of around 25 minutes from the main town of Paro takes you to Satsam Chorten, 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 have tea with cookies at Taktsang cafeteria and then walk a short distance until we see, clearly and seemingly within reach, Tiger's Nest monastery. The history dates back to the 8th century when Guru Rinpoche, a tantric master flew to this place on the back of a flying tiger, said to be his favorite Tibetan consort known as Khandro Yeshey Chogyal and meditated in a cave nearby, The temple itself was built in the 17th century by the Penlop (governor) of Paro Gyaltsen Tenzin Rbgey; this incredible monastery clings to the edge of a sheer rocky cliff that plunges 600 meters into the valley below.

After lunch, drive to Thimphu. Dinner and overnight at the hotel.

### Day 3: Thimphu Sightseeing

Thimphu

After breakfast, first visit the Buddha Dordenma, the tallest Buddha statue in the world. Visit **National Library**, which holds a vast collection of ancient Buddhist manuscripts followed by a visit to **Folk Heritage Museum**. Then visit **Takin Preserve center** where you will have the chance to see our **National Animal Takin** followed by a visit to **Zhulikha Nunnery** and **the School of Thirteen Arts and Crafts** which is famous for carving and freehand art, in this school you will find the students whose aptitude is more artistic than academic, Lunch will be served in one of the tourist restaurant in middle of the city.

After lunch visit **authentic Bhutanese craft market** and weekend market. Also visit an **archery ground** to witness archery matches if you are interested,. In the evening, visit Tashichho Dzong (Fortress of the Glorious Religion), built in 1641 by Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal and reconstructed in 1961 by the Third King Jigme Dorji Wangchuck, who is also known as the Father of Modern Bhutan. Evening stroll through Thimphu city. Dinner and overnight at the hotel.

### Day 4: Thimphu - Punakha

Thimphu → Punakha | 1250m | 2h 30m drive | 76 km

(76 km, 2.5 hours by road): After breakfast, drive to Punakha valley via **Dochula Pass (3,140 meters)**. We stop for a while at Dochula pass and if the weather in the distance is clear, you will have the chance to see all the higher Himalayan ranges from there.

When you reach Punakha valley, witness **Punakha Festival** in Punakha Dzong. Punakha Dzong was built in 1637 by Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal and is situated between Pho Chu (Male River) and Mo Chu (Female River). For many years until the time of the second king, it served as the capital of Bhutan. The construction of the Dzong was foretold by Guru Rinpoche who visited this place in the 8th century, who

predicted that, a person named Namgyal will arrive at a hill that looks like a sleeping elephant. There was a smaller building here called Dzong Chu (Small Dzong) that housed a statue of Buddha. It is said that Zhabdrung when he visited this place he met a Bhutanese architect called Zowe Palep, so ordered the architect, Zowe Palep, to sleep in front of the statue, while Palep was sleeping; the Zhabdrung took him in his dreams to Zangtopelri (Paradise) and showed him the palace of Guru Rinpoche. From his vision, the architect conceived the design for the new Dzong, which in keeping with the tradition, was never committed to paper. The Dzong was named **Druk Pungthang Dechen Phodrang** which means **“Palace of Great Happiness”**. The war materials captured during the battle with Tibetans are preserved here. Punakha is still the winter residence of **Chief Abbot** (Je-Khenpo) and King Jigme Dorji Wangchuk convened the First National Assembly here in 1952. If time permits visit longest suspension bridge over Pho Chu river. Dinner and overnight at the hotel.

### Day 5: Punakha - Thimphu

Punakha → Thimphu

After breakfast, witness the Punakha Festivals until lunchtime.

After lunch, visit Chimi Lhakhang which is also known as the “Temple of Fertility” built by Lama Drukpa Kuenley who is popularly known as “The Divine Madman” in the 15th century. Lunch will be served at a restaurant nearby, then drive back to Thimphu. Dinner and overnight at the hotel.

### Day 6: Departure

Paro Airport

Early in the morning, drive to the Paro Airport for your departure. Farewell!

## What's Included

### Included

- + Accommodation in 3\* Hotels in twin sharing basis
- + All Three Meals (Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner)
- + Daily Tariff
- + Visa Fee
- + Royalty and Government Taxes
- + Sustainable Development Fee of USD 100 per night per person which goes towards free education, free healthcare and infrastructure development
- + Transportation from receive till drop
- + Museum and Monument fee
- + Bottle Water in Car
- + Sightseeing
- + English Speaking Guide
- + Driver

### Not Included

- Air Fare
- Insurance Premiums
- Payment for service provided on a personal basis
- Cost for any services not mentioned in the Inclusive Head
- Cost incurred due to mishaps, strikes, political unrest, etc.
- Personal expenses in items such as laundry, soft or hard drinks, camera charges, bottle water in restaurants or in hotels, Portage, bellboy charges
- Charges for chartered flights necessitated by a sudden death or unforeseen mishap
- Tips to guide and driver

## Ready to Book?

Contact our Bhutan travel experts to customize this itinerary.

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