



# A GUEST'S GUIDE TO THE KINGDOM OF BHUTAN



"Zhorey is a local fermented cheese and a staple in the diet of us highlanders. Just a tiny amount added to our curries produces a delicious burst of flavour! Zhorey is made from unskimmed yak milk and is then fermented in a tightly packed animal hide for up to a year. One needs to tend to it carefully to keep it from spoiling."

Dawa, Owner, Red-Panda Homestay  
TASHIGANG

"I left my stable job to pursue entrepreneurship due to my love for mushrooms, which began in my childhood while herding cows. It took a couple of years before I saw any success, but I've since been able to help set up 33 enterprises and provide mentorship and financial opportunities to women and youth all over Chhukha. I'm happy to see that Bhutan's deep-rooted appreciation of mushrooms is developing into a growing industry all over the country."

Jangchuk Dorji, Entrepreneur, Janchubshing Organic Farm  
CHHUKHA

"The Lotus trek is part of an ancient Bhutanese salt route – traders would use it to go from here to Samdrup Jongkhar and then onwards to India where they would barter for salt to bring back home. When walking it myself I'm both humbled and inspired by the legacy of the traders who travelled this path. The trek is dotted by sacred and cultural sites and is a treat for nature-lovers, including birdwatchers."

Dawa Tshering, Planning officer  
PEMAGATSHEL

"Bumthang is our spiritual heartland and a living museum. We recently restored a historic stupa in Baribrang, which has profound value to myself and many others. This stupa was erected to pay homage to the great Buddhist master, Pema Lingpa, without whom Bhutan would not have existed. My second feature film, The Monk and the Gun, was shot in Ura valley while the fields were ablaze with pink buckwheat flowers – a simply breathtaking landscape to behold."

Pawo Choyning Dorji, Academy Award-nominated director  
BUMTHANG

This kingdom is steeped in history, but our gaze is fixed on the future. This is our moment of evolution.

Guardians of some of the world's most pristine, wild and sacred places – and of a rich, deeply rooted culture – we are steadfast as the cypress in our commitment to conservation.

Our future requires us to protect our heritage and to forge fresh pathways for the coming generations.

Those who seek us out are called here. Arriving as guests, you become our partners in this transformative moment and make a meaningful contribution towards preserving what is priceless.

We see a bright future. And we believe in our ability and responsibility to realise it together, and shine as a beacon of possibility in the world.

"Most of the seeds that are used globally have been modified and aren't as climate resilient as the world's original seeds. The Dungsam Seed Bank here in Samdrup Jongkhar has been conserving and promoting Bhutan's native cereal seeds since 2018 in order to protect our traditional practices and ensure food security."

Cheku Dorji, Program director, Samdrup Jongkhar Initiative  
SAMDRUP JONGKHAR

"I've been a pandit for 25 years. I feel blessed to serve my community at the Shivalaya Mandir temple, which was gifted to the people of Samste by His Majesty the King. Although we are a Hindu temple, we have Buddhist masters offering prayers here too. I believe this multiplies blessings for our visitors."

Pandit Tika Ram Upadhyaya, Shivalaya Mandir  
SAMTSE

"River rafting is not new to Zhemgang – our forefathers would string together bamboo to cross our region's rivers. It brings me joy to carry on the tradition and to offer community services such as rescue and retrieval, besides other commercial activities like catch and release fishing."

Passang Dorji, Farmer  
PUNAKHA

"The Buddhist master Drupthob Terkhangpa blessed Gasa with 108 medicinal waters and hot springs in the 12th century. The region is a sanctuary of rejuvenation, where nature's remedies and Tseheringma – the goddess of longevity – embrace all who seek solace and healing."

Dorji Dhradul, Former governor of Gasa  
GASA

"Unlike most parts of Bhutan that have glacier-fed rivers, Dagana gets its drinking and irrigation water from rainfed lakes. But many of our lakes have dried up or are drying up. During my time as an MP, I led an initiative to successfully revive six lakes in the region – protecting our lakes is paramount."

Surjaman Thapa, Former MP for Dagana  
DAGANA

"Thimphu's only contemporary art centre and a civil society organisation, VAST Bhutan nurtures creativity and offers perspectives that may not seem conventionally Bhutanese – a culture and people that are of course as diverse as any other. Visitors to this wonderful space will relate to the joys and scars expressed by the Bhutanese artists on display."

Chimi Zango, Artist  
THIMPHU

"The Black Mountain festival puts the spotlight on the Monpa community who are considered the first inhabitants of Bhutan. The colourful display of their rich tradition and culture is incredible to take part in. As a Trongsap, I am very proud of this festival as it has brought us a lot of visibility."

Tashi Dema, Journalist  
TRONGSA

"We are very fortunate to have the sacred Meri Puensum here in Haa. They are three identical mountains that have tremendous religious value for us as they represent the Buddhas of compassion, wisdom, and power and victory. It is believed that circumambulating the mountains can bring great merit."

Tenzin Jampa, Local leader  
HAA

"My family makes mengay for every important event – the dish is a core memory for me. We colloquially call it 'Bhutanese pizza' and it's made from rice flour, egg, butter, garlic and perilla seeds. I'm happy that the generations-long love for this dish has now been passed down to my son, too."

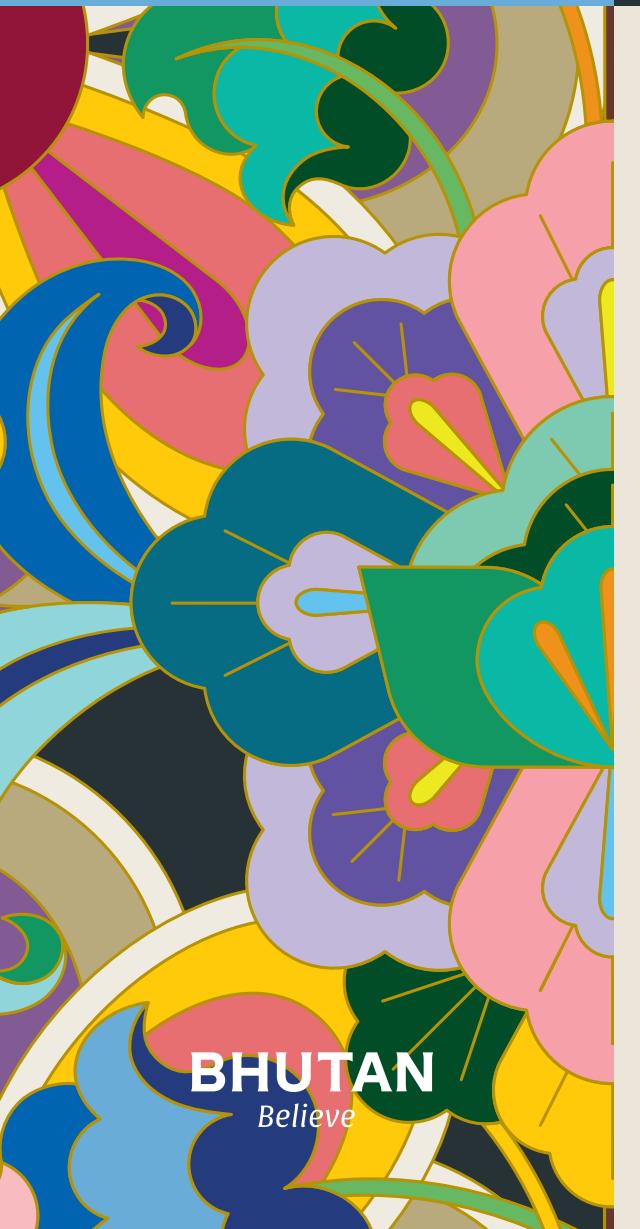
Tandin Bida, Actress  
PARO

"Tsirang is known as the vegetable capital of Bhutan as we produce the highest number of vegetables in the country – both in terms of quantity and the diversity of our produce. Farming is a way of life for us. Even the act of sowing seeds is woven into our local dances."

Amir Rai, Farmer  
TSIRANG

Jigme Tshering, National co-ordinator, Royal Society for the Protection of Nature  
WANGDUE PHODRANG

**BHUTAN**  
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# BHUTAN OF KINGDOM TO THE A GUEST'S GUIDE

Believe

BHUTAN

[www.bhutan.travel](http://www.bhutan.travel)

## Sustainable Development Fee

Since the doors to the kingdom first opened to visitors in 1974, guests have played a critical role in Bhutan's growth. This daily levy directly helps to protect our pristine nature and fund conservation projects, upgrade infrastructure and create long-term, sustainable opportunities for the Bhutanese people, as well as enhancing facilities and experiences for our visitors.

Read more about the SDF on [bhutan.travel](http://bhutan.travel)



## Money

Cash is the preferred payment method – preferably in ngultrum, although Indian rupees or US dollars are also accepted. International credit cards may not be reliable outside urban areas. Digital wallet apps are more widely accepted: download Bank of Bhutan's goBoB, which works with a local SIM card, or Bhutan National Bank's MyPay app.

## Connectivity

Visitor SIM cards enable reliable mobile network and internet access across the kingdom. TashiCell and Bhutan Telecom offer these – buy one at the airport or from mobile phone stores in city areas and top up as you go using your digital wallet app.



## Getting around

Within Bhutan, the most convenient way to travel is to hire a vehicle and driver, or book a transport service provider (self-drive is only permitted under certain circumstances). Internal flights are possible via three regional airports, or you can fly privately with the Royal Bhutan Helicopter Service. Bhutan's host service, your guide, tour operator or hotel, can advise and arrange your travel.

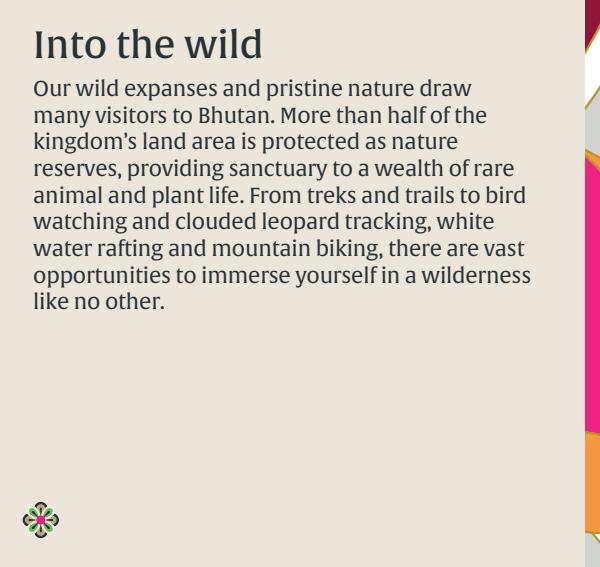
## Everyone is welcome

Bhutan decriminalised homosexuality in 2021. You will find friends at organisations like Pride Bhutan and Queer Voices of Bhutan.

While our kingdom is becoming increasingly accessible, we invite visitors with physical disabilities to make prior arrangements in order to get the most out of your time in Bhutan. Organisations such as Ability Bhutan Society, Disabled Person's Organisation, and Draksho are doing phenomenal work to accelerate progress in our extreme terrain.

## Our people

We are a rich tapestry of ethnicities, all proudly Bhutanese. 19 languages are spoken here, including English – the language used in our schools. On your journey, you'll encounter our universally warm welcome, kindness and hospitality.



## The Trans-Bhutan Trail

The recently upgraded Trans-Bhutan Trail stretches for 403km across the kingdom, from Haa in the west to Trashigang in the east. Whether you take on a short stretch or the full route, you'll walk in the footsteps of ancestors and explorers, discovering historical and spiritual landmarks, culturally rich life in remote villages and diverse climate zones.

## The Snowman Trek

The world's toughest trail and arguably the most beautiful, the Snowman Trek traces the spine of the Himalayas between Bhutan and Tibet, China, at over 4,000m altitude. For an extra challenge, the Snowman Race sees elite athletes complete an ultra-marathon along the route to raise awareness of climate change.

## Sports & activities

Join in the camaraderie and friendly competition with Bhutan's many sporting activities. The national sport, archery, is played enthusiastically in villages and towns across the kingdom. Khuru (a kind of outdoor darts) is another popular traditional sport, while international sports like basketball, cricket and futsal are gaining in popularity. Football fans should catch a match in Thimphu's Changlimethang stadium.

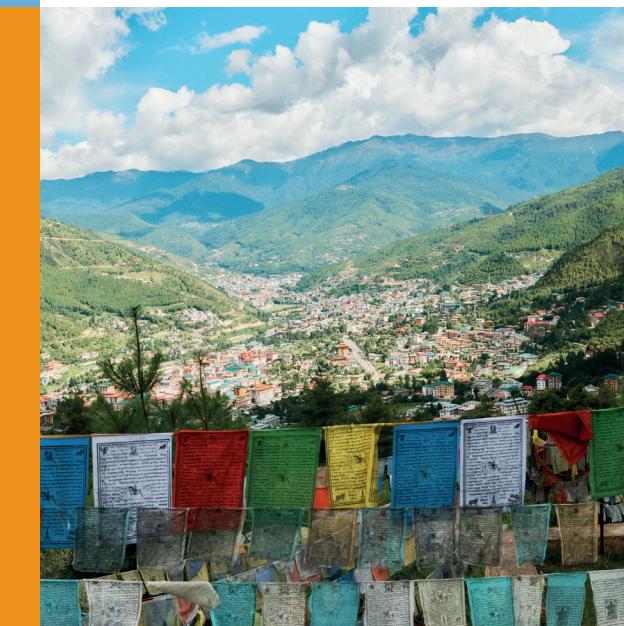


## At a glance

Capital	Thimphu
Currency	Ngultrum
Official language	Dzongkha (but we speak 18 other languages too)
Head of state	Druk Gyalpo Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck
Government	Democratic Constitutional Monarchy
Primary religion	Buddhism
Population	about 790,000
Area	38,394km <sup>2</sup>
Lowest point	97m above sea level
Highest point	7,570 m above sea level
Dial code	+975
Police contact number	113
Ambulance contact number	112

## Drive times

From	To	Hours
Thimphu	Paro	1
Thimphu	Phuentsholing	4
Phuentsholing	Bagdogra	4
Thimphu	Wangdue Phodrang	3
Thimphu	Punakha	3
Punakha	Wangdue Phodrang	0.75
Wangdue Phodrang	Trongsa	4.5
Trongsa	Bumthang	2
Bumthang	Mongar	7
Mongar	Lhuentse	3
Lhuentse	Tashigang	3.5
Tashigang	Tashi Yangtse	3
Tashigang	Samdrup Jongkhar	3



## Religious sites

Bhutan is the last Vajrayana Buddhist country in the world and it contains many religious sites – from temples, monasteries and nunneries, to roadside stupas, lakes, rivers, mountains and caves. Please respect our people's faith by speaking softly when visiting sacred sites, dressing appropriately and refraining from taking photographs within temples or of people practising their religion.

## Festivals

Festivals, known as tshechus, are vital spiritual, social and cultural events. More than 250 take place each year, bringing communities together to dance, celebrate, and receive blessings. Enjoy the carnival-like atmosphere while browsing local market stalls.

## Textiles

Traditional skills of dyeing and weaving, handed down through generations of female artisans, are practised across Bhutan, particularly in Lhuentse and Radhi, producing fabrics worn as gho and kira (national dress) or collected as art. Thimphu's Textile Museum is a remarkable repository of the craft.



## Host service

Bhutan's Department of Tourism operates a complimentary host service to help you plan and make the most of your time in the kingdom. For support before and during your stay, contact [hosts@tourism.gov.bt](mailto:hosts@tourism.gov.bt)

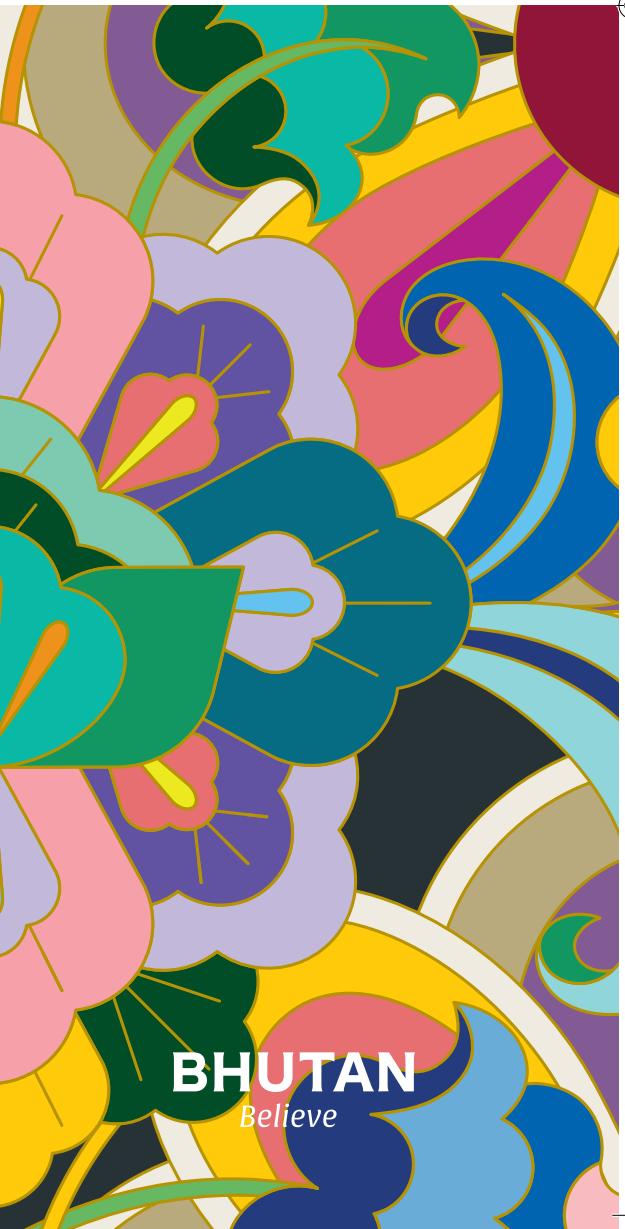
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Sustainable Eco Paper

Contribute to the development of our tourism sector by filling out the survey available at the QR code below.



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# Welcome to Bhutan

Across our 20 dzongkhags, earthly and heavenly pleasures abound, from age-old crafts and captivating festivals to exhilarating treks and epic landscapes.

Bhutan's rich culture, unspoiled nature and peerless hospitality await you in every corner of the kingdom – and we believe what you find here will leave you forever changed.