

BHUTAN



- ✓ Bhutan is no ordinary place. It is the last great Himalayan kingdom, shrouded in mystery and magic, where a traditional Buddhist culture carefully embraces global developments.
- ✓ The Buddhist Kingdom of Bhutan lies along the lofty ridges of the Eastern Himalayas. It is bordered by Tibet in the north and west, and Indian states in the east, west and south. The country within these borders forms a giant staircase, from a narrow strip of land in the south to some of the highest unclimbed Himalayan peaks on earth.
- ✓ It was the mighty Himalayas which protected Bhutan from the rest of the world and left the Kingdom blissfully untouched. The Drukpa Kagyupa sect of Mahayana Buddhism provided the essence of a rich culture and fascinating history. The Bhutanese people protected this sacred heritage and unique identity For centuries by choosing to remain shrouded deeply in a jealously guarded isolation.
- ✓ With a relatively small population of 700,000 people, Bhutan enjoys a sustainable lifestyle which they inherited from their forefathers. About 85% of the population of the country still live in small villages sparsely scattered over rugged mountain land. Buddhism, prevalent in the country since the 7th century, continues to play an important role in the everyday lives of the Bhutanese people



Capital
Thimphu



Population
0.8 million



Language
Dzongkha



Time Zone
GMT+6:00
(Indochina Time Zone)



Electricity
230v, 50Hz.



Currency
The ngultrum

When to Go

SEASONS

Bhutan has four seasons. Spring is from March to May; summer from June to August; autumn from September to November; and winter from December to February.

WEATHER

Weather in Bhutan depends upon the altitude. In the northern parts of the country where mountains rise up to 7,000m, weather conditions are similar to arctic. Southwards, closer to India, the weather is hot and humid in the summer and cool in winter. The best times to visit Bhutan are spring and autumn when the weather is warm, dry and sunny.



WHAT TO BRING

Bring loose, comfortable clothes that can be layered if travelling in the cooler months. Comfy walking shoes are a necessity. The Bhutanese are quite modest so avoid wearing revealing clothes. Bhutan's high altitude naturally means you are closer to the sun so bring sunscreen, a hat and lip balm. If you have certain toiletries that you only use, then bring those too.

ADDITIONAL REMARKS

Temperatures vary depending on which part of Bhutan you are visiting, so make sure you research the temperatures beforehand and bring the required type of clothing.

Customs & Traditions

ART & ARCHITECTURE

Bhutan's vibrant art, dance, drama, music and even its characteristic architecture have their roots in Buddhism. Almost all representation in art, music and dance is a dramatisation of the Buddha's teachings. Bhutanese architecture is one of the most striking features of the country. Massive dzongs (fort-monasteries), remote goembas (monasteries) and lhakhangs (temples), as well as the traditional houses, all subscribe to a characteristic Bhutanese style.

DANCE & THEATRE

Cham Dance is the traditional dance of Bhutan. It involves a series of masked dances, which are usually performed by monks and laymen, wearing colourful costumes. The welcome dance, Joenpa Legso, is performed to bless the audience and the entire ceremony with luck and charm. These are just a few of the dances, there are many more vibrant dances that are used as a way of worship and to respect their rich heritage.

ETIQUETTE

Do dress modestly and keep shoulders and knees covered and remove hats when visiting temples, monasteries and dzongs. Walk in a clockwise direction while visiting temples, monasteries, chortens and prayer flags. Do not buy antiques as this is strictly forbidden, and smokers will need to get a special permit at the airport on arrival.

PEOPLE

The estimated population of Bhutan is 763,092. The society of Bhutan is made up of several ethnic groups. The Sharchops, who are believed to be ancestors of those earliest residents, live mostly in eastern Bhutan. The Ngalops live in western Bhutan and migrated from the Tibetan plains. The other main ethnic group is the Lhotshampas, who were from Nepal originally.

RELIGION

Buddhism, which was introduced in the seventh century, is the official religion of Bhutan. Bhutan is the only country in the world that has retained the Vajrayana form of Mahayana Buddhism as its national religion. Throughout all of Bhutan there are Buddhist stupas, believed to be a form of protection for tourists and residents. Hinduism is practiced by the southern Bhutanese.

