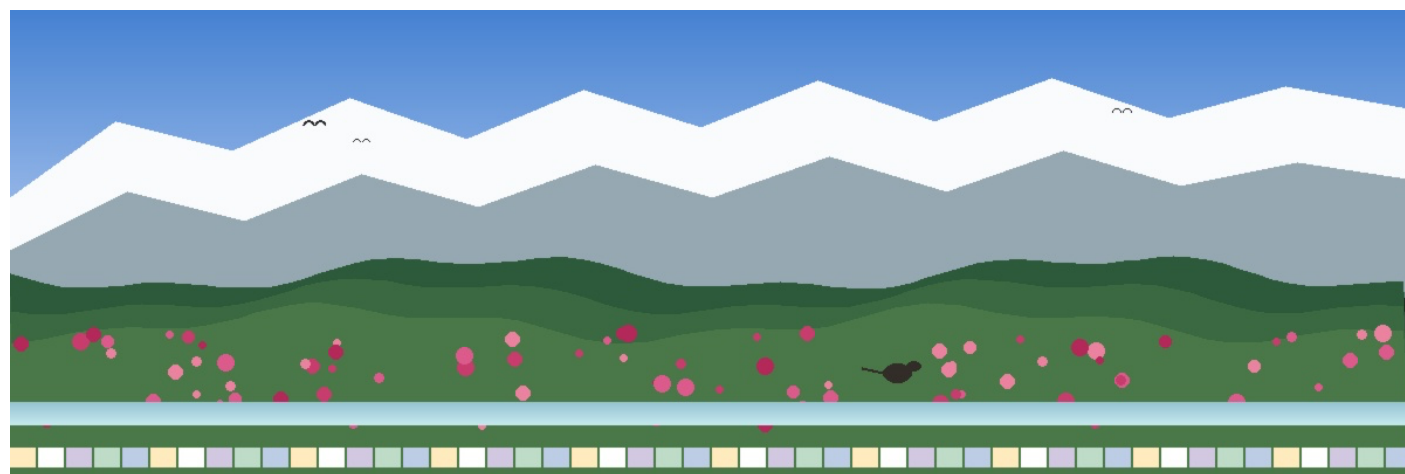




SHANGRILA EXPEDITIONS

presents

BAEYUL

Pure Air, Wild Valleys — Seven Days Seven Days Through Bhutan's Hidden Valleys of Bhutan

EXCURSION III · CLEAN AIR, RARE LIFE & LIVING HERITAGE IN PARO, HAA & PHOBJIKHA

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Bhutan is the world's only carbon-negative country — its forests, protected by constitutional law at a minimum of 60 percent of the land, absorb more carbon than the nation produces. You feel that fact rather than read it: the air in **Paro, Haa, and Phobjikha** is genuinely, noticeably different, and it carries everything with it — pine resin, wet rhododendron, woodsmoke, high-altitude cold. This 7-day journey moves through three of Bhutan's most distinct valleys, each with its own light, elevation, and character, and each home to a slice of the country's extraordinary biodiversity: more than 770 recorded bird species, 200 species of mammals, and 5,400 species of plants nationwide, a good number of them visible on this route alone. None of it comes at the expense of culture — dzongs, 7th-century temples, and living villages are woven through every day — but the throughline is the valleys themselves: clean, quiet, and largely unchanged.



7 Days

Duration



3,988m

Max Elevation



Easy

Difficulty



Mar–May, Sep–

Nov

Best Seasons



Carbon-Negative

Nation

Clean Air



70%+ Protected

Forest Cover



770+ Bird Species

Biodiversity



7th-Century Temples

Living Heritage



Black-necked cranes winter in Phobjikha roughly from November to February, circling Gangtey Monastery three times on arrival. Outside that window, the valley's resident cranes at the information center, wide-open trails, and quieter pace are still very much worth the visit.

YOUR 7-DAY JOURNEY

DAY

1

Arrival: Paro → Thimphu | Elevation: 2,250m



Arrive at Paro International Airport, received by your Shangrila Expeditions team — the first breath of mountain air here, thin, cool, and pine-scented, is often the moment people say they first feel they've truly left home.



Stop at the Paro Airport Bird's Eye Viewpoint — Paro is one of the most technically demanding airports on Earth, with jets threading between mountain ridges on approach; from above, the reason why becomes immediately clear, and so does the sheer density of unbroken forest surrounding the valley.



Visit Buddha Point (Buddha Dordenma) — a 51.5-metre gilded bronze Buddha, one of the largest statues of its kind in the world, housing over 100,000 smaller Buddha statues within, with sweeping views over the forested Thimphu Valley.



Visit the National Memorial Chorten — built in 1974 in memory of the Third King, its courtyard in constant quiet motion with devotees completing their daily circumambulation.



Check in to your hotel in Thimphu.



Dinner at the hotel.

DAY

2

Thimphu → Gangtey | Elevation: 2,900m



Visit Bhutan Post Office HQ — home to the country's famously eccentric stamp collection, and the chance to have your own portrait printed onto a set of fully functional Bhutanese postage stamps.



Visit the School of Arts and Crafts — Thimphu's National Institute for Zorig Chusum, where students train for years in Bhutan's 13 traditional arts, from thangka painting to wood carving and bronze casting.



Visit the Simply Bhutan Museum — a hands-on living museum recreating traditional Bhutanese village life, architecture, and daily customs.



Drive to Gangtey — the road climbs steadily through changing forest, blue pine giving way to oak, then fir and rhododendron, a living cross-section of Bhutan's altitude bands before the road opens onto the wide glacial bowl of Phobjikha.



Dinner at the hotel.

DAY

3

Gangtey → Punakha | Elevation: 1,300m



Begin a light hike on the Gangtey Nature Trail — an easy, scenic walk across the open valley floor, through dwarf bamboo and past chortens and grazing yaks, with the marshland spread out below.



Visit Gangtey Monastery along the way — the only Nyingmapa monastery in western Bhutan, perched above the valley the black-necked cranes circle three times on their arrival each winter.



Continue the trail to Khewang Lhakhang, a quiet temple along the route.



Visit the Black-Necked Crane Information Centre — telescopes trained on the marsh, and two resident, non-flighted cranes kept here year-round for visitors who come outside the winter migration window. Phobjikha is one of Bhutan's most significant protected wetlands, and the reason the valley feels so undisturbed is that it, quite literally, is.



Drive to Punakha.



Visit Chimi Lhakhang, the beloved Fertility Temple, associated with the 'Divine Madman' Drukpa Kunley.



Overnight in Punakha.

DAY

4

Punakha → Paro | via Dochula Pass, 3,100m



Visit Punakha Dzong — at the confluence of the Pho Chhu and Mo Chhu rivers, widely considered Bhutan's most beautiful fortress, reached via its traditional wooden cantilever bridge (bazam).



Cross a suspension bridge over the river to explore the far bank.



Visit the Khamsum Yulley Namgyal Chorten — a gentle walk through rice terraces to a hilltop temple with sweeping valley views.



Drive toward Paro, stopping at Dochula Pass — 108 memorial chortens at 3,100m, ringed by rhododendron forest that turns the hillside pink and red in spring, with an unbroken view of the eastern Himalayas on clear mornings.



Dinner back at the hotel in Paro.

DAY

5

Paro → Haa → Paro | via Chele La Pass, 3,988m



Early departure for Haa Valley — sealed off from foreign visitors until 2002, and still one of Bhutan's least-travelled and most unspoiled corners.



Cross Chele La Pass — at 3,988m, the highest motorable pass in Bhutan, and one of its richest for plant and bird life: rhododendron and fir forest give way to open alpine meadow thick with primula, iris, and gentian, home to pheasants and, for the very fortunate, a rare high-altitude poppy found almost nowhere else on Earth. On a clear day the reward is a direct, unobstructed view of Mount Jomolhari and Jichu Drake.



Visit Haa's own cliffside hermitage — often called the 'Mini Tiger's Nest' for its dramatic perch, this is Juneydrak, reached by a short scenic hike and home to a sacred footprint of the great yogini Machig Labdrön.



Visit Lhakhang Karpo (White Temple) and Lhakhang Nagpo (Black Temple) — twin 7th-century temples built by the Tibetan king Songtsen Gampo, set at the foot of the sacred Meri Puensum mountains.



Stroll through Haa town, past terraced fields and farmhouses — small, quiet, and largely untouched by mass tourism.



Return to Paro for dinner and overnight.

DAY

6

Paro — Tiger's Nest | Elevation: 3,120m



Hike to Taktsang, Tiger's Nest Monastery — the trail climbs through blue pine, oak, and rhododendron forest alive with birdsong, clinging to a sheer cliff 900m above the Paro Valley floor, where Guru Rinpoche is said to have meditated after arriving on the back of a flying tigress.



Continue to Drukgyal Dzong — the atmospheric 17th-century ruins of the 'Fortress of the Victorious Bhutanese,' with a clear view, on good days, of Mount Jomolhari rising cleanly against the sky.



Visit Kyichu Lhakhang — one of Bhutan's oldest temples, dating to the 7th century, where lighting a butter lamp is a simple, personal way to close out the hike.



Optional: visit a local farmhouse and try your hand at archery, Bhutan's national sport.



Return to the hotel for dinner and rest.

DAY

7

Departure | Elevation: 2,250m



If your flight departs in the afternoon, there's time to visit the Bhutan National Museum and Paro Dzong before heading to the airport.



Drive to Paro International Airport for departure, carrying home the memory of three valleys' worth of clean air, rare wildlife, and living heritage.



The airport's souvenir shops and bookstore are worth a browse for any last-minute finds.

WHAT'S INCLUDED IN YOUR PACKAGE



Accommodation in TCB-rated hotels, twin-bed / double-occupancy



Private ground transportation with professional driver



Expert English-speaking Shangrila guide throughout



Bhutanese SIM card and airport transfers



All meals (breakfast, lunch & dinner) throughout



All monument, museum, and site entrance fees



Bhutan visa processing and Sustainable Development Fee (SDF)



Drinking water and welcome Tashi Khadar scarf ceremony

WHY TRAVEL WITH SHANGRILA EXPEDITIONS?

“

We don't just arrange tours — we create transformative experiences rooted in Bhutan's living culture, ancient wisdom, and extraordinary landscapes. As a registered Bhutan tour operator, our on-the-ground team and long-standing relationships with local communities ensure you travel with authenticity, depth, and ease — including into the valleys most visitors never see.

”

✓ Access to valleys most itineraries skip entirely

✓ Bhutan-based expertise and deep local relationships

✓ Guides who know the wildlife, not just the temples

✓ Culture and wilderness woven into one itinerary

✓ End-to-end service from visa to farewell

✓ Bhutan's High Value, Low Impact philosophy at every step

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