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Drukair

TASHI DELEK

VOL. XXVII | ISSUE VI | NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2026

ON THE WINGS OF THE DRAGON





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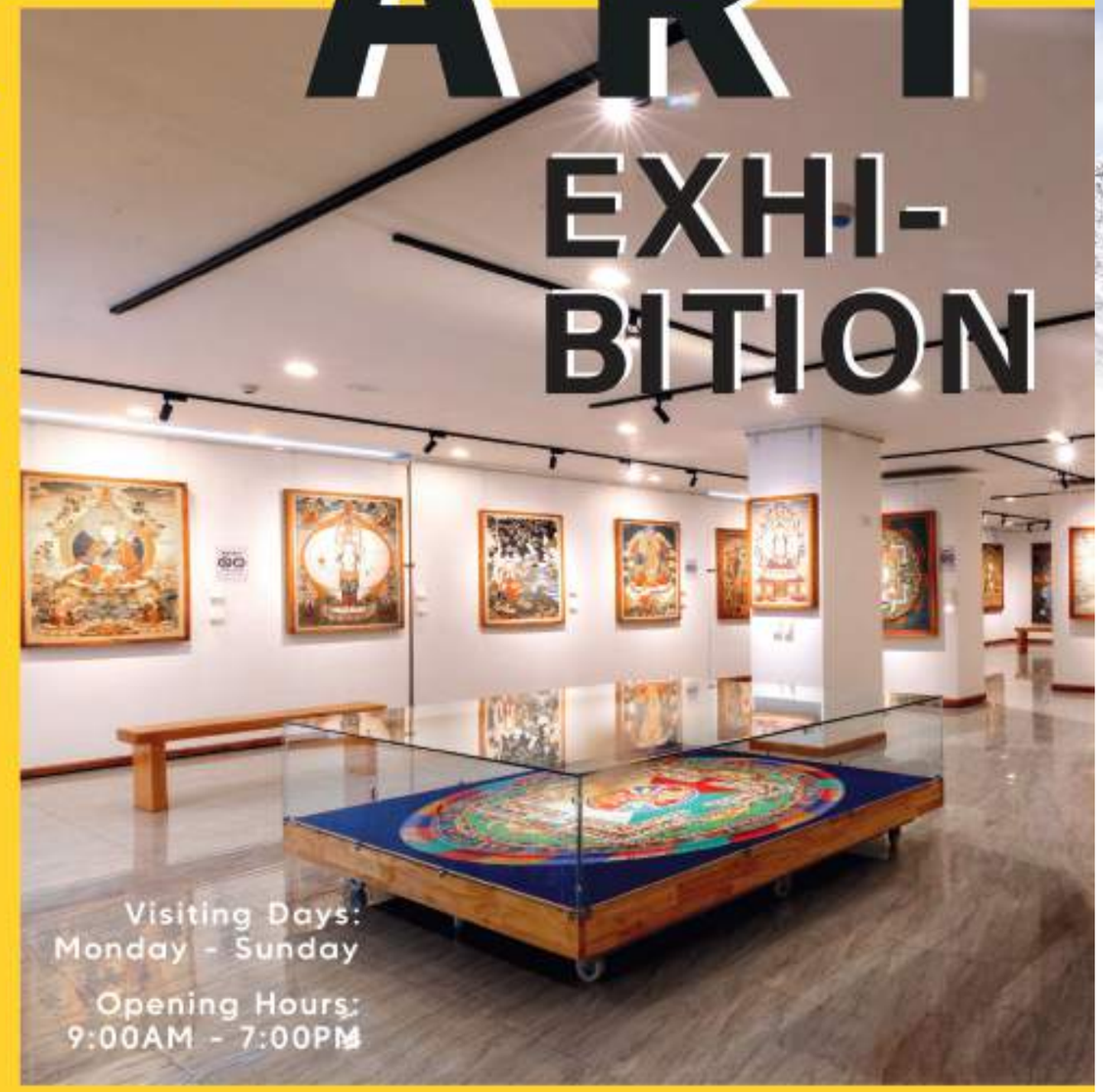


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GREEN ENERGY ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION
NEXT CORPORATE GOVERNANCE
GENTECH MINES & MINERALS GMC
QUANTUM STRATEGIC ETHICS START-UPS
ENERGY & RESOURCES

10X JOURNEY

DHI's 10X Roadmap sets a bold vision to grow tenfold by 2035, aligned with the Gelephu Mindfulness City and Bhutan's 21st Century Economic Roadmap. DHI is transitioning from an asset steward to a strategic architect of Bhutan's future economy, driven by three pillars: portfolio management, investments in five priority sectors, and an innovation strategy that strengthens R&D, advanced technology, and entrepreneurship through the Multichannel Innovation Fund (MCIF).

Supported by robust financing, technology transformation, and human capital development, the 10X Roadmap positions DHI and Group to unlock long-term national growth and global opportunities.

Our Mission

To safeguard and enhance national wealth for all generations of Bhutanese through prudent investments.

Get in touch with us

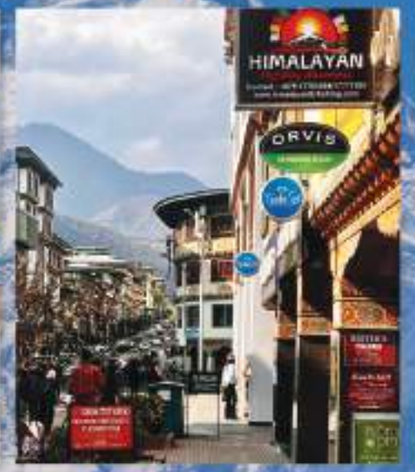
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CDK GYENCHA



From Bhutan to the world, CDK GYENCHA is not leaving tradition behind—it is carrying it forward.

The brand's journey from a small home-based initiative to an internationally recognized name reflects a rare combination of vision and resilience. Since its inception in 2016, CDK Gyencha has continuously challenged the conventions of fashion by placing ethics, craftsmanship, and community at its core.

For Chandrika, international recognition is also an opportunity to create a wider platform for the women behind the cloth. CDK works with Bhutanese weavers, including women who are able to weave from their homes, connecting traditional knowledge with sustainable economic opportunity.



One of the brand's earliest milestones came in 2017, when Chandrika Tamang was awarded the prestigious National Woman Entrepreneur of the Year by Bhutan's Department of Cottage and Small Industry—marking a significant moment not only for the designer, but for the fashion industry in Bhutan, where such recognition remains rare. On the global stage, CDK Gyencha has steadily expanded its presence, with showcases across Australia,South Asia, Spain, and Italy. A defining moment in this journey was its presentation at Milan Fashion Week, one of the most prestigious platforms in international fashion in collaboration with Italian fashion designers initiated by UN FAO.

At its core, CDK Gyencha is more than a fashion label; it is a social enterprise. Working closely with rural weavers across Bhutan, the brand champions sustainable practices, women's employment, and the preservation of indigenous weaving techniques—many of which are at risk of fading into obscurity. Each textile carries not only the rhythm of the loom but also the story of a community, a lineage, and a way of life.

Bhutanese Heritage, Reimagined for the World



It is a story of a designer finding her own voice, of women creating opportunity through their hands, and of Bhutanese heritage continuing to evolve.

As CDK GYENCHA looks increasingly toward the international market, Chandrika's vision remains clear: to build a globally recognised Bhutanese fashion house without diluting the identity that makes it unique.

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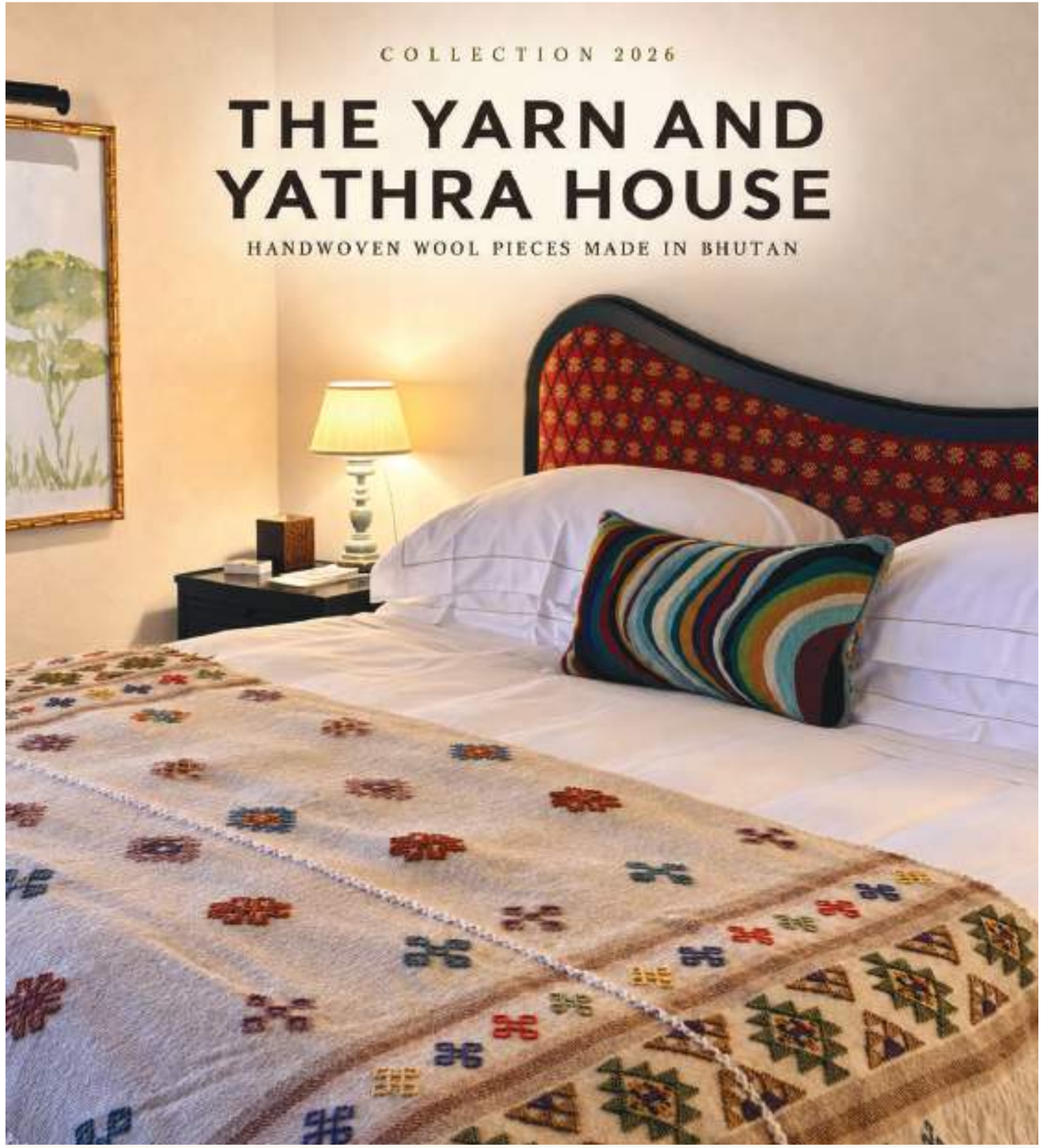
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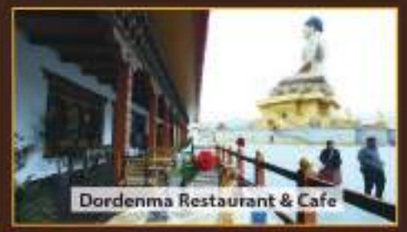

Olathang Cottages


Paro Airport Cafe


Taktsang Restaurant Paro


Paro Airport Restaurant


Hotel Phuntsho Pelri


Dordenma Restaurant & Cafe


Hotel Lhaki Thimphu


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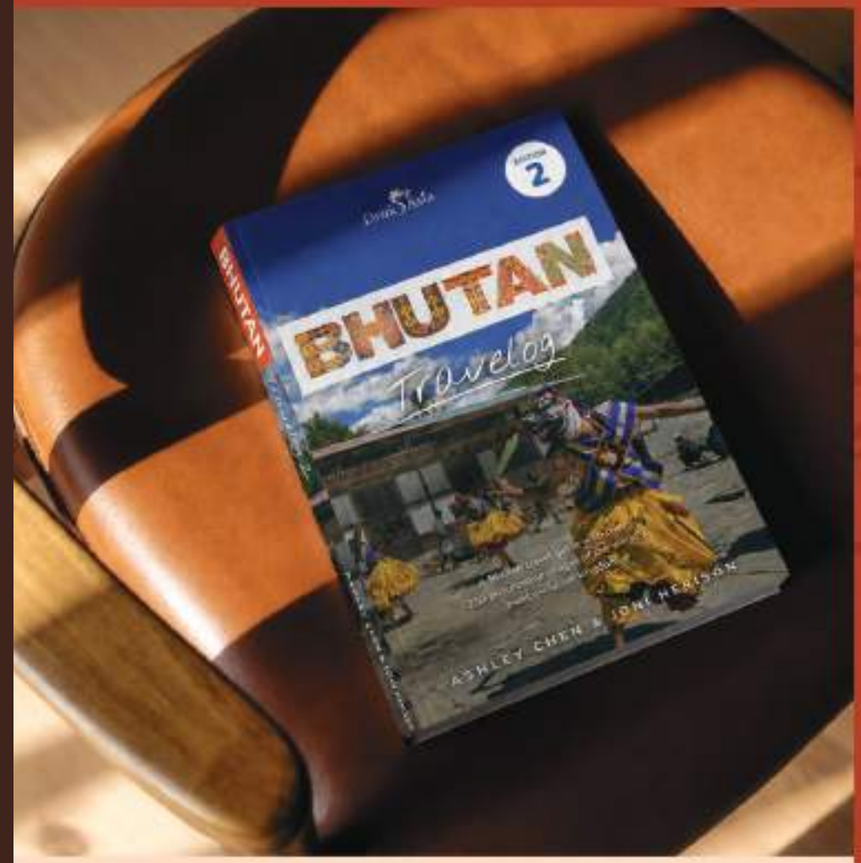

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Inside

Rooted in Bhutan. Ready for the World. 24

Coffee with Conscience: A Model of Mindful Enterprise 36

The Road 42

The Buddhist Chortens of Bhutan 46





Winter in Bhutan: A Reluctant Penguin Looking at the Sky 54

The Price of Keeping Bhutan, Bhutan 60

A walk through the Himalayas: A Buddhist call to climate action 64

We Hear the Sounds of Bhutan 68

A Journey of Stillness 70

Movie Review 74

Art Review 75



Dear Valued Passengers,



Tandi Wangchuk
Chief Executive Officer
Drukair Corporation Ltd.

As we present the final issue of our inflight magazine for 2026, I would like to take this opportunity to reflect on a significant year for Drukair, Royal Bhutan Airlines, and extend my heartfelt gratitude to all our valued passengers for the trust and confidence you continue to place in us.

Every journey begins with a purpose. Whether you are returning home, travelling for business, pursuing educational opportunities, reconnecting with loved ones, or exploring new destinations, we recognise the trust you place in us when choosing Drukair. It is a responsibility we deeply value and one that continues to guide our commitment to safety, reliability, and service excellence.

The year 2026 marks a particularly significant milestone in Drukair's journey, with our official admission as a member of the International Air Transport Association (IATA), following our successful registration under the IATA Operational Safety Audit (IOSA) programme. This achievement represents an important step forward in our continued growth and integration into the global aviation community.

IATA membership is more than an institutional recognition. It reflects our commitment to meeting internationally recognised aviation standards and strengthening our position within the global airline industry. Our successful IOSA registration, a mandatory requirement for IATA membership, further demonstrates the importance we place on robust operational management systems, safety oversight, and continuous improvement.

As the national flag carrier of the Kingdom of Bhutan, this milestone holds particular significance. It provides new opportunities to strengthen cooperation with international airline and industry partners, participate in global aviation initiatives, and further align our operations with established international practices. Most importantly, it reinforces our commitment to providing our passengers with a safe, reliable, and professional travel experience.

Beyond this significant achievement, 2026 has also been a year of continued progress in strengthening our services, enhancing global connectivity, and improving the overall passenger experience. Our IATA membership further complements Drukair's broader strategic initiatives to strengthen international connectivity and distribution through enhanced Global Distribution System (GDS) accessibility, the adoption of New Distribution Capability (NDC), the expansion of interline and codeshare partnerships, and continued route network development. Together, these initiatives reflect our commitment to making travel with Drukair more accessible, convenient, and seamless, while creating greater opportunities to connect Bhutan with the rest of the world.

To our valued passengers, thank you for being part of our journey and for your continued confidence in us. Your support inspires us to strive for excellence and reminds us of the responsibility we carry each time we welcome you on board.

As the year draws to a close, I extend my warmest wishes to you and your loved ones for a peaceful, joyful, and prosperous New Year. May the year ahead bring new opportunities, meaningful journeys, and cherished moments.

Thank you for choosing Drukair. We look forward to welcoming you on board in 2027 and continuing our journey together.

Tashi Delek!

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TASHI DELEK

Tashi Delek is an auspicious and versatile Bhutanese expression. It is a word or an expression encompassing a number of meanings such as wishing you well, good wishes, congratulations, may many good things come to you, cheers, and good luck.

Tashi Delek, a publication of Drukair Corporation Limited, is produced by Zoom Out Publishing, a unit of Zoom Out Productions. Views expressed in Tashi Delek are not necessarily those of Drukair's or Zoom Out Productions'. Drukair or Zoom Out Productions does not take any responsibility for the financial standing or any other particulars of the firms, products and services mentioned in the magazine. The publisher reserves the right to edit, rewrite or reproduce articles according to the requirement of the publication.

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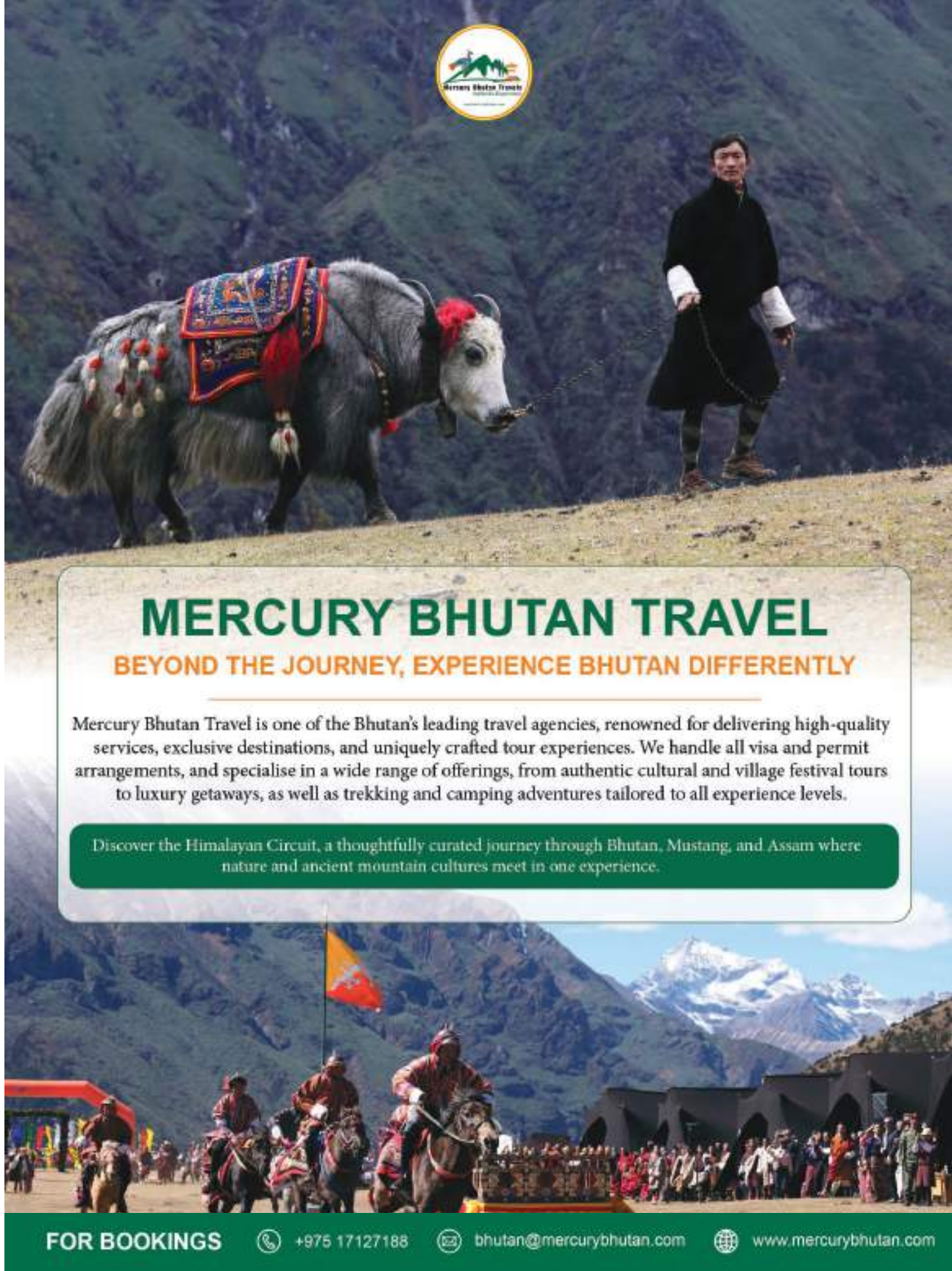
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TASHI DELEK

FACTS ABOUT **BHUTAN**





NATIONAL DRESS

Men wear the Gho, a knee-length robe that is tied at the waist by a traditional belt known as Kera. Women wear the Kira, a long, ankle-length dress accompanied by a light outer jacket known as a Tego with an inner layer known as a Wonju.



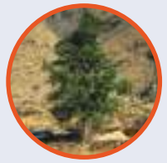
NATIONAL GAME

Archery was declared as the national game in 1971 when Bhutan became a member of the United Nations. Bhutan also maintains an Olympic archery team. Archery is played during public holidays in Bhutan and local festivals.



NATIONAL BIRD

The National Bird is the Raven (*Corvus corax*). The Raven adorns the Royal Crown. The raven represents the deity Gonpo Jarodongchen (raven headed Mahakala), one of the chief guardian deities of Bhutan.



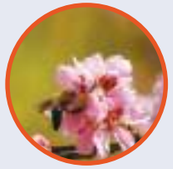
NATIONAL TREE

The National Tree is the Cypress (*Cupressus torolusa*). Cypresses are found in abundance and one may notice large cypresses near temples and monasteries. This tree is found in temperate climate zone, between 1800 and 3500 meters.



NATIONAL ANIMAL

The National Animal is the Takin (*Burdorcas taxicolor*) and is associated with religious history and mythology. It is a rare mammal with a thick neck and short muscular legs. It lives in groups and is found above 4000 meters on the north-western and far north eastern parts of the country.



CLIMATE SEASON

Bhutan has four seasons. Spring from March until April followed by Summer with occasional showers until late September. Autumn follows until late November, characterized by sunny days. Winter until March, with snowfall in regions above 3,000 meters.



NATIONAL FLAG

The National Flag is divided diagonally into two equal halves. The upper yellow half signifies the secular power and authority of the King while the lower saffron-orange symbolizes the practice of religion and the power of Buddhism, manifested in the tradition of Drukpa Kagyu. The dragon signifies the name and the purity of the country while the jewels in its claws stand for wealth and perfection of the country.



NATIONAL EMBLEM

The National Emblem of Bhutan is a circle that projects a double diamond thunderbolt placed above the lotus. There is a jewel on all sides with two dragons on vertical sides. The thunderbolts represent the harmony between secular and religious power while the lotus symbolizes purity. The jewel signifies the sovereign power while the two dragons (male and female) represent the name of the country Drukyul or the Land of the Dragon.



NATIONAL FLOWER

The National Flower is the Blue Poppy (*Meconopsis Gakyidiana)*. It is a delicate purple or blue tinged with purple blossom with distinctly concave petals. This species grows at an elevation of 3700-4300 meters above sea level. *Gakyidiana* is an epithet based on the Dzongkha word for happiness, *gakyid*, to reflect Bhutan's important cultural aspiration of 'Gross National Happiness' and *diana* is nomenclature term for the flower.



NATIONAL AIRLINE

Drukair, Royal Bhutan Airlines, is the National flag carrier of Bhutan. Drukair was founded on April 5, 1981 under the Royal Charter by His Majesty the Fourth King Jigme Singye Wangchuck. Drukair plays a vital role in promoting Bhutan as a tourist destination and plays an important role in connecting Bhutan to the world.



CARBON STATUS

Bhutan is the first carbon negative country in the world, absorbing six million tons of carbon every year. The Constitution of Bhutan places a high premium on conservation of its natural environment, mandating the country to maintain at least 60 percent of its land under forest cover for all times to come.



DEVELOPMENT PHILOSOPHY

Promulgated by His Majesty the Fourth King Jigme Singye Wangchuck, Gross National Happiness guides all development process in Bhutan. The central objective of GNH is to ensure a holistic and sustainable development by balancing the material and the non-material values.



Members of the EtonHouse Bhutan International School community with founding students in Thimphu

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International in outlook, Bhutanese at heart

A child who grows up understanding the wider world can still stay firmly attached to where he or she comes from. That idea sits at the centre of EtonHouse Bhutan International School, the Kingdom's first international K–12 school.

The school is being established by EtonHouse International Education Group, a Singapore-founded education group, which brings more than three decades of educational experience, in collaboration with the Royal Government of Bhutan and the Ministry of Education and Skills Development. It supports the government's vision of nurturing world-class talent by widening access to high-quality international education within the Kingdom.

The ambition goes further than importing a model. EtonHouse's philosophy places the learner at the centre, with inquiry, critical thinking, learner agency and strong relationships. It also cares for the whole child: socially, emotionally and physically. In Bhutan, that experience meets the country's own language, heritage, and values.



Mr Michael Leahy, Principal of EtonHouse Bhutan International School and Ms Evelyn Tay, CEO, Singapore and Bhutan, EtonHouse International Education Group

For Ms Evelyn Tay, CEO for Singapore and Bhutan at EtonHouse International Education Group, the vision is clear: "Our ambition is to create a school that truly belongs in Bhutan — one that is deeply respectful of Bhutanese culture, language and values, while giving learners the intellectual confidence, curiosity and global perspective to thrive wherever their futures take them."

about more than knowing the right answer. We want our learners to ask questions, think critically, test ideas and make connections across disciplines. Our role is to create an environment where they are challenged academically, encouraged to be curious and confident in expressing their thinking, while remaining grounded in who they are and where they come from."





A journey, from age 3 to 18

EtonHouse Bhutan offers a comprehensive international K-12 pathway from Early Years to Sixth Form where academic rigour is thoughtfully balanced with social, emotional, and holistic development. The programme is anchored in robust governance, guided by a strong pedagogical approach, and delivered through a rigorous yet responsive curriculum.

In the Early Years, children will experience the EtonHouse Inquire. Think. Learn curriculum inspired by the Reggio Emilia approach. Primary students will engage in the International Primary Curriculum alongside Singapore Mathematics and UK-aligned core subjects, progressing to the Cambridge Lower Secondary, IGCSE and International A Level qualifications from Cambridge. Our approach allows Bhutanese History and Dzongkha to remain integral while being delivered as part of an international curriculum. This is complemented by a multilingual language programme offering English, Dzongkha and Mandarin, alongside a strong emphasis on STEAM, sustainability and holistic wellbeing.

Principal Michael Leahy explains: "Rigour is

That same philosophy shapes the school's approach to technology. Students learn to use emerging digital and AI tools with confidence and discernment—questioning outputs, evaluating sources and recognising bias and misinformation. Technology is not a substitute for thinking, but a tool to strengthen it.

Pathways to Global Universities

The pathway culminates in Cambridge IGCSE and Cambridge International A Levels, qualifications recognised by universities worldwide. EtonHouse's wider record shows what that commitment can look like. At EtonHouse International School Orchard (Singapore), the 2026 A Level results improved year on year, with 45% of grades at A*–A, 67% at A*–B and 81% at A*–C. Students receive personalised university and careers guidance, and Class of 2026 offers included Imperial College London, University College London, London School of Economics and Political Science, the University of Toronto, The University of Edinburgh, University of St Andrews, The University of Warwick and University of Bristol.







World-class Learning Environment
EtonHouse regards the environment as a third educator, and the campus reflects that philosophy in its purposeful design. A dedicated Research and Innovation Centre brings together the library, STEAM and ICT, encouraging learners to cross subject boundaries and follow an idea wherever it leads. Science laboratories invite hands-on experiments in Biology, Chemistry and Physics. In the Reggio-inspired ateliers, young children explore light, sound, clay, mark-making and natural materials, discovering many "languages" through which to express what they understand.

Cultural learning spaces give Bhutanese History and Dzongkha a visible, everyday place in school life. A multipurpose sports hall supports teamwork and wellbeing, and a performing arts space is home to music, drama and movement.

Rooted in language, culture, and identity
For over three decades, the EtonHouse Group has been at the forefront of multilingual education. The multilingual programme brings together English, Dzongkha and Mandarin. Guided by Bhutan's philosophy of Gross National Happiness, the school balances academic and future-ready learning with emotional wellbeing—offering an international education grounded in local identity.

A Global Learning Community
As an internationally recognised global education group, EtonHouse ensures excellent teaching and learning standards as well as access to a worldwide learning network that connects students and educators across countries. Through the EtonHouse Global Classroom, students engage with peers across our international network, gaining global perspectives through shared learning and cultural understanding.

Ready for what comes next
At EtonHouse Bhutan, academic success is the beginning of a much greater journey. An internationally recognised curriculum, strong university pathways and the support of EtonHouse's global community of schools, families and alumni will prepare learners to thrive in school, at university and beyond. For Bhutanese families, it means their children can access a world of opportunity without leaving Bhutan. For families who have chosen Bhutan as home, it offers their children a meaningful connection to the country, its culture and its values. Wherever they come from, every learner can step confidently into the world—rooted in Bhutan, supported by a global community and equipped to compete on the global stage.

Discover EtonHouse Bhutan International School
From Early Years to Sixth Form, discover an international learning pathway that brings together academic rigour, inquiry and innovation with Bhutanese culture, language and values.

Find out more

Email: bhutan.enquiries@etonhouse.com
www.etonhouse.edu.bt

GOLDEN MANDALA



HIGH QUALITY THANGKA

Traditional Arts & Crafts



"*Every **Thangka** Tells a Story- Make One Yours.*"

The High Quality Thangka Painting experience offers guests a rare opportunity to immerse themselves in Bhutan's rich artistic and spiritual heritage. Rooted in centuries-old traditions, this exclusive hands-on experience combines authenticity, craftsmanship, and cultural storytelling, allowing visitors to connect deeply with the skills, techniques, and devotion behind this sacred art form.

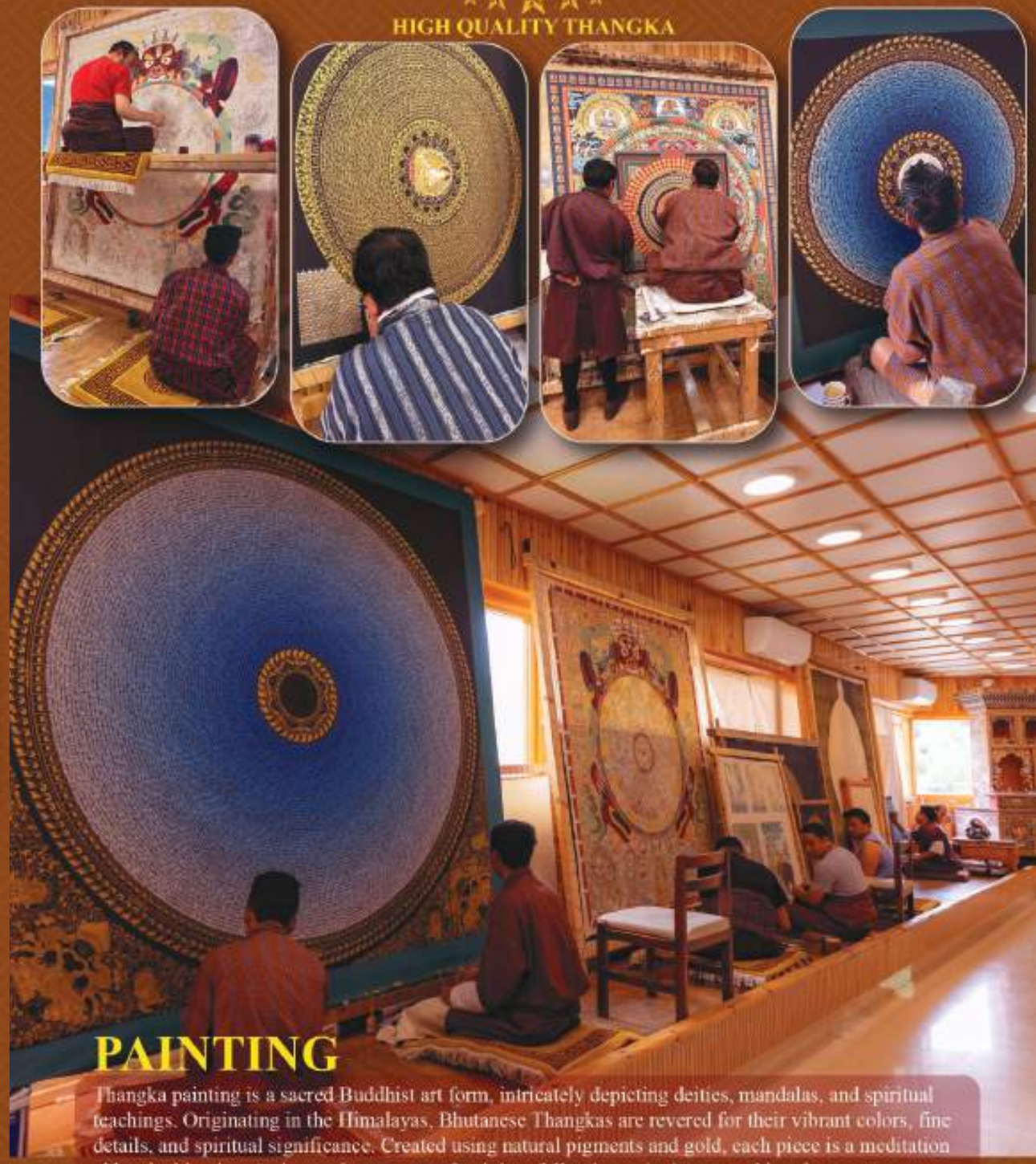
At our arts and crafts studio, guests will enjoy a personalized and meaningful journey into the world of Thangka painting, experiencing the precision, symbolism, and artistic mastery that make each creation unique.

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HIGH QUALITY THANGKA



PAINTING

Thangka painting is a sacred Buddhist art form, intricately depicting deities, mandalas, and spiritual teachings. Originating in the Himalayas, Bhutanese Thangkas are revered for their vibrant colors, fine details, and spiritual significance. Created using natural pigments and gold, each piece is a meditation aid and a blessing. Artists undergo years of training, following strict iconographic rules to ensure accuracy. Thangkas are used in rituals, festivals, and personal devotion, embodying Bhutan's rich Buddhist heritage. At our studio, witness this ancient craft and explore the harmony of art and spirituality that defines Bhutanese culture. Our artists are accomplished masters with decades of painting experiences. Visitors can watch these master artists in action as they their masterpieces.

HIGH QUALITY THANGKA

WOOD & SLATE CARVING

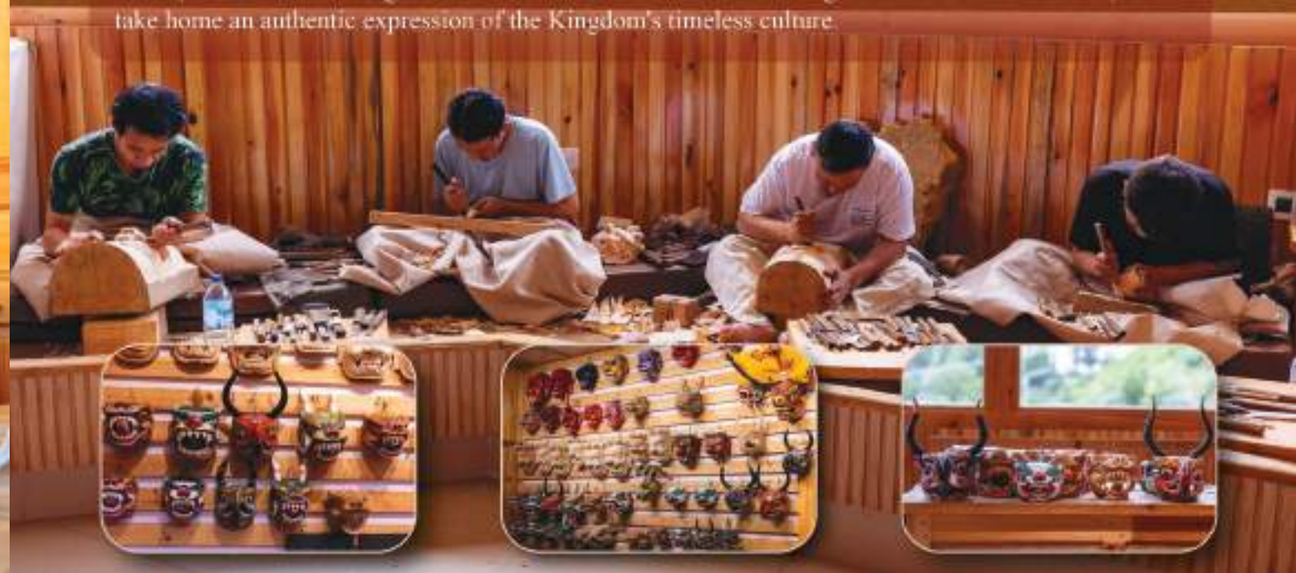
Discover the timeless artistry of Bhutanese wood and slate carving, where centuries-old craftsmanship meets spiritual tradition. Skilled artisans transform sustainably sourced wood and natural slate into intricate works inspired by Buddhist symbolism and nature, featuring motifs such as lotus flowers, dragons, and sacred deities. From architectural details and decorative panels to sculptures, household items, and engraved slate art, every piece reflects Bhutan's rich cultural heritage and artistic excellence. At our studio, watch master artisans bring these creations to life using techniques passed down through generationsake home an authentic piece of Bhutan's enduring legacy.



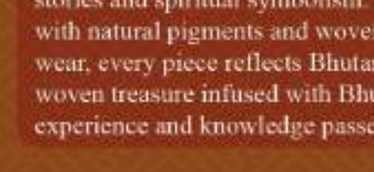
HIGH QUALITY THANGKA

SCULPTING & MASK CARVING

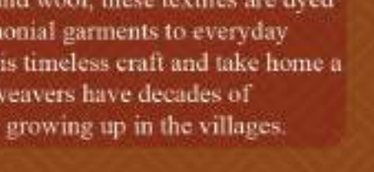
Discover Bhutan's rich spiritual artistry through its sacred sculptures, ceremonial masks, and iconic phallus carvings. Skilled master artisans handcraft bronze, clay, wood, and papier-mâché into intricate Buddhas, deities, saints, mythical beings, and symbolic works rooted in Vajrayana Buddhist tradition. Created using centuries-old techniques such as lost-wax casting, hand carving, and natural pigments, each piece reflects deep spiritual devotion, cultural heritage, and exceptional craftsmanship. At our studio, witness these living traditions firsthand as master artists bring Bhutan's sacred art to life, and take home an authentic expression of the Kingdom's timeless culture.











WEAVING

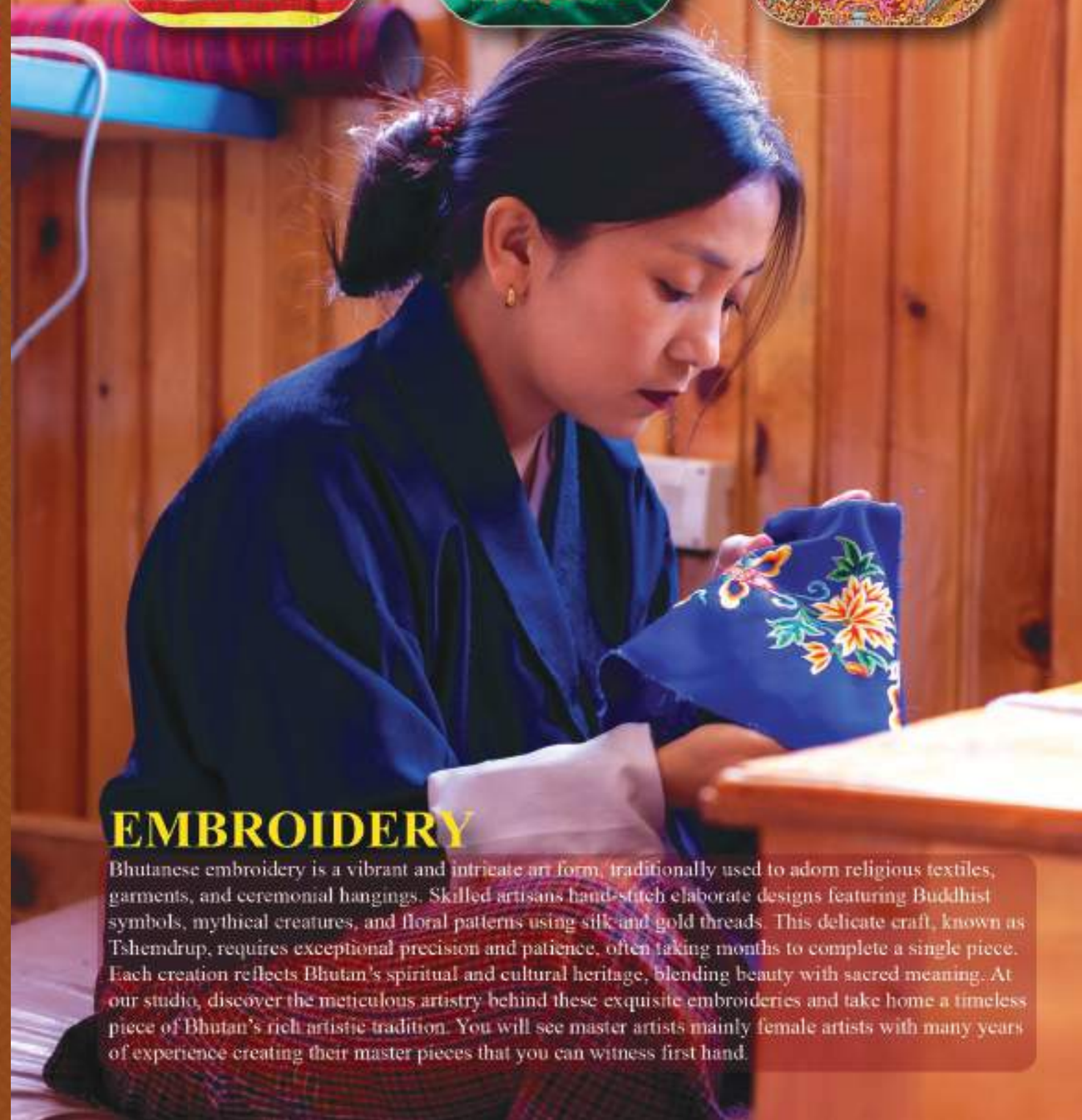
Experience the living heritage of Bhutanese weaving, where vibrant threads transform into exquisite textiles rich with cultural meaning. Using backstrap and frame looms,master weavers create intricate patterns like the iconic kushuthara (brocade) and yathra (woolen tapestry), each design carrying ancestral stories and spiritual symbolism. Made with locally sourced silk, cotton, and wool, these textiles are dyed with natural pigments and woven with meticulous precision. From ceremonial garments to everyday wear, every piece reflects Bhutan's artistic soul. At our studio, witness this timeless craft and take home a woven treasure infused with Bhutan's colors and traditions. Our master weavers have decades of experience and knowledge passed on from their parents at very early age growing up in the villages.

HIGH QUALITY THANGKA









EMBROIDERY

Bhutanese embroidery is a vibrant and intricate art form, traditionally used to adorn religious textiles, garments, and ceremonial hangings. Skilled artisans hand-stitch elaborate designs featuring Buddhist symbols, mythical creatures, and floral patterns using silk and gold threads. This delicate craft, known as Tshemdrup, requires exceptional precision and patience, often taking months to complete a single piece. Each creation reflects Bhutan's spiritual and cultural heritage, blending beauty with sacred meaning. At our studio, discover the meticulous artistry behind these exquisite embroideries and take home a timeless piece of Bhutan's rich artistic tradition. You will see master artists mainly female artists with many years of experience creating their master pieces that you can witness first hand.

HIGH QUALITY CAR RENTAL

High Quality Car Rental is a trusted car rental company dedicated to building long-lasting relationships with our clients by delivering exceptional service and excellent value for money. Our goal is to provide reliable, safe, and comfortable vehicles that encourage customers to choose our rental and leasing services time and time again.
Our mission is to develop a highly successful and profitable car rental business that consistently provides quality transportation services to both local residents and international tourists. We strive to set the standard for excellence in the car rental industry through professionalism, reliability, and outstanding customer care.

Since our establishment in **2008**, we have been committed to serving our clients with integrity, dedication, and uncompromising service. Our experienced and well-trained team is equipped to meet the diverse transportation needs of our customers, ensuring every rental experience is convenient, safe, and enjoyable.
We are passionate about excellence and committed to maintaining a fleet of reliable, clean, and comfortable vehicles. By combining quality service with competitive pricing, we aim to exceed customer expectations and build lasting trust.

We are confident that our core values, dependable fleet, and unwavering commitment to customer satisfaction will continue to drive our growth, strengthen our reputation, and establish **High Quality Car Rental** as the preferred choice for car rental and leasing services.

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HIGH QUALITY CAR RENTAL



OUR FLEETS

GWM Tank 500 SUV
(2 to 3 Seater)

Toyota High Roof
(5 to 9 Seater)

Coaster Bus
(15 to 22 Seater)

Toyota Prado SUV
(2 to 3 Seater)

Hyundai H1 Haice
(3 to 6 Seater)

















COFFEE WITH CONSCIENCE

A MODEL OF MINDFUL ENTERPRISE

From the forested hillsides of Samtse to the cafés of Thimphu, Paro, Phuentsholing and Gelephu, Bhutan Mountain Coffee is demonstrating how enterprise can create livelihoods, empower communities and protect nature – turning the philosophy of Gross National Happiness (GNH) into a business model.

In the lush, forested hills of Pemaling Gewog in Samtse, coffee trees once bore fruit that nobody wanted. Farmers had planted them decades earlier, encouraged by government initiatives to introduce coffee cultivation. But without processing facilities or reliable buyers, the cherries ripened, fell and rotted. The trees survived. The promise of a new livelihood did not.

When entrepreneur Karma Chime arrived in 2016, he confronted more than an agricultural challenge. He had to restore farmers' faith in a crop that had already failed them.

His proposition was simple: grow coffee, and there would be someone to buy it. That promise became the foundation of Bhutan Mountain Coffee, an enterprise that is redefining the relationship between business, people and nature.

Today, the company works with more than 1,000 farming households across several hundred acres, creating a growing ecosystem of cultivation, processing, roasting and retail.





In a country where GNH places human well-being and environmental conservation at the centre of development, Bhutan Mountain Coffee offers a compelling example of mindful entrepreneurship in practice.

Its business philosophy rests on a fundamental proposition: economic growth need not come at the



Bhutan Mountain Coffee Products
Available at all Mountain Cafe Outlets

expense of nature or communities.

Unlike conventional agricultural expansion that often involves clearing forests, Bhutan Mountain Coffee promotes cultivation beneath existing forest canopies. Coffee thrives in the shade of standing trees, allowing farmers to generate income while preserving vegetation and biodiversity.

The company also encourages environmentally responsible farming practices, including minimising synthetic chemicals, conserving water and regenerating soil.

This approach reflects the principles of organic and regenerative agriculture, although environmentally responsible cultivation does not necessarily mean every farm is certified organic.

In Bhutan, where environmental conservation is a constitutional commitment, such farming practices carry particular significance. Forests become productive landscapes without necessarily losing their ecological integrity.

Equally important is the enterprise's social dimension. Across rural Bhutan, declining agricultural incomes and migration have steadily emptied villages of their working-age populations. Bhutan Mountain Coffee is attempting to reverse this economic equation by making farming commercially worthwhile.

Through technical training, improved planting materials, extension services and market access, the company enables households to participate in an emerging high-value agricultural industry.

Its commitment to purchasing farmers' produce addresses one of rural agriculture's most persistent vulnerabilities: uncertainty over markets. For farming families, coffee offers an additional source of income. For communities, it creates opportunities to sustain livelihoods without abandoning their villages.









Women and young people are also finding opportunities beyond the plantations. At Mountain Café outlets, where women constitute most of the workforce, the business creates employment in hospitality and customer service. Its expanding value chain also offers career pathways in roasting, processing, quality assurance, marketing and logistics.

These opportunities matter in a country confronting youth unemployment and outward migration. They demonstrate how an agricultural enterprise can generate employment across multiple sectors while retaining greater economic value domestically.

Rather than exporting raw beans alone, Bhutan Mountain Coffee processes, roasts, packages and markets its products locally. Its integrated farm-to-cup model allows more of the value generated by Bhutanese coffee to remain within the national economy.

The company's ambitions now extend towards Gelephu Mindfulness City, where Bhutan is seeking to demonstrate that economic dynamism, ecological responsibility and human well-being can reinforce one another. For Bhutan Mountain Coffee, this philosophy is already taking shape in its plantations, farming partnerships and cafés.

The enterprise illustrates a broader possibility for Bhutan's economic future: businesses that measure success not merely through profits, but through the livelihoods they sustain, the opportunities they create and the natural heritage they preserve.

In every cup of Bhutanese coffee lies a larger aspiration—that prosperity can be cultivated without sacrificing the land or leaving communities behind.

And perhaps that is what a truly mindful enterprise should taste like.



Mountain Cafe, Phuentsholing


Mountain Cafe, Thimphu




Mountain Cafe, GMC



Mountain Cafe, Paro


Mountain Cafe, Paro
International Airport



Mountain Cafe Roastery, Paro

BHUTAN MOUNTAIN COFFEE
Contact +975 16933333/17111731 **Website for Mountain Cafe** www.mountaincafe.bt
Website for Bhutan Mountain Coffee www.bhutanmountaincoffee.com



THE ROAD

The road in Bhutan has a character of its own, as you will soon see once you set foot outside the airport. Or if you've been in Bhutan already, you most certainly have your own road stories.

I used to hear people say, "Trongsa Dzong teases the people". Maybe they still do, because it still does. As you're traveling toward it, winding your way down from Pelela Pass almost at the direct center of the country, the road gets closer and closer to the magnificent, sprawling Trongsa Dzong, the government and religious center, one of 22 dzongs in the country built originally as fortresses to keep Tibetans out. One minute you feel like you're right up on it, and then your vehicle takes a curve and you look out the window and it's far away again. The road leads you nearly to the doorstep, then it pulls you back so the dzong is tiny. The road promises and then pulls away.

The country is just under 200 miles from east to west, but because the road winds so intensely through the mountains, it can take three days to traverse from Haa in the west to Trashigang in the east. The length of the road is double the length of the country, give or take some miles. And you can't go very fast, but that's good for sightseeing.

Years ago some road engineers calculated that there's a curve every eight seconds on the Bhutanese lateral road that traverses the country. That's an insane number of curves. It makes you jittery and it lulls you at the same time. Years ago when I first came to Bhutan, the road used to be one lane, or at best, a lane and a half, and every once in a while you'd be startled out of the curve by the front of a Tata truck coming directly at you. Brakes squeal and the truck stops inches from the front of your car and then, after a breath catching moment, backs up. You also back up your vehicle so as to position for the passing of two vehicles on a road space that is only wide enough for one. And then you inch along the side of the cliff you're driving on so that the truck can pass you on the other side and I've seen this time and time again: there seems to be enough space. The vehicles come insanely close to each other, millimeters close, but they somehow shrink themselves magically or defy the laws of physics and pass each other without incident and carry on in their respective directions.

Driving years ago wasn't for the faint of heart. The Bhutanese drivers are some of the best in the world out of necessity. I wrote quite a bit about the road in my first book, but traveling in Bhutan has gotten better. The road is better. But it's still windy, and there are only a couple of straight places in the whole country. One is in Bumthang, in the Chumi Valley. It's exhilarating after hours of winding.

Amazingly, construction of the road in Bhutan only started in 1960. So the country has only had a vehicular road for a little over 60 years. In 1972 it had about 1,500 kilometers of road and by 2020 it had 18,000. The road was built by Dantak, the engineering arm of the Indian government, and even today Dantak maintains some of the major roads, and the road workers you see toiling away on the side of the road are its employees. It's only been within the last few years that road-building machinery has been available to build the roads. Previously it was all done by hand by Indian and Bhutanese laborers. In fact, many gave their lives over the years building and maintaining the Bhutanese road.

The Bhutanese take good care of their road, but weather and natural occurrences are hard on these Himalayan highways. When there's a landslide, and there can be landslides, especially in summer monsoons, the road can disappear under a few tons of mud and debris. But Bhutanese people are nothing if not adaptable, and so they get out of their vehicles and climb up over the slide and down to the other side, where, if they're lucky, there are people and vehicles waiting. They can arrange to switch transportation with the people on the other side and carry on their respective ways. At some later point they can get their cars or trucks back.

I was making arrangements with Marie Brown over 30 years ago to come to Bhutan in August of 1994. She owned Bhutan Travel in New York, and it was the only way to get to Bhutan back in the day. She said that during my trip it would rain, since August meant the summer monsoons were



Trongsa Dzong



in force, and that there might be landslides on the road. "What happens if there's a landslide?" I asked. "Then you'll get stuck," she said, in her characteristic blunt way. I acknowledged with some comment like, “Of course". But I pondered it for days. This is the way the rest of the world works.

I've encountered a few landslides in my life in Bhutan, and the first was memorable, on the way to Phuentsholing, because a big V-shaped chunk of the road had washed away. It was maybe the size of a four-story building, and we waited and waited. Some fellow travelers shared their lunch with us and we all discussed what might happen, until we heard the rumbling of a dozer in the distance. The driver maneuvered the machine down to the bottom of the V, and he shouted for Namgay to drive our car down and position it in front of the dozer, which Namgay did, and it was pretty steep. I was in the passenger seat, and we bumped and jerked, our bumper taking a real beating, as the dozer steadily and firmly lifted us out of the muck at the tip of the V and up to the other side.

Other times we did the shuttle thing after waiting around for the sound of a dozer a while, maybe 30 minutes. Then some industrious Bhutanese who actually had to be somewhere would set off to hike over the slide to the other side and then we all followed.



The road just isn't for vehicles in Bhutan. You'll see a lot of activity, especially near villages. There are always dogs. Cows and sheep eat grass on the side of the road, since there aren't many places they can graze in Bhutan. The arable lands are cultivated for food. People meet on the road and sit beside it and watch the traffic. There’s lots of vegetable selling and you’ll see big ropes of dried yak cheese, little white squares that look like chalk, hanging from the roofs of the vegetable vendors’ sheds. In the fall there’s lots of roasted corn. Recommended. The road in Bhutan is a lifeline.

As I mentioned the road is much improved in the years since I first came to Bhutan. Landslides, weather, and other acts of nature really took a toll and the farther east you got, let’s say the road from Bumthang to Mongar, the less it was an actual road and it became more the suggestion of a road, a little gravel in the dust on a path cut into the side of the mountain. So when you’re traveling on the road and feeling insecure just remember that it’s wide and paved and a lot better than it could be.

One thing that occasionally still happens around Trongsa, where my husband is from, is that people put bamboo poles on the road the width of vehicle tires, and drivers are encouraged to drive over them and split them so they can be used to make baskets.

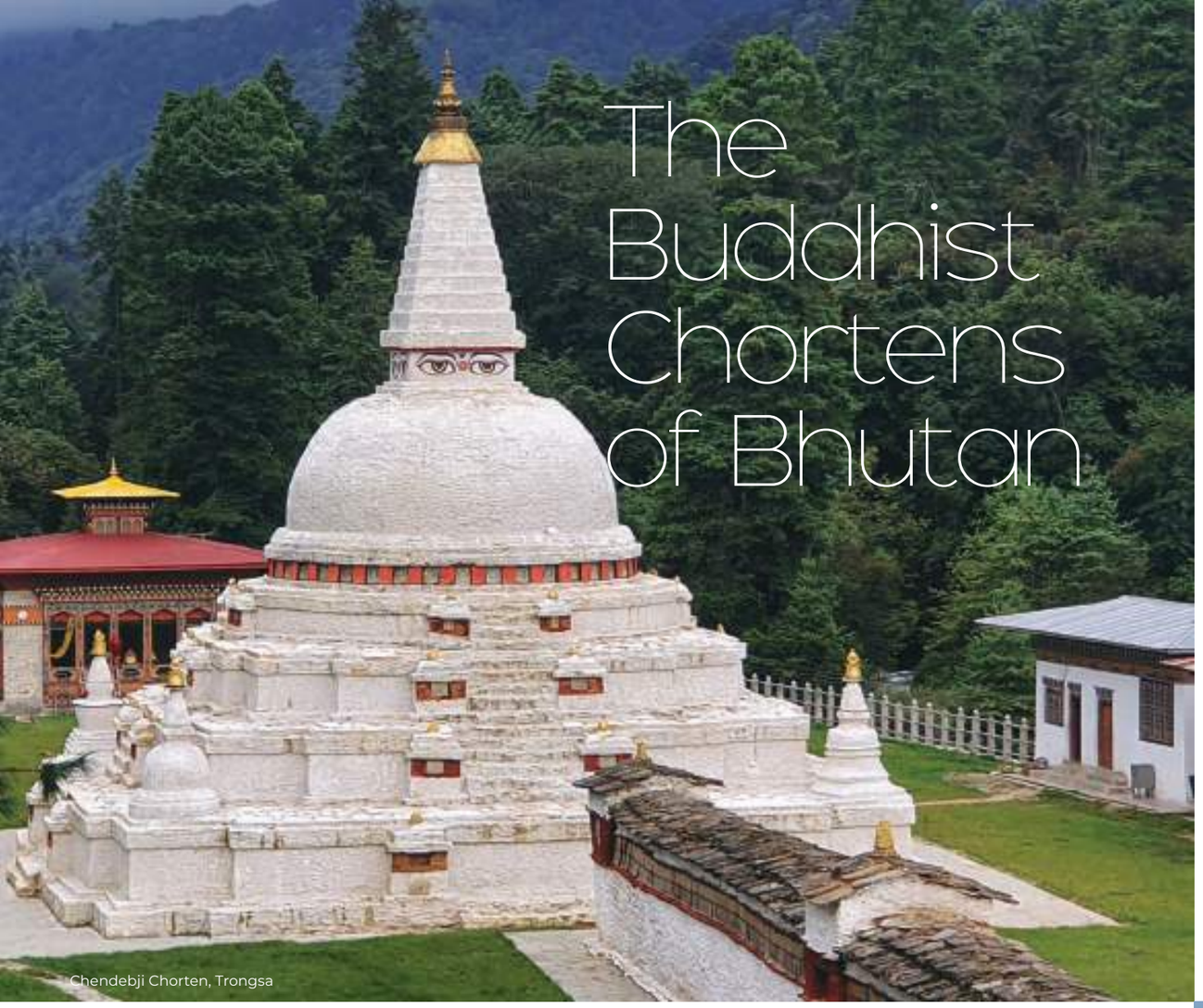
Once, years ago, I came upon some poles arranged neatly on the road and aimed my car for maximum damage. Driving over the poles made a crack crack crack. Two men were sitting there at the side of the road with big knives, compulsory for village men, sticking out of the slits of their ghos. I waved and smiled and, on impulse, reached over to the passenger's seat and threw a Costco-sized box of Kit Kat candy bars out the open window. An American friend had sent a care package. The men looked down at the box as it skidded on the road. I could see them grinning in my rearview mirror. They won twice. I hope they dug in, and then took the rest back to their respective houses and shared them with their wives and kids. I like to think American candy bars would have been an unimaginable treat dumped on a kitchen floor. Little fingers breaking the little chocolate Kit Kat fingers. And faces smeared with chocolate.



LINDA LEAMING

She is the author of the best sellers, MARRIED TO BHUTAN and A FIELD GUIDE TO HAPPINESS. Her third book about Bhutan, NO RIGHT ANGLES, is forthcoming. She lives in Thimphu with her husband, Phurba Namgay, a painter.

The Buddhist Chortens of Bhutan



Chendebji Chorten, Trongsa

The mountainous Himalayan Kingdom of Bhutan is world renowned for its stunning landscapes, rich cultural practices and unwavering commitment to the environment. What makes it perhaps most unique from other destinations in the Himalayas is its carefully preserved Buddhist heritage structures. These structures exist everywhere in the country, yet are deeply revered. They are so profoundly intertwined into the Bhutanese landscape itself, that it is difficult to describe without recounting the cultural significance, history and meaning of these striking structures.

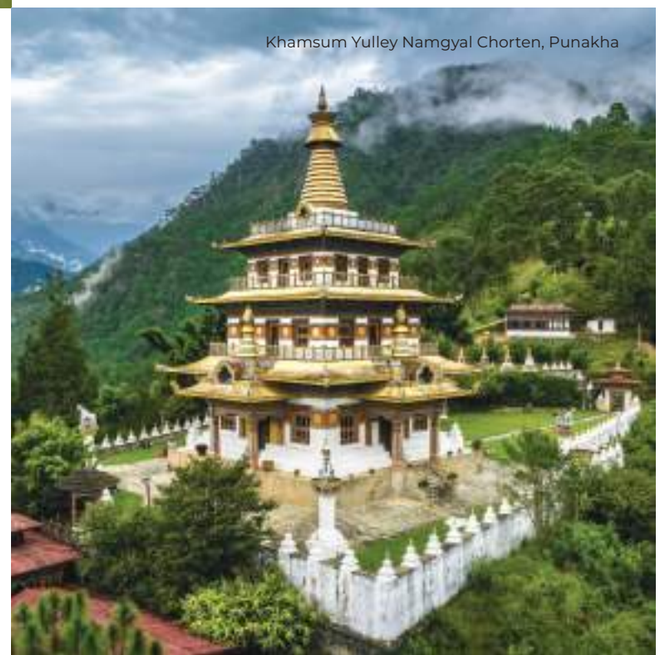
The dzongs (mountain fortresses) and lhakhangs (Buddhist temples) are the biggest of the Buddhist structures. They are so large that they can be spotted from the air as one flies over the country. The smaller of the Buddhist structures in Bhutan are its chortens (stupas). Chortens are the most numerous and perhaps the most visible Buddhist material-structural forms on the ground. They are found everywhere, on mountain tops, mountain passes, the confluence of rivers, approaches to lhakhangs and dzongs, and almost every village and community where Buddhism is practiced.

Chortens are integral to the Bhutanese landscape, both in the material and geographical sense, but also in the spiritual and cultural sense. They are found everywhere in the country as they dot the panorama of Bhutanese mountains and valleys. However, it would be misleading to refer to the chortens as being "common", as they hold deep spiritual significance and meaning from a Buddhist perspective. They are also important national Bhutanese symbols of remembrance, deference, and cultural and spiritual practice.

Historical, Spiritual and Socio-cultural Significance

In Bhutan, the word chorten is close to a Tibetan word that has a similar phonetic sound. Its historical roots date further back to the Sanskrit word stupa, which literally translates to "support for offering", or "receptable of veneration". These meanings encapsulate the functioning of the chorten as a locale or structure to which devotional spiritual and cultural practices and rituals are directed.

Vajrayana Buddhism, as the major religion practiced by Bhutanese women, men and youth across the country, further defines the meaning and significance of chortens. The chorten in essence, is a place where sacred Buddhist relics, texts and objects are housed. It is a place of pilgrimage, meditation, a receptacle for offerings, and an important site for Buddhist religious and cultural practices. Given their abundance and accessibility throughout the nation, they play a vital role in the daily practice of Buddhism.



Khamsum Yulley Namgyal Chorten, Punakha

This form of spiritual practice is due in large part to the auspicious nature of the chorten vis à vis the sacred relics housed within it. In Bhutan, all chortens contain several types of sacred religious relics, such as Buddhist images, statues, objects, and sometimes, the mortal remains of Buddhist monks and nuns. Given these auspicious contents, the practice of circumambulating chortens in a clockwise manner is the custom symbolizing devotion. It is often accompanied by the reciting of mantras and prayers, supplemented by the use of prayer beads or a small handheld rotating prayer wheel. Sometimes, Buddhist practitioners will engage in prostrations and/or the spinning of large prayers wheels embedded into the structure or on the chorten compound. In addition to these practices, the sponsorship, funding, repair and construction of a chorten is considered to generate good merit for oneself and for all sentient beings.

A chorten is constructed and consecrated as a receptacle or shrine intended to house sacred relics. Its interior cavity is filled with sacred contents called zung. These relics often take the form of printed mantras and prayers, ritually prepared earth, grains, precious substances and manuscripts. They also contain large quantities of small, molded clay miniatures called tsa-tsa. Shaped to resemble chortens themselves, they are often produced in their thousands while reciting mantras. Chortens are consecrated through a Buddhist ceremony performed by lamas, thereby transforming the material structure and its contents to a living object of devotion and veneration.

Historically, all chortens descend from the ancient Indian Buddhist stupa, which originally housed bodily relics of the Buddha or other revered Buddhist lamas or figures. The classical stupa based on the ancient Indian stupa form was carried into Tibet from the eighth century onwards. Buddhist transmissions from Tibet were adapted in Bhutan according to Bhutanese cultural and religious practices over time, and came to be known as the chorten. The Bhutanese shape eventually became distinct from stupa conventions in Nepal and Tibet. However, in Bhutan, all three forms co-exist today, and are commonly referred to as Bhutanese, Tibetan, and Nepalese styles.

The Nepali-style chorten is based on the

classical stupa shape from India. The four sides of the tower are painted with the all-seeing eyes of The Buddha. What appears as the nose is actually the Sanskrit character for the number "one", symbolizing the absoluteness of The Buddha. Examples of the Nepali style include Chorten Kora in Trashiyangtse and Chendebji Chorten near Trongsa. The Tibetan-style chorten is shaped similar to the classical stupa, but the rounded part flares outward instead of a dome shape. An example of this style is Thimphu's National Memorial Chorten.

The Bhutanese design of chortens is also derived from the classical stupa. It often comprises a square base, and a square stone pillar with a finial or the shape of a crescent moon and sun at its pinnacle. Several other types of chortens exist in Bhutan, including two pillars that support an archway to forms a gate over a trail. Travelers and pilgrims earn merit by passing under the structure, which is often painted with Buddhist murals on its interior walls and a mandala on the inside of the roof. Another chorten type is hollow to allow the housing of a large prayer wheel within it. Often built over or near a stream, the water turns the wooden turbine below the structure to propel the turning of the prayer wheel.

Chortens, across Bhutan, vary widely in scale and style, from those that are just a meter high, to structures that are several meters tall. They sometimes take the form of a roadside or trail marker, or important historical or devotional monuments. They have been built over many centuries across the country from the time when Buddhism first spread.

Structure, Location and Symbolism of Chortens

The architecture of the chorten follows a set of principles rooted in Vajrayana Buddhist cosmology and conventions that have been transmitted through centuries of building practice. These Buddhist principles shape its functionality, proportions, spatiality and architectural arrangements.

Often referred to as stupas in other parts of the Himalayas and South Asia, a chorten is a domed hemispherical structure containing sacred spiritual relics described above. Chortens are conscientiously constructed at points considered spiritually charged of vulnerable. These include for instance river confluences, crossroads, mountain passes, bridges and gates to settlements. This is done to bless the locale, and to subdue negative influences or to ward off evil elements.

Chortens vary in size and shape throughout Bhutan. The entire structure is interpreted in Vajrayana Buddhism as a three-dimensional image of the Buddha in meditation. Sequentially, from the ground up, this is represented by the stepped base of the chorten as crossed legs, the hemispherical dome as the torso, the harmika as the eyes and crown, and the spire and finial at its peak.

In Bhutan, each of the chorten's five architectural elements has a symbolic meaning. It is often constructed in vertical sequence, with each carrying important symbolic meaning and Buddhist significance.

The Base – the stepped or graded square or rectangular base symbolizes the earth. It is often called the lion throne, on which the rest of the structure rests. The series of steps represents



National Memorial Chorten, Thimphu

aspects of the path, interpreted as the four immeasurables of equanimity, love, compassion and empathetic happiness.

The hemispherical dome – the rounded or vase-shaped body that forms the main mass of the chorten symbolizes water. It contains the shrine chamber that houses, stores and protects the relics contained within it.

The harmika – is a square shrine box set above the dome, on which eyes are sometimes painted in stupas of the Nepal style, for example.

The conical or pyramidal spire – is made of thirteen tapering rings or disc segments that symbolize fire. They represent the thirteens steps leading to Buddhahood: the ten progressive grounds of the bodhisattva path (e.g., a bodhisattva is a person who has attained enlightenment but delays nirvana to help others attain awakening), and three higher stages of Vajrayana Buddhism.

The parasol or canopy – is located above the spire, and signifies Royal and spiritual sovereignty.

The crescent moon, sun and jewel – is sometimes placed on the top, and symbolizes air. It also represents wisdom and compassion, and the unification of the two.

The Finial – is the decorative ornament or knob that marks the top peak of the structure. It represents the awakening rising from the head of the chorten.

Significant Buddhist Chortens

Chortens across Bhutan are often steeped in local legend, memory, significance, and stand as a testament to the enduring spirit and cultural heritage of Bhutan. Chortens may vary in size and shape across Bhutan, but each and every chorten plays an important role in the engagement of Buddhist practices. Some chortens are built in memory of an individual, while others commemorate the visit of a saint, contain sacred texts, or house the remains of saints or great lamas or nuns. Below are but a few examples of famous chortens of Bhutan, including one being planned.

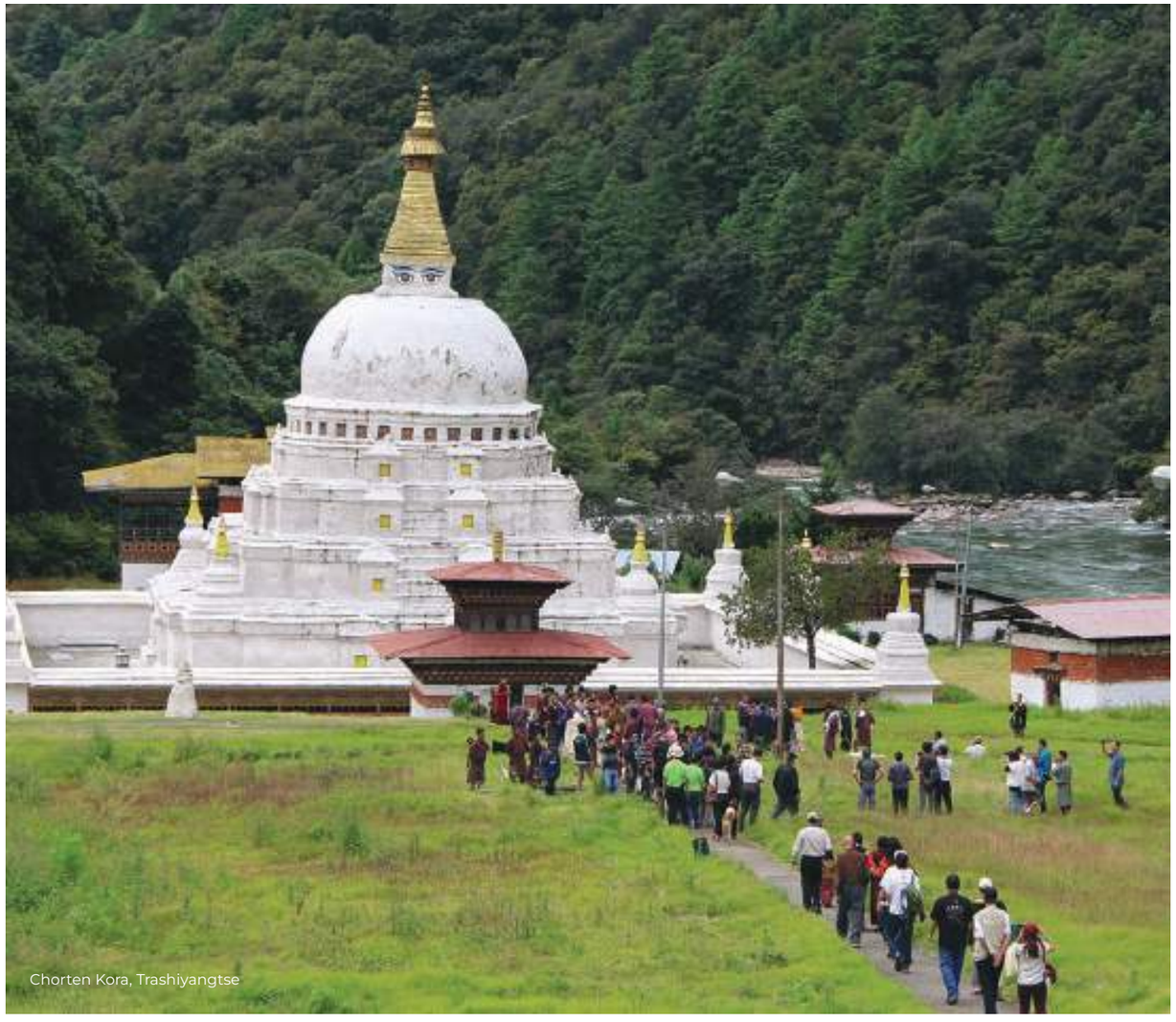
National Memorial Chorten – was built in 1974 in memory of the Third King of Bhutan, Jigme Dorji Wangchuck (1928–1972). This memorial chorten is unique in that it does not enshrine human remains, but rather, a photograph of the Third King in ceremonial dress is featured in the ground floor hall. Standing magnificently at 108 feet tall (or approximately 33 meters), the large white chorten has a gleaming golden spire on its crown. It acts as a prominent landmark in the capital city of Thimphu. It was designed as a classical Tibetan-style stupa with a distinct vase shape (rather than a dome shape), crowned by a golden pryadmidal spire and canopy.

The chorten depicts large images of wrathful deities with female consorts. The compound has a large entrance gate decorated with slate carvings that lead to a green garden. On one side of the compound are very large prayers wheels that are constantly being spun by Buddhist devotees. The interior of the chorten is divided into three floors. The ground floor has four shrines, containing many mandalas, statues and a shrine dedicated to the Third King of Bhutan. The second and third floors also have four shrines each. The interior of the chorten is decorated with large wooden carvings that depict deities, and second floor leads to the roof of the structure with beautiful views of the city surrounding it. As a major Buddhist structure in the heart of the city, the chorten attracts hundreds of worshippers on a daily basis. It is especially known for attracting elderly Bhutanese women and men who circumambulate the chorten, whirl the large red prayer wheels and worship at the shrine to dedicate the merit earned from such actions to all sentient beings.

Chorten Kora – was built over a period of twelve years starting in the 1740s in the far-eastern district of Trashiyangtse. Located near the serene Kholong Chhu river, the stunning chorten resembles the famous Swayambhunath and Boudhanath Stupas in Nepal, but is short of being as large or tall as the stupa of Boudhanath. When completed, it was consecrated by the Chief Abbot of Bhutan. The chorten was built to subdue demons who were causing harm to humans and animals in the valley. In front of the chorten is a natural stone stupa, which used to sit atop the chorten and is considered sacred. The compound also has a small Buddhist monastery.

According to local legend, during the construction of the chorten, a young girl from Arunchal Pradesh in India, believed to be a pious dakini princess, entombed herself within the dome to dedicate her life to meditation on behalf of all beings and to offer spiritual protection to the local people from a powerful demon. The popular Bhutanese film Chorten Kora was shot here, and brings to life the legend to depicts the story behind this historic chorten. According to the film's description, the movie blends "faith, sacrifice, love, and Bhutanese folklore" and "captures the deep spiritual connection between people, place, and tradition. The story has continued to resonate with audiences beyond its original telling, inspiring a follow-up production, Chorten Kora 2, released in 2009 by Bhutan Multimedia and directed by Wangchuk".

The chorten is also an important venue for two popular festivals, the Dhagpa Kora and the Drukpa Kora. The former is attended by the Dhagpa community from Tawang in Arunachal Pradesh. The latter is attended by Bhutanese from all over Eastern Bhutan, including indigenous highlanders from the Merak and Sakteng regions who attend the local fair to gain good karma by witnessing the unfurling of a giant thongdrol (massive Bhutanese scroll).



Chorten Kora, Trashiyangtse

Druk Wangyal Chortens – perched high on the Dochula pass at an elevation of approximately 3,100 meters (or 10,200 ft) above sea level on the East West Road from Thimphu to Punakha, is the location of this historical landmark. The famous group of 108 memorial chortens is unique, given it combines many chortens together in harmony on a serene and stunning mountain pass. The chorten complex was built by one of the four Queen Mothers in memory of Bhutanese soldiers who died in 2003 in safeguarding the nation, and symbolizes peace, harmony and security. The complex also has a Buddhist temple called the Druk Wangyal Lhakhang, built in honor of the Fourth King of Bhutan, His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck. This site hosts the recently created annual Dochula festival, and is adjacent to Bhutan's first Royal Botanical Park.

This is a popular stop for travelers going to or from Punakha. The stop allows visitors to take in the stunning views of the Himalayan snow-capped mountains. Although the high mountain pass is often covered in fog and mist, clear panoramic views of the mountains are often visible on clear days between the months of October and February. Perhaps most stunning among the scenic mountain views is that of Mount Masanggang standing at 7,194 meters (or 23, 602 feet), and the highest peak in Bhutan of Mount Gangkar Puensum standing at 7,570 meters (or 24,836 feet) above sea level. The pass has a serene, calming effect on travelers and pilgrims, given the natural beauty that surrounds this stunning location.

Chortens, chortens everywhere.

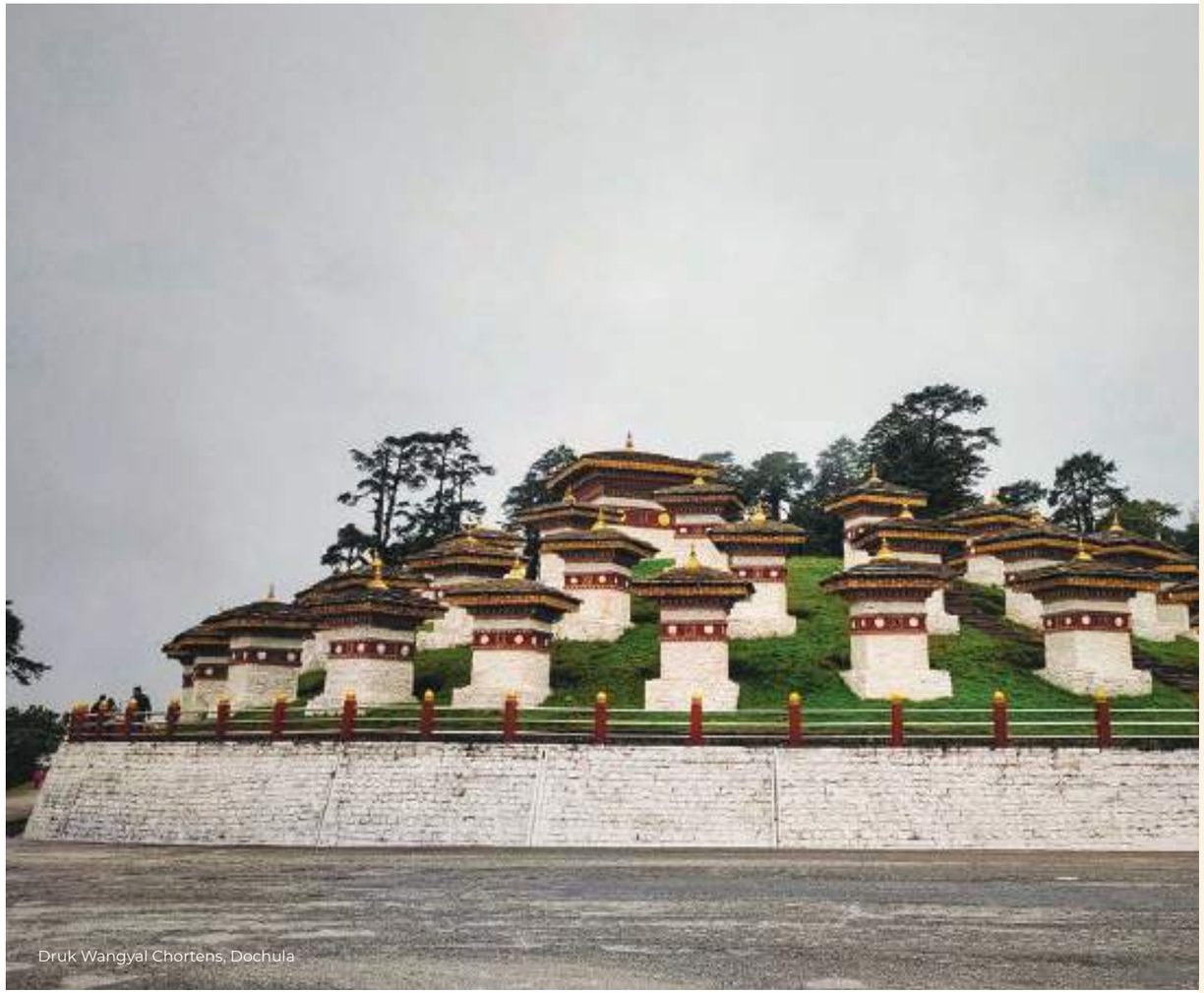
Over and above the more famous chortens of Bhutan, there exist numerous chortens in almost every hill, valley and corner of Bhutan, each with its own story and characteristics. Some of them have profound stories embedded in their history, making them a quiet but important destination for those seeking connection and reflection in the beautiful landscape of Bhutan. They also serve an important purpose in the community, as they are engaged for spiritual Buddhist practices in people's everyday lives. It is well worth exploring these local chortens, as well more famous ones, especially if a trip can be timed to gently and respectfully witness the larger and more famous annual rituals, celebrations and annual masked dance festivals that Bhutan is known in the world for. These chortens offer visitors a serene presence against the backdrop of a fast-paced and busy world.

Towards Mindful Travel

There is a deep sense of veneration palpable around Bhutanese chortens. This is discernable, especially if travelers approach their visit to a chorten in the same way they would a sacred reliquary in Europe, a sacred Baha'i shrine in India, or a sacred mausoleum in Syria, for instance. Although there are no signboards posted around a chorten that instruct visitors to remain quiet and deferential, the expected custom is to remain respectful of one's surroundings and give priority to those who have come to dedicate spiritual activities. In other words, a chorten's secondary or tertiary aim is a tourist destination. Its primary and higher spiritual aim is to serve as a living, breathing place of worship, practice, sacredness, deference and devotion for Buddhists and followers of Buddhism.

To travel to the wonder of environmentally, culturally, historically and architecturally rich Bhutan is a unique experience. It allows travelers to experience a country that places central importance on nature, culture and spirituality, and its conservation and protection. The country is a rich haven for wildlife, rich biodiversity and sentient beings, as well as spiritually-rich Buddhist practices that promote harmony, balance, mindfulness and the importance protecting its history. The majestic and auspicious mountains of Bhutan and its sacred temples and chortens remain protected against the forces of modernity, as they should be. The preservation of culture extends not only to unique chorten architecture, but the way they are constructed, mindfully and conscientiously using traditional methods and locally available materials.

Foreign travelers too have a responsibility as travelers, pilgrims and tourists. We must tread carefully and gently, with great respect and compassion to local environments and locales, and its inhabitants, big and small, and its local



Druk Wangyal Chortens, Dochula

cultural and spiritual practices steeped deep in history, philosophical meaning and mindfulness. These environmentally, culturally and historically important sites are not just "tourist destinations" but are central ways of life for people and sentient beings that inhabit and frequent these precious and auspicious spaces. We are mere visitors passing by, but also have the potential of being transformed by our travels and taking and disseminating our learnings when we go back home, while being careful not to impact or harm such fragile locales we visit in turn. As the famous saying goes, take only memories, leave only footprints. Bhutan provides both the traveler an unprecedented experience in a pristine environmentally, culturally and historically rich spiritual setting where the pace of life is often slow and mindful – a gentle yet powerful reminder that we are all interconnected with one another, to nature and this amazing planet we share with all other sentient beings.



DR RITU VERMA

An anthropologist, researcher, author and photographer, she has published extensively on GNH, Bhutan, and beyond. She is a regular columnist in this magazine. Find her at rituvermapuri.wordpress.com, ucla.academia.edu/RituVerma and twitter.com/Rituvermapuri

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Winter in Bhutan

A Reluctant Penguin Looking at the Sky



As someone who enjoys summer in places like Varanasi, where temperatures often climb into the forties, winter has never been my favourite season. The moment thick jackets are pulled from cupboards, I feel my spirit sink.

It is not that Thimphu's winters are especially harsh. In fact, they are relatively mild; it is their length that I don't appreciate. Once the cold settles in, it seems reluctant to leave. I was definitely not a penguin in a former life.

Though cold, winters in northern Bhutan are dry, bringing deep blue skies, strong sunlight, and long, sharp shadows. With less happening in the landscape, there is a particular stillness to the season, one that seems to draw attention inward. I notice this most when walking in the early evening, when the streets of the capital begin to thin as people hurry home to escape the cold.

During this time, I occasionally catch a glimpse of distant, snow-covered peaks tinged red by the setting sun. They can be striking, rising above the rooftops in the fading light. On rare occasions, when my mind is not caught in its own chatter, I think of the accomplished masters who spent years in such places, seeking solitude and a different relationship with the conditions around them.

Guru Rinpoche, Yeshe Tsogyal, Longchen Rabjam, and Jigme Lingpa are particularly associated with caves, remote valleys, and places of retreat in Bhutan, where profound teachings arose spontaneously in their minds and sacred treasures were concealed in rock faces and lakes. Yet these places are not merely remnants of a distant past. They remain part of a living tradition, where yogis and meditators still withdraw into simple retreat huts and caves to practise in solitude.

I was particularly reminded of this a year earlier at Rinchen Bumpa, a remote sacred site in eastern Bhutan, where caves, cliffs, shrines, and rock formations form a single sacred landscape. A friend and I arrived in winter, with snow forecast and threatening clouds gathering over the



Rinchen Bumpa, Lhuentse

mountain. The cold and isolation seemed to strip away much of the ordinary world, leaving the landscape unusually stark and silent. Perched high above the valleys, the site felt less like a place designated sacred than one in which the landscape itself had invited it. It was easy to understand why generations of practitioners still sought out this mountain and other such places.

I watched an elderly couple scramble up a bank to press their foreheads against self-arisen mantras protruding from the rock face. I wondered how many winters they had made similar climbs, and whether the cold mattered less to them than it did to me. I didn't ask. I only watched, glad of my jacket.

But season and place ultimately matter little to accomplished yogis. As the lives of the mahasiddhas demonstrate, they can practise as readily amid the noise and activity of a crowded city as in the quiet solitude of a mountain cave.

Darikapa, a former king, is a case in point. For twelve years he served in a brothel, maintaining the sacred commitments entrusted to him by his teacher, his realisation hidden from worldly beings amid the most unlikely of circumstances. He needed no mountain, no season, and no sacred symbols to press his forehead against.

But for beginners like me, conditions and atmosphere matter and we remain very much subject to outer circumstances. This is where solitude in a remote sacred site helps: it offers a constant reminder of practice and creates distance from everyday reference points — other people's opinions, expectations, and reactions — that we use to reinforce an illusory sense of self. When those reference points fall away, even briefly, it becomes clearer that the "self" we cling to has no independent existence, but arises only in relation to shifting external factors.

Winter seems especially suited to this kind of experience. In summer, everything is in motion — plants grow, flowers bloom, rivers swell, clouds gather and disperse. Winter is different: it strips the landscape back, leaving a greater sense of stillness and isolation. Perhaps that is one reason the season feels conducive to reflection, even for those of us with no intention of spending it in a meditation hut.



Self-arisen mantras at Rinchen Bumpa

And then there is the winter sky: deep blue, vast and immaculately clear. On those winter evenings when the sky is completely clear, I sometimes find myself staring at it longer than I intended. Perhaps this is one reason why Himalayan Buddhism so often uses the sky as a metaphor for the nature of the mind: vast and unobstructed, its clarity undisturbed by whatever passes through it.

We spend much of our lives caught up in the clouds of thought and confusion, mistaking them for the nature of the sky itself. Yet no matter how dense they become, they neither diminish nor stain its inherent clarity. In the same way, ignorance, confusion, and habitual patterns may obscure our true nature, but they do not alter it. Even amid the turbulence of our thoughts and emotions, it remains present and untouched.

It is this innate purity and potential for awakening that we refer to as Buddha-nature. It is easy to mistakenly imagine meditation as a process of gradually constructing enlightenment, as though we are building something that did not exist before. But practice is not about creating something new, but clearing away what obscures what is already there.

Although I am sure winter will never be my favourite season, I have come to understand why the Himalayan winter has inspired so many people to turn inward, why it has long been a magnet for both Buddhist and Hindu yogis, and why it has found such a natural expression in poetry.

I still prefer to sweat on the banks of the Ganga with ash-covered Aghoris than shiver on a mountain peak with a yogi in a cotton shawl, but I can appreciate what winter does. It removes some of the excess, quietens the landscape, and reveals the sky — deep blue, vast, and magical.

The meditative silence evoked by a Himalayan winter is perhaps best captured by the revered yogi Milarepa in these two unassuming lines:

"The dark hills clad in white,
ice forms upon the billowing lakes."



SHENPHEN ZANGPO

He was born in Swansea, UK, but spent more than 28 years practicing and studying Buddhism in Taiwan and Japan, and around 15 years working with substance abusers in Bhutan, teaching meditation and organizing drug outreach programmes. Currently, he is engaged in activities that present the traditional wisdom of the Dharma to the youth of Bhutan in a modern and relevant way.

Russian Café and Bakery Brusnika











Brusnika, a charming café with a beautiful menu, is a testament to the passion of its owners, Tashi and Natalia.

Inspired by the wonderful bakeries and cuisines of their homelands, Bhutan and Russia, Tashi and Natalia realized the need for organic Artisan type breads in Bhutan.

The café had humble beginnings, with Natalia practicing a fusion of Russian style pastries using local grains, including Bhutan's favourite grain, rice! She started to bake for family and friends, and soon dreamed of opening her own bakery.

When Natalia and Tashi found a beautiful place with the most amazing view in town, Russian Cafe and Bakery Brusnika was born. Natalia trained Bhutanese ladies how to bake bread, cakes, and pastries. Now, the cafe and bakery serves a charming menu of continental cuisine infused with Russian flavors.

The bread and pastries are a mix of Russian and German, a simple homage to the Bhutanese-Russian family's personal history. Natalia was born and brought up in Russia, and the couple spent 10 years in Germany.

The concept of food at Brusnika is simple: eat local, eat healthy. The café uses local milk and butter, homemade cheese, jams by Brusnika, organic vegetables and fruits, and avoids processed food as much as possible.

Brusnika is more than just a café; it is a place where people can come together to enjoy delicious food, stunning views, and the warmth of Russian-Bhutanese hospitality.

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The Price of Keeping Bhutan, Bhutan

The officer behind the counter started tallying up our nights on a calculator that looked older than the 1949 Treaty of Friendship between India and Bhutan. His voice carried the calculations through the immigration hall with absolutely no interest in my feelings about them. Multiply. Carry the one. On he went. With every zero he added, I felt a small, undignified pinch; the specific, hot-eared humiliation of catching yourself being a hypocrite in real time, in public, in an immigration queue resting between two countries, with nowhere to hide.

My moral self has built an entire career on telling other people to travel responsibly. Choose the homestay over the resort chain. Tip the local guide before the multinational tour operator. Buy the handwoven scarf from the artisan, not the airport gift shop. Think about where your money goes, who benefits from your presence and what your visit leaves behind. I've said it enough times to know the argument by heart. Most places let you enjoy the scenery for free, while leaving someone else to pick up the bill for keeping it that way. Bhutan, on the other hand, wants to be honest about who that someone else should be: the visitor.

It was, in theory, exactly the kind of tourism policy I believed in. The money followed the traveller; the traveller helped carry the cost of keeping the place intact. I had no intellectual objection to it. In fact, I found myself admiring the bluntness of it. And yet there I was, watching the number climb on the officer's calculator, quietly wishing it would stop. What made the whole thing harder to defend was that I was paying less than everyone else in that hall. As an Indian national, my SDF was INR 1200 (USD 12) a night, a fraction of the USD 100 charged to most international visitors.

I was, objectively, getting the "neighbour discount" and still managing to experience buyer's remorse.

We were a group of ten travelling with Druk Origins, accompanied by our guide, Bishnu, and our driver, also, Bishnu. Bishnu, the guide, used the long, empty stretches of road to fill silences and explain Bhutan to us: its culture, its religious beliefs, its geography, its history, whatever question happened to come up before the next mountain pass. The SDF was one of those conversations. He explained that the Sustainable Development Fee is a daily charge paid by international visitors, separate from the cost of their visa, accommodation, guide and everything else that comes with being in the country. In 2026, it stands at USD 100 per person per night, down from the USD 200 rate introduced when Bhutan reopened its borders in 2022. The idea was fairly simple: the longer you stay, the more you contribute towards the country you're using…its roads, its forests, its













infrastructure, its public services, all the things that make Bhutan feel like Bhutan in the first place.

Everything Bishnu told us from the front seat seemed to have a way of revealing itself on the road. We would drive for six, sometimes eight hours through mountain passes, pine forests folding into pine forests, with barely a petrol pump or town in sight. He'd point out things as we went…the way villages were laid out, the forests we were passing through, the communities tucked in the valleys. We would get into conversations about healthcare and education, both of which are provided free to Bhutanese citizens, alongside learning about the many ways the country was trying to look after its people and the land. What sounded like a policy once had now begun to seem tangible in the way Bhutan was shaping.

It didn't fully become real until Phobjikha: a valley that arrives almost as a surprise. The switchbacks suddenly give way to a wide bowl of gold-brown grass, enclosed by dark, forested mountains, with farmhouses and grazing yaks scattered across the valley floor. The road seems to loosen its grip on the mountainside and, for a moment, there is nothing to do but look. Bishnu pulled the car over before we had even reached the valley floor and we all spilled out, cameras forgotten for a minute, trying to take in the scale of it.

I thought the valley itself would be the thing I remembered. It wasn't.

It was the absence of something. Power lines. There wasn't a single one cutting across the landscape…no poles marching along the road, no wires strung between houses, nothing interrupting the sweep of the valley. In a place where electricity poles are such an ordinary part of the landscape that you stop seeing them, their absence was suddenly impossible to miss. The entire valley's power grid runs underground, not for the view but for a bird.

Every winter, black-necked cranes — thrung thrung karmo, as they're known locally — cross the Himalayas from the Tibetan Plateau to spend the season in these wetlands. There are only a few thousand left in the wild and in Bhutan they are deeply revered. They are said to circle the seventeenth-century Gangtey Monastery three times when they arrive, a blessing the valley takes seriously. The birds had already begun their journey north by the time we arrived, so I wouldn't see them. But Bishnu explained that the valley's underground electricity wasn't an aesthetic choice. It was to keep the cranes' flight path clear.

Bhutan had designated 163 square kilometres of the valley as a protected conservation area in 2003 and when overhead cables threatened the cranes, the government chose to bury them rather than ask the landscape to accommodate its infrastructure. It was a small detail, almost easy to miss, but it stayed with me. Here was a country that had made a practical decision around a creature most of us would never even see.

The cranes didn't need to be there for a tourist to photograph them. They simply needed the valley to remain theirs.

That evening, I posted a video of the empty wetland on Instagram, along with my rather unexpected change of heart about the SDF. What surprised me wasn't that the post did well. It was the replies. Almost everyone who had been to Bhutan agreed with the SDF. They had each stood somewhere in the country and seen some version of what I had just seen; the money translating into something tangible, something they hadn't necessarily expected to notice.

It also made me wonder why the SDF exists separately from the visa in the first place. Why not fold the two into one fee and be done with? The more I understood the system, the more the separation began to make sense. A visa charges you for entering a country. The SDF charges you for staying in it. Two nights and twenty nights are not the same footprint and the contribution grows accordingly. It means your time in Bhutan, rather than simply your arrival is what determines what you put back into it.

Somewhere between that immigration hall and an empty wetland built for a bird I never even saw, the pinch had disappeared. In its place was the rather satisfying knowledge that some of those rupees had gone towards keeping that valley exactly as it was. And perhaps that is what makes Bhutan's model worth paying attention to: what the government does with the money collected from tourism. Healthcare. Education. Community development. Conservation. And, sometimes, decisions so specific and seemingly irrational on a balance sheet that they make perfect sense when you stand in the landscape…like burying an entire valley's power lines for a bird.

Bhutan's approach has been built around the simple idea of high value, low impact: not maximising the number of people who come through, but making sure that those who do contribute meaningfully to the country they are visiting, while keeping tourism within limits the country can live with.

Maybe that's the real lesson: deciding what tourism is for, and having the conviction to make it serve the country beyond the visitor's experience.

That, to me, is the blueprint.





POOJA AKULA

A nomad by lifestyle and storyteller by craft, Pooja is usually somewhere between a moving desk and a good story. She travels slow and intentional, with a particular fondness for long stays, until a place feels like home. She has a soft spot for places that make her wonder, "Could I live here?" — until the next adventure. Find more at @pooja_akula.

A walk through the Himalayas

A Buddhist call to climate action

Led by Gyalwa Dokhampa, a revered Drukpa Buddhist Master and author of The Restful Mind, the Garsha Eco Pad Yatra brought together nearly 1,000 people from six countries for a journey through the Indian Himalayas, where they witnessed how climate change is threatening mountain communities and why its impacts extend far beyond the region.









For six days, from 20 – 26 September 2026, close to a 1,000 people walked over 100 kilometres through seven villages in Garsha (Lahaul), Himachal Pradesh.

They walked not only as pilgrims, but as witnesses to a landscape undergoing profound change amid an escalating climate crisis.

They saw rivers, mountains and villages living with the effects of a changing climate. They heard stories of homes and roads threatened by floods and landslides. They felt an unusual September heat. And they saw how changes in the mountains are beginning to reshape everyday life.

Led by Gyalwa Dokhampa together with the Drukpa Kung Fu nuns, the Garsha Eco Pad Yatra brought together people from Bhutan, India, Nepal, Malaysia, Singapore and Vietnam under the theme "Walking for Climate and Heritage".

But this was more than a journey through the mountains.

It was a journey into a much bigger question: How should we live in a world where the natural systems that sustain us are under increasing pressure?

For Gyalwa Dokhampa, the answer begins with something Buddhism has taught for centuries: we are not separate from nature.

"We are part of nature. The Buddha taught us about interdependence. Nothing exists completely on its own," said Gyalwa Dokhampa. "Our lives depend on water. Water depends on the mountains. The mountains depend on forests, glaciers and the wider ecosystem. And communities depend on all of them."

And nowhere is that relationship more visible than in the Himalayas.

Walking Through A Changing Himalayas

Walking alongside rivers, crossing mountain slopes and passing through remote villages, participants saw firsthand how climate change is reshaping Garsha in alarming ways.

In Jhalman village, a sudden flood in June, linked to glacial melt upstream, washed away a bridge and sections of a road.

In Lindoor, the ground beneath the village is giving way. Fourteen households, home to around 150 people, face the stark prospect of having to relocate to safety.

But leaving home is not simple. "I don't want to leave my village," said one woman from Lindoor. "This is my home. Where will I move? I will stay here as long as I can."

In Sissu, people are increasingly worried about the expanding Ghepan Lake and the risk of a glacial lake outburst flood.

Even the weather seemed unfamiliar. September, usually a cooler month in the mountains, was hot.

"People told us that there are no longer seasons in Garsha. We felt what they meant," said one participant.

For communities here, climate change is no longer something discussed only in scientific reports or international conferences.

It is happening at home.

It is changing rivers, mountains and roads. It is threatening homes and livelihoods. It is altering the landscape people have depended on for generations.

And what is happening in Garsha is part of a much bigger Himalayan story.



An Ancient Buddhist Wisdom For A Changing World

The Garsha Eco Pad Yatra offered a different way of looking at the climate crisis. Long before climate change became a global concern, Buddhist teachings placed strong emphasis on compassion, interdependence, non-harm and the consequences of causing harm to our environment.

The idea that all life is interconnected sits at the heart of Buddhism. Human beings do not exist separately from the natural world, and our wellbeing is tied to the wellbeing of other people and all living beings. That understanding has taken on a new urgency in a world confronting a growing climate catastrophe.

Today, science is telling us something that is increasingly difficult to ignore: protecting ecosystems, reducing harm to nature and living more sustainably are essential to safeguarding our future.

The message may be expressed in different language, but the principle is deeply familiar: We are connected. What we do to the natural world ultimately affects us all.

That is what the Pad Yatra sought to bring into the climate conversation: not Buddhism as a new solution to climate change, but an ancient ethical perspective that asks us to reconsider our relationship with nature.

Because the climate crisis is not only a crisis of temperature, ice and weather. It is also a crisis of relationship: how we relate to nature, to one another and to generations yet to come.





What Happens In The Himalayas Affects Us All

The Himalayas may be divided by national borders, but their rivers, glaciers and ecosystems are not.

Garsha is only one small part of the Hindu Kush Himalayas, a vast mountain region spanning eight countries, including Bhutan, India and Nepal.

More than 270 million people live in the region, while its rivers provide water and other ecosystem services to nearly two billion people downstream. The region is often described as the "Water Tower of Asia" because of its importance to water security and livelihoods.

But this vital system is under growing pressure.

A 2026 assessment by ICIMOD found that glaciers across the Hindu Kush Himalayas are losing ice at twice the rate recorded since 2000, with some glaciers losing up to 27 metres of ice thickness since 1975.

The consequences reach far beyond the mountains. Changing snowfall, melting glaciers, degrading permafrost and unpredictable rivers are increasing the risks of floods, landslides and glacial lake outburst floods. They threaten homes and livelihoods in the mountains and have implications for water, food and energy security far downstream.

Recent floods in Nepal have offered another stark reminder of how vulnerable Himalayan communities are. The mountains may seem distant to those living far away. But their future is connected to ours.





From Walking To Action

Rooted in the Drukpa Order of Buddhism, Pad Yatras have always carried messages of peace, compassion and care for the planet. The Garsha Eco Pad Yatra was no different.

At its heart, the Pad Yatra brought Buddhist teachings on compassion, interdependence, non-harm and reverence for all life into the climate conversation, turning a walking pilgrimage into a collective act of witnessing and drawing attention to the climate crisis unfolding in the Himalayas, reminding us that caring for nature is inseparable from caring for one another.

The Pad Yatra, however, went beyond raising awareness.

Along the route, participants collected waste, planted trees and promoted environmental conservation. More importantly, the journey sought to build a sense of shared responsibility.

The Himalayas are not simply a spectacular landscape of snow-capped peaks and glaciers. They are a living system, one that sustains communities in the mountains and millions downstream. Protecting them therefore requires more than individual action. It requires communities, countries and institutions to work together to protect fragile mountain ecosystems, strengthen resilience and reduce the drivers of climate change.

For Gyalwa Dokhampa, the Pad Yatra offered a way to bring this message into the world through something deeply human: walking together.

Step by step, village by village, the journey turned an enormous global challenge into something people could see, feel and experience together.

It also offered a broader understanding of climate action. Climate action can be found in science and policy. But it can also begin with compassion. It can be advanced through technology. But it also requires responsibility. And while international agreements matter, so does the way we understand our relationship with the natural world.

"From a Buddhist perspective, protecting nature is not something different from practicing Dharma," said Gyalwa Dokhampa. "Taking care of the earth is an expression of compassion. When we protect a water source, we protect the people and animals who depend on it. When we plant a tree, we are thinking about generations beyond ours. When we reduce waste, we show respect for the land that sustains us."

The walk may have ended in Garsha, but the message is meant to travel much further.

As the Himalayas warm and their ecosystems come under increasing pressure, the Buddhist values of compassion, interdependence, non-harm and reverence for life offer a powerful way to think about one of the most urgent challenges of our time.

To Protect The Himalayas Is To Protect The Lives They Sustain

And to care for those lives is to recognise something the Pad Yatra carried with every step: We are not separate from nature. We are part of it.

The journey is a call to remember that connection and to act while there is still time.



RINZIN WANGCHUK

He is a senior journalist with nearly three decades of experience in journalism and Bhutanese news media. Currently, he serves as the Executive Director of Journalists' Association of Bhutan.

W Hear the Sounds of Bhutan

Listen. Wear. Protect.









Travellers bring many things home from Bhutan: photographs of mountain passes, prayer flags fluttering against blue skies, memories of monasteries at dawn. Now there is something entirely new, a souvenir that lets you hear Bhutan long after you have left.

The Youth Development Fund's **Bioacoustic Scarves** transform the songs of Bhutan's birds into woven textile designs. Using sonograms, which are visual maps of sound, designers translated bird calls into pattern, creating scarves that carry both beauty and voice. Each piece is hand-woven in Bhutan using traditional techniques and natural dyes. Each carries a small label with a scannable code. Scan it, and your phone plays the call of the bird that inspired the design.

You are not simply wearing Bhutan. You are listening to it.

Voices woven into cloth

The collection celebrates three extraordinary birds, each deeply connected to Bhutan's identity and landscape.

The Raven, Bhutan's sacred national bird, symbolises protection, wisdom and continuity. Its deep, resonant calls inspired bold, dark weaves that speak of strength and guardianship.

The Black-Necked Crane, a beloved winter visitor to the valleys of Phobjikha and Bumdeling, lends its haunting calls to flowing patterns of mist-grey, black clay and mountain light. Long associated with harmony and blessing in Bhutanese culture, the crane moves through the textile like music across air.

Perhaps most moving of all is the **White-Bellied Heron,** one of the rarest birds on Earth, found in Bhutan's pristine river valleys. Its quiet voice inspired delicate silver-blue designs that evoke stillness, fragility and wilderness.









Tradition meets innovation

The Bioacoustic Collection was created through **DrukVana**, the social enterprise of the Youth Development Fund, in collaboration with designer Ellen Rock and Bhutanese master artisans.
The project bridges traditional weaving and contemporary ecological design, transforming biodiversity into wearable art.

Natural dyes from rhododendron, black clay and plant extracts give the scarves their rich colours and organic textures. Every woven line carries a story of birds, rivers, valleys, forests and the people who sustain Bhutan's extraordinary textile traditions.

For the young Bhutanese involved in the project, the scarves are more than beautiful objects. They offer artisan livelihoods, creative training, and a future rooted in culture and sustainability.

A souvenir that lives on

Most travel souvenirs slowly fade into memory. But imagine sitting quietly at home, months or years after your visit to Bhutan, scanning the label on your scarf and suddenly hearing the call of cranes over Phobjikha Valley or a raven echoing across the Himalaya. For a moment, Bhutan returns. That is the magic of the Bioacoustic Scarves. They turn memory into sound, and sound into something you can carry.

Scan and listen

Each Bioacoustic Scarf code links to:

- The bird's call
- Its conservation story
- Information about the artisan
- The inspiration behind the design

Where to find them

Bioacoustic Scarves are available at DrukVana outlet, Chubachu (opposite BNB) and online at www.drukvana.com. Ask your guide, call them at **77932350** or email ydfse.gwc@bhutanyouth.org — and take home a piece of Bhutan you can hear as well as wear.



MICHAEL RUTLAND, O.B.E.
ON BEHALF OF DRUKVANA, YDF

Vice-President, The Bhutan Society of the UK
Thimphu

PEMADRUK

BHUTAN DUTY FREE

A JOURNEY OF STILLNESS

Internationally acclaimed Chinese sculptor Xie Aige brings a Bhutan-inspired collection to Pemadruk Bhutan Duty Free, in tribute to Gelephu Mindfulness City's 108 Stupa Project



Above the Clouds — fibre-resin edition

Pemadruk Bhutan Duty Free, together with Singapore contemporary art gallery Ode to Art and acclaimed Chinese sculptor Xie Aige, has launched **A Journey Between Heaven, Humanity and Self** — an exclusive sculptural collection created for Bhutan and available only at Pemadruk Bhutan Duty Free.

The collection draws on Bhutan's philosophy of Gross National Happiness, its soaring Himalayan landscapes and its living spiritual traditions, and was created in tribute to the 108 Stupa Project in Gelephu Mindfulness City (GMC).

The collaboration extends beyond the collection. Ode to Art has sponsored a seven-foot sculpture by Xie Aige for GMC — a serene, monumental presence that invites visitors to pause, breathe and look up.



The Sanctuary Within



Above the Clouds Bronze electroplated limited edition



Upon the Tree



The Sanctuary Within



Above the Clouds
Fibre-resin edition



Upon the Tree

The Collection
Three designs — The Sanctuary Within, Above the Clouds and Upon the Tree — are offered in two editions: a bronze electroplated limited edition of 88 serial-numbered sets and a fibre-resin edition of 288 pieces per design. Each comes with a certificate of authenticity and the artist's signature.

"Bhutan is a deeply magical place. I was struck by its gentleness, its harmony and the sense that everything is interconnected. These works reflect that experience — the relationship between the inner and outer worlds, above and below, and Bhutan's quiet invitation to pause, observe and simply be."

— Xie Aige

"Each piece in this collection commemorates the 108 Chortens of Gelephu Mindfulness City, to be consecrated on 1 November 2026 — a day we believe will leave a lasting impression on the world, and on everyone who joins us. Every sculpture carries a meaning rooted in Bhutan's spirit of stillness and compassion, so it becomes more than a keepsake: it is a piece of that moment to take home. Limited in number and available only in Bhutan, these are works to treasure for generations,"

— Marianne Liow, Chief Executive Officer, Pemadruk Bhutan Duty Free



Available exclusively from November 2026 at Pemadruk Bhutan Duty Free:
Thimphu City Boutique; Paro International Airport Departures; and Choego Building, Gelephu Mindfulness City.
Enquiries: info@bdfl.bt | www.bdfl.bt

Detail	Information
Collection	A Journey Between Heaven, Humanity and Self
Artist	Xie Aige (谢艾格)
Designs	The Sanctuary Within · Above the Clouds · Upon the Tree
Editions	Bronze electroplated: 88 serial-numbered sets · Fibre resin: 288 pieces per design
Available	From November 2026
Where to buy	Thimphu City Boutique; Paro International Airport Departures; Choego Building, Gelephu Mindfulness City
Enquiries	info@bdfl.bt · www.bdfl.bt



Xie Aige at Buddha Dordenma, Thimphu

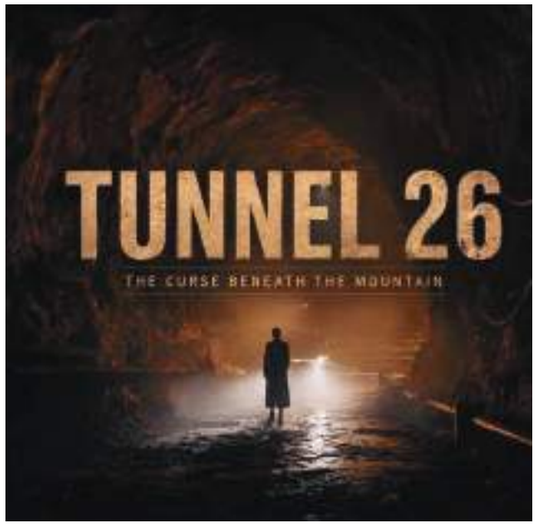
About Xie Aige
Xie Aige (谢艾格) is a leading Chinese contemporary sculptor based in Shanghai, known for serene and whimsical works inspired by nature, Buddhist thought and the human spirit. Her work has been exhibited internationally and is held in prominent collections.

About Pemadruk Bhutan Duty Free
Bhutan's duty-free retailer, operated by Bhutan Duty Free Limited, with stores at Thimphu City Boutique, Paro International Airport departures and arrivals, and Phuentsholing, offering international brands alongside curated Bhutan Exclusives.

About Ode to Art
A leading Singapore contemporary art gallery representing an international roster of painters and sculptors.

For media enquiries, please contact:
Marianne Liow, CEO, PemaDruk Bhutan Duty Free, Email: Marianne.liow@bdfl.bt

Movie review





A new frontier for Cinema

Bhutanese cinema ventures into unfamiliar territory with Tunnel 26, an ambitious supernatural thriller that marks a significant milestone in the country's evolving film industry. Bhutan's first zombie film and a pioneering Bhutan-Nepal collaboration, the film pushes the boundaries of local filmmaking, both in storytelling and technical execution.

Directed by Kinley Tshering, the film brings together an ensemble cast from Bhutan and Nepal, including Sangay Tsheltrim, Anna Sharma, Anoop Bikram Shahi, Phuntshok Dhonden, Nidup Dorji, Deki Lhamo, and Indian model Roshni Dada.

Set against the backdrop of a hydropower project in Wangduephodrang, the story begins with a tunnel collapse that traps engineers, workers, and students underground. What initially unfolds as a desperate rescue operation soon descends into supernatural horror when an ancient spirit from the Naga realm is inadvertently unleashed.

The premise is particularly compelling because it draws on Bhutan's deeply rooted spiritual beliefs, where mountains, rivers, and forests are considered sacred domains inhabited by protective deities.

Beyond its supernatural spectacle, Tunnel 26 raises questions about human greed, survival, sacrifice, and the consequences of disturbing nature. The confined underground setting provides a fitting canvas for exploring how fear strips away civility, exposing both humanity's darkest instincts and its capacity for courage.

Technically, the film marks a remarkable leap for Bhutanese cinema. Its high production value, striking cinematography, convincing visual effects, and immersive sound design create a cinematic experience rarely attempted on this scale in the local industry.

The collaboration with Nepalese actors adds another dimension, demonstrating the possibilities of cross-border partnerships in expanding Bhutanese cinema's creative and commercial horizons.

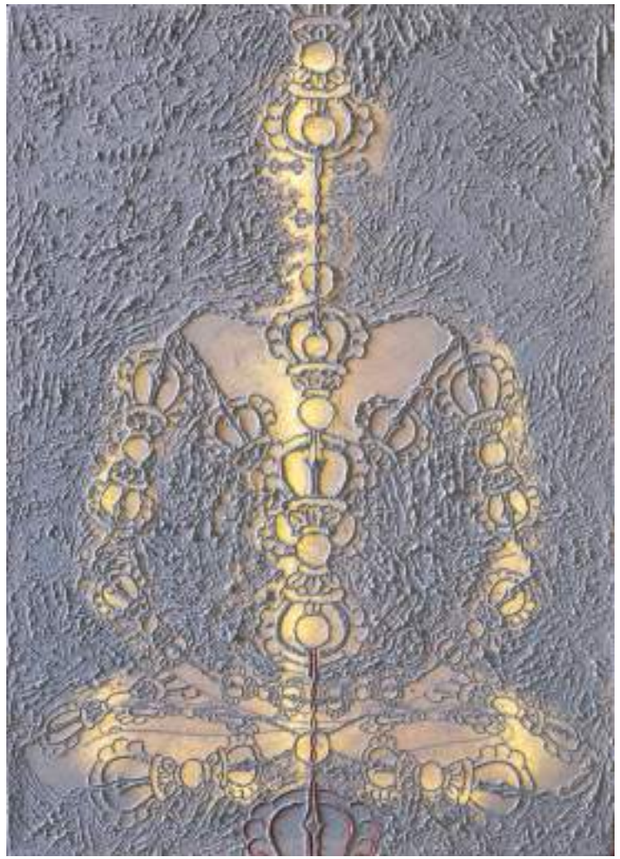
The film is an ambitious undertaking for a genre that thrives on sustained tension and narrative momentum. Yet its significance extends beyond conventional measures of genre filmmaking. More than a zombie thriller, Tunnel 26 demonstrates that Bhutanese filmmakers are increasingly willing to experiment with genres, invest in sophisticated production, and challenge the industry's traditional storytelling conventions.

Currently screening in Bhutan, Tunnel 26 deserves attention not merely for being a first, but for opening exciting new possibilities for Bhutanese cinema.

Art review



Artwork Title: Tendrel - Series 1: 1
Medium: Satshoen (Natural Pigment)
Artist: Kunzang Wangmo



Exhibition Dates:
13 October - 15 November, 2026 |
Venue: VAST Bhutan, Thimphu. | Open to All

Art Description

Between what is seen and hidden lies a quiet place where the invisible speaks to your heart. Tendrel explores the unseen connections that bind us to one another and to the world around us. Through the five elements - earth, water, fire, air, and space - we encounter the impermanence of form and the interconnectedness of all things. Like the wind that carries the Lungta, these connections move through all existence, ever-present, waiting to be recognized. Perhaps we are never separate, only the shape of things changes.

Artist Profile

Kunzang Wangmo is a contemporary Bhutanese artist. She holds a BA in Visual Communication from Beaconhouse National University, Lahore, Pakistan. She has been part of VAST Bhutan family since 2004. Tendrel is her first solo exhibition.

This review is brought to you by VAST Bhutan, a registered civil society organization. VAST Bhutan over 25 years of existence has helped nurture several young artists and supported their endeavors.
For purchase of original Bhutanese contemporary artworks contact: Ms. Sonam Deki, mobile number:
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It means that Drukair has successfully undergone an independent assessment of its operations against internationally recognised safety standards, covering everything from how we fly and maintain our aircraft to how we handle ground operations, cargo, security and passenger care.

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IN THE PRESS



Drukair meaningfully contributes to Project 108

Drukair, Royal Bhutan Airlines, along with the DHI Group contributed to Project 108, an initiative supporting the offering of a Jangchub Chorten at Gelephu Mindfulness City.

Through the collective generosity of employees across the DHI Group and contributions from associated companies, a total of Nu. 23 million has been raised towards this significant offering.

Drukair is privileged to be part of this meaningful endeavor and extends heartfelt appreciation to the DHI Group and everyone who contributed to making this initiative a reality.



Drukair Supports Global Conscious Food Systems Summit

Drukair, Royal Bhutan Airlines served as the Official Travel Partner for the first Global Conscious Food Systems Summit held in Paro, Bhutan, in collaboration with UNDP Bhutan.

As the travel partner, Drukair supported the travel arrangements of summit participants and provided dedicated assistance to facilitate their journeys to Bhutan.

The summit brought together stakeholders from diverse sectors to advance discussions on conscious, inclusive, and sustainable food systems.



Drukair Supports towards Flood-Relief Efforts in Nepal

Drukair, Royal Bhutan Airlines contributed Nu. 1 million, equivalent to approximately NPR 1.6 million, towards flood-relief efforts in Nepal.

The contribution was formally handed over to Mr. Prem Nath Thakur, Acting Director General of the Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal (CAAN), for onward facilitation to the Prime Minister Disaster Relief Fund.

The contribution forms part of Drukair's support for relief efforts assisting communities affected by the floods in Nepal.

Drukair celebrates the Third Birth Anniversary of Her Royal Highness the Gyalsem



Drukair, Royal Bhutan Airlines, marked the 3rd Birth Anniversary of Her Royal Highness the Gyalsem Sonam Yangden Wangchuck with a special celebration onboard, commemorating the auspicious occasion in the skies.

Drukair Selects LEAP-1A Engines for New Aircraft



Drukair, Royal Bhutan Airlines, announced the selection of CFM International's LEAP-1A engines to power five Airbus A320neo family aircraft, comprising three A320neo and two A321XLR aircraft. The selection further strengthened Drukair's longstanding partnership with CFM International and supports the airline's fleet expansion and future network development.



Drukair Celebrates 15th Royal Wedding Anniversary and a Historic IATA Membership Milestone

Drukair commemorated the 15th Royal Wedding Anniversary with its Annual Night celebration held on 13 October 2026. The occasion was made even more significant with the formal recognition of one of Drukair's major achievements, its membership in the International Air Transport Association (IATA).

The milestone follows Drukair's successful registration under the IATA Operational Safety Audit (IOSA), reaffirming the airline's commitment to internationally recognized aviation safety standards and operational excellence.

The IATA membership and IOSA registration certificates were formally presented during the celebration, marking a proud chapter in Drukair's journey towards strengthening global connectivity, international airline partnerships and its position in the global aviation industry.



Drukair Holds Annual Future Activity Review Meeting (FARM)

Drukair held the annual Future Activity Review Meeting (FARM) for the year 2026, bringing together station managers from across the network to review achievements, address operational challenges, and develop strategies to enhance service delivery and improve the overall passenger experience.

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P.O Box: 1154, Thimphu, Bhutan.
Thimphu, Bhutan.
Tel: +975 2 333327
Mobile: +975 17114717
Email: kamalrag@tamushipping.com
Website: www.tamushipping.com

BANGLADESH

DHAKA - AIRPORT OFFICE

Drukair Corporation Ltd.
Room No # 316, Terminal 2, 2nd Floor,
Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport
Dhaka, Bangladesh.
Tel: +88 2 8901823
Email: dackk@drukair.com.bt

GSA - Passenger & Cargo

Skybangla Aviation Ltd.
Suite No. 6C (6th Floor)
Sonartori Tower, 12, Sonargaon Road (Adjacent Bangla Motor), Dhaka - 1000, Bangladesh.
Tel: +880 2 9632775
Mob: +880 1749177643
Email: dhaka@drukair.com.bt/daccargo@drukair.com.bt

INDIA

BAGDOGRA - AIRPORT OFFICE

Drukair Corporation Ltd.
Bagdogra International Airport, Bagdogra.
Tel: + 91 0353 2698011
Email: ixbkk@drukair.com.bt

BODH GAYA - AIRPORT OFFICE

Drukair Corporation Ltd.
Room No: 6, Ground Floor, Gaya Airport
Gaya, Bihar.
PIN No. 823001
Mobile: +91 9934499734
Email: gaykk@drukair.com.bt

NEW DELHI AIRPORT OFFICE

Drukair Corporation Ltd.
Room No. 46, Level IV,
Indira Gandhi International Airport,
Terminal 3, New Delhi.
Tel: +91 11 49638616/18/19
Email: delkk@drukair.com.bt

BAGDOGRA - CITY OFFICE

GSA - Global Aviation Services Pvt. Ltd.
Drukair Corporation Ltd.
32, 2nd floor, Planet Mall, Sevoke Road,
Siliguri - 734001, Dist. Darjeeling, West Bengal.
Tel: 0353 2540892
Email: bagdogra@drukair.com.bt

BODH GAYA - CITY OFFICE

Global Aviation Pvt. Ltd.
1st Floor, Hotel Jataka Inn, Domuhan,
Bodh Gaya, Bihar.
PIN No. 824231
Mobile: +91 9525430214
Email: bodhgaya@drukair.com.bt

DELHI - CITY OFFICE

GSA - Global Aviation Services Pvt. Ltd.
GF1-16, Prakash Deep Building 7 Tolstoy Marg,
Barakhamba Road,
New Delhi - 110001.
Tel: +91 11 47125100
Email: delhi@drukair.com.bt /
delhicargo@drukair.com.bt

KOLKATA - AIRPORT OFFICE

Drukair Corporation Ltd.
Room No. B-328, Terminal 2, NSCBI Airport,
Kolkata - 700052.
Tel: +91 33 25118088
Mobile: +91 9874530938
Email: ccukk@drukair.com.bt

GUWAHATI - AIRPORT OFFICE

Drukair Corporation Ltd.
LGBI Airport, Guwahati, Assam.
Tel: +91 0361 2840907
Email: gaukk@drukair.com.bt

U.A.E

DUBAI (GSA - Passenger)

Sharaf Travels LLC.
Sharaf Building, Khalid Bin Walid Road,
P.O Box - 21593, Bur Dubai,
Dubai - United Arab Emirates.
Tel: +971 3976161
Email: dubai@drukair.com.bt

KOLKATA - CITY OFFICE

GSA- Global Aviation Services Pvt. Ltd.
Flat no. 101, Block-A 4th Floor, 1C Ballygunge Circular
Road,Kolkata - 700 019
Tel: +91 33 22833599
Email: kolkata@drukair.com.bt /
kolkatacargo@drukair.com.bt

GUWAHATI - CITY OFFICE

GSA - Global Aviation Services Pvt. Ltd.
Sood Villa, 2nd Floor, Behind ICICI Bank,
G S Road, Christian Basti, Guwahati - 781005.
Tel: +91 361 2346996
Email: guwahati@drukair.com.bt /
guwahaticargo@drukair.com.bt

DUBAI (GSA - Cargo)

Sharaf Cargo LLC.
Sharaf Building, 06th Floor,
Hamkhool Road, Bur Dubai
Email: dubaicargo@drukair.com.bt

| **GSA** - General Sales Agent | **PSA** - Passenger Sales Agent | **CSA** - Cargo Sales Agent

DRUKAIR OFFICES

THAILAND

BANGKOK - AIRPORT OFFICE

Drukair Corporation Ltd.
23-010, 3rd Floor, 999 Moo 1, Airlines office (ADB)
Suvarnabhumi International Airport
Bangkok, Thailand.
Tel: +66 21343040
Email: bkkk@drukair.com.bt

GSA - Passenger & Cargo

Oriole Travels & Tours Co Limited.
5th Floor Suite No 141/4, Skuthai Surawong Tower,
Surawong Road, Bangkok 105000, Thailand.
Tel: +662 237 92013
Email: bangkok@drukair.com.bt /
bangkokcargo@drukair.com.bt

NEPAL

KATHMANDU - AIRPORT OFFICE

Drukair Corporation Ltd.
Room No. 009, Tribhuvan International Airport,
Kathmandu, Nepal.
Tel: +977 14113112
Email: ktmkk@drukair.com.bt

GSA - Cargo

Starlight Express Private Limited
Starlight Building, Sahayogi Nagar, Janata Sadak,
KTM32, 44600 G.P.O Box 12713, Kathmandu, Nepal.
Tel: +977-1-4155451
Email: kathmanducargo@drukair.com.bt

CSA

Zenith Nepal Cargo Service pvt. Ltd.
P.O Box: 7237, Thamel, Kathmandu, Nepal.
Tel: +977 9841579173; +977 9851022306
Email: zenithel365@gmail.com
Website: www.zenithcargo.com

GSA - Passenger

Danfe Travel Centre
P.O Box: 4429, Kamalpokhari, Behind Marcopolo
Business Hotel Kathmandu, Nepal.
Tel: +977 01 4528667
Email: kathmandu@drukair.com.bt

CSA

M/s Sunrise International Private Limited
Pulchowk Na tole 19 lalitpur
Kathmandu, Nepal.
Tel: +977-9849765848/ 77251477/ 17661618
Email: internationalsunrise2022@gmail.com

SINGAPORE

GSA - Passenger

Druk Asia Pte Ltd.
60, Albert Street, #12-03, OG Albert Complex,
Singapore - 189969.
Tel: +65 6767 9939
Email: singapore@drukair.com.bt

CSA

Druk Logistics Pte Ltd.
60, Albert Street, # 12-06,
OG Albert Complex, Singapore - 189969.
Tel: +65 96238188
Email: info@drukcargo.com

GSA - Cargo & PSA

Chariot Travels Pte Ltd.
101 Kitchener Road-03-38, Jalan Besar Plaza,
Singapore - 208511.
Tel: +65 84941625, 6388-883 / +65-90613070 /
90042658
Email: drukair@chariot.com.sg / singaporecargo@
drukair.com.bt

JAPAN

TOKYO (GSA - Passenger)

White Bear Family Co. Ltd.
UMAX Bld.3F 6-21-3 Shimbashi Minato-Ku
Tokyo Japan.
Email: tokyo@drukair.com.bt

CHINA

SHANGHAI (GSA - Passenger)

WorldAir Travel Co. Ltd.
Floor 3, Building E, No. 998, Shenbin South Road,
Minhang District, Shanghai.
Tel: +8613501919559
Email: shanghai@drukair.com.bt

KUNMING (CSA)

KUZU Co., Ltd.
Kunming 650000, People's East Road, Yi Hao Mall,
2205/3
Tel: 0086-1588707352; +86 (0871) 6720 7653
Email: hadyagong@myiish.com
Website: www.myiish.co

HONGKONG

HONG KONG (GSA - Passenger)

Megacap S. A. Ltd.
9F Chung Nam building,
1 Lockhart Road, Hong Kong.
Tel: +852 3705 6322
Email: hongkong@drukair.com.bt

U.S.A

Florida (GSA - Passenger)

AirlinePros International Inc.
9F Chung Nam building,
6303 Blue Lagoon Drive, Suite 400,
Miami, Florida 33126, USA
Tel: +877 958 1077
Email: florida@drukair.com.bt

ISRAEL

Tel Aviv-Yafo (GSA - Passenger)

TAL Aviation Israel
2 Ben Gurion Road, Ramat Gan,
5257334, Israel
Tel: +972-3-795-2111
Email: israel@drukair.com.bt

AUSTRALIA

Sydney (GSA - Passenger)

Aviation Online Pty Ltd.
Suite 14b, Level 1, 123 Clarence St, Sydney, NSW 2000, Australia
Tel: 1300 781 747
Email: sydney@drukair.com.bt

| **GSA** - General Sales Agent | **PSA** - Passenger Sales Agent | **CSA** - Cargo Sales Agent

DRUKAIR OFFICES

INDIA (GSA - Passenger)

AHMEDABAD

Global Aviation Services Pvt. Ltd.
Umeshankar Joshi Marg, Off C.G.Road, Nr. Girish Cold
Drink Crossroads, Ahmedabad - 380006.
Phone: +91-079-4021-6516
Email: ahmedabad@drukair.com.bt /
ahmedabadcargo@drukair.com.bt

BENGALURU

Global Aviation Services Pvt. Ltd.
C-4/5,Devatha Plaza, Residency Road ,Bangalore -
560025
Phone: +91 9916503000
Email: bengaluru@drukair.com.bt /
bengalurucargo@drukair.com.bt

MUMBAI

Global Aviation Services Pvt. Ltd.
No. 1&2, Ground Floor,111, Pil Court,Maharshi Karve
Road,Churchgate,Mumbai - 400020
Phone: +91 22 6621 3825
Email: mumbai@drukair.com.bt /
mumbaicargo@drukair.com.bt

COCHIN

Global Aviation Services Pvt. Ltd.
2A, 2nd Floor, K.G.Oxford Business Centre,Sreekan-
dath Road., Ravipuram, Kochi, 682016
Phone: 0484- 2368233
Email: cochin@drukair.com.bt /
cochincargo@drukair.com.bt

HYDERABAD

Global Aviation Services Pvt. Ltd.
5-9-58/A/203, 2nd Floor, Gupta Estate, Basheer
Bagh, Hyderabad-4
Phone: +9140-23240755
Email: hydrabad@drukair.com.bt /
hydrabadcargo@drukair.com.bt

CHENNAI

Global Aviation Services Pvt. Ltd.
CITI TOWER, 4TH FLOOR,No. 117 , Sir Thyagaraya
Road , T.Nagar , Chennai - 600017
Phone: +91 98840 88072
Email: chennai@drukair.com.bt /
chennaicargo@drukair.com.bt

PUNE

Global Aviation Services Pvt. Ltd.
3, Hermes Kunj, 48, Mangaldas Road,Pune - 411001
Phone: 020- 41052204
Email: pune@drukair.com.bt

KUWAIT

KUWAIT CITY (GSA - Passenger)

Caesars Int'l Travel Co. W.L.L.
18th Floor, Aljawhara Tower,
Ali Al-Salem Street, Safat-13056,
PB-28229
Tel: +965 22072040
Email: kuwait@drukair.com.bt

KUWAIT CITY (PSA)

Alrashed International Travel Co. W.L.L
Office No: 8/9, Al Salam Tower, Mezzanine Floor,
Fahad Al Salem St., Sahiya; P.O. Box: 242;
Tel: +965 22072707
Email: drukair@alrashed.travel
Website: www.alrashed.travel

UNITED KINGDOM

LONDON (GSA - Passenger)

Flight Directors Scheduled Services Limited
Suite 9a, Gatwick House, Peeks Brook Lane,
Horley, Surrey, RH6 9ST, United Kingdom.
Tel: +44 1293 874912
Email: london@drukair.com.bt

SOUTH KOREA

SEOUL (GSA - Passenger)

Pacific Air International
3F., E-PLAZA Bldg., 25 Sejong-daero 4-gil,
Jung-gu, Seoul, 04527, Republic of Korea.
Tel: +82 2 317 8880
Email: seoul@drukair.com.bt

SEOUL (CSA)

Pacific Air International
3F., E-PLAZA Bldg., 25 Sejong-daero 4-gil, Jung-gu,
Seoul, 04527, Republic of Korea.
Tel: +82 2 317 8822
Email: downtown@paagrp.co.kr

GERMANY

FRANKFURT (GSA - Passenger)

TAL Aviation Germany UG
Hanauer Landstr. 136, 60314, Frankfurt.
Tel: +49-69-31090200
Email: frankfurt@drukair.com.bt
Website: www.talaviation.com

MALAYSIA

KUALA LUMPUR (GSA - Passenger)

Asia Travel Cafe Sdn Bhd
No.9, Tingkat 1, Jalan Tengkat Tong Shin, Bukit Bin-
tang, 50200 Kuala Lumpur.
Tel: +60 122096287
Email: kualalumpur@drukair.com.bt

SRI LANKA

COLOMBO (GSA - Passenger)

Acorn Aviation Pvt. Ltd.
Hemas Building, 399 Sir Razik Fareed Mawatha,
Colombo-1, Sri Lanka.
Tel: +94 11 4731554
Email: colombo@drukair.com.bt

VIETNAM

Ho Chi Minh City (GSA- Passenger)

Hong Ngoc Ha Joint Stock Company
15-17 Ngo Thoi Nhiem, Ward 06, District 3
Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam.
Tel: 028 38 305 318
Email: vietnam@drukair.com.bt

FRANCE

PARIS (GSA - Passenger)

TAL Aviation France
69 Boulevard Haussmann, 75008, Paris, France
Tel: +33 1 76 36 12 56
Email: drukair.france@talaviation.fr
Website: www.talaviation.com

enquiry@drukair.com.bt >> for general enquiry (During weekdays - Working Hrs. 9AM-5PM BST)
reservation@drukair.com.bt >> for ticket booking and date change before 4 days of departure. (Within Bhutan only)
wearelistening@drukair.com.bt >> for any complaints and feedback. (During weekdays - Working Hrs. 9AM-5PM BST)
happiness@drukair.com.bt >> for queries related to HappinessMiles Program
card_refund@drukair.com.bt >> for any assistance related to ticket purchased from website (During weekdays - Working Hrs. 9AM-5PM BST)

INFO & TIPS

DRUKAIR FLIGHT TIMING

As Bhutan's National Flag carrier operating in and out of Paro, Drukair requests every passenger to refer Conditions of Carriage and the foot note on ticket itinerary. Due to operational challenges out of Paro International Airport in Bhutan that is severely dependent on weather conditions, Drukair makes every effort to maintain the schedule integrity. However due to circumstances beyond our control, schedule timings are subject to change without prior notice. Therefore, we request travelers to check with Drukair offices or its agents for the latest information.

RESERVATION

For any travel requirements, please contact reservation@drukair.com.bt or call our toll free number 1300 (in-country) / +975 8276430 (International) / WhatsApp number +975 17131300 for any assistance required.

International airlies, tour promoters and travel agents abroad are invited to communicate their reservation requirements with the space control of Drukair.

RECONFIRMATION

Request all passengers to reconfirm their reservations 72 hours prior to departure. For passengers in Bhutan, reconfirmation can be either done at any Drukair offices or you can contact reservation@drukair.com.bt or call Drukair's toll free no: 1300 / WhatsApp number +975 17131300 during office hours 07:00 - 21:00 (GMT+6).

VALIDITY

Tickets issued against full fare are valid for a period of one year from the date of travel, except as otherwise specified in the ticket conditions.

CHANGE IN FARE AND TAXES

Fares and taxes are subject to change without notice. In the event of a passenger commencing journey after a revised tariff becomes effective, the differences between the fare paid and the fare applicable will be collected from the passenger before embarkation.

REFUND AND CANCELLATION

Refund of ticket can be made at the issuing office. For the conditions of refund and cancellation, please check with any Drukair Office.

BAGGAGE

A checked baggage allowance of 40kg in business class and 30kg in economy on international flights and 20kg for economy and 30kg for business class for domestic flights is permissible. An infant under two years of age is not entitled to baggage allowance.

HAND BAGGAGE

For security reasons and your own safety, passengers are allowed to carry only one piece of hand baggage. The total of its three dimensions must not exceed 100 cm, and the weight must not exceed 5 kg in Economy Class and 7 kg in Business Class.

SECURITY

All passengers and their baggage are subject to check before boarding a flight. Transit passengers are thefefore requested to remain on board at transit stations as otherwise, they will be again subject to security checks.

According to the Security Regulations, passengers are advised:

Not to accept any baggage/packet from unknown person. Not to leave baggage unobserved at anytime especially within airport area. Unattended baggage may be removed by the Airport Security Staff as object of suspicion.

If passengers are carrying any arms or explosive substance, it must be declared before check-in.
Concealment is an offense under Aircrafts Act & Rules.

To remove battery/dry cells from radio, transistor sets, two-in-one and other such electrical/electronic items and hand them over to the airline staff before security check or carry them in registered baggage.

CUSTOMS: TOURIST ALLOWANCE

A tourist is allowed to bring any quantity of tobacco products. However, it must be declared at the customs. The import of tobacco products is subjected to 100% Customs Duty.

A tourist shall be allowed to import temporarily free customs duty for his/her personal effects and articles required for the visit, provided that the items imported are for personal use only. A tourist is allowed to bring in one liter of alcohol.

All information mentioned above are based on those valid at the time of print and are, therefore, subject to change. For further information, contact any Drukair Office or its agents in your area or visit our website: *www.drukair.com.bt*

VISA REQUIREMENTS TO ENTER BHUTAN

Visitors of all nationalities, except those from India, require a visa before entering Bhutan. For all visitors, except those from Bangladesh and the Maldives, this visa must be applied for and approved in advance of travel. Visitors from Bangladesh and the Maldives also require a visa, but this can be applied for and approved either in advance of travel or upon arrival in Bhutan.

Visitors from India are able to apply for a permit but are required to hold an Indian passport or an Indian voter ID card. For Indian nationals under the age of 18, a passport or a birth certificate can be used to enter and they must be accompanied by a legal guardian. Nationals from Switzerland and Thailand holding diplomatic or government-official passports are eligible for a visa at their port of entry.

Before travelling, visitors from India, Bangladesh and the Maldives can apply for a permit (Indian nationals) or visa (Bangladeshi or Maldivian nationals) online. You may also apply at the point of entry, but please be aware that there may be a long wait depending on the number of applicants at the time. We recommend arranging your permit/visa beforehand.

Note to all passengers: All passengers are advised to check their travel document validity. For passengers traveling with their passport, validity of their passport should not be less than six months from the date of depature from Bhutan. Drukair will not be liable and will refuse check-in of those passengers whose passport does not meet the validity requirement.

IMPORTANT INSTRUCTION

For safety, passengers are required to fasten seat belts during take off and landing. However, they are advised to keep the seat belts fastened during the entire flight.

Smoking and chewing "doma" (areca nut and betel leaf) in the aircraft are strictly prohibited.

SPECIAL LOUNGES

Executive/Business Class passengers, including counter upgrades/ FFP entitlements as per FFP policy document can avail the comfort of our special lounges. They offer a buffet service, Internet access points and washroom facilities.

TRAVEL TIPS

Transit time should not exceed 24 hours to connect on your onward carrier and to avoid any misconnections. Please note that unfortunately we are unable to offer advice or guidance on frequently changing restrictions in individual countries, therefore all passengers are advised to check related government websites for further travel advice.

As per the notice circulated by Thai Immigration Office to all airlines, visa on arrival for passengers holding one-way or open ticket will not be extended. Therefore, such passengers are advised to obtain necessary visa prior from the concerned diplomatic representations abroad to avoid being inconvenienced and deported. All transit passengers are requested to observe the following procedures pertaining to transit check-in.
Passengers can check-in on Drukair flights on transit at Bangkok without having to go through immigrations. The process is as follows:

Outbound Flights - Out of Paro
To kindly inform the check-in counter at Paro on details of the onward flight
Baggage will then be tagged as transit showing final destination of the passenger on the onward carrier
At the transit check-in at Bangkok passengers are requested to present their baggage tag to the transit desk
The boarding pass is issued on the onward carrier and the baggage transferred
For any special assistance required for groups on transit you may please email enquiry@drukair.com.bt

MEALS & REFRESHMENTS

Drukair offers multi-cuisine menu on board. Bangkok Airways Catering, Paro Catering, Taj Group and SATS provide most of our in-flight catering.
Meals are served after a flight is airborne for reasonable duration. The timings are:

Breakfast:	0730 - 1030
Lunch:	1030 - 1430
Dinner:	1830 - 2130

On one-hour sector flight, snacks are served. Refreshment and drinks are served throughout the duration of the flight.

For detailed carrier's general condition of carriage for passenger & baggage, visit
drukair.com.bt/terms-and-conditions/conditions-of-carriage/

Customs Information

CUSTOMS DECLARATION

Passengers entering Bhutan have to pass through the customs checks. All passengers carrying baggage in excess of allowable limit (which is goods worth US $1000), or, dutiable goods, or, restricted items, must make declaration in the prescribed form.
Should the passengers fail to make the declaration in whole, or, file incomplete declaration, as against the mandate of Section 96, Ch. 13 of the Customs Act of Bhutan, 2017 (CAB), it shall lead to invocation of Section 143 & 146, Ch. 19 of the CAB.
Note: Baggage or goods in commercial nature shall not be considered as free baggage allowance even if the value of the goods is less than US$ 1000 or equivalent Ngultrum.

FREE BAGGAGE ALLOWANCE FOR AIR PASSENGERS

Personal effects up to the assessed value of US$ 1,000 or equivalent
in Ngultrum subject to the ceiling prescribed below:

(a) Alcohol/Spirits – 2 bottles, each bottle not larger than one liter
(b) Perfume: 1 bottle, not larger than 2 ounces
(c) Gold (including jewellery) – 50 grams
(d) Silver (including jewellery) – 1 kilogram
(e) Clothing items: Maximum of 10 pieces each of type of clothing whether stitched or unstitched
(f) Other household or personal goods including electronics and bedding shall be limited to one piece each.
(g) Items of gifts and presents shall be included in the above free allowance.

Note: Baggage or goods in commercial nature shall not be considered as free baggage allowance even if the value of the goods is less than US$ 1000 or equivalent Ngultrum.

FREE BAGGAGE ALLOWANCE FOR FOREIGN TOURIST

(a) Used personal effects and articles reasonably required for the visit provided items imported are for personal use and shall be re-exported upon leaving Bhutan.
(b) Import free of Customs duty, articles up to Ngultrum 10,000/- or equivalent, for personal use or as gifts and travel souvenirs if carried on the person or in the accompanied baggage, including spirit of not more than two liters and perfume of not more than 100 ml.
(c) High value articles and sports items as approved and imported in reasonable quantities shall be considered under temporary admission considering that the articles or items are re-exported on leaving Bhutan.

LIST OF RESTRICTED GOODS:

i. Arms and Ammunitions
ii. Gold and Silver in excess of free baggage allowance
iii. Explosives and explosives devices
iv. Medicinal products including narcotics and psychotropic substance for medical use
v. Other narcotics and psychotropic substances and precursor
vi. Animal and their parts and products including food
vii. Plants, their parts (seeds/fruits/flowers/shoots/roots/ tissues) and products
viii. Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) and their products
ix. Industrial and toxic wastes and residues
x. Wireless and remote sensing telecommunication and broadcasting equipment
xi. Scraps
xii. Used or second hand goods, vehicles, machinery and equipment
xiii. Chemical and Fertilizers
xiv. Plastic packing materials
xv. Valuable cultural properties
xvi. Ozone Depleting substances
xvii. Intellectual property rights
xviii. Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS)/Drones

Note: A tourist can bring US$10,000 or equivalent without declaring. If the amount exceeds US$10,000, it must be declared at the customs.

LIST OF PROHIBITED GOODS:

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

i. Narcotics and psychotropic drugs and substances
ii. Pornographic materials
iii. Animals and plants classified as endangered species and their parts and products

Department of Revenue and Customs
Ministry of Finance

SHIP MORE
PAY LESS
50% OFF
On All Sectors
Outgoing from Paro
SAFETY FIRST
We follow the highest safety standards to ensure secure handling of your cargo
RELIABLE ALWAYS
You can count on us for consistent & dependable cargo services across all sectors
Drukair
Royal Bhutan Airlines
+975 08 271 800 cargo@drukair.com.bt www.drukair.com.bt

NEED ASSISTANCE AT THE AIRPORT?
We've got you covered!
Enjoy a smoother, more convenient, and stress-free journey with our Meet & Assist Service, designed to provide personalised assistance and added comfort throughout your airport experience.
From arrival to departure, let us take care of the details while you enjoy a hassle-free journey.
Available at:
Paro | Bangkok | Guwahati | Singapore | Delhi | Dubai
Reserve your Service at least 24 hours before departure through our Drukair Sales Counters (Thimphu & Paro) or Contact Centre.
Drukair
Royal Bhutan Airlines
Meet & Assist Service
We're here to make your journey easy and comfortable.
1300 (Toll-Free within Bhutan) reservation@drukair.com.bt +975 1713 1300 (WhatsApp)

Key Information



Trekking in Bhutan

Bhutan's breathtaking landscapes and diverse terrains make it a paradise for trekking enthusiasts. From challenging high-altitude treks to scenic and moderate trails, there are various trekking options to explore the natural beauty and cultural heritage of Bhutan. Here are some popular trekking routes to consider:

Druk Path Trek: This trek is a great introduction to Bhutan's natural and cultural wonders. It takes you from Paro to Thimphu, passing through stunning alpine meadows, rhododendron forests, and serene mountain lakes. Along the way, you can also visit ancient monasteries and enjoy panoramic views of the Himalayas.

Jomolhari Trek: Considered one of the most beautiful treks in Bhutan, the Jomolhari Trek offers a challenging yet rewarding experience. It takes you to the base camp of Mount Jomolhari, the second highest peak in Bhutan. The trail passes through remote villages, pristine valleys, and high mountain passes, offering stunning views of snow-capped peaks.

Snowman Trek: For experienced trekkers seeking an ultimate adventure, the Snowman Trek is an epic journey that traverses through Bhutan's remote and untouched wilderness. It is one of the most challenging treks in the world, taking about 27 days to complete. The trail leads through high mountain passes, pristine lakes, and remote villages, showcasing Bhutan's pristine beauty.

Trans Bhutan Trail Trek: The Trans Bhutan Trail is a 403km route, spanning from Haa in the West of Bhutan to Trashigang in the East. It is considered one of the world's greatest walks and one of the best hiking routes in Asia. The trail traverses through remote villages, ancient monasteries, terraced fields, dense forests, and pristine alpine meadows, providing a comprehensive glimpse into the country's natural beauty and cultural heritage.

Bumthang Cultural Trek: This trek combines nature and culture, taking you through the beautiful Bumthang Valley, known as the cultural heartland of Bhutan. You can visit ancient temples, monasteries, and remote villages, while enjoying the scenic landscapes of green valleys, pristine forests, and farmlands.

Dagala Thousand Lakes Trek: Offering breathtaking views of high mountain passes and numerous glacial lakes, the Dagala Thousand Lakes Trek is a moderate trek suitable for all fitness levels. The trek takes you through alpine meadows, yak herders' camps, and serene lakes, providing ample opportunities for photography and nature exploration.

Before embarking on any trek in Bhutan, it is essential to obtain the necessary permits and hire a licensed guide. The best time for trekking in Bhutan is during spring (March to May) and autumn (September to November) seasons when the weather is favorable and the landscapes are at their most vibrant.

Other Treks in Bhutan

Bumdra Trek
Bumthang Owl Trek
Gangtey Trek
Laya Gasa Trek
Merak Sakteng Trek
Nabji Korphu Trek

Rodung La Trek
Samtengang Winter Trek
Soi Yaktsa Trek
Salt Route Trek
Sinchula Trek

Average Temperature

Month	Figures in Centigrade	Paro	Thimphu	Punakha	Wangdue	Trongsa	Bumthang	Mongar	Trashigang	Gelephu
JAN	MAX	9.4	.3	16.1	17.0	13.0	10.8	15.5	20.4	24
	MIN	-5.8	-2.6	4.2	4.3	-0.2	-5.1	8.2	10.5	13
FEB	MAX	13.4	14.4	19.6	19.0	13.9	10.0	15.9	21.7	27
	MIN	1.5	0.6	5.3	7.8	0.4	-1.4	8.3	11.5	15
MAR	MAX	14.5	16.4	21.12	22.8	16.7	16.2	20.0	24.8	32
	MIN	0.6	3.9	9.2	10.4	4.4	3.5	11.6	14.4	22
APR	MAX	17.6	20.0	24.4	26.2	20.1	18.7	2.8	28.3	32
	MIN	4.6	7.1	11.2	12.9	6.6	3.9	14.0	17.0	23
MAY	MAX	23.5	22.5	27.2	29.1	21.0	21.3	25.1	30.0	31
	MIN	10.6	13.1	14.2	17.7	11.6	9.5	17.4	20.6	25
JUN	MAX	25.4	24.4	31.2	29.2	22.2	22.5	26.1	30.7	31
	MIN	14.1	15.2	19.5	20.1	13.6	3.5	19.5	22.6	26
JUL	MAX	26.8	18.9	32.0	18.4	25.3	14.1	16.1	30.5	31
	MIN	14.9	13.4	21.6	16.2	15.3	10.9	15.8	23.1	26
AUG	MAX	25.3	25.0	31.4	29.1	23.8	23.0	25.4	30.2	32
	MIN	14.7	15.8	19.8	20.0	15.0	13.7	19.6	22.7	26
SEPT	MAX	23.4	23.1	29.9	27.5	22.6	21.6	24.7	30.0	31
	MIN	11.7	15.0	20.4	19.1	14.2	12.1	19.4	23.9	25
OCT	MAX	18.7	21.9	27.8	26.1	21.8	19.5	22.7	29.1	30
	MIN	7.4	12.4	18.9	14.7	11.7	5.9	15.8	17.7	22
NOV	MAX	13.9	17.9	22.3	22.6	19.8	16.1	19.9	26.1	28
	MIN	1.4	5.0	13.0	9.6	6.4	-0.5	11.2	13.6	17
DEC	MAX	11.2	14.5	15.0	19.1	18.2	12.3	15.7	23.0	25
	MIN	-1.7	-1.1	7.9	6.3	2.5	-2.3	9.5	11.6	14

Driving Time Between Various Places in Bhutan

FROM	TO	DISTANCE (APPROX)	DRIVING TIME
Thimphu	Paro	54 km	1 hr +
Thimphu	Phuentsholing	145 km	4.5 hrs +
Thimphu	Wangduephodrang	70 km	2 hrs +
Thimphu	Punakha	77 km	2 hrs +
Punakha	Wangduephodrang	13 km	30 min +
Wangduephodrang	Trongsa	129 km	4 hrs +
Trongsa	Bumthang	68 km	1.5 hrs +
Bumthang	Mongar	193 km	7 hrs +
Mongar	Lhuentse	76 km	2.5 hrs +
Mongar	Trashigang	91 km	3 hrs +
Trashigang	Chorten Kora	51 km	1.5 hrs +
Trashigang	Samdrup Jongkhar	175 km	6 hrs +
Samdrup Jongkhar	Phuentsholing	400 km	10 hrs +
Thimphu	Gelephu	243 km	6.5 hrs +
Phuentsholing	Gelephu	196 km	4-5 hrs +

Festival Dates for 2026

FESTIVAL NAME	FESTIVAL LOCATION	FESTIVAL DATE
Lhamoi Dromchhen	Trongsa Dzong, Trongsa	22nd – 24th February
Punakha Dromchoe	Punakha Dzong, Punakha	24th – 26th February
Punakha Tshechu	Punakha Dzong, Punakha	27th, 28th February – 1st March
Tharpaling Thongdrol	Tharpaling Lhakhang, Chumey, Bumthang	3rd March
Tangsibi Mani	Tangsibi Lhakhang, Ura Bumthang	4th – 6th March
Chorten Kora	Chorten Kora, Trashiyangtse	3rd March & 19th March
Gomphukora	Gom Kora Lhakhang, Trashiyangtse	26th – 28th March
Talo Tshechu	Talo Gonpa, Punakha	26th – 28th March
Gasa Tshechu	Gasa Dzong, Gasa	26th – 28th March
Zhemgang Tshechu	Zhemgang Dzong, Zhemgang	26th – 28th March
Paro Tshechu	Rinpung Dzong, Paro	29th March – 2nd April (Thongdrel on last day)
Rhododendron Festival	Lamperi Botanical Park,Thimphu	13th – 14th April
Domkhar Tshechu	Domkhar, Chumey, Bumthang.	26th – 28th April
Ura Yakchoe	Ura Lhakhang, Bumthang	28th April – 2nd May
Nimalung Tshechu	Nimalung Dratshang, Chumey, Bumthang	22nd – 24th June
Kurjey Tshechu	Kurjey Lhakhang, Choekhor, Bumthang	24th June
Tour of the Dragon (Mountain Bike Race)	Bumthang to Thimphu	5th September
Thimphu Drubchen	Tashichhodzong, Thimphu	17th September
Haa Tshechu	Lhakhang Karpo, Haa	19th – 21st September
Wangdue Tshechu	Wangduephodrang	19th –21st September
Tamshing Phala Chhoepa	Tamshing lhakhang, Bumthang	21st – 23rd September
Thimphu Tshechu	Tashichhodzong, Thimphu	21st – 23rd September
Gangtey Tshechu	Gangtey Gonpa, Wangduephodrang	24th – 26th September (Thongdral on last day)
Thangbi Mewang	Thangbi Lhakhang, Choekor, Bumthang	26th – 27th September
Pemagatshel Tshechu	Pemagatshel Dzong, Pemagatshel.	18th – 21st October (Thongdral on last day)
Jhomolhari Mountain Festival	Dangochong, Thimphu	14th – 15th October
Chhukha Tshechu	Chhukha Dzong, Chhukha	19th – 21st October
Dechenphu Tshechu	Dechenphu Lhakhang, Thimphu	21st October
Jakar Tshechu	Jakar Dzong, Choekhor, Bumthang.	18th – 21st October
Jambay Lhakhang Drup	Jambay Lhakhang, Choekhor, Bumthang	26th – 29th October
Traakar Duchhoed	Traakar Khakhang, Chumey, Bumthang	27th – 29th October
Black Necked Crane Festival	Gangtey Gonpa, Phobjikha, Wangduephodrang.	11th November
Goenpai Drupchen	Trongsa Dzong, Trongsa	14th – 16th November
Mongar Tshechu	Mongar Dzong, Mongar	17th – 19th November
Trashigang Tshechu	Trashigang Dzong, Trashigang.	18th th – 20th November
Phuentsholing Tshechu	Phuentsholing, Chhukha	17th – 19th November
Jambay Lhakhang Singye Cham	Jambay Lhakhang, Choekhor, Bumthang	24th November
Nalakhar Tshechu	Ngaa Lhakhang, Choekhor, Bumthang	24th – 26th November
Druk Wangyel Tshechu	Douchula, Thimphu	13th December
Trongsa Tshechu	Trongsa Dzong, Trongsa	17th – 21st December (Thongdral on last day)
Lhuentse Tshechu	Lhuentse Dzong, Lhuentse	17th – 21st December (Thongdral on last day)
Samdrup Jongkhar Tshechu	Samdrup Jongkhar	22nd – 24th December
Nabji Lhakhang Drup	Nabji Lhakhang, Nabji, Trongsa	24th – 26th December

National Holidays 2026

Jan 2	Winter Solstice (Nyilo)
Jan 19	Traditional Day of Offerings
Feb 18–19	Losar (Fire Male Horse Year)
Feb 21–23	Birth Anniversary of His Majesty the King
May 2	Birth Anniversary of Third Druk Gyalpo
June 24	Birth Anniversary of Guru Rinpoche
July 18	Buddha's First Sermon
Sept 17	Thimphu Drubchoe
Sept 21–23	Thimphu Tshechu
Sept 23	Blessed Rainy Day
Oct 26	Dashain
Nov 1	Coronation Day of His Majesty the King
Nov 7	Descending Day of Lord Buddha
Nov 11	Birth Anniversary of 4th Druk Gyalpo/Constitution Day
Dec 17	National Day

Negative list on movement of tourist within Bhutan

Prohibited Areas

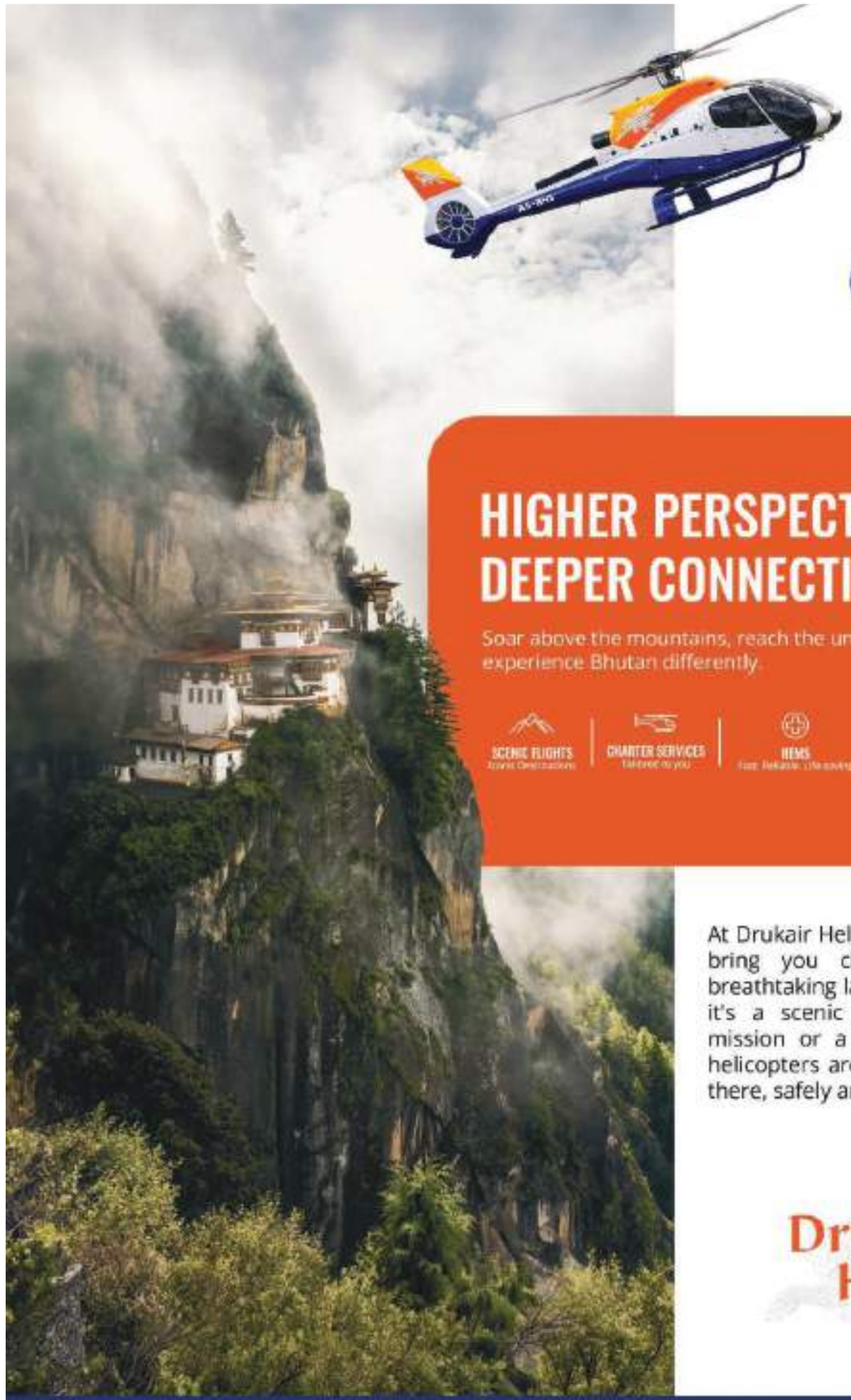
Place	Dzongkhag
Chekha	Paro
Changju	Samtse
Singye Dzong	Lhuentse
Tobrang	Trashiyangtse
Takpang	Lhuentse
Singphey	Trashiyangtse
Tshampa	Bumthang
Beyond Haa Damthang	Haa

Restricted Areas

Place	Dzongkhag
Gunitsawa	Paro
Soi	Thimphu
Khatang	Bumthang
Lingzhi	Thimphu
Beyond Bumdeling	Trashiyangtse

***Note:** However, tourist will be allowed to visit restricted areas identified as trekking route by the Department of Tourism if accompanied by trekking guide.*





Basic Dzongkha

INTRODUCTIONS

Greetings and well wishes
Kuzuzangpola
What is your name?
(for elders or with respect)
Na gi Tshen Ga Chi Mo?
What is your name?
(for friends)
Chhoey gi Ming Ga Chi Mo?
My name is
Ngegi Ming.....Ein
Where are you from?
Chhoey ga te lay mo?
How old are you?
Kay Lo gadem chi Ya si?



Good bye: *Log Jay Gay.*
(Meaning we will meet again)

TRAVEL TALK

Where does this road lead to?
Lam di ga thay jow mo?
Is it far?
Tha ring sa in-na?
Here : *Na/ Nalu*
There : *Pha/ Phalu*
Where? : *Ga Tey?*

Which? : *Gadee?*
In front of : *Dongkha*
Next to : *Bolokha*
Behind : *Japkha*



SHOPPING CONVERSATION

What time does it open?
Chutsho gademchi lu go pchiu mo?

What time does it close?
Chutsho gademchi lu go dam mo?

What is this? : *Ani ga chi mo?*
How much is it? : *Dilu gadem chi mo?*
That's too much : *Gong bom may*



Waiter! : *Wai Chharo!*
(literally meaning friend)
Waitress : *Wai Bumo!*
(literally meaning girl)
Please Have/ Eat : *Zhey*
Water : *Chhu*
Hot Water : *Chhu Tshe*
Milk Tea : *Na Ja*
Butter Tea : *Su Ja*
Get me : *...Nang*





TELEPHONE TETE-A TETE

Hello : *Kuzoozangpo La*
Who is speaking : *Ga Sung Mo La?*
I'm....Speaking : *Nga ....Zhu Do La*
Yes, Yes : *Ong, Ong*
Yes in Affirmative : *Ein Ein La*
Roger/ Signing off : *Las La. Laso La*

It was tasty

Zhim bay (While making a gesture of moving one's forefinger in front of the cheek)



No more, thanks

Me Zhu (while making a gesture of moving one's hand in front of the mouth)



Thank you
Kardrinchhey

EMERGENCY ESSENTIALS

I'm ill : *Nga nau may*

Where is the hospital?
Menkhang ga tey in na?

Where is the toilet?
Chhapsa ga tey in-na?



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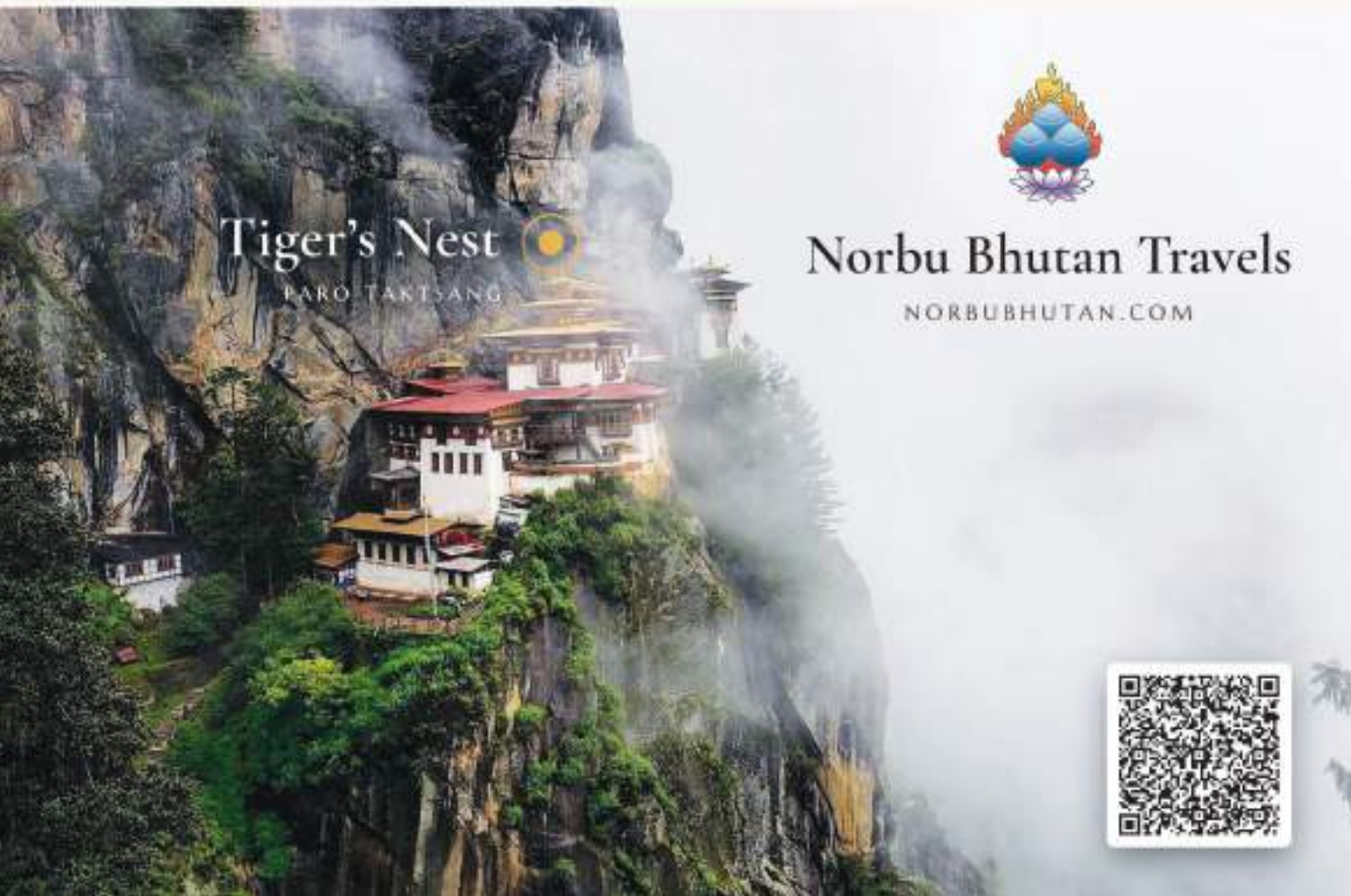
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