

## If You Go

All travelers wishing to explore the Kingdom of Bhutan must make prior arrangements through an existing licensed tour company. There is a fixed rate per person of \$250 per day, which covers a knowledgeable guide, all necessary transport, three meals each day and comfortable accommodation. Visas, as well as round-trip air travel to and from Paro International Airport, are arranged through the tour company for additional costs.

### Excursion to Taktsang "Tiger's Nest" Gompa, Paro Valley

Make sure to get an early start to the day (after a sizable breakfast, of course). Lace up your sturdy shoes and hike the arduously rewarding ascent to Taktsang Gompa, Bhutan's most iconic and auspicious Buddhist monasteries, impossibly nestled on the spur of a craggy, near vertical cliff.

Stone cairns will lead the way to Taktsang. The trail zigzags steeply through dry pine and fir trees tethered with undulating shreds of faded Tibetan prayer flags. Shaggy ponies with bells and saddles, along with a few friendly mongrel dogs, will trot past you on the switchbacks. Battered metal signs posted along the way in Bhutanese and English espouse environmental preservation lessons and poignant reminders: "Plastics take 100 years to decompose." Your effort will be worth it for the mesmerizing views (and photos) of the monastery complex, 3,000 feet above the Paro Valley floor.

### Pay homage at the National Memorial Chorten, Thimphu

Feel the tranquility as you enter the swirl of Bhutanese pilgrims at the National Memorial Chorten, a Tibetan-style Buddhist monument in the capital city. A flurry of activity is guaranteed from sunrise to sundown at the chorten. It is a cinematic scene plucked convincingly from ages-past. Make sure to turn a massive prayer wheel or two and request to go inside the ritual hall where burning butter lamps and a fixed-gaze golden Padmasambhava statue await you.

Live Happy's trip to the Dragon Kingdom was arranged by [Mukesh Gupta of Bhutan Travel, bhutantravel.com](http://bhutantravel.com).

TAP FOR  
SLIDESHOW

