





## BHUTAN - A KINGDOM OF HAPPINESS

*New Delhi - Thimphu - Punakha - Paro - Gurgaon*

*10 Days / 9 Nights*

*2 Persons*

*Date of Issue: 13 January 2020*



[Click here to view your Digital Itinerary](#)

## Introduction

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Accommodation	Destination	Basis	Room Type	Duration
The Oberoi New Delhi	New Delhi	B&B	1x Double Room	<b>2 Nights</b>
Six Senses Thimphu	Thimphu	B&B	1x Double Room	<b>2 Nights</b>
Six Senses Punakha	Punakha	B&B	1x Double Room	<b>2 Nights</b>
Six Senses Paro	Paro	B&B	1x Double Room	<b>2 Nights</b>
The Oberoi Gurgaon	Gurgaon	B&B	1x Double Room	<b>1 Night</b>

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### Key

B&B: Bed and Breakfast

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## Day 1: The Oberoi New Delhi, New Delhi



India's largest city, Delhi, has been one of the country's commercial and economic hubs for centuries and, as a result, is incredibly rich in culture and history. Made up of the ancient walled city of Old Delhi and the more modern sector, New Delhi, the city encompasses a staggering array of beautiful architecture, notable monuments and age-old temples, including three UNESCO World Heritage Sites – the Red Fort, Qutab Minar and Humayun's Tomb. Other key attractions include the 17th century Chandni Chowk marketplace – still one of the city's most popular retail centres today, particularly for jewellery and traditional Indian saris; the iconic Bahà'i Lotus Temple – an award-winning architectural gem; and the Jama Masjid, India's largest mosque.

### Day Itinerary

Our representative will meet you in the arrival area of the airport after you clear all immigration and custom formalities. Depart for your hotel where you will check in for your stay.

### Overnight: The Oberoi New Delhi

The Oberoi, New Delhi is an iconic luxury 5 star hotel in New Delhi. It is located in the center of India's cosmopolitan capital city and is 30 minutes from the Domestic Airport and 45 minutes from the International Airport.

The hotel has 218 rooms and suites. All rooms and suites feature large picture windows which frame unmatched views of the Delhi Golf Course on one side and the historical Humayun's Tomb on the other. All rooms have teakwood floors, walk-in closets, luxury Italian marble bathrooms, complimentary high speed Internet for up to four devices, international television news channels and a selection of latest movies. A butler service and in room dining is available 24 hours a day.

Restaurants at The Oberoi, New Delhi have the threesixty° all-day dining restaurant, a contemporary Indian restaurant and a rooftop Chinese restaurant overlooking the Delhi Golf Course.



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**Basis**Bed and Breakfast

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**Day 2: The Oberoi New Delhi, New Delhi**

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**Day Itinerary**

After breakfast, proceed for the full day city tour of Delhi including **India Gate, Qutub Minar and Humayun's tomb.**

**Drive Past Red Fort; visit Jama Mosque, Normal Rickshaw ride in the markets of old Delhi. Later visit Raj Ghat.**

**Activities**

Jama Masjid New Delhi
Raj Ghat
Humayun's Tomb
Qutub Minar
India Gate
Delhi Rickshaw Ride

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***Jama Masjid New Delhi***

The majestic Jama Masjid – meaning ‘world-reflecting’ mosque – is Old Delhi’s principal place of worship, and the largest and most renowned of its kind in India. Built in the 17th century by the Mughal Emperor Shahjahan – who also built the Taj Mahal and the Red Fort – it’s an elaborate structure featuring an expansive geometric base topped with globe-shaped minarets crafted from strips of red sandstone and white marble, and a massive courtyard that can hold up to 25 000 people. Jama Masjid is particularly impressive just before dusk, when its rosy hues intensify in the glow of the setting sun.

***Raj Ghat***

Named after a historical ghat of Old Delhi located nearby, Raj Ghat is a memorial to Mahatma Gandhi, marking the spot where he was cremated after his assassination in 1948. Housed in an open-air garden area inside a walled complex, the memorial consists of a simple, flat black platform (reflecting the simplicity of Gandhi’s life) that is kept constantly decorated with an abundance of fresh flowers. An eternal flame burns at one end, symbolising the everlasting legacy of this great man. Two museums devoted to Mahatma Gandhi, his life and teachings are located nearby.

***Humayun's Tomb***

The mausoleum complex of Humayun, India’s second Mughal Emperor, was commissioned by his widow in 1565 and was the first garden tomb to be built in India, taking seven years to complete. Humayun had travelled widely in Persia and Central Asia during his lifetime, and many of the architectural principles he brought back from these journeys were incorporated into the building at his wife’s instructions. With its double domes, decorative inlaid marble and vast garden with pools connected by channels, this 16th Century building set the stage for the style that culminated in the Taj Mahal almost 100 years later.

### *Qutub Minar*

The majestic Qutub Minar is a heritage building located in downtown Mehrauli in India. Standing tall at 73-metres, the tower consists of 5 storeys with a flight of spiral stairs leading to its top. The walls are adorned with decorative motifs and Quranic inscriptions. At the foot of the tower lie other monuments of historical significance, such as the Quwwat-ul-Islam Mosque and the Iron Pillar of Delhi. The Amazing race Australia used this site as a pitstop in the second series. Visitors can take advantage of stunning photo opportunities.

### *India Gate*

Also known as the Delhi Memorial or the All India War Memorial, the India Gate was built in commemoration of the roughly 80 000 Indian soldiers who died representing their country in World War One and on various other battlefields, and whose names are inscribed on the structure. Unveiled in 1931, its distinctive arch is reminiscent of the Arc de Triomphe in Paris and the Gateway of India in Bombay, and is one of the trademark sights of New Delhi.

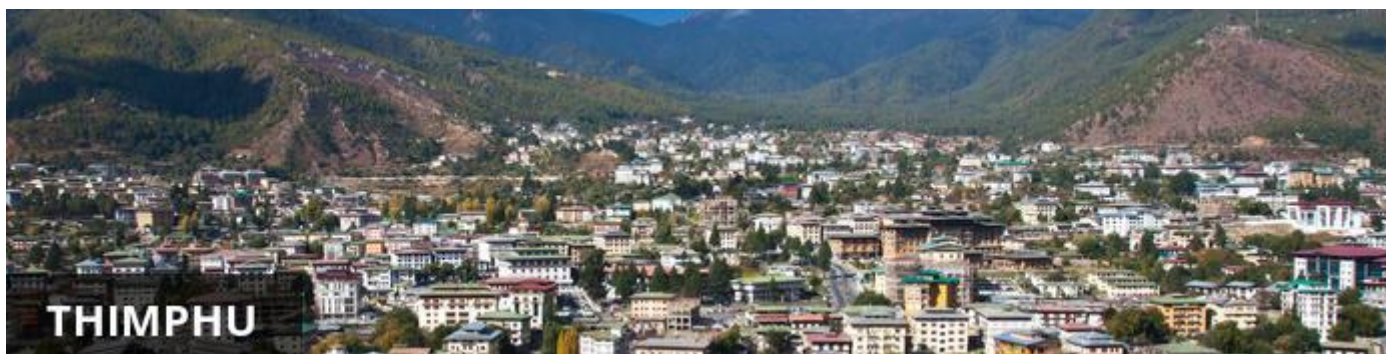
### *Delhi Rickshaw Ride*

One of its kind tour in specially designed rickshaws that attempt to transport guests 400 years back in history through the vibrant narrow lanes of Chandni Chowk in Old Delhi. On the tour, visit monuments such as the Jama Masjid; Asia's largest spice market and witness delightfully decorated shops, famous eateries, colourful bazaars, architectural marvels of Old Delhi. Hear interesting stories and live the sights and sounds bringing history back to life.

## **Basis**

Bed and Breakfast

## **Day 3: Six Senses Thimphu, Thimphu**



Resting in a lush green valley of hills and rice paddies, Bhutan's capital city of Thimphu is the country's commercial and religious hub, and is known for its interesting fusion of ancient and modern elements. Historical architecture and ancient traditional elements juxtapose with contemporary buildings and sensibilities. The imposing, stately 350-year-old Tashicho Dzong Fortress is currently used as the administrative centre of the county, and is also the king's office. Visitors can explore the gold-spired Memorial Chorten, a revered Buddhist shrine; see the intricate frescoes and slate carvings at Simtokha Dzong; and discover the Bhutanese way of life through exhibits and folk dances at the fascinating National Folk Heritage Museum. The city bustles with cafes, clubs and restaurants, thereby offering the best of old-and new-world charms.

## **Day Itinerary**

Morning transfer to airport to board flight for Paro

On a clear day, the flight to Paro is breathtaking, with views of major Himalayan peaks such as Everest, Kanchenjunga and Makalu, and on the final approach Bhutan's own snowy peaks, the sacred Jhomolhari, Jichu Drake and Tserimgang.

On arrival at Paro airport and after completion of airport formalities, you will be met by your representative. Drive from Paro to Thimphu, the modern capital town of Bhutan and an exciting blend of tradition and modernity.

In the evening depending on flight timing, visit **Tashichho Dzong**: The "fortress of the glorious religion" was initially erected in 1641 and rebuilt by King Jigme Dorji Wangchuck in the 1960s. Tashichho Dzong houses some ministries, His Majesty's secretariat, and the central monk body. It is open to visitors during the Thimphu Tsechu (held in autumn) and while the monk body is resident in its winter quarters at Punakha Dzong. **(Open: Mon-Fri [Mar-Oct after 5:30pm] [Nov-Feb after 4:30 pm] / Open on Sat, Sun, Govt. Holidays)**

In the evening, take a stroll along the town's main street.

### **Overnight: Six Senses Thimphu**

Situated within apple orchards and pine forests, yet still, within reach of the capital's attractions, Six Senses Thimphu is perched on an auspicious hillside overlooking the shimmering lights of Thimphu. With its grand design and outdoor ponds reflecting the sky above, this is truly a Palace in the Sky. Six Senses Thimphu offers 25 spacious villas and suites, starting from 721 square feet for the Lodge Suites and up to 3,358 square feet for the Three-Bedroom Villa. For those wanting an extraordinary culinary experience, the Namkha restaurant excels in healthy cuisine and Asian specialties plus authentic Bhutanese dishes such as momos dumplings with a fiery ezay sauce. Namkha offers indoor seating for 60 guests, outdoor seating for 16 guests and a private dining room for up to 10 guests.




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### **Basis**

Bed and Breakfast

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## **Day 4: Six Senses Thimphu, Thimphu**

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### **Day Itinerary**

Thimphu, perhaps the most unusual capital city in the world, is the seat of government. This bustling town is home to Bhutan's royal family, the civil service, and foreign missions with representation in Bhutan. It is also the headquarters for a number of internationally funded development projects.

Today's full day of sightseeing in Thimphu valley includes visits to:

**Kuensal Phodrang:** (Buddha Point) which is a place from where one can get a complete view of the town of Thimphu. The view point has the largest statue of the Buddha.

**National Memorial Chorten:** The building of this landmark was envisaged by the third king, His Majesty Jigme Dorji Wangchuk, as a monument to world peace and prosperity. Completed in 1974 after his untimely death, it is both a memorial to the Late King (“the Father of modern Bhutan”) and a monument to world peace. The paintings and statues inside the monument provide a deep insight into Buddhist philosophy.

**Gagyel Lhundrup Weaving Centre:** The private weaving centre frequently produces ceremonial textiles for Bhutanese royals, including the gho and kira (traditional attire) worn by the King and Queen for their marriage ceremony in October 2011. Visitors to the centre can watch weavers at work and interact with them.

\* **Institute for Zorig Chusum:** Commonly known as the Painting School, the Institute offers a six-year course on the 13 traditional arts and crafts of Bhutan. On a visit one can see students learning the various skills taught at the school. **(Open Mon – Fri 10am – 4pm, Sat 10am-12pm, closed on Sun & Govt. Holidays, School break and events)**

\* **National Library,** which holds a vast collection of Buddhist texts and manuscripts, some dating back several hundred years, as well as modern academic books mainly on Himalayan culture and religion. **(Open Mon – Fri 09am – 05pm, Closed on Sat, Sun & Govt. Holidays)**

Evening visit to **Weekend Market:** Most of the Thimphu’s population and many valley dwellers converge on the bustling weekend market, held down by the river. A wide range of foodstuffs and local arts and crafts are sold at the market, which runs from Friday afternoon to Sunday. A visit to the market provides great photo opportunities, as well as the chance to mingle with local people and perhaps buy souvenirs

## Overnight at Hotel

## Activities

Kuensal Phodrang
National Memorial Chorten
Gagyel Lhundrup Weaving Centre
Institute of Zorig Chusum
Bhutan National Library
Weekend Market of Thimphu

### *Kuensal Phodrang*

Kuensal Phodrang overlooks Thimphu Valley and is famous for housing the famous gilded bronze Great Buddha Dordenma. This 54-meter statue of the Shakyamuni Buddha is one of the largest Buddha statues in the world. Fulfilling the mission of Buddhas, the Great Buddha Dordenma symbolizes peerless virility to bestow blessings, peace, and happiness on this world.

### *National Memorial Chorten*

Constructed in 1974, the National Memorial Chorten is a stupa which is placed in Thimphu, Bhutan. The stupa stands as a tribute to the late King Jigme Dorji Wangchuk, the country’s third male monarch, widely acknowledged by the



Bhutanese as the father of contemporary national culture. The interior of the stupa is decorated with paintings and sculptures representing various aspects of Tibetan Buddhism.

### *Institute of Zorig Chusum*

At the Institute of Zorig Chusum, also known as the Painting School or Arts and Crafts School, students are taught Bhutan's 13 traditional arts and crafts in a six-year course. Tours of the institute are offered, during which visitors can see aspects of the training process.

### *Bhutan National Library*

Housing a vast collection of age-old documents, books and prayer flag printing blocks, the National Library represents a diverse cross section of Bhutanese history.

## **Basis**

Bed and Breakfast

## **Day 5: Six Senses Punakha, Punakha**



Located in the Himalayas of Bhutan, the Punakha rests at the confluence of the Puna Tsang Chhu and Mo Chhu rivers. This ancient Bhutanese capital serves as an excellent base from which to explore the scenic temple-dotted Punakha Valley and beyond. The town's star attraction is undoubtedly the incredibly picturesque riverside Punakha Dzong, a 17th-century fortress which plays host to the annual religious Punakha Festival featuring traditional dancing and music. Lucky birdwatchers can spot the critically endangered white-bellied herons. Visitors can enjoy epic views of the Himalayas from the renowned Dochula Pass, explore the Royal Botanical Park, and discover the picturesque mountain-top village of Talo. Other popular activities include: hiking through the valley, visiting the Chimi Lhakhang 'fertility' Temple, and the traditional architecture of Punakha Ritsha Village.

## **Day Itinerary**

After early breakfast depart by surface for Punakha, drive up to **Dochu-la pass** (3,088m/10,130ft) stopping briefly here to take in the view and admire the chortens, Mani walls, and prayer flags which decorate the highest point on the road. If skies are clear, the high Himalayan peaks towards the northeast will be revealed in all their glory. On a clear day, the following peaks can be seen from this pass (left to right): Masagang (7,158m), Tsendegang (6,960m), Terigang (7,060m), Jejegangphugang (7,158m), Kangphugang (7,170m), Zongaphugang (7,060m) a table mountain that dominates the isolated region of Lunana, and finally, Gangkar Puensum, the highest peak in Bhutan at 7,497m.

After Lunch, hike to the nearby **Chimi Lhakhang**, a temple dedicated to the "Divine Madman", an eccentric monk from the 16th century famous for many his many amusing, Rabelaisian folklore stories.

Later visit **Punakha Dzong**, the Dzong built in 1637 by Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal to serve as the religious and administrative center of the region. Damaged over the centuries by four catastrophic fires and an earthquake, the Dzong has been fully restored in recent years by the present monarch. It is open for visitors during the Punakha festival (early spring) and in the summer months, after the monk body has returned to Thimphu. The Dzong is placed strategically at the junction of the Pho Chu and Mo Chu rivers. This ancient fortress is the winter residence of the monastic order's head and still serves as the administrative headquarters for the Punakha region.

In the evening, take a stroll along the town's main street.

### Overnight at Hotel

#### Overnight: Six Senses Punakha

This beautiful lodge has a rustic feel and is blessed with a warmer climate. Six Senses Punakha offers a choice of suites and villas, pool, library, yoga and meditation huts, and serves as an excellent base from which to visit the majestic Punakha Dzong. This spectacular lodge takes on a more rustic rural feel complementing the warmer climate of its surroundings and offers sweeping views of the valley filled with rice paddy fields and dotted with traditional farmhouses. Guests can start the day with breakfast on the terrace overlooking the rice paddies as the mist clears through the valley, order a poolside barbecue for lunch and sample traditional Bhutanese dishes with a Western twist at Ari for dinner.



### Basis

Bed and Breakfast

## Day 6: Six Senses Punakha, Punakha

### Day Itinerary

Today, you will begin with a **hike up** through fields of rice along the banks of the Mo Chhu to the upper end of the valley **to the Khamsum Yuelley Namgyal Chorten**, a stunning monument recently built by the Queens and consecrated in 1999. The temple is located on a hill with stunning views of the valley, paddy fields and the Mo Chu River that gently meanders through the valley floor. It is an hour walk through rice fields and forest.

In the afternoon, drive up to explore the picturesque villages of **Talo or Nobgang**, the ancestral home of the Queen Mothers of Bhutan. The villages are scattered along a ridge above the Punakha valley at an altitude of around 2,800m and is known amongst Punakha villages for its neat and clean appearance. The women here are particularly known for their beauty.

Enroute visit **Sangchen Dorji Lhendrup Nunnery**, perched on a ridge with spectacular views of the Punakha and Wangdue valleys. The temple houses a 14 foot bronze statue of Avalokiteshvara, one of the biggest in the country. The statue was handcrafted exclusively by local artisans. The temple houses a complex for higher studies and meditation center for nuns. Apart from religious trainings, the nuns are also provided skills such as embroidery, tailoring and statue making.

**Visit Nalanda Monastery** to visit the monks who are pursuing higher Buddhist studies and learning English as well. You may interact with the monks and chat with them.

Spend evening at leisure.

### Overnight at Hotel

### Activities

Khamsum Yulley Namgyal Chorten
Nobgang
Sangchhen Dorji Lhuendrup Lhakhang Nunnery
Visit Nalanda Monastery

#### *Khamsum Yulley Namgyal Chorten*

The Khamsum Yulley Namgyal Chorten is set on a hilltop nearby Yepaisa Village in the Punakha district of Bhutan. Built in 2004 by the Queen of Bhutan, this stupa was built to provide spiritual protection, peace, and harmony. It took nine years to build the four-story pagoda-style stupa along with various smaller pagodas surrounding it. As the stupa was built for protection, most of the deities portrayed inside are wrathful deities, whose fury are directed towards destroying evil in the world through compassion. Statues and shrines of these deities are found on the main, second and third floors, while the golden state of Sakyamuni Buddha is gracefully set on the rooftop floor.

#### *Sangchhen Dorji Lhuendrup Lhakhang Nunnery*

The Sangchhen Dorji Lhuendrup Lhakhang Nunnery is placed in Punakha. This temple and nunnery is perched on a ridge and overlooks the Toebesa, Punakha and Wangduephodrang valleys.

A double storied temple, a chorten resembling Nepal's Boudhanath stupa and a nunnery complex are found on the property. The temple houses a 14-foot bronze statue of Avalokiteshvara with statues of various Buddhas, and 21 Taras also being housed here.

The skillfully carved black marble blocks surrounding the chorten depicts 84 Mahasiddhis, 16 Arhats, and the great lamas of the Drukpa Kagyu lineage. The nunnery complex consists of 70 rooms, where a permanent higher learning and meditation centre is located. Apart from religious training, the complex provides skill training including tailoring, embroidery, statue making and thangka painting.

### Basis

Bed and Breakfast

## Day 7: Six Senses Paro, Paro

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### Day Itinerary

This morning, set off for Paro once again crossing over Dochula Pass.

On arrival visit the **National Museum** where an intriguing collection of artifacts provide a wonderful introduction to the rich culture and heritage of the Kingdom. Just a short walk downhill lays the dominating **Paro Dzong**, a fine example of Bhutanese historic architecture. From the Dzong, the tour crosses Nyamai Zampa, a traditional cantilever bridge, and guests are then driven to the town temple, built in 1525, to view ancient wall paintings.

After lunch you can visit the auspicious **Kichu Lhakhang**, a sacred monument pinning down the left foot of a treacherous ogress. This is one of the oldest temples in Bhutan dating back to the 7th century.

In the evening, take a stroll along the town's main street.

### Overnight at the Hotel

#### Overnight: Six Senses Paro

Designed to maximize what is surely one of the most scenic settings within the Six Senses Bhutan journey, Six Senses Paro is known as Stone Ruins – and guests will understand why when dining among them. The generous suites are designed with large windows and awe-inspiring valley views in mind. Neutral, relaxing tones are complemented by the simple lines of natural timber furniture and the presence of local touches such as Bukhari's (traditional wood-burning stoves) and vegetable-dyed, antique-washed Himalayan rugs. Eat With Six Senses is the guiding philosophy for tasty and wholesome dishes created from organic local produce. Guests can head back in time for a feudal dinner set among 12th-century ruins or visit a local farmhouse for a truly authentic Bhutanese dining experience.



### Activities

Dochula Pass
National Museum
Kyichu Lhakhang Temple

### *Dochula Pass*

The Dochula Pass connects the contemporary Bhutanese capital, Thimpu, with the ancient capital, Punakha, via a 3000-metre altitude route that takes approximately three hours to navigate by car. On clear days, travelers can catch glimpses of the Himalayas along the way.

### *Kyichu Lhakhang Temple*

Kyichu Lhakhang Temple is located in Paro, Bhutan. This ancient Buddhist temple was built overnight in the 7th Century by Songtsen Gampo, a Tibetan Emperor. As one of the oldest temples in Bhutan, this temple is considered to be one of the 108 border taming temples which the emperor had built. It is believed that in the 8th Century, Guru Padmasambhava visited the Kyichu Lhakhang Temple and had hidden a variety of treasures in the temple.

### **Basis**

Bed and Breakfast

## **Day 8: Six Senses Paro, Paro**

### **Day Itinerary**

This morning will begin with a hike up to view one of Bhutan's most revered monuments, the **Taktshang Goemba**, more commonly referred to as the "Tiger's Nest". The four to five hour return trek offers spectacular views of this sacred monastery perched on a cliff face 900m above the valley floor.

In the evening visit to a **Farmhouse** to share a cup of traditional butter tea with the family.

### **Overnight at the Hotel**

### **Activities**

Taktshang Goemba

### **Basis**

Bed and Breakfast

## **Day 9: The Oberoi Gurgaon, Gurgaon**



A handful of skyscrapers reach for the sky in the CBD of Gurgaon, a northwestern metropolis in the province of Haryana, near Delhi. Historically known as Guru Gram, the dormant town gathered economic momentum when Indian

automobile manufacturer, Maruti Suzuki India Limited, set up a manufacturing plant here in the 1970s. Just a few decades later, half the Fortune 500 companies had opened offices in Gurgaon. Despite the congested urban areas, birding enthusiasts can find respite at Sultanpur Bird Sanctuary, a famous bird-watching spot only 15 km from the city.

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### **Day Itinerary**

After breakfast you will be transferred to airport to board the flight to Delhi.

On arrival in Delhi transfer to hotel for overnight stay. Rest of the day is at leisure.

### **Overnight at Hotel**

#### **Overnight: The Oberoi Gurgaon**

The Oberoi Gurgaon hotel is located in the prime business and shopping district of Gurgaon. It is a 15 minute drive from Delhi International Airport. The hotel is also within easy reach from the New Delhi city center, major sightseeing destinations and most of the entertainment, shopping and recreation hubs in Gurgaon city.

Dining options range from an all day dining restaurant featuring five interactive show kitchens, and alfresco seating on teak wood decks extended onto the reflection pool, to an Indian coastal cuisine specialty restaurant. A delicatessen, bar and an exclusive Cigar Lounge complete the culinary experience.



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### **Basis**

Bed and Breakfast

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## **Day 10: End of Itinerary**

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### **Day Itinerary**

In time you will be transferred to airport for your flight for onward journey.

### **Basis**

Bed and Breakfast

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## Transport

### Flight Information

Date	Flight	Airline	Departure Airport	Time	Arrival Airport	Time	Class	Ref
	Scheduled		Indira Gandhi International Airport [DEL]		Paro International Airport [PBH]			
	Scheduled		Paro International Airport [PBH]		Indira Gandhi International Airport [DEL]			

### Transfers

Date	Company	Pick Up	Drop Off	Time	Vehicle
		Indira Gandhi International Airport [DEL]	The Oberoi New Delhi		Transfer
		The Oberoi New Delhi	Indira Gandhi International Airport [DEL]		Transfer
		Paro International Airport [PBH]	Six Senses Thimphu		Transfer
		Six Senses Thimphu	Six Senses Punakha		Transfer
		Six Senses Punakha	Six Senses Paro		Transfer
		Six Senses Paro	Paro International Airport [PBH]		Transfer
		Indira Gandhi International Airport [DEL]	The Oberoi Gurgaon		Transfer
		The Oberoi Gurgaon	Indira Gandhi International Airport [DEL]		Transfer

### Urgent Contact Numbers

Company Name	Telephone	Email Address	Contact Person
Distinct Destinations	+919818419730		Chishneet

### Service Provider Directory

Service Provider	Ref. Number	Telephone	Address
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Six Senses Paro		Paro Bhutan
Six Senses Punakha		Punakha Bhutan
Six Senses Thimphu		Chunimeding, Babesa, Chang Gewog Thimphu, Bhutan
The Oberoi Gurgaon	+91 124 245 1234	The Oberoi 443 Udyog Vihar, Phase V Gurgaon - 122 016 Haryana
The Oberoi New Delhi		Dr. Zakir Hussain Marg New Delhi 110003 India



## Travel Information



Vast, diverse, deeply spiritual and utterly unforgettable, India is unlike anywhere else on earth – a melting pot of ethnicities and religions, a treasure trove of history and culture, and a curious mixture of chaos and serenity. Stretching across more than three million square kilometres, it encompasses a staggering array of landscapes, vistas and environs, and offers unparalleled travel experiences – from the beautiful beaches of Goa, to the compelling craziness of Kolkata, the sacred Ganges river banks of Varanasi, the snow-capped peaks of the Himalayas in Kashmir and the ancient, exquisitely crafted temples dotted across the entire country. Not to mention the vibrant, friendly people, and the incredible cuisine.

### *Banking and Currency*

#### **Currency**

The Indian rupee is the official currency of the Republic of India. The modern rupee is subdivided into 100 paise (singular paisa), though as of 2011 only 50-paise coins are legal tender. Banknotes in circulation come in denominations of ₹5, ₹10, ₹20, ₹50, ₹100, ₹500 and ₹2000. Please note that as of November 2016, the older ₹500 note is no longer valid legal tender and only new ₹500 notes will be accepted.

The import and export of local currency is prohibited. The import of foreign currency is unlimited. However, amounts exceeding US\$5,000 or equivalent in cash, or US\$10,000 or equivalent in all forms of currency must be declared. The export of foreign currency is allowed up to the amount imported and declared.

Currency can be changed at banks, airports or authorised money changers. Many hotels also have facilities to change money but this is a more expensive option. It is illegal to exchange money through unauthorised money changers. US Dollars and Pounds Sterling are the easiest currencies to exchange.

### *Travel, Transport and Getting Around*

India is big and there are lots of interesting ways to travel around it, most of which could not very well be described as efficient or punctual. Allow considerable buffer time for any journey with a fixed deadline (eg. your flight back), and try to remember that getting there should be half the fun.

India's large size and uncertain roads make flying a viable option, especially as prices have tumbled in the last few years. Even India's offshore islands and remote mountain states are served by flights, the main exceptions being Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh (although crossing over from neighbouring states is fairly easy). Due to the aviation boom over the last few years, airports have not been able to keep up with the air traffic. Most Indian airports continue to function with one runway and a handful of boarding gates. Check in and security queues can be terribly long, especially in Delhi and Mumbai.

Railways were introduced in India in 1853, more than one and half a centuries ago, by the British, and today India boasts of the biggest network of railway lines in the world, and the rail system is very efficient, if not always on schedule. Travelling on Indian Railways gives you the opportunity to discover the Indian landscape and scenic beauty first hand and is generally more economical than flying domestic. It is one of the safest ways of travel in India. With classes ranging from luxurious to regular, it's the best way to get to know the country and its people. Most train passengers will be curious about you and happy to pass the time with a chat.

In central locations of big cities like airports or stations reliable pre-paid taxis are available and will save you money as well as the bargaining hassle. However beware of touts who would claim themselves to be running pre-paid taxis. Always collect the receipt from the counter first. The receipt has two parts - one part is for your reference and the other part you will need to handover to the taxi driver only after you reach your desired destination. The taxi driver will get his payment by submitting or producing this other part to the pre-paid taxi counter. Normal taxis running by meter are usually more common. In many non Metro Cities (or even in Metros depending on time) taxies or autos may ply without the usual meter.

While you can't take a cross-country bus-ride across India, buses are the second most popular way of travelling across states and the only cheap way of reaching many places not on the rail network (eg. Dharamsala).

### *Food, Drink and Cuisine Advice*

Indian food is world-renowned for its tantalising flavours, spiciness and enormous variety. Curries are created from the subtle and delicate blending of spices such as cumin, turmeric, cardamom, ginger, coriander, nutmeg and poppy seed although these vary from region to region and every spice has medicinal properties and use.

Vegetable dishes are more common than in Europe, particularly in the fruity, coconutty dishes of southern India, while northern India has an entirely different but equally satisfying cuisine to sample. Breads like paranthas, chapatis, naans and rotis are also part of the main diet in several states like Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh. Achars (pickles), relishes and chutneys again vary by region and add more resonance to amazing meals.

Sweets or mithai too have regional specialities. They tend to be milk based and some are syrupy and fried. Well-known northern sweets are gulab jamun, jalebi (it's worth watching how these syrup-based confections are made in the street), kulfi, *kheer*, halwa and laddu. From the east are rasgulla and rasmalai. The south has several burfi and halwa-type desserts like coconut burfi and badam halwa made from almonds.

Non-vegetarians will find fabulously spiced mutton dishes according to regional specialities including fish dishes typical to coastal areas.

10 to 15% is usual in restaurants that impose no service fee; optional where service fee is added to bill.

### *Climate and Weather*

The weather is mainly hot most of the year with significant variations from region to region. The coolest weather lasts from around the end of November to the beginning of March, with fresh mornings and evenings, and mostly sunny days. The really hot weather, when it is dry, dusty and unpleasant, is between April and June. Monsoon rains occur in most regions in summer anywhere between June and early October.

### *Clothing and Dress Recommendations*

For most locations and seasons in India, thin, loose linen or cotton pants and button-down shirts will keep you comfortable in hot, humid weather and help you blend in. While you may see Indian young adults sporting tight jeans and fitted brand-name tops, you'd stand out significantly more in the same outfit. If you visit anywhere in northern India - not just the mountains, Delhi too - during the winter, prepare for seriously cold weather. Bring jeans and heavy shirts and pick up an Indian wool wrap.

When visiting temples and other religious sites on your own or part of a tour, be on the lookout for signs advising visitors to dress in a specific way to enter the temple. The government of India advises that some religious institutions require visitors to cover their heads or remove their shoes, and covering your legs and arms in respect goes without saying. Certain sites may carry more specific requirements, such as donning a certain colored sash or sarong-like covering. Take your cue from other visitors exiting the site.

### *Electricity and Plug Standards*

For the most part, electrical sockets (outlets) in India are the "Type D" 5 amp BS-546 sockets. This is actually an old British standard. The "Type D" Indian plug and socket is not to be confused with the "Type M" South African plug and socket. In pictures, they look very similar, but the South African type is much larger than the Indian type, and they are physically incompatible. If your appliance's plug doesn't match the shape of these sockets, you will need a travel plug adapter in order to plug in.

Electrical sockets (outlets) in India usually supply electricity at between 220 and 240 volts AC. If you're plugging in an appliance that was built for 220-240 volt electrical input, or an appliance that is compatible with multiple voltages, then an adapter is all you need. If your appliances are not compatible with 220-240 volt electrical output, a voltage converter will be necessary.



Consistently voted the happiest country in the world, the little nation of Bhutan is set at the far eastern end of the Himalayas, between India and China. Bhutan only began to open its doors to outsiders in the 1970s, and still has a strict sustainability policy in place with respect to tourism. As a result it has retained a deep cultural authenticity and has preserved its environment admirably, making it one of Asia's most beguiling and unforgettable destinations. Highlights include incredible forts and temples perched on sheer mountain cliffs, a rich (predominantly Buddhist) culture, and spectacular scenery – ranging from temperate sub-tropical plains and valleys cloaked with dense forest, to lofty sub-Alpine mountains capped with snow.

### *Banking and Currency*

#### **Currency**

1 Ngultrum (BTN; symbol Nu) = 100 chetrum (Ch). The Ngultrum is pegged to the Indian Rupee (which is also accepted as legal tender). Notes are in denominations of Nu500, 100, 50, 20, 10 and 5. Coins are in denominations of Nu1, and 50, 25 and 20 chetrum. Smaller denomination notes and coins have been discontinued but are still in circulation and are legal tender. US Dollars are also widely accepted.

There are no restrictions on the import or export of local or foreign currency, but foreign currency must be declared upon arrival.

Leading foreign currencies are accepted but traveller's cheques are preferred and receive a better exchange rate. Major hotels in Thimphu, Paro and Phuentsholing will also exchange foreign currency.

## Banking

Banking hours: Mon-Fri 09h00-15h00, Sat 09h00-12h00.

Most credit cards have limited acceptability. ATMs only accept Bhutanese bank cards.

Travellers cheques can be exchanged in any branch of the Bank of Bhutan or at all BTCL hotels. Travellers are advised to take traveller's cheques in US Dollars.

## *Travel, Transport and Getting Around*

There are no domestic airline routes within Bhutan.

The country has a fairly good internal road network with well over 3,000km (1,800 miles) of surfaced road. Cars are driven on the left side of the road. The average speed is less than 40kph (25mph).

The main routes run north from Phuentsholing to the western regions of Paro and Thimphu, and west-east, across the Pele La Pass and Thrumshing La Pass to the central valleys and eastern regions.

The northern regions of the High Himalayas have no roads.

Tour operators will typically arrange all internal travel for tourists, which will usually be by road.

## *Food, Drink and Cuisine Advice*

Water used for drinking, brushing teeth or making ice should have first been boiled or otherwise sterilised. Mineral water is widely available. Milk should be boiled. Powdered or tinned milk is available. Only eat well-cooked meat and fish. Vegetables should be cooked and fruit peeled.

There is a fair choice of restaurants in Paro and Thimphu but most tourists eat in their hotels where hygiene is good and chefs temper the spicy Bhutanese dishes to suit Western tastes. Rice is the staple (sometimes flavoured with saffron or of the red variety) apart from in central Bhutan where the altitude makes rice cultivation difficult. Buckwheat is more common here. The country is replete with apple orchards, rice paddies and asparagus, which grows freely in the countryside and there are over 400 varieties of mushroom including orchid mushrooms.

Meals are often buffet-style and mostly vegetarian. Meat and fish are now imported from nearby India, and Nepali Hindus living in Bhutan are licensed to slaughter animals. Usual precautions apply.

Tipping is not widely practised.

## *Climate and Weather*

The climate varies with altitude, with the highest temperatures and rainfall occurring in the south which bears the brunt of the monsoon between June and September.

Temperatures drop dramatically with increases in altitude though days are usually very pleasant with clear skies and sunshine. Nights are cold and require heavy woollen clothing, particularly in winter. Generally, October, November and April to mid June are the best times to visit - rainfall is at a minimum and temperatures are conducive to active days of sightseeing. The foothills are also very pleasant during the winter.

## *Clothing and Dress Recommendations*

Lightweight cottons, linens and waterproof gear are recommended. Light sweaters and jackets are advisable for the evenings. Upland areas: thick, warm clothing for evenings, particularly during the winter months.

### *Electricity and Plug Standards*

For the most part, electrical sockets (outlets) in Bhutan are one of three types: the "Type C" European CEE 7/16 Europlug, the "Type G" British BS-1363 or the "Type D" Indian 5 amp BS-546. It's just anybody's guess as to which of the three types will be installed at any given specific location. If your appliance's plug doesn't match the shape of these sockets, you will need a travel plug adapter in order to plug in. Travel plug adapters simply change the shape of your appliance's plug to match whatever type of socket you need to plug into. If it's crucial to be able to plug in no matter what, bring an adapter for all three types.

Electrical sockets (outlets) in Bhutan usually supply electricity at between 220 and 240 volts AC. If you're plugging in an appliance that was built for 220-240 volt electrical input, or an appliance that is compatible with multiple voltages, then an adapter is all you need.

But travel plug adapters do not change the voltage, so the electricity coming through the adapter will still be the same 220-240 volts the socket is supplying. If your appliance is not compatible with 220-240 volt electrical output, a voltage converter will be necessary.

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