

Bhutan

Spirit of the Himalayas

November 3 to 27, 2026



Golden Langur
© Cheesemans' Ecology Safaris

SAFARI OVERVIEW

Explore the awe-inspiring landscapes and rich biodiversity of **Bhutan**, a **Himalayan kingdom** where cultural heritage and wildlife conservation are deeply intertwined. Journey from subtropical lowlands to alpine valleys in search of Bhutan's most captivating wildlife, including **Black-necked Cranes**, golden langurs, and vibrant **Himalayan Pheasants**. Marvel at sacred temples and ancient dzongs nestled in the mountains, and hike to the iconic **Tiger's Nest Monastery** perched high above the Paro Valley. Led by renowned Bhutanese naturalist Hishey Tshering, this unforgettable 21-day immersive safari offers rare wildlife encounters, spiritual traditions, and dramatic Himalayan scenery. Designed for nature lovers and cultural explorers, this trip offers a rare glimpse into the heart of the Himalayan kingdom.

WHY CHOOSE THIS TRIP?

- **Immerse in Bhutan's Rich Cultural Heritage:** Visit ancient monasteries, including the Tiger's Nest Monastery, dzongs, and traditional villages to experience the unique Himalayan Buddhist culture.

- **Explore Pristine Himalayan Landscapes:** Traverse dramatic landscapes via mountain passes like Dochula, Pele La, and Thrumshing La, with panoramic Himalayan views and diverse forest zones.
- **Witness Iconic Wildlife in Their Natural Habitat:** Spot intriguing mammals, including the endemic golden langur and vibrant bird species in Bhutan’s protected national parks.
- **Watch Traditional Festivals:** Experience vibrant Bhutanese festivals with colorful masks, dances, and rituals that offer a deep insight into local traditions.
- **Explore Bhutan’s Largest Wetlands:** Travel to the “Valley of the Cranes,” the wintering ground for Black-necked Cranes.

LEADERS: Hishey Tshering, plus an assistant guide and driver.

DAYS: 25, including estimated travel time.

GROUP SIZE: 10.

COST: \$9,750 per person, double occupancy, not including airfare, singles extra. See the Costs section on page 9.

Date	Description	Accommodation	Meals
Nov 3–5	Fly to Bangkok, Thailand.		
Nov 6	Arrival and drive to Thimphu. Fly from Bangkok to Paro, Bhutan and then drive to Thimphu.	Hotel in Thimphu	L, D
Nov 7–25	Explorations of Bhutan. Explore the natural and cultural wonders of Bhutan. You will journey across the country from west to east, exploring a stunning variety of ecosystems and cultural landmarks. Your days will be filled with expertly guided birdwatching excursions in top biodiversity hotspots like Tingtibi, Yongkhola, and Royal Manas National Park, where you’ll search for rare species such as the Beautiful Nuthatch, Ward’s Trogon, and White-bellied Heron. You’ll hike to sacred sites including the Khamsum Yulley Chorten and the world-famous Tiger’s Nest Monastery, and experience vibrant local traditions at the Mongar Tsechu festival. Along the way, you’ll visit iconic dzongs, stroll through terraced valleys, and learn about conservation efforts in places like Phobjikha Valley, winter home of the Black-necked Cranes. This itinerary offers an enriching blend of wildlife encounters, scenic drives, spiritual sites, and cultural immersion in the heart of the Himalayan kingdom of Bhutan.	Various lodges in Bhutan	B, L, D
Nov 26	Fly from Paro to Bangkok to connect with flights home.		
Nov 27	Arrive home.		

LEADER

Cheesemans' Ecology Safaris carefully selects leaders who are experts in their field to ensure that your experience is the best it can be. One leader with an assistant guide will provide a range of expertise for your trip.



Hishey Tshering

Hishey Tshering is an avid birder, a football (soccer) fanatic, and a keen conservationist. Prior to establishing the company (Bhutan Birding & Heritage Travels), Hishey worked for the Royal Society for the Protection of Nature (RSPN) as its Communications Officer. During his years at RSPN, he played a pivotal role in the protection of the Black-necked Cranes. In 1998 he worked with Dr. George Archibald, co-founder of the International Crane Foundation, on the first-ever color-banding and radio-collaring of the black-necked cranes to study their migratory route.

DETAILED ITINERARY

Nov 3–5 ~ Travel to Bangkok, Thailand

Fly to Bangkok, Thailand for an overnight. Lose a day of traveling east across the International Date Line.

Nov 6 ~ Fly from Bangkok to Paro, Bhutan

Fly from Bangkok to Paro, Bhutan, with views of Himalayan peaks towering through the clouds. Hishey will meet you in Paro to start your journey through Bhutan.

Nov 7–25 ~ Explore the natural and cultural wonders of Bhutan

Bhutan is a country and culture that embodies living in the moment. As this nation is experiencing rapid growth and a newly emerging tourist industry, the itinerary must be flexible to take advantage of the best Bhutan has to offer. Your trip will start and end in Paro. From Paro you begin your journey through the country, have binoculars and camera ready in hand as the beauty of Bhutan unfolds immediately. Keep an eye out for the enigmatic Isisbill, one of the most sought-after Himalayan shorebirds, and the beautiful Wallcreeper as you venture further into the country. You will drive through many districts (or dzongkhag) to visit the best regions for bird watching, acrobatic langurs, beautiful mountain scenery, and unique cultural experiences. Among many unforgettable sites along the way, you will return to Paro and hike Bhutan's famous Tiger's Nest Monastery. Read on for highlights of each district you may visit.

Thimphu ~ Capital city of Bhutan

In Bhutan's capital city, Thimphu, you will explore more natural and cultural attractions. Visit a weaving shop and traditional papermaking workshop to watch students learn these respected crafts. See the national mammal, the takin, protected in an extensive nature reserve on the edge of town, or take an optional hike up to the Cheri Monastery.



Assam Macaque
© Cheesemans' Ecology Safaris

Jigme Dorji National Park

Explore Jigme Dorji National Park, the second largest national park in Bhutan, covering parts of five districts (Gasa, Thimphu, Punakha, Paro, and Wangdue Phodrang). You may encounter Assam macaques, common grey langurs, and goral (a native goat), plus many birds, such as the Crested Kingfisher, Rufous-bellied Woodpecker, Oriental Cuckoo, and Large Hawk-cuckoo. With luck, you'll see the rarely seen Yellow-rumped Honeyguide feeding on the honeycomb of rock-bee hives.

Punakha ~ Dochu La Pass, Punakha Dzong

The drive from Thimphu to Punakha is one of the most scenic and memorable journeys in Bhutan, offering a blend of natural beauty, cultural stops, and opportunities for light adventure.



Landscape
© Namgay Tshring

Starting from Thimphu, the road ascends gradually through pine forests and small villages before reaching the Dochula Pass at around 3,100 meters (10,200 feet). This pass

is a highlight of the drive, especially in November, when the skies are typically crystal clear, offering stunning panoramic views of the eastern Himalayas. On a clear day, you may catch glimpses of several of Bhutan's snow-capped peaks, including the majestic Gangkar Puensum, the world's highest unclimbed mountain.

A must-stop along the way is the Royal Botanical Park at Lamperi, located just before the pass. The park spans over 47 square kilometers and is rich in biodiversity. It's a great place for a short nature walk on well-marked trails that pass through oak, rhododendron, and bamboo forests. Interpretive signs help visitors learn about the local flora and fauna, and the tranquil setting is ideal for a peaceful break. Continuing the descent, the landscape transitions from cool alpine to lush subtropical valleys as you approach Punakha, with terraced rice fields, traditional farmhouses, and the sparkling Mo Chhu river welcoming you into the valley.

Trongsa ~ Trongsa Dzong, Golden Langurs

Trongsa is best known for the Trongsa Dzong, the largest dzong in Bhutan. Take in the beautiful surroundings and impressive architecture of the traditional fortress, learn about its historical importance, and perhaps see Assam macaques climbing the walls. If open, you'll also visit the Tower of Trongsa Museum. The watchtower, up on the hill, has great views and interesting cultural and historical artifacts. The district is also an ideal place to find golden langurs, an increasingly endangered primate found only in Bhutan and parts of India. The drive from Punakha to Trongsa in November is a breathtaking journey through some of Bhutan's most dramatic landscapes, steeped in natural beauty and cultural significance. Covering around 130 kilometers and taking roughly 5 to 6 hours, the road winds through lush valleys, dense forests, and high mountain passes, offering a rich and varied experience.



Golden Langur
© Namgay Tshering

As the road descends from Pele La, it enters the broad, forested valley of Trongsa, Bhutan's geographic heart. The first sight of the Trongsa Dzong—dramatically perched on a ridge high above the Mangde Chhu river—is one of the most iconic views in Bhutan. The dzong appears suddenly through the trees, commanding the landscape and offering a powerful visual introduction to the region's history.

At Trongsa you'll visit the Trongsa Dzong and the watch-tower museum, which is dedicated to the Royal Family of Bhutan.

Zhemgang District ~ Tingtibi

During your time in the Zhemgang District, and along the Zhemgang-Tingtibi Road, you may find many special species, like Fire-tailed Myzornis, Cutia, Sultan Tit, Yellow-cheeked Tit, several species of Fulvettas and Laughingthrushes, Golden Babbler, Rust-fronted Barwing, Red-headed Trogon, beautiful Nuthatch, Blue-bearded Bee-eater, Pin-tailed Pigeon, White-browed and Speckled Piculet, and more. Watch for the endemic and rare golden langur, well known for its presence in this region, and encounter the black giant squirrel and yellow-throated marten while exploring the mixed broadleaved evergreen forests at elevations from 2,000 to 8,000ft. Tingtibi is a birding hotspot, however, the overnight accommodations are very basic here, with hopes that the prolific wildlife present and authentic experience are an even exchange.



Yellow-cheeked Tit
© Cheesemans' Ecology Safaris

Tingtibe

Spend a day birding in the Tingtibe region with a focus on seeing one of the rarest birds in the world – the White-bellied Heron. It is estimated that the global population of this most critically endangered species is less than 60 individuals and almost half the world's population is found in Bhutan. The other species that you can expect to find are White-hooded Babbler, Rufous-necked Hornbill, White-breasted Parrotbill, etc.

Panbang

The drive from Tingtibi to Panbang in southern Bhutan is a journey through one of the country's richest biodiversity corridors, offering exceptional birdwatching and immersion in lush subtropical forests. Spanning approximately 96 kilometers and taking about 3 to 4 hours, this route descends from the mid-hills of Zhemgang into the lowland forests bordering the Royal Manas National Park.



Birdwatching
© Namgay Tshering

This region is part of the Royal Manas National Park, Bhutan's oldest national park and a UNESCO tentative site. The park encompasses a mosaic of habitats, including tropical and subtropical broadleaf forests, riverine grasslands, and bamboo groves. These diverse ecosystems support a wide array of flora and fauna, making the area a hotspot for biodiversity. Beyond birds, the area is rich in other wildlife. The

Panbang valley is known for its vast variety of butterflies and moths, with numerous species recorded in the region. Mammals such as the Golden Langur, an endangered primate endemic to Bhutan, can also be spotted in the forests along the route.

Nganglam

The drive from Panbang to Nganglam in southeastern Bhutan is a remarkable journey through some of the country's most biodiverse and bird-rich subtropical forests. Spanning approximately 80 kilometers, this route descends to elevations as low as 400 meters, offering birders and nature enthusiasts an exceptional opportunity to observe a wide array of tropical and subtropical species.

This corridor traverses the fringes of Royal Manas National Park, Bhutan's oldest protected area. The landscape is characterized by dense broadleaf forests, bamboo thickets, and riverine ecosystems. These habitats support a rich diversity of flora and fauna, making the region a hotspot for biodiversity.

Yongkhola

The drive to Yongkhola will take you through some of the most pristine high-altitude montane forests along one of the best birding circuits in all of Asia. Keep watch for the beautiful Himalayan Pheasant as you weave through the landscape over Thrumshing La pass at 12,500ft and down into the Yongkhola at 5,500ft. If lucky, you might even spot a red panda. Hishey loves birding in this area so much he built Trogon Villa, so his clients would have a comfortable base to explore this wildlife-rich region of Bhutan. In addition to abundant bird life, search for capped langurs swinging playfully in the trees. A night drive offers you the opportunity to see nocturnal species. You will be stopping for four nights in the pristine forest of Yongkhola, which may be one of the top birding sites in Asia. During this time, we will also visit the headquarters of the Mongar district to witness the Mongar Tsechu (festival).



Prayer Flags
© Heather McFarland

The Mongar Tshechu is a vibrant three-day religious and cultural festival held annually in eastern Bhutan, from November 17 to 19. Hosted in the courtyard of Mongar Dzong, this event is a significant spiritual occasion for the local communities and attracts attendees from neighboring districts such as Trashigang, Lhuentse, and Trashiyangtse.

Central to the Tshechu are the Cham dances, sacred masked performances that depict stories from the life of Guru Rinpoche (Padmasambhava) and other Buddhist deities. These dances are believed to confer blessings upon spectators and serve as a means of spiritual purification. Beyond its religious aspects, the festival is a major social event. Locals dress in their finest traditional attire, gather with family and friends, and enjoy communal meals. The Tshechu fosters community bonding and offers a platform for cultural expression through music, dance, and traditional arts.

Bumthang ~ Jakar Dzong, Tang Valley

Bumthang Valley, often considered the spiritual heartland of Bhutan, is a serene and culturally rich region located in the central part of the country. Comprising four smaller valleys—Chokhor, Tang, Ura, and Chhume—Bumthang is known for its rolling hills, verdant pastures, and numerous ancient temples and monasteries. It is home to some of Bhutan's most sacred sites, including Jambay Lhakhang and Kurjey Lhakhang, which are deeply rooted in Bhutanese history and the spread of Buddhism in the region. The valley's name, "Bumthang," roughly translates to "beautiful field," a fitting description for its picturesque landscape and peaceful ambiance.

Beyond its spiritual significance, Bumthang offers a unique glimpse into traditional Bhutanese life. The region is renowned for its distinctive textiles, particularly the intricate woolen weaves known as *yathra*, which are produced in villages like Zugney. Visitors can explore quaint farming communities, taste locally made cheese and honey, and enjoy scenic hikes through pine forests and along pristine rivers. Despite its growing popularity among tourists, Bumthang has retained its charm and authenticity, making it a captivating destination for those seeking both natural beauty and cultural depth.

Wangdue Phodrang ~ Pele La Pass, Phobjikha Valley

Take in spectacular views over Pele La Pass between the districts of Trongsa and Wangdue Phodrang. Monals, a type of pheasant, and Great Parrotbills are possible sightings here. You may also encounter mammals, like goral and serow, wild herbivores that do well in these habitats around Pela La. Descend into the glacial valley of Phobjikha, known as the "Valley of the Cranes." This valley has the largest wetland in Bhutan and is one of the winter homes of about 350 Black-necked Cranes. These cranes typically start to arrive at the end of October and migrate back to Tibet in early March. The annual presence of the cranes has made Phobjikha one of the most important wildlife preserves in the kingdom. Listen to the cranes calling in the pine forest while flying overhead. During your two days stay in this valley, you will hike around the crane roost, watch for new arrivals, and visit the Crane Education Center to learn about the various conservation programs in the valley.



Drukgyel Dzong Ruins
© Debbie Thompson

Dochu La Pass

Dochu La, at 10,200ft, is one of the most scenic passes in Bhutan. On a clear day, Dochu La affords superb views of the Himalayan range to the north. In addition to the natural scenery, visitors to the Dochu La are drawn to the 108 Buddhist stupas (a place for meditation) built on a hill decorated by colorful prayer flags. Wake up early to watch the sun rise over the breathtaking Bhutanese Himalayas.

Paro ~ National Museum, Tiger's Nest Monastery, Chele La Pass, Paro Valley

Make your way back to Paro with time to visit the National Museum of Bhutan. View over 3,000 pieces of the country's finest specimens and masterpieces including art, bronze statues, and paintings that cover 1,500 years of cultural heritage.

Bhutan's most famous site is the Tiger's Nest Monastery, impressively built on the side of a cliff just west of Paro. Halfway up you may relax at a cafe and enjoy the view of the monastery across a gorge. If you continue, you will discover increasingly dramatic views leading to a picturesque waterfall and bridge just below the monastery. You may tour the inside to see the rocks protruding from within; however, photography is not permitted inside. Keep an eye out for monkeys playing in the trees near the trail.



Tiger's Nest Monastery
© Namgay Tshering

Scenic Chele La Pass is the highest road in Bhutan (close to 13,000ft) with excellent views when the skies are clear. A pre-dawn departure could uncover nocturnal species such as Gray Nightjars or leopard cats. Explore different habitats as you climb to the mountain pass and search for three different pheasant species. Explore the beautiful Paro Valley and the ruins of the Drukgyel Dzong. The valley's blue pine forest is home to Laughingthrushes (Black-faced and Chestnut-crowned) and Chestnut-tailed Minla, and you may find Ibisbill patrolling the Paro River.

Bhutan's festivals and Buddhist culture

Bhutan is a country of festivals. The most important are the religious dance festivals, known as Tshechus, which are held in different districts throughout the year. In a swirl of color and noise, the gods and demons of Buddhist mythology come to life. Masked and sword dances and other rituals are performed by monks and villagers. The performances have deep religious significance but are not somber affairs. The Atsaras (traditional clowns of the Tshechu) add color and merriment to the festival with their bawdy antics.

The Buddhist culture of Bhutan is visible throughout the country with prayer flags and stupas adorning the hillsides and mountain passes. Hishey will enlighten you with stories of his country's history, including the arrival of Buddhism and Bhutan's peaceful transition from monarchy to democracy. He'll interpret tales depicted in the brightly painted murals covering walls in monasteries and dzongs. Because of the strong connection to nature, the country's cultural history is strongly tied to its natural history.



Festival
© Cheesemans' Ecology Safaris

Nov 26 ~ Fly from Paro to Bangkok

Hishey will transfer you to the airport for your group flight from Paro back to Bangkok. Overnight in Bangkok or connect with a late-night flight homeward.

Nov 27 ~ Arrive home

COSTS (ALL COSTS ARE IN US DOLLARS)

Cost

Type	Cost per Person
Trip Cost, double occupancy	\$9,750
Single Supplement	\$600

Costs are per person, double occupancy, not including airfare, singles extra. See *Included* and *Not Included* sections for more details.

If you are a single traveler, we will try to find a roommate for you, but if we cannot pair you with a roommate, we may charge you a single supplement. Single rooms cost extra and are subject to availability.

Payment Schedule

Payment	Due Date	Amount per Person
Deposit	Due now to reserve your space	\$500
Final	May 27, 2026	Remaining Balance

Payments are due based on the schedule above. All reservations require a deposit to confirm reservation of your space.

Cancellations

Until the Final Payment due date, deposits are refundable except for a cancellation fee of \$150 per person, which can be applied toward another trip if reserved within six months of the canceled trip's departure date. Cancellations are non-transferable. No refunds are given after the Final Payment due date.

Included

- Carbon offsets for the duration of this trip.
- All leaders, transport, park entry fees, and permits for all activities unless described as optional.
- Sustainable Development Fee.
- Transfers in Bhutan.
- Bhutan visa fee.
- Accommodations for the nights of November 6 through November 25.
- Meals from lunch on November 6 through breakfast on November 25.
- Drinking water on the bus and during all included meals.
- Gratuities to airport and hotel porters and restaurant waitstaff in Bhutan.
- Trip Planning Materials – information about entry requirements, flights, packing, gratuities, etc.

Not Included

- Carbon offsets for your flights to/from this trip.
- Passport fees

- All airfare, airport and departure taxes, and excess baggage fees. The round-trip flights between Bangkok and Paro will be added to your trip balance based on rates at the time of booking. The estimated cost is \$1,300.
- Accommodations, transportation, and meals in Bangkok.
- Divergent airport transfers (arranged by us) and extra hotel nights in Bangkok.
- Gratuities – tipping is always discretionary. However, we will add a gratuity of \$300 per participant (\$15 per participant per day for 20 days with Hishey’s staff) to your final payment.
- Mandatory [emergency evacuation insurance](#).
- Optional [trip cancellation insurance](#).
- Items of a personal nature such as laundry, telephone calls, medical costs or hospitalization, room service, beverages other than water, items not on the regular menu, etc. If you have special dietary needs, please indicate them on your Traveler Form.

SIGN UP

Please contact us first to check availability, reserve your space, and obtain a Traveler Form. To confirm your reservation, we require a deposit and signed form from each participant.

[Cheesemans' Ecology Safaris](#)

Email: info@cheesemans.com

WhatsApp: (408) 741-5330

Phone: (800) 527-5330 or (408) 741-5330

OTHER DETAILS

Climate

The weather in November is generally dry with clear skies but be prepared for a slight chance of rain or snow. Temperatures can vary greatly throughout Bhutan, so come prepared. Expect daytime temperatures in the 50s°F (10°C) at higher altitudes to the 70s°F (21°C) at lower altitudes in the southern region. Expect early morning and nighttime temperatures around 10 to 40°F (-12 to 4°C) at higher altitudes to the 50s°F (10°C) at lower altitudes in the southern region.

Fitness Level

You will visit high elevations; your overnights at these elevations range from about 4,500ft at Punakha and Yongkhola to about 9,500ft at Phobjikha. You will need to get in and out of a Toyota Coaster bus and walk from 1mi to 2mi at a slow pace with stops to observe wildlife. This high elevation makes typically manageable activity more difficult. The most strenuous walk is the optional hike up to the Tiger’s Nest Monastery (10,240ft). Most of the trail is steep with switchbacks or stairs, but you can stop halfway at a viewpoint and decide if you want to continue or just enjoy the view from there. The hike up and back can take about 3 to 4 hours depending on your pace and how much time you spend at the monastery. Please contact us if you have any health concerns that may make this trip challenging.

Accommodations

All lodges and hotels have electricity and private bathrooms with showers and flush toilets. Lodging throughout the trip is comfortable and ranges from deluxe hotels to simple and rustic lodges in remote

locations; some may have only a squat toilet. All have the architectural style characteristic of Bhutan and many have beautiful grounds and/or views to take in.

Transportation

You will drive across Bhutan in Hishey's "Grus Mobile," a roomy, 22-seat Toyota Coaster bus with large windows that open. Although you'll often stop to enjoy the pristine Himalayan air and to photograph the stunning scenery, you may at times have to photograph from the vehicle. Expect winding mountain roads and sometimes slow, bumpy drives, depending on road conditions. In Bhutan, distances are usually estimated by time rather than by mileage (the average driving speed is 15mph), and roadwork is widespread. Because you look for birds along the roads, you may spend a full day traveling from one destination to another.

Flights

Detailed logistical information is included in the Trip Planning Materials we will send you.

Flights you book

- Arrive in Bangkok, Thailand (BKK) by 11:59pm on November 5 to connect with your early-morning group flight to Bhutan on November 6.
- Depart Bangkok, Thailand (BKK) after 11:59pm on November 26.

Flights we book

- The round-trip flights between Bangkok and Paro; we'll add the flight cost to your final trip balance.

Terms and Conditions

Read our current [Terms and Conditions](#).

Conservation

Our company ethos has always regarded conservation as inseparable from responsible tourism. We struggle with the dilemma that traveling worldwide expends climate-changing carbon. However, we wholeheartedly believe that traveling with us will cultivate your passion for conserving our beautiful world while stimulating each destination's local economy. We encourage you to explore the various ways in which Cheesemans' operates within this context:

- **Ecotourism and Conservation for Bhutan.**
- **Cheesemans' Trips are Carbon Neutral.**
- **Offsetting your Travel to/from our Trip:** We ask you to pledge to offset the carbon emissions for your travel to and from our trips. You can purchase offsets with most airlines (Delta includes them automatically), use our handy [carbon calculator](#), and donate to Sustainable Travel International, or contribute to your favorite offsetting organization.

FAQS

Where is Bhutan?

The Kingdom of Bhutan is the size of Switzerland, nestled between Tibet and India, and is truly one of Earth's most remote countries. More than 60% of the country is still forested with farms dotting the countryside. Bhutan has 20 peaks over 23,000ft, a wonderful place to photograph stunning mountain scenery, while also seeing spectacular birds and charming mammals. The Buddhist philosophy of respecting all living things

alongside a progressive governmental approach to environmental preservation and promotion of Bhutan's unique culture and traditions has maintained an environment where wildlife flourishes.

What wildlife can you expect to see?

Bhutan lies in an area designated as one of the world's top ten biodiversity hotspots. More than 600 bird species live in Bhutan, including some of the most exotic and rare species in the eastern Himalayas. Because of their abundance, birds are the main wildlife you will encounter. Bhutan is also home to at least 165 mammal species, including langurs, macaques, Himalayan black bears, alpine musk deer, and in the alpine meadows, takins (endangered) and yaks grazing on grasses along mountainsides. You may find tiger tracks along the bases of the foothills to above the tree line, although this predator is seldom seen. Red pandas are very rarely seen, but are considered good luck if spotted.

When is the best time to visit Bhutan?

Generally, October to December and March to May are the best times to visit Bhutan – rainfall is low, and temperatures are conducive to active days of sightseeing. (The Monsoon season occurs June to August.) Choosing spring or fall will depend on your priorities. In the fall, days are usually very pleasant with clear skies and sunshine, providing the best opportunities to view Himalayan peaks. November to December is the best time to see Black-necked Cranes, and spring is the best time to spot a Satyr Tragopan. In the spring, the mountains are covered with blooming rhododendrons, and the bird life is more numerous and more active, although overcast skies and wind are more common, especially at passes. In spring you tend to find about twice as many bird species compared to fall.

What is a dzong?

A dzong is a fortress, which continues to serve as Bhutan's administrative and religious center. You'll also see monasteries, including the famous Tiger's Nest, and smaller chortens (stupas), all of which are important features of Bhutan's religion and culture. You will have opportunities to examine traditional Bhutanese arts and crafts, which represent a vital aspect of Bhutan's living heritage as well as its spiritual and intellectual life.

What is Gross National Happiness (GNH)?

GNH is a government index that not only measures the happiness and well-being of the Bhutanese people but also intentionally guides policy. The four pillars of the GNH are fair and sustainable socio-economic development, conservation and promotion of culture, environmental protection (including constitutionally protecting 60% of the nation as forest land), and good governance.

Why is visiting Bhutan so special?

Until recently, Bhutan's remoteness, steep terrain, and tightly controlled tourism ensured that its incredible beauty and fascinating people remained known only to a few. Bhutan was closed to outsiders until 1960; its first roads were built in 1961 and no tourists were officially permitted until 1974. Bhutan is a developing country, yet its unique agrarian Buddhist culture is still intact. You will encounter red-robed monks and herders with their cows or yaks on the road along with vehicles.