

SAMPLE TOUR ITINERARY



HISTORY AND CULTURE



ACCOMMODATIONS

MONGGAR

TOURISM ATTRACTIONS





MONGAR

TOURISM ATTRACTIONS

- Sample Tour Itinerary
- History & Culture
- Accommodations

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SHINE (Sustainable Hospitality Industries Inclusive
of Native Entrepreneurs)

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Foreword

Tourism benefits have been rather concentrated in western Bhutan. Most of eastern and central areas are barely visited by international tourists, despite the vast potential of the attractions - pristine landscapes, rich cultural heritage, historical narratives and diverse ethnic minorities. The project “Sustainable Hospitality Industry Inclusive of Native Entrepreneur (SHINE)” funded by the EU SWITCH-Asia Programme aims at more inclusive tourism development in Bhutan, by promoting the indigenous and authentic tourism resources of the eastern and central Bhutan. At large, SHINE adopts the two-way strategy: to vitalize tourism in eastern and central Bhutan, where the handicraft and agro- products are made; and conversely, to bring these products into the supply chain of the mainstream tourism.

The project was initiated by the Centre for Appropriate Technology (GrAT, Austria) and kicked off in May 2020 in partnership with the Handicrafts Association of Bhutan (HAB), Bhutan Association of Women Entrepreneurs (BAOWE), and STENUM Asia in India.

The project engages native producers - individuals and groups in the tourism value chain, links their products and services to the tourism hubs, and uses Appropriate Technology (AT) to increase production quality and quantity. SHINE’s various interventions include product diversification, quality and quantity improvement of handicrafts and agri-products, integrating indigenous attractions in tour products, and propagating and replicating the results. The beneficiary groups of the project are rural producers, craftsmen, hoteliers, village homestays, agro-producers, craft and agro-enterprises, women entrepreneurs, informal self-help groups, disadvantaged youth and the local communities. Through the multi-dimensional interventions, producers not only acquire better skills, but are also able to market their products more successfully. HAB and BAOWE also receive assistance in terms of skills development and capacity building. These agencies are active in helping the vulnerable and neglected players in the value chain. This volume of tourism attraction books is one vital step towards promoting the eastern and southern districts in Bhutan as attractive tourism destinations.

On behalf of the entire SHINE team, I would like to invite you to discover the exciting and diverse attractions presented in this first edition of our books, and wish you use this resource collection together with the local stakeholders for a joint and inclusive development.

Dr. Robert Wimmer
Lead Project Manager of the SHINE project
Managing Director, Center for Appropriate Technology (GrAT) Austria



Sustainable Hospitality Industry
Inclusive of Native Entrepreneurs

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Beautiful view of Sengor village, Mongar



Photo Courtesy: [bhutanmindfultravels](#)

Introduction

The uneven distribution of tourism benefits in Bhutan is one of the pressing concerns that the EU-funded SWITCH-Asia project SHINE (Sustainable Hospitality Industry Inclusive of Native Entrepreneurs) is addressing. The project's seven target districts - Zhemgang, Dagana, Lhuentse, Mongar, Trashigang and Pemagatshel - are far-flung districts with challenging accessibility by both road and air. An overwhelming majority of tourists visit only the western region, which resulted in heavy dependence on imported products such as handicrafts and agri-food to serve them while leaving behind the valuable and diverse traditional foods and rural crafts from the eastern and central districts. If more tourists travel to the rural areas to experience natural aspect of Bhutan, or if the resources in the East and central are effectively mobilized to cover the high demand of tourists in the current tourism hotspots, local producers can improve their community livelihood and enhance the distribution of tourism values across the country. These seven districts have an enormous potential to attract tourists. Each is unique in itself. Every valley resounds with myths and tales from the past, and every village has its own folk traditions and customs. Their rituals, festivals, and social mores still retain that native originality and splendor. The way they work on their ancient farmlands, the food they consume, the community in which they thrive, and almost all other aspects of their lives are largely unsullied by modernization and external influences. To top it all, surrounding their homes and villages are pristine forests inhabited by a plethora of wildlife.

This volume of tourism attraction books is therefore an attempt to build an inventory of tourism resources in these seven districts by delving into every aspect of rural life including crops and forest products, history, culture, craft, monasteries and religious sites, folk life, etc. Various products deemed interesting for tourists to see, taste and listen to, are introduced. The volume consists of eight books: one presenting the agri-products and non-timber forest products, as well as traditional sports and cultural activities, which are commonly encountered and practiced in the region; each of the other seven books is dedicated to each target district with specific monasteries and stupas, unique festivals and myths, and available accommodation options. Two sample itineraries per district are proposed to explore the uncharted Bhutan.

As a whole, this inventory will help policymakers and respective districts to develop sustainable and inclusive tourism models with the rich resources, tour operators and guides pick up the momentum of thriving rural eco-tourism trends of the world, and many producers along the tourism value chain to find the new opportunities for income generation by supplying cash crops, authentic handicraft, and village homestays with standard quality.

This is the first edition, and the SHINE project team hopes to receive feedback from readers, including potential stakeholders of the new sustainable tourism models, to verify and enhance the inventory, and tourists who are interested in exploring real Bhutan.

About the Dzongkhag

Mongar Dzongkhag covers an area of 1,940 sq.km with elevations ranging from 400 to 4,000 meters. The region is sandwiched between the districts of Trashigang, Lhuentse, Pemagatshel, Samdrup Jongkhar, and Zhemgang, which has led to its unique, albeit multi-dimensional, cultural identity. It is also home to some of the most remote communities of Bhutan, including the Gongduekha-speaking natives who inhabit the southernmost belts.

Among a wide array of cultural heritages, the shamanic rituals of Kharphu and Kengkhar are considered vestiges of an ancient Bon belief system that was prevalent in the country prior to the advent of Buddhism. The 'Kharam Festival of Tsamang, where phallic elements are still venerated, is yet another primal carnival straight from Bhutan's medieval archives.

Mongar has mild climatic conditions and gentle mountain valleys, which provide a habitat for a rich array of flora and fauna. The district has 574 recorded bird species, including 19 globally threatened species, making it a haven for birders and ornithologists. The region is known for its skilled weavers and intricate textile designs, and fabrics produced here are considered some of the finest. There are also numerous village communities who specialize in traditional woodcrafts that have been passed down from generations.

The western regions of Mongar form part of the Phrumsengla National Park, while the northeastern portions fall under the Bumdeling Wildlife Sanctuary. Though these parks are the domains of some rare mammals and bird species, it has largely remained unexplored. While maize, rice, and citrus fruits are grown abundantly, the district is also noted for hazelnut and lemongrass cultivation. There are a hydropower plant on the Kurichhu river and the only regional referral hospital in the east. The dzongkhag is administratively divided into 17 gewogs and a drungkhag and is today gradually morphing into a thriving urban centre in eastern Bhutan.

MONGAR AT A GLANCE

National Statistical Bureau	2021	Central Schools	3
		Higher Secondary Schools	5
		Middle Secondary Schools	5
Area (sq. km)	1,940.28		
Altitude (masl.)	400 - 40000		
Drungkhags	1	AGRICULTURE	
Gewogs	14	Dry land (acres)	30,161
Chiwogs	17	Wet land (acres)	5,420
Villages	88	Orchard (acres)	60
Gungtong	638		
		TRANSPORT	
POPULATION		Length of Road	2,032.9
Total	36,561	Dzongkhag Roads	287.6
Population density (per sq. km)	19	Motorable Bridges (Nos.)	20
		INFRASTRUCTURE	
HEALTH		Telephone connections (nos)	556
Hospitals	1	Internet connections	566
Indigenous Units	5	Households electrified (%)	100
Basic Health Units (BHUs)	23	Religious institutions	5
Rural water supply coverage (%)	99	Religious monuments	189
		EDUCATION	
Tertiary Institute under RUB	1	No. of tourists visited (2019)	509

DISTANCE BY ROAD

From	To	Distance	Duration
Paro	Thimphu	65 kms	1 hr 15mins
Thimphu	Wangdue	70 kms	3 hrs
Wangdue	Trongsa	137 kms	5 hrs 30 mins
Trongsa	Bumthang	65 kms	2 hrs 15 mins
Bumthang	Mongar	190 kms	8 hrs
Mongar	Tsakaling	33 kms	1 hr 15 mins
Mongar	Drametse	89 kms	3 hrs 30 mins
Mongar	Chaskar	55 kms	2 hrs
Mongar	Ngatshang	37 kms	1 hr 30 mins
Mongar	Tsamang	73 kms	3 hrs
Mongar	Gongdu (via Silambi)	147 kms	6 hrs 45 mins
Mongar	Trashigang	92 kms	3 hrs 15 mins
Trashigang	S/jongkhar	180 kms	7 hrs
S/jongkhar	Guwahati, Assam	110 kms	3 hrs

Map of human settlements



BIRD WATCHING TOUR - A DATE WITH LARKS AND PHEASANTS



567 species of birds,
Village life and folk tradition,
Namling waterfall



March-May,
September-November



1200-3800m



Cool and
temperate



Moderate



8 Nights 9 Days

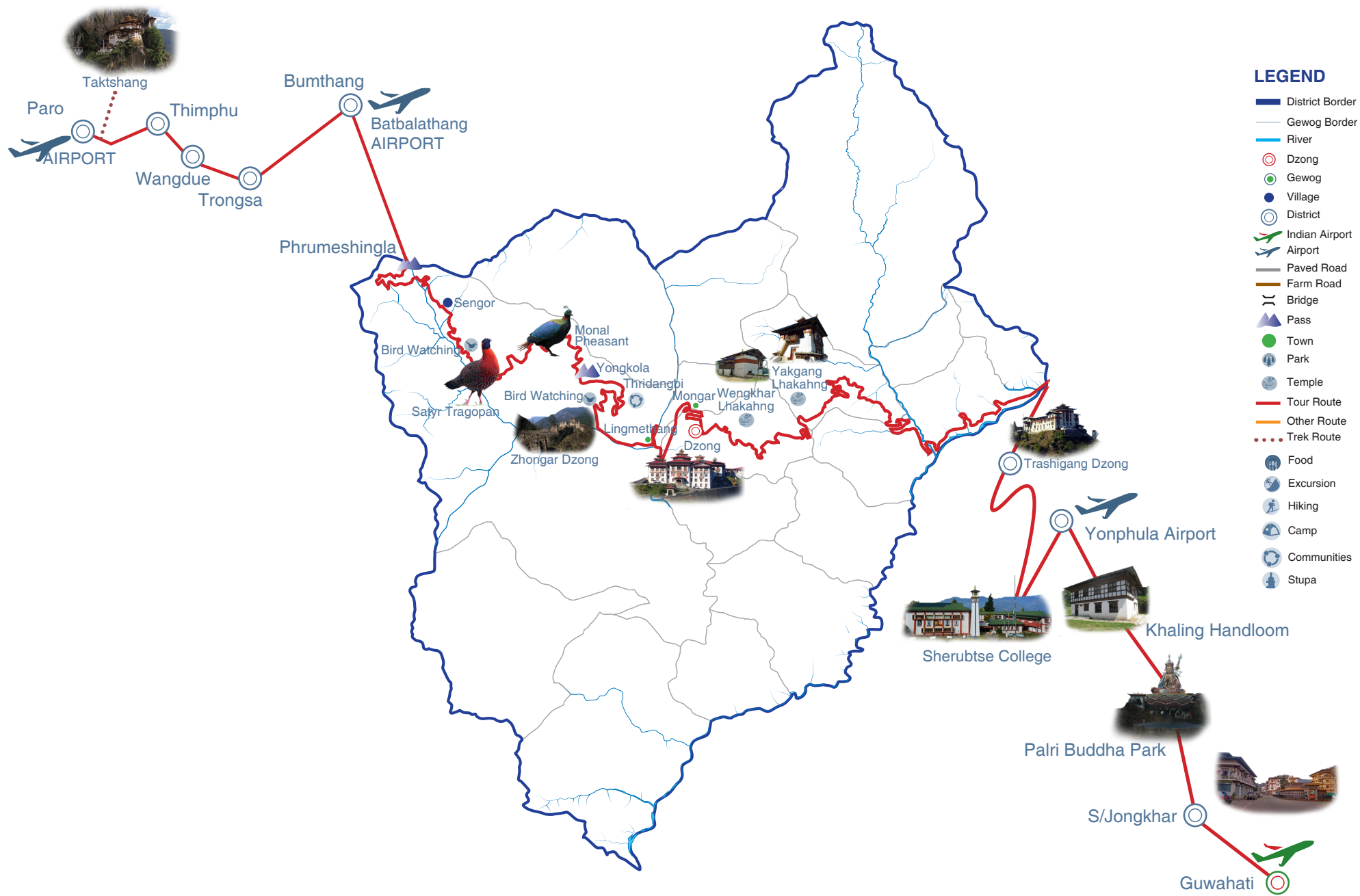
Notably dubbed as “the Birding Capital of the World”, the Mongar district boasts of harboring about 567 species of the recorded 747 birds in the country, including the majestic Monal Pheasant and the rare Satyr Tragopan. A short stretch of about 26 kilometers, from Sengor to Yongkola, is considered one of the best birding circuits on the entire planet.

The trails are breathtakingly beautiful and cut through ancient mule tracks and lush forests of giant oak and cedar, while rhododendron blooms carpet the valleys with radiant hues exuding an earthy scent. The spectacular waterfall at Namling that cascades amidst hair-raising cliffs and bends are yet another view that will be etched in any visitor’s visual memory as you traverse across the remote mountain landscapes of the Far East.

Birding in Mongar, apart from the regular thrill and adventure, is an experience of a lifetime and an occasion to reconnect and soak our weary urban souls with nature in its untainted best.

01 DAY	Activity	Arrival at Paro - Thimphu	Night halt	Thimphu
02 DAY	Activity	Thimphu-Bumthang	Night halt	Bumthang
03 DAY	Activity	Bumthang - Sengor: morning explore Bumthang valley & drive to Sengor.	Night halt	Sengor VHS

04 DAY	Activity	Sengor - Yongkola: explore Sengor community & bird watching	Night halt	Yongkola VHS
05 DAY	Activity	Yongkola - Mongar: en-route bird watching & explore the Thridangbi community & visit the ruins of Zhongar Dzong.	Night halt	Mongar
06 DAY	Activity	Mongar: Visit Pongchula & experience local community life.	Night halt	Mongar
07 DAY	Activity	Mongar - Trashigang: en-route visit Mongar Dzong, Yakgang & Wengkhar communities & Lhakhang.	Night halt	Trashigang
08 DAY	Activity	Trashigang - Samdrup Jongkhar	Night halt	S/Jongkhar
09 DAY	Activity	Depart from Bhutan via Guwahati international airport, Assam, India		



CRAFT VILLAGE TOUR - INTO THE ARTISTIC REALMS OF UNCHARTED BHUTAN



A village of craftsmen
Ancient temples and bon festivals



March-May,
September-November



1200-3800m



Cool and temperate



Moderate



8 Nights 9 Days

One exotic feature of the Mongar district, unexplored and unknown to western travelers is the distinct rural communities of Kengkhar and Jurmey that have mastered the thirteen traditional arts and crafts. They are renowned for producing the finest decorated wooden wine containers called Jandhom/Palang.

The communities along the trail are also flag-bearers of some ancient bon festivals and rituals such as Khar Phud and WayoWayo, which they practice and observe with as much in genuity and zeal, as was done centuries ago. Before it gets permeated into the folds of time and modernization, the world at large needs to explore, learn, and appreciate the astuteness of these communities.

01 DAY	Activity	Guwahati - Samdrup Jongkhar	Night halt	S/Jongkhar
02 DAY	Activity	Samdrup Jongkhar - Trashigang	Night halt	Trashigang
03 DAY	Activity	Trashigang - Mongar: en-route visit Drametse Lhakhang, Ngatshang Lhakhang, explore Yadi village.	Night halt	Mongar
04 DAY	Activity	Mongar - Kengkhar craft village: en-route visit Gyelpozhing - the land of the Kings.	Night halt	Kengkhar VHS

05 DAY	Activity	Kengkhar - Jurmey: en-route explore Kengkhar crafts village & travel to Jurmey.	Night halt	Jurmey VHS
06 DAY	Activity	Jurmey - Yangbari: explore Yangbari community & golden mahseer (Barbus mosal), river-rafting, hiking, local cuisine preparation & lifestyle.	Night halt	Yangbari Eco Lodge
07 DAY	Activity	Yangbari - Lingmethang: en-route visit bamboo crafts village in Gongdue & Silambi.	Night halt	Thridangbi VHS
08 DAY	Activity	Thridangbi: Explore Yongkola and experience the community life	Night halt	Thridangbi VHS
09 DAY	Activity	Thridangbi - Bumthang	Night halt	Paro
10 DAY	Activity	Bumthang - Paro	Night halt	Paro
08 DAY	Activity	Depart from Paro International		





Mongar Dzong view

HISTORY & CULTURE

Photo Courtesy: bhutanpeylkheel.com

HISTORY & CULTURE

Cultural Map of Mongar



Mongar town



Photo Courtesy: Fb, Sherimuhing Gewog Administration



Historical Sites & Heritage



Photo Courtesy: bhutandreamcatchers.com

MONGAR DZONG

This is the administrative building of the Mongar Dzongkhag (District) which sits on a slope overlooking the Mongar town. The dzong was built in 1930 upon the command of the third King of Bhutan. The dzong was to replace the Zhongar dzong which was destroyed by fire in 1929.

Unlike the old dzongs in Bhutan with one main entrance, Mongar dzong has two main doors. One door is for administrative building, while the other for the religious people. The modernized dzong preserved the ancient construction style of not using any nails. Majestic in its structure, the dzong has an Utse (central tower) which hosts the sanctum for protective deities. The central tower also hosts shrines of Buddha, Guru Rinpoche and Zhabdrung - the gods mostly worshipped by Bhutanese.

The dzong conducts its annual Tshechu (religious festival) usually towards the last months of the calendar. Local people gather in the courtyard of the dzong to witness the elaborate festival, lasting for three days. Most of the masked dances performed by monks during the Tshechu are considered to have originated in the region.



Photo Courtesy: TCB

THE RUINS OF ZHONGAR DZONG

Zhongar Dzong is believed to have been built around 17th century. The legend has the local king named Karpo Dung who invited a renowned architect, Bala, from western Bhutan to build the dzong. While surveying the area, the architect is said to have sighted a white stone shaped like a bowl. It is said that he also had a dream of the same bowl. So, he called the place Zhongkar ('Zhong' meaning a bowl and 'Kar' white).

The dzong was built based on the model that Bala made from sticks. It was a massive structure with four main buildings. The buildings looked flawless with all stones arranged to their best fit. It was a master piece. However, when the dzong was complete, the king changed his mind and wanted to acclaim the dzong as his own achievement. So, the king killed the architect. The dying architect cursed the king and the dzong to collapse. A parallel story says that the king instead cut off the right hand of the architect before his death. The curse of the architect brought ill fate to successive kings who ruled the dzong.

The dzong became the administrative powerhouse controlling all districts of the eastern Bhutan. Years later the dzong was destroyed by an earthquake and fire bringing its glory to the ruins. Perhaps, the curse came to be true? The architect is said to be reborn as a giant snake that loiters the ruins.

HISTORY & CULTURE



Photo Courtesy: dorjipenjore.wordpress.com

MASANG DAZA BURIAL GROUND

In 2004, a mass grave was unearthed in a place called Masang Daza in Mongar. About 20 tombs were found in the area. The area lies on left side of the Moiri river in Lingmithang across the national highway that connect Mongar with Bumthang.

The graves are discovered when a farmer ploughing the field. The tombs, measuring 5 feet long and 18 inches wide with 14 inches of height, were made of big stone slabs. There is no account of what led to this burial site. Nearby historical sites consist of ruined castle of Tongphu King (c. 113-115), a descendant of the Tibetan prince Lhasay Tsangma, and the Zhongar Dzong.

The burial tombs of Masang Daza are a strange discovery since Bhutanese usually cremate the dead. Burial is practiced only in a few exceptional cases.



Photo Courtesy: Fb. Tshewang Dargay

THE MYTH OF TONGPHU GYALPO

Tongphu was a valley kingdom that existed in ancient Bhutan. The place is located a little away from Yongkala in Thridangbi village in Mongar.

The story of a Tongphu king is about an obsessed, the king wanted to see the house of his queen directly from his palace window. He ordered his ministers and the subjects to bring down the mountain. It was a mammoth task that his subjects had to endure. Realizing the mountain cannot be brought down easily, people planned to bring down the king instead.

The king was assassinated in an archery match with the neighboring kingdom. But before he died, the king predicted that he would be reborn in Tibet. People of Tongphu must come to find him bringing him the pear from the tree beside his palace.

Anarchy prevailed in Tongphu after the king's death. When heard of the king's rebirth, the people went to Tibet to bring him back. Among many children found playing outside Lhasa in Tibet, a boy recognized the pear from the tree. While bringing him back, the boy seems to have asked the entourage that he will settle in the place they were resting. He feared he might face the similar fate of his previous life. The people agreed to the boy's wishes and the boy went on to establish a lineage of family called Dhung Nagpo in Ura, Bumthang.



Photo Courtesy: bhutanambassadorholidays.com

KENGKHAR NAGTSHANG

The Naktshang was built by Drungpa (regional head) Tandin, the last regional administrator of Kengkhar province. The Drungpa started the construction of the majestic manor in 1951 and took three years to complete the structure.

Village elders say the raw materials for the construction of the Naktshang were brought from far-flung villages, ferried on their bare backs. The stones were collected from Neykorlok and Dungmanma, woods from Tongla, and water from Wangkhochoi and Sangdaree.

The Naktshang, apart from serving as the office of the Drungpa and his subordinates, was also utilized as a prison. It was renovated in the 1980s and handed over to the gewog administration who continue to use it as their official administrative centre.



Festivals



Photo Courtesy: bhutanage.com

KHARPHU BON FESTIVAL

From the village of Tsamang originates one of eastern Bhutan's most well known, yet currently declining, community festivals – Kharpbu. This biannual event is wholly organized by the village community and follows an age-old tradition that predates the introduction of Buddhism in Bhutan.

The festival lasts for seven days and draws the attention of the entire community. It consists of a series of rituals, all-night-long exchanges of songs and dances and, as one researcher puts it, “thoroughly enjoyable symbolic subversion of traditional gender roles”.

The festival denotes profound significance and symbolism. Among others, it is about community prosperity, good harvest, timely rainfall, good health, promoting conceiving of child among couples, chasing the evils away, receiving blessings, and ensuring the continuity of an ancient tradition.



Photo Courtesy: bhutantimes.bt

YADI SANGNGAG CHOLING LHAKHANG

Sangngag Choling Lhakhang is a 20-minute uphill walk from the highway at Bachoe. Considered sacred and one of the oldest temples around, it was most probably built in the 18th century.

Two annual Tshechus are being held at the temple. The one-day Trelde Tshechu is held on the 10th day of the 5th Month of the Bhutanese calendar, while the three-day annual Tshechu coincides with the 10th month of the Bhutanese calendar.

Yadi, about 39 kilometers on the lateral highway between Mongar and Trashigang, derived its name from the letter “Ya” inscribed on a stone.

Apart from individual healing rituals, the Jomo performs annual household rituals to ensure the vitality and fertility of household members, animals and crops.

HISTORY & CULTURE



Photo Courtesy: facebook.com/drametsepaa/posts

KANGSO CHHENMO

One major annual event of Drametse monastery is the three-day annual Kangso Chhenmo (the festival of Vajra dances and rituals) held during the 10th month of the Bhutanese calendar. People from all over the neighboring regions and tourists gather to witness the sacred treasure Vajra dances revealed by Terton Pema Lingpa.

The first day of the festival is dedicated to unfurling the Pema Lingpa Thongdrol, the first of its kind in the world. This is followed by the performance of 10 sacred dances including the Drametse Nga-chham (the Mask Dance of the Drummers of Drametse).

The second day comprises the thanks giving ceremony called Tenzug Korchham dedicated to the tutelary deities followed by seven sacred dances. The festival concludes on the third day with five different mask dances which are based on the religious texts of Peling Terchoe. Some of these sacred Vajra dances are performed only at Drametse monastery.



Photo Courtesy: eastasiaforum.org

DRAMETSE NGA-CHHAM

Drametse Nga-chham or the “Mask Dance of the Drums of Drametse” was choreographed in Drametse monastery in the 16th century following a vision of Guru Rinpoche’s Zangtopelri (Copper-Colored Mountain Paradise) by the founder, Kunga Gyeltshen, the great grandson of Terton Pema Lingpa.

The dance features 16 masked male dancers and 10 musicians. They first perform a prayer dance in the main shrine, before appearing one by one in the courtyard of the monastery. The dance has two parts: a calm, contemplative part to represent the peaceful deities and a rapid, athletic part for the wrathful ones. This dance has been performed for almost five centuries all over Bhutan, making it a quintessence of Bhutanese identity. It is now an integral part of Tshechus around Bhutan.

Due to its worldly, spiritual and artistic values, Dramétsé Nga-chham was labeled a “Masterpiece of the Intangible Heritage” at the Third Proclamation of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO in Paris in November 2005.



Photo Courtesy: Fb, KingJigmeKhesar

KHANDRO KONGSHAG FESTIVAL

This festival is performed once every three years in Tsakaling village between the 25th and 30th days of the 11th month of the Bhutanese calendar. It is a confession prayer to cleanse defilements, ward off obstacles and misfortunes, and bring prosperity and wellbeing to the communities.

The festival attracts many devotees and spectators. Besides mask dances, there is a tradition of villagers going around every household in the locality as far as Takhambi, a seven-hour walk from Tsakaling Lhakhang. The youth, in particular, spend the entire duration of the festival circumambulating the temple and engaging in courtship.

Tsakaling Lhakhang was founded in 1620 by Sazin Tenzin Dhendup, a son of Yonphu Choeje in Trashigang.



Photo Courtesy: bhutanculturalatlas.clcs.edu.bt

LHA (HA) FESTIVAL

Every year, in the sixth month of the Bhutanese calendar, the Ganglakong Kilikhar community celebrates the Lha (Ha) festival to wish soil fertility, timely rainfall, healthy cattle, and bumper harvests. Two households - Thogpa and Wogpa - host the festival while the others contribute materials and participate.

Similar to the Ha festival in Gortshom village in Lhuentse, the main feature of the Ganglakong festival is the singing of a verse called "Wayo". 'Wayo Bo' means "Summon Wayo" while "Wayo Wayo Bjing" is a refrain after each Wayo couplet. Recited without a clear sequence, most couplets contain lewd and ribald phrases, expressions that echo the spirit of the celebration or the shedding of inhibitions in sexual behavior. A slightly variant "Wayo" is sung in different communities where the festival is celebrated.

Traditionally presided over by a Bon practitioner known as Lha Bon, the festival has lost some significance in recent years. Today's generation know little about it, which once gave this community and the neighbouring villages a sense of purpose, unity and festivity.

HISTORY & CULTURE



Photo Courtesy: facebook.com/permalink.php

MONGAR TSHECHU

The three-day annual Tshechu held in November is one of the biggest crowd-pullers in the district and celebrated with much pomp and fanfare. The famous Drametse Nga-chham is one of the dances performed.

Held at the courtyard of Mongar Dzong, the annual Tshechu draws spectators from as far as Lhuntse, Trashigang and Trashi Yangtse districts, and communities from the dzongkhag's 17 gewogs. The district administration declares a three-day public holiday to add prominence to the event as one of the most important cultural functions of the dzongkhag.

The Tshechu is a time of reprieve for the people as a majority of those attending the festival are farmers who take the event as a time to rejoice and converge with long lost friends and relatives. The Tshechu culminates with the unfurling of the grand Thongdrel (giant applique) before the crack of dawn on the final day.



Photo Courtesy: Fb. Pema Lodey

DUEZA BON FESTIVAL

The annual festival of Dueza, a bon ritual, is observed by the remote communities of Kengkhar gewog. While the origin and significance of the ritual is vague, locals say the tradition has been practiced for generations and is still a significant part of their customary annual rituals practiced today.

The ritual is observed in the month of October corresponding to the 15th day of the ninth lunar month and villagers from far-flung communities gather at a place called Duezama, where they are treated to a customary feast of walnuts, steamed tapioca and alcohol. The caretaker of Dungkar Lhakhang is usually chosen to perform the rituals and dons a head-gear made of marigold flowers.

Village elderly say the rituals involved sacrificing a cattle as ceremonial offering in the distant past; however, today it has been replaced with a cattle head-shaped effigy kneaded from dough. The villagers also offer fresh fishes wrapped in banana leaves which are placed in the altar in front of the cattle-head idol. The day-long ritual culminates with the village community hauling the cattle-head effigy to the Dungkar Lhakhang where it is disposed off in a bonfire.



Photo Courtesy: flickr.com

NGATSHANG TSHECHU

Ngatshang is located about 25 kilometers away from Mongar on the Mongar-Trashigang highway. One of the main attractions of the village is the monastic school of Ngatshang, known as the Tashi Chopheling monastery.

The communities of the three chiwogs of Phanas, Ngatshang and Thumbari gather at the Ngatshang Tashi Chhophel monastery to witness the biggest annual festival in their gewog. To mark the event, 200-odd households contribute money, three dreys (a unit of grain measure) of local rice, five balls of cheese and half a kilogram of butter each.

The three-day annual Tshechu is held in the month of December corresponding to the 13th day of the 11th month of Bhutanese calendar. Devotees witness the Guru Tshengye (eight manifestations of Guru Rinpoche) mask dances and the unfurling of the Guru Nangsi Zilnoen thongdroel, a giant appliqué, on the final day of the festival.



Photo Courtesy: Fb, HeavenlyBhutan

KHARAM FESTIVAL

Kharam literally means curse and the Kharam festival revolves around Kharamshing, a phallus carved on a wood. Kharam is celebrated on the 29th day of the 9th month of the Bhutanese calendar in the villages of Tsamang, Chali, Thridangbi and a few other places.

There are three forms of Kharam: those that relate to one's land (zhing gi kharam), to one's health (miyi kharam), and to one's property or cattle (nor gi kharam). On the first day of the three-day festival, Kharamshing is erected in front of houses to avert harmful influence or negative energy, and in the fields to protect crops and ensure a bountiful harvest.

The second day is dedicated to cattle, with the Kharamshing planted in cowsheds to ensure wealth in the form of livestock. The final day is dedicated to safeguarding the well-being of people. Ritualized greetings are performed to protect and avert quarrels among family members. By the end of the day, the entire landscape is dotted with the Kharamshing.



Nye (Sacred sites)



Photo Courtesy: Fb page, Druk Ge Nye

PELDEN LHAMO NYE

Palden Lhamo is one of the main protecting deities of Bhutan. She is considered an enlightened being and the protector of Buddhism. This sacred site is known to bless women who are nulliparous women (who have never given birth to a live baby). Many pilgrims visit this site to get this blessing.

This sacred site is located at an altitude of approximately 3,500 meters in the extreme north of Sherimung gewog. It takes two to three hours of hike from the Serzhong highway to reach the site.



Photo Courtesy: Fb page, transbhumantrail

THONGJAGANG WADIPA NYE

The people of Ngatshang are blessed with cattle which is their primary source of livelihood and prosperity. This blessing, they say, came in the aftermath of an unusual encounter a long time ago.

The sacred Wadipa Nye derived its name from the Tshangla dialect "Wadipa" which means a cow herder. The Nye is located at Thongja Gang in Ngatshang gewog. An account goes that deep in the forests of Korila (mountain pass), a Gomchen (lay monk) parched with thirst asked a lone cow herder there for water. Since water was very scarce in the area, the cow herder walked a long way off to his hut to get some milk instead. When he returned, the monk was nowhere to be found. It is said, the monk was none other than Guru Rinpoche himself and that cattle flourished in the village ever since the incident occurred.

HISTORY & CULTURE



Photo Courtesy: Fb. Tshering Choden

MONKHA SHERI DZONG

Sheri Dzong is located in Sherzhong gewog at the border of Trashi Yangtse and Mongar districts. Unlike the proper structure of a dzong, this religious site is a rock cave with a painting of Guru Rinpoche inside it. This site is one of the eight sacred places in Tibet and Bhutan blessed by Guru Padmasambhava.

One of the marvels of the place is the waterfall gushing out of the rock cliff. The cliff is believed to be a Bumpa (a ritual vase). The rock surface on which the waterfall looks like a mirror. The vase and mirror are used to conduct Lhasang Thrisel, which is cleaning and purification ritual for people and places to free them from obstructive and destructive forces. This is a natural wonder of the ritual.

The huge rock surface of the site is presumed to be a glass fortress. The glass refers to the pure clarity and transparency attained by Guru Rinpoche during his meditation there.



Photo Courtesy: bookmytour.bt

AJA NYE

Aja Nye is a sacred site located at Sherzhong gewog in Mongar at an altitude of 3,500 meters. The name 'Aja' is derived from the hundred imprints of the letter 'Aa' on the rock surface believed to have left by Guru Padmasambhava as a mark of attaining the perfection after three months of meditation there. The Guru was in pursuit of a demon king called Khikharathoe.

There are a lot of other sacred marvels surrounding Aja Nye. The spring water, Aja Chhu, has medicinal values that can cure about 20 diseases. Another stream called Awa Chhu falling from the cliff is said to have originated when Guru planted his walking stick on the rock surface. The base at the waterfall has a pool where pilgrims take bath to cleanse their bodies.

The Guru is said to have left the imprints of his body and feet wherever he meditated in the area. The imprints symbolized the subjugation of demons. There are 108 retreat caves where Guru meditated. Guru has hidden many sacred sites to be revealed in future by great powers. The place also has foot prints of the legendary princess, Khandro Drowa Zangmo. Lam Karma Jamyang, the disciple of the ninth Karmapa, is said to have rediscovered the nye and opened the path to pilgrims.

Cooking food over an earthen oven





Tshachu & Menchu

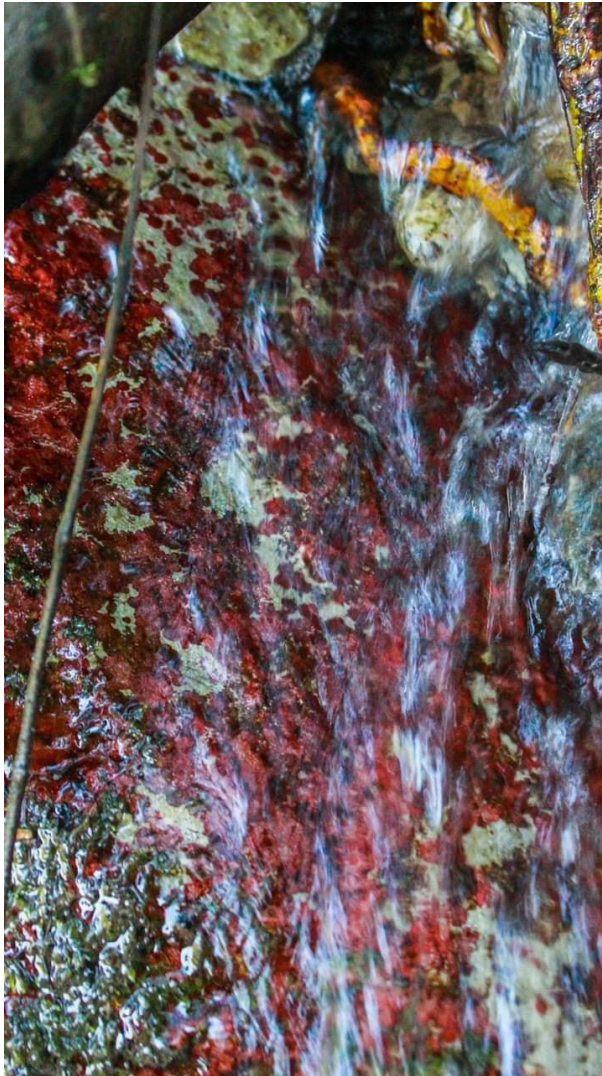
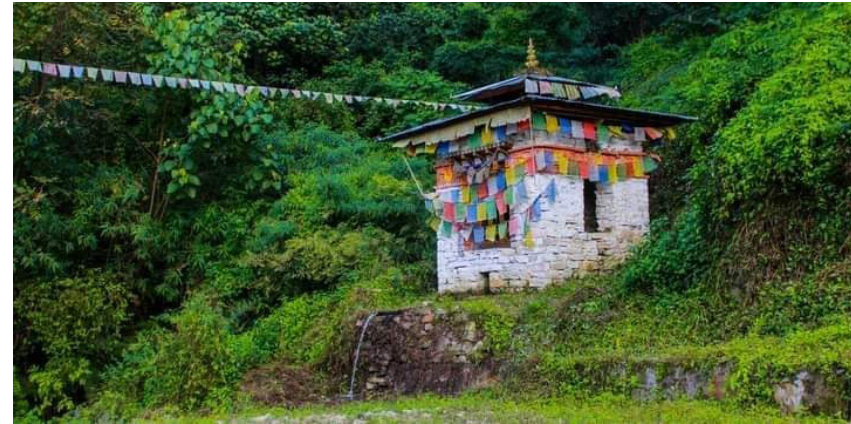


Photo Courtesy: facebook.com



NAMNING CHU

The third Namkhai Nyingpo, Jamphel Ngawang Drakpa, was on a pilgrimage from Tibet to Bodhgaya, India, when he passed away at a present-day junction just above the Mongar-Lhuentse highway. The famous Buddhist master had been poisoned at the nearby Chhali village. To prepare for cremation, Namkhai Nyingpo's Kudung (physical remains) was bathed at the nearby stream but, astonishingly, blood gushed out from the body and stained the jutting rocks around the stream. The rocks still appear red today and apparently one can also get an inimitable smell of fresh human blood. After this incident, the stream came to be known as "Namning Chu", meaning the water of Namkhai Nyingpo.

It is said that after being poisoned, Namkhai Nyingpo continued his journey further down to Kengkhar where his health deteriorated. He made an aspiration prayer to undertake the pilgrimage to Bodhgaya in his next life, left a rock footprint which is preserved at the Nyukphu Lhakhang, and retraced his journey back home. The people of Kengkhar believe that the village began to receive abundant rainfall ever since Namkhai Nyingpo visited it.

HISTORY & CULTURE



Photo Courtesy: facebook.com/pilgrimagesitesinbhutan/photos

AJA MENCHU

Blessed by Guru Rinpoche, Aja Menchu is located at an elevation of 2,513 meters, within the confines of the sacred Aja Nye. It is said that Guru Rinpoche visited the area in the form of a Garuda, a mythical bird, from which the Menchu takes its physical appearance. The pungent-smelling Menchu is believed to have numerous medicinal values including the power to cure 18 diseases such as tuberculosis, body ache, ulcer and whooping cough.

Nearby the Mechu is a pond formed by a stream called Awachu, which cascades down a rocky cliff. Legend has it that the stream came into existence after Guru Rinpoche's walking stick was implanted in the rock. The pool is warm in winter and cool in summer and a bath in it is believed to purify a person.

Aja Menchu can be reached after a two-hour drive from Yadi to Serzhong, followed by at least eight hours of walk from the foothills of Yarab village in Serzhong gewog.



Farmers blow horn to scare away wild animals from farms

Photo Courtesy: en.pcgfoundation.org



Monasteries & stupas



Photo Courtesy: facebook.com/Ugyen Chewang

WENGKHAR NAGTSHANG

Located at an elevation of 1,779 meters, Wengkhar Naktshang is well-known and revered as the birthplace of Zhabdrung Jigme Drakpa (1725-1761), the third reincarnation of Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyel. Its relics consist of religious scriptures written in gold; Zhabdrung's statues and religious objects; his personal rosary, head gear and monk's attire; and the carpet on which he prayed. On the 10th day of the 3rd month of the Bhutanese calendar, a religious ceremony takes place where the various relics are displayed to the public.

The three-storied Naktshang's ground floor is partitioned into two and was originally used to keep prisoners on one side and horses on the other. The middle floor was used as grain storage, and the third floor as living space and temple.



Photo Courtesy: en.pcgfoundation.org

TSAMANG TOKARI NUNNERY

About 500 years ago, while on his way back to Tibet from India, the 7th Karmapa Chodrak Gyatsho (1454–1506) built a temple at Tsamang Tokari. The temple has some unique relics: the sandalwood walking stick of the Karmapa brought all the way from India; a drupchu (holy spring water); his footprint on a rock; a rock footprint of his riding horse. There are also two stupas near the temple.

The temple was rebuilt and has statues of the Buddha, Guru Padmasambhava, and wall paintings of Jangchub Tungsha. In 2006, the temple was offered to Gangteng Truelku for patronage.

HISTORY & CULTURE



Photo Courtesy: mongar.gov.bt

YAKGANG LHA KHANG

Built in the 16th century by Terton Pema Lingpa's youngest son, Sangdag, this Lhakhang is one of Bhutan's most iconic religious structures. The temple is known for its unique and rare artifacts, among others, a statue of the Buddha discovered by Terton Pema Lingpa from Mebartsho, a three-sided Phurpa (ritual dagger) discovered by Pema Lingpa from Ugordra in Tibet, the skull of a Dakini from Samye Chimphu Nadrak, and a skull of the king of water sprits - the Nagas.

The temple also houses an ancient armor and masks, musical instruments, weapons, and xylograph blocks. The ground floor has statues of the Buddhas (past, present and future), Guru Rinpoche, Chenrizig, Terton Pema Lingpa, and Gyapo Lhashang.

It is believed that three statues flew away when Choekhor Deb, a local king, tried to open the treasure chest revealed by Pema Lingpa: one to Jakar dzong, the second to Dongkala monastery, and the third to Yakgang Lhakhang.



Photo Courtesy: Heavenly Bhutan Travels

DRAMETSE MONASTERY

One of eastern Bhutan's most notable religious sites, Drametse Lhakhang was founded in 1511 by Ani Choeten Zangmo, the granddaughter of Terton Pema Lingpa (1450-1521). It was further blessed by the birth of three successive incarnations of Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal: Zhabdrung Jigme Drakpa (1791-1830), Zhabdrung Jigme Norbu (1831-1861), and Zhabdrung Jigme Chogyal (1862-1904).

The monastery contains the Kudung (the physical remains) of Ani Choeten Zangmo, and Kapala of Dakini with the self-arisen syllables OM AH HUNG imprinted on it. The Kapala - believed to have been hidden by Guru Rinpoche and Khandro Yeshe Tshogyal after completing the construction of Samye Monastery in 769 AD - was rediscovered by Terton Pema Lingpa and kept in the Taen Gam (treasure box) of Tamzhing Lhuendrup Choeling until Ani Choeten Zangmo received it as a share of inheritance. Apart from housing rare collection of important manuscripts, murals and religious sculptures, the monastery is home of the Dance of the Drums of Drame, which is listed as a masterpiece of oral and intangible World Heritage by UNESCO.



Photo Courtesy: Thukten Thukten

KADAM LHAKHANG

The Kadam Lhakhang is a community-owned temple in Chaskhar gewog. It was founded by Nubcho Drungpa Rigzin Dorji, and currently monks reside there. The annual religious festival at the temple is held during the 11th month of the Bhutanese calendar. The main relic inside the temple is a statue of Guru Pema Jungney.

Similarly, there is a Kadam Lhakhang in Thangrong gewog. It was built by Thinley Wangchuk and his teacher Gyeltshen of Changshing Goenpa in 1968. The temple can be reached from Yakpogang, Sherichu, Kilikhar and Drepong.



Photo Courtesy: Fb, Anguished Mind's Mirror

PONGCHULA LHAKHANG

Pongchula Goenpa near Mongar is located at an elevation of 2,010 meters, overlooking the breathtaking valleys below.

An oral account says that a I am from Paro settled in this region centuries ago. One day, while meditating at an ancient chorten (stupa), he heard voices chanting the six syllable mantra “Om Ma Ni Pad Me Hung” associated with Chenrizig (Avalokiteshvara). He realized that the chant emanated from the stupa. Considering it an auspicious omen, he named the place Potola, associating it with the paradise of Chenrizig. Later the name was changed from Potola to Pongchula.

The temple houses relics such as the statues of Yoepamed (Amitabha) and Shakyamuni Buddha.

HISTORY & CULTURE



Photo Courtesy: Anguished Mind's Mirror

DUNGKHAR LHAKHANG

Located in Kengkhar, the temple is owned by the community. It houses sacred relics such as Chugchizhey (Avalokiteshvara with eleven heads), Chagtong Chentong (Avalokiteshvara with a thousand arms and eyes) and Chenrezig (Avalokiteshvara).

The temple, built upon the command of the first king of Bhutan Gongsar Ugyen Wangchuck, hosts its annual Trelde Tsechu (festival) on the 10th day of the 5th month of the Bhutanese calendar.



Photo Courtesy: ommons.wikimedia.org

TSHAKALING LHAKHANG

This is one of the oldest and most sacred temples in Mongar district and is closely associated with Tsakaling Choje, who descended from Sangdag, the youngest son of Terton Pema Lingpa.

In 1620, Lam Tenzin Doendrup, heir to Trashigang Yonphu Choeje, founded the temple and named it Tsakaling. The temple became one of the key seats of Pema Lingpa's tradition of Buddhism in eastern Bhutan. However, the temple later fell into disrepair with its spiritual sanctity also declining, as religious transmissions and empowerments were rarely performed. The temple was thus handed over to Gangtey Truelku, a scion of the Peling tradition.



Photo Courtesy: bayuel.com

LARJAB DRAKAR CHOELING

Surrounded by alpine forests and mountains, Larjab Drakar Choeling Lhakhang in Yakpogang, Mongar gewog, was built between 1701 and 1707 by Drupthob Kuenzang Chophel, a disciple of the 9th abbot of Bhutan, Je Khenpo Shakya Rinchen. A story has it that, at the spot where the temple was built, Drupthob Kuenzang Chophel subdued an evil spirit which had assumed a human form. It is also said the temple was miraculously built by sky dancers (Dakini), empowered by the Drupthob's wisdom.

Resembling a Rhino's Horn, the temple is said to have been built with small pebbles at the bottom (foundation), with bigger boulders used as the construction grew in height. Over the years, given its sanctity, the temple attained a special status as the "Taktshang of the east". Today, the monastery has a Drubdey (a retreat for meditation) for lay monks established by Gyeltshen Truelku. It is also said that disciples of Drupthob Kuenzang Chophel built a bridge, known as Drubthob Zampa, between Lingmethang and the then Zhongar Dzong in a single day.



Photo Courtesy: སྤྱི་བདེ་མཁའ་ལུང་རྟོག་པ་ཆོས་ཀྱི་དགའ་ཆོལ་ཡུན་ལྷོ། རྫོང་ལྷན་ཁྲུང་ཁག།

**KIDHEYKHAR LUNGTOG
CHOKEY GATSHEL**

Kidheykhar Lungtog Chokey Gatshel Shedra is a monastic school located about four kilometers from Mongar town. The main relics of the monastery are the statues of Buddha, Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal and Guru Rinpoche. The temple has instituted a drubdey (meditation center) with about 200 monks headed by the Lam Neten of Mongar Rabdey.

His Holiness the 70th Je Khenpo of Bhutan, Truelku Jigme Choeda, consecrated the drubdey in 2017.



Photo Courtesy: fb, His Holiness late Aja Lama Zhenphen Drodul Dorji Tenzin

DUNGKAR CHOLING LHAKHANG

Once in ruins the Dungkar Choling Lhakhang was constructed again and is considered one of the most sacred among the three temples located within the Aja Nye area. It was built by the Buli Truelku of Bumthang, Khachab Namkha Dorji.

Buli Truelku, in a vision, saw three Dakinis who promised to supply the rocks required to build the temple. Blocks of stones were indeed brought until the construction was over. The temple was renovated by Buli Truelku's son, Lam Dorji Tenzin, in 1969 and completed in 1973.



Photo Courtesy: facebook.com/ Anguished Mind's Mirror

NYUKPHU GOENPA

The temple is located in Kengkhar gewog, almost three hours' drive from Mongar district headquarters and was founded by Lama Sherab Jungney in the 18th century.

An account claims that the Zhabdrung had prophesized Lama Sherab Jungney to visit Kengkhar and tame the wild bears which infested the region's forests and settlements. Oral accounts also claim that Sherab Jungney while meditating in a cave near the present temple created two Drupchus, a male- and a female spring, to end water scarcity in the locality.

It is also said that Sherab Jungney, at one time, performed a miracle on a rock where a stupa stands to this day. The stupa is said to bless childless couples with children, including wealth and prosperity to the many faithful who seek its blessings.

The temple houses statues of Buddha, Guru Rinpoche and Avalokiteshvara, which are believed to have been crafted by the founder himself. It also has a foot imprint of the third Namkhai Nyingpo.



Photo Courtesy: facebook.com/GyeltshenTruelku

NGAGDRA DORJI CHOEGAR

Ngagdra Dorji Choegar (Institute for Vajrayana studies) at Kurizampa, Mongar, provides teachings, blessings and initiations before monks embark on meditation in retreat centres. Established by Gyeltshen Truelku Kuenzang Tenpai Gyeltshen in 2007, the institute is the only one of its kind in the world since the tradition was begun by Kuenkhen Pema Karpo (1527–1592) about 500 years ago.

Gyeltshen Truelku was born in 1953 and practiced abstinence for many years, following which he constructed 166 hermitage for Buddhist practitioners. He guided and trained several practitioners, including nuns, in the monasteries and meditation centres of the five eastern Dzongkhags. He also established nine meditation centers, including three for nuns. Most recently, Gyeltshen Truelku has also established a centre in Thimphu and sends his followers who have undergone meditation course for three to nine years to perform rituals for the public.

HISTORY & CULTURE



Photo Courtesy: fb, Drametse/འཇམ་དཔལ་ལྷོ་མོ།



DRUBCHU GOENPA

Drubchu Goenpa (monastery) in Drametse is renowned as the site where Ani Choeten Zangmo, the great granddaughter of Tertön Pema Lingpa, meditated for 13 years. Ani Choeten Zangmo is considered to be a highly accomplished teacher who contributed vastly to the spread of Buddhism in eastern Bhutan. She is said to have practiced and eventually mastered the Lama Norbu Gyamtsho cycle of Terma teaching of Pema Lingpa in a hermitage there. Drubchu Goenpa has a spring which is named after Choeten Zangmo and, among numerous others, a sacred statue of Guru Nangsid Zilnoen.

While at Drubchu Goenpa, Ani Choeten Zangmo blew a conch shell and produced a melodious sound. The sound was interpreted as an auspicious omen to build, in 1511, a monastery at the nearby hilltop. The monastery is none other than the majestic Drametse monastery, the bastion of Pema Lingpa's teachings in eastern Bhutan.



Languages

HISTORY & CULTURE



Photo Courtesy: bletour.com

CHALIPAI KHA

The language of Chali, or Chalipaikha, is spoken by households with about 2,000 people in the three villages of Gonpa Chali, Wengmakhar and Chali itself. Though no one has any idea about the origin of the dialect, one story has it that when god distributed languages to the people in the world, there was none left for the people of Chali. So all the sacks which carried the languages were emptied and whatever remained was given to the Chalipas. The dialect thus is said to contain a word or two from many languages around the world.

Another story goes that once the people of Bumthang, Kheng and Kurtoe met at Chali and decided to live together, eventually developing a common language. The new language, later, turned out to be Chalipaikha which is largely a mixture of Bumthangkha, Khengkha and Kurtoepkha.



Photo Courtesy: Fb, རྩལ་པུ་མེད་

GONGDUE KHA

Gongduekha, also known as Gongduebikha, is an endangered Sino-Tibetan language spoken by about 1,000 people in a few villages located near the Kurichu river in Gongdue gewog, located south of Mongar district. The language has a complex verbal morphology.

Gongduekha speaking natives are said to have come from hunters who would move from place to place at times, and had extensive contact with the Black Mountain Mönpas before the arrival of East Bodish languages in Bhutan.

Believed to be one of the oldest dialects in the country, Gongduekha is intertwined with several other languages like Tshangla, Bumtapkha, Khengkha, and Dzongkha. Today, the dialect is endemic to the villages of Bakla, Daksa, Damkhar, Pam, Pangthang, and Yangbari.

In 2004, research by the Himalayan Language Project reported that Gongduekha was among the 15 dialects in Bhutan that were on the verge of extinction due to rapid socio-economic change and demographic pressure.



Photo Courtesy: sonamwangchuk.wordpress.com

TSAMANGPAI ALO

Alo is a popular song in central and eastern Bhutan, generally sung solo and without musical instruments or accompanying dance. There are at least eight categories of Alo songs, of which the one originating from Tsamang village is considered to be the earliest. As such, the lyrics are mostly in Chocha Ngacha, a dialect spoken by the Tsamang people.

Alo is essentially a song of sorrow, rendered soulfully, with themes hinging on human relationships. It is performed on occasions like the departure of friends or family members to far-off places or when one is in a solitary situation, such as tending cattle or working in a field. Alo is commonly sung by women but the lyrics can vary from region to region. In Lhuentse, the song is known as Kurtodpai Alo, in Yangtse as Yangtsepai Alo, and in the Tshangla-speaking belt as Tshangla Alo and Dungsampai Alo.



Other attractions



Photo Courtesy: Heavenly Bhutan Travels

KURICHHU HYDROPOWER PLANT

The Kurichhu Hydropower Plant is located at Gyalpozhang on the Kurichhu river in eastern Bhutan. This run-of-river scheme project was started in 1995 and completed in 2001. It was commissioned in September 2001, and began commercial operations a year later. It has a dam 55-meter high, crest length of 285 meters and a surface power house located at the toe of the dam. The plant has an installed capacity of 60 MW, consisting of four units of 15 MW each, and a mean annual energy generation capacity of 400 million units.

The plant was constructed at a cost of Nu 5,600 million, funded by the government of India, and inaugurated by His Majesty Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck, who was then Trongsa Penlop, in April, 2006.

HISTORY & CULTURE



Photo Courtesy: yayoishionoiri.com

NETTLE-FIBER WEAVING

A very common plant that grows in Bhutan's countryside is the stinging nettle (*Urtica dioica*) whose bark fiber is used to weave beautiful home-made textiles. The tradition is common in the eastern districts of Lhuentse, Pemagatshel, Trashigang and Zhemgang where the age-old craft thrives to this day.

The nettle plant, which is easily available in cool and temperate areas, is cut to extract fiber from its bark. The fibers are then dried before undergoing a series of processes to finally turn into a yarn. In the past, nettle yarn was used to make ropes and was also spun to weave mats, bags and blankets. It was also used for making traditional bowstring.

Today, with support from the government and civil society organizations, the local people have diversified their products and nettle weavers now produce intricate home-made jackets, table mats, kiras and other everyday household textiles that are in demand by the locals as well as tourists.



Photo Courtesy: Fb, Phrumsengla

PHRUMSENGLA NATIONAL PARK

Located in the heart of Bhutan, amid gigantic mountains which are more than 3,000 meters high and primeval forests ranging from the alpine to the subtropical, the park has more than 340 species of birds including the globally threatened rufous-necked hornbill, black-necked cranes, blood pheasant, wood snipe, nuthatch, blue-naped pitta, brown wood owl, booted eagle, ultramarine flycatcher and back-headed shrike babbler.

There are also 68 mammalian species which inhabit the park including black bear, red panda, capped langur, Himalayan black bear and Malayan giant squirrel. In addition, there are about 620 plants species.

The park has 94% of its area under forest cover and is spread over the districts of Bumthang, Mongar, Lhuentse and Zhemgang.



Photo Courtesy: mountainhazelnuts.com



HAZELNUT PLANTATION

Headquartered in Lingmethang, Mountain Hazelnuts is a social enterprise that produces premium quality hazelnuts in Bhutan. It was established as a public-private-community partnership in 2008.

This agricultural venture envisions providing long-term source of income to vulnerable communities of smallholder farmers who make up about 70% of the country's population. The project has also created an inclusive and environmentally sustainable value chain, reduced rural-to-urban migration, and prevented land erosion.

Apart from providing free saplings and technical assistance to the farmers, growers can take their harvest to collection points and sell it to Mountains Hazelnut Ventures Private Limited (MHVPL) at a guaranteed minimum price once the trees start bearing fruits four-five years after plantation.

Today, 16 farmers from Mongar's 17 gewogs are engaged in hazelnut plantation with Drametse, Chaskar and Drepong considered as the chief nut producing regions.

HISTORY & CULTURE



Photo Courtesy: rb.bt/gallery

BHUTAN AGRO INDUSTRIES LTD

Located at Lingmethang, south of the district about 28 kms from the Dzongkhag headquarters, Bhutan Agro Industries Ltd is a fruit and vegetable processing plant established in 2019 to help create a market outlet and enhance the income and livelihood of the farmers of eastern Bhutan.

The chief products are packaged drinking water and canned juices of orange, mango, pineapple and passion fruits. The plant also manufactures pickles, jams, marmalade which are in high demand not only in the country but some parts of India and Bangladesh.

The plant has become one of the major outlets for orchard farmers in the east, and growers from as far as Trashigang and Pemagatshel sell their fruits which have become a major source of livelihood for them.



Photo Courtesy: Fb, ARDC Wengkhær

WENGKHAR AGRICULTURE RESEARCH

Located 11 kms away from Mongar towards Trashigang, the Agriculture Research Development Centre (ARDC) at Wengkhær is one of the biggest centers of its kind in the region and focuses on horticulture, maize and minor cereals.

As the institutional home for the National Maize Commodity Program, ARDC-Wengkhær is responsible for coordination, planning and implementation of the maize research and development activities in the country.

The various programmes and scientific research provide farmers of the eastern districts with agricultural inputs and training to help make their production more diverse and resilient. Inputs include hybrid seeds for vegetables such as chilli, tomato, onion, garlic, mustard green, asparagus, broccoli and mushroom, and for fruits such as, apricot, soft shell walnut, avocado, mango, litchi, dragon fruit and passion fruit.

The centre also helps locals and farmers establish integrated farms, or a multi-tier cropping system, which allows them to grow crops of different heights together on the same piece of land - thus making efficient and economical use of scarce land and water.



Photo Courtesy: actualtravelbhutan.com

KURICHHU RAFTING/KAYAKING

Kuri Chhu flows from the Mt. Kula Gangri (7,532 meters) glaciers in Tibet, crosses Lhuntse Dzong and joins the Kholong Chhu and Drangme Chhu forming the Manas river which drains into the Brahmaputra river in India.

The river is considered to be ideal for white water sport with its steep slope, great force, scenic landscape and fast rapids (class V - class VI). The river provides three runs and the 14-kilometer upper run and the 20-kilometre middle run are suitable for kayaking while the 10-kilometre lower run is suitable for both rafting and kayaking.



Rice fields in Bazur Village, Drametse Gewog

Accommodations

Photo Courtesy: Eb, Trans Bhutan Trail

ACCOMMODATIONS



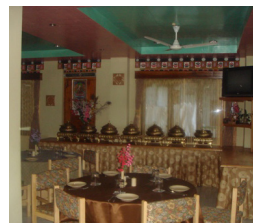
Hotel Druk Zhongar

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E-mail: drukzhongar@gmail.com



Hotel Druk Zom

Shongar Lam, Mongar

Phone: +975 4 641206

E-mail: hoteldrukzom@yahoo.com

Amenities/services

- Bar
- Business centre
- Conference hall
- Foreign currency exchange
- Taxi service on call

Restaurant

- A la carte and buffet
- Bhutanese, Chinese, Continental and Indian

Rooms

- Deluxe Single 5
- Deluxe Double (Twin) 9
- Deluxe Double (King) 3
- Super Deluxe Double (Twin) 2
- Super Deluxe Double (King) 1
- Suite 1
- Suite (Presidential) 1
- Attached bath
- Balcony
- Cable TV
- Distance from Mongar town (in kms): 0

Amenities/services

- Bar
- Taxi service on call

Restaurant

- A la carte and buffet
- Bhutanese, Chinese, Continental, Indian and Swiss

Rooms

- Standard rooms 10
- Attached bath
- Balcony
- Cable TV
- Choice of double and twin beds
- Distance from Mongar town (in kms): 0



Amenities/services

- Restaurant
- Outdoor patio
- Spa & wellness
- Wi-fi internet
- Business center
- Conference room
- Courtyard
- Laundry services
- Free parking

Rooms

- Cable TV
- Wireless internet
- Mini Fridge
- Essentials (towels, soap, shampoo, moisturizer)
- Air conditioning/fan & room heating
- Laundry Services

Wangchuk Hotel

Dzonglam, Mongar town

Tel: +975 4 641522

Reservation: +975 77126834

E-mail: monger@wangchukhotel.com



Amenities/services

- Bar
- Conference facilities
- Event management

Rooms

- Single 2
- Double 4
- Twin 6

Restaurant

- A la carte and buffet
- Bhutanese, Chinese, Continental and Indian

- Distance: 26 kms from Gyelpozhing, 43 kms from Mongar town

Trogon Villa

Yongkhola, Mongar

Phone: +975 332302

Mobile: +975 77110133 / 17420890

E-mail: trogonvillareservations@gmail.com

ACCOMMODATIONS



Changala VHS
Location: Thridangbi
Phone: +975 17750349



Thinley Wangdi VHS
Location: Thridangbi
Phone: 17644057/17600764



Khalong Goenpa House VHS
Location: Khalong Goenpa, Drametse
Facilities: Outdoor toilet and washing facilities, hot water in bucket, traditional
Surroundings: Drametse monastery, Drupchhu, forest hikes.



Maize hung to dry on wooden rafters

Photo Courtesy: bhutantimes.bt

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21. Bhutan Food Culture "For Bhutanese and Tourists"
22. Fishes of Bhutan
23. Buddhist religious sites
24. Bhutanese forum for food and agriculture



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