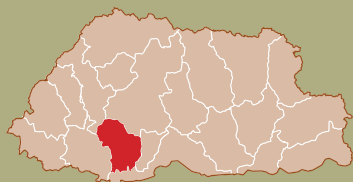


FIRST EDITION  
2022



SAMPLE TOUR ITINERARY



HISTORY AND CULTURE



ACCOMMODATIONS

# DAGANA

## TOURISM ATTRACTIONS







# DAGANA

## 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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*View from Dho Namkhai Kaw*

Photo Courtesy: [heavenlybhutan.com](http://heavenlybhutan.com)



# 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 DISTRICT

## About the Dzongkhag

The Dzongkhag is located south of Thimphu and Wangdue Phodrang valleys. Dagana's name is derived from two sources: Darkarla (the provincial deity) and Darkanang (realm of the White Prayer Flags). The district is administered from the historic Daga Trashiyangtse Dzong built in 1651 on the command of Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyel.

Dagana stretches all the way down to the southern frontiers of Bhutan. The district is a verdant region with more than 80% of its area under forest cover.

The southern valleys of the district are swathed in lush sub-tropical jungles, littered with occasional patches of picturesque village settlements and glassy brooks and streams. The district is home to some of the rarest mammals and birds, including the majestic one-horned Asian rhino and the gorgeous Bear's Pochard, listed as critically endangered by the IUCN.

With exquisite hiking trails that cruise through uncharted river valleys, water-falls and limestone cave stare revered as abodes of natural spirits, Dagana's misty-green hills and craggy mountains has a distinct aura of an enigma and will capture the eye of the adept photographer.

Ngalops and the Lhotshampas comprise the main ethnic groups in this district. Agriculture is the main source of livelihood with orange, cardamon and rice being the main cash crop of every household.

Among its cultural heritage, Dagana is known for its three-stone megaliths known as "Sky Pillar Rock" (Do Namkhair Kaw), "The Rock of Ancient Steps" (Do Kelpai Genthey) and "The Frontier Sky Fortress" (Tha Namkhair Dzong).

## DAGANA AT A GLANCE

<b>National Statistical Bureau</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>EDUCATION</b>	
Area (sq. km)	1722.83	Tertiary Institute under RUB	0
Altitude (masl.)	185 - 3800	Central Schools	0
Dungkhags	1 (Lhamoidzangkha)	Higher Secondary Schools	3
Gewogs	14	Middle Secondary Schools	3
Chiwogs	70	<b>AGRICULTURE</b>	
Villages	224	Dry land (in hectares)	5,432.334
Gungtong	231	Wet land (in hectares)	18,167.165
		Orchard (in hectares)	1,922.504
<b>POPULATION</b>		<b>INFRASTRUCTURE</b>	
Total	25,280	Length of Road	1,011.76
Population density (per sq. km)	15	Telephone connections (nos)	142
<b>HEALTH</b>		Internet connections	26
Hospitals	3	Households electrified (%)	99.7
Indigenous Units	3	Religious Institutions	59
Basic Health Units (BHUs)	7	Religious monuments	134
Rural water supply coverage (%)	98.5	Tourist visited (2019)	2

## DISTANCE BY ROAD

From	To	Distance	Duration
Paro	Thimphu	65 kms	1 hr 15 mins
Thimphu	Wangdue	70 kms	3 hrs
Wangdue	Dagana	185 kms	7 hrs
Wangdue	Sunkosh	125 kms	4 hrs 20 mins
Sunkosh	Dagapela	44 kms	2 hrs 30 mins
Dagapela	Dagana	43 kms	1 hr
Dagana	Drujeygang	72 kms	3 hrs 30 mins
Dagana	Tsirang	115.2 kms	4 hrs 20 mins
Tsirang	Sarpang	104.5 kms	4 hrs
Sarpang	Gelephu	18 kms	45 mins
Gelephu	P/ling	204.5 kms	5 hrs
Gelephu	Guwahati, Assam	232 kms	5 hrs 30 mins
Gelephu	Bagdora Airport	330.8 kms	7 hrs 45 mins

# Map of human settlements

## LEGEND

- Road
- River
- Human Settlement
- ⊙ Dzung
- ⊙ Gewog



# DAGALA TREK – A JOURNEY THROUGH A THOUSAND LAKES.



Nature, Culture  
Mahseer Fishing (Catch & release)



April-June  
September-October



300-4200m



Warm-Alpine



Moderate



5 Nights 6 Days

This five-day trek and tour take you into an area decorated with a multitude of pristine nature and unique communities of Thimphu and Dagana. As you walk through the Dagala trek route via Thimphu, you'll be treated to stunning views of the entire Himalayan mountain range and some of the world's highest peaks including Mt. Everest, Jomolhari, Masang Gang, Jichu Drake, Gangche Ta, and many more.

Once you set a foot into the Tseza community via the Dagala trek, two entire days will be dedicated to visiting some of the heritage sites such as Dagana Dzong, and Do Namkhair Kaw "Sky Pillar Rock". During these two days, you can explore primitive rural farming skills and experience the traditional Bhutanese village life of Dagana.

While this tour route is somewhat strenuous, it is well worth the effort because of the beauty of the natural landscape combined with the cultural and historical experience that you will enjoy during the journey. The best time to embark on this trek is between April-June or September –October.

01  
DAY

Activity



Arrival at Paro international airport - Travel to Thimphu

Night halt



Thimphu

02  
DAY

Activity



Thimphu-Tseza, Dagana via Dagala Trek

Night halt



Tseza VHS

03  
DAY

Activity



Tseza-Dagana - enroute experience community life, visit Dagana Dzong.

Night halt



Tseza VHS

04  
DAY

Activity



Dagana local tour: visit Sunkosh and experience flyfishing (Messier fishing/catch & release)

Night halt



Dagana Campsite

05  
DAY

Activity



Dagana-Thimphu - Enroute flyfishing the Kamechu area

Night halt



Thimphu

06  
DAY

Activity



Either exit from Bhutan or plan for a visit to Tigers Nest (Taksang), Paro





## LEGEND

- District Border
- Gewog Border
- River
- Dzong
- Gewog
- Village
- District
- Indian Airport
- Airport
- Paved Road
- Farm Road
- Bridge
- Pass
- Town
- Park
- Temple
- Tour Route
- Other Route
- Trek Route
- Food
- Excursion
- Hiking
- Camp
- Communities
- Stupa

# CARDAMOM HARVEST AND DASHAIN FESTIVAL TOUR



Agriculture  
Culture & Nature



Cardamom harvest  
season



300-2800 m



warm &  
subtropical



Moderate



5 Nights 6 Days

**D**ue to the favorable climatic conditions and the fertile soil, a wide variety of fruits and vegetables are grown in Dagana in high quality and quantity. Dagana is the second-largest cardamom producer in Bhutan, after Samtse. Cultivation, harvest, and processing is done in a traditional style which visiting tourists can experience firsthand.

Dagana has a unique and diverse conglomerate of ethnic groups namely the Lhotshampa, Ngalops, Sharchops, and Khengpas. Harmony between those groups itself is a unique cultural diversity. Due to the majority belonging to the Lhotshampa community, Dagana celebrates two main Hindu festivals - Dashain and Diwali. The festivals are celebrated during the months of October and November which aligns with the harvest season of cardamom.

During the tour, one can enjoy the beauty of the surrounding nature, enjoy the lively atmosphere laid back in village life, and indulge in the colorful local festivals with delicious culinary experiences.

01  
DAY

Activity



Thimphu – Dagana  
Night hold at Dagana - Farm-  
house

Night halt



Dagana VHS

02  
DAY

Activity



Dagana: Helping the farm owners/  
homestay owners with the  
harvesting of cardamom. Learning  
how the cardamom is traditionally  
dried. Trying the fresh cardamoms  
and interacting with the farm  
owners/ homestay owners with tea  
made from the cardamoms

Night halt



Dagana VHS

03  
DAY

Activity



Dagana: Indulging in the prepa-  
ration of Dashain festival (cook-  
ing) with the locals/homestays  
owners

Night halt



Dagana VHS

04  
DAY

Activity



Dagana: Celebrating the Dashain  
festival with the locals and  
homestay owners.

Night halt



Dagana VHS

05  
DAY

Activity



Bird watching and visiting the  
Dungchen Menchu and having a  
hot stone bath in the evening.

Night halt



Dagana VHS

06  
DAY

Activity



Returning to Thimphu and exit  
from Bhutan the next day



## LEGEND

- District Border
- Gewog Border
- River
- Dzong
- Gewog
- Village
- District
- ✈ Indian Airport
- ✈ Airport
- Paved Road
- Farm Road
- ) Bridge
- ▲ Pass
- Town
- Park
- Temple
- Tour Route
- Other Route
- ... Trek Route
- Food
- Excursion
- Hiking
- Camp
- Communities
- Stupa







An aerial photograph of a mountainous region. In the foreground, a small village with several white houses and a few larger buildings is situated on a green hillside. The background shows deep, forested valleys and distant mountain peaks under a clear blue sky.

*Dagana the least explored community*

# HISTORY & CULTURE

Photo Courtesy: TCB

## HISTORY & CULTURE

# Cultural Map of Dagana







Photo Courtesy: Fb, Dagana Dzongkhag Administration





## Historical Sites & Heritage





Photo Courtesy: kenketsu.com

## DAGA TRASHIYANGTSE DZONG

The Daga Trashiyantshe Dzong played an important role during the medieval times in Bhutan as it was the base of Daga penlop who controlled much of southern Bhutan along with the bordering Duar areas (present-day India).

The Dzong (castle/fortress) was constructed on directives of Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyel in 1648 in order to safeguard the country from invading armies from the south. Druk Namgyel laid the foundations for the Dzong on a ridge that overlooked the valley and, two years later in 1651, the Dzong was completed and formally named as Lho Darkar Trashiyangtse Dzong by Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyel.

Tenpa Thinley became the first Daga Penlop (governor) and it is believed that he discovered a pair of buffalo horn measuring about 651/2 inches, in 16th century which is considered as one of the most treasured relic of the Daga Trashiyangtse Dzong.



Photo Courtesy: heavenlybhutan.com

## THA-NAMKHAH DZONG

Tha Namkhai Dzong meaning the “Frontier Sky Fortress,” is a stone megalith which seats a cave where Guru Padmasambhava is said to have meditated in the 8th century. Even today, on auspicious days, devotees can supposedly hear a mysterious bell ringing from the cave.

Although the cave is inaccessible as it is located high upon a cliff, one can get a closer view from a viewpoint after taking a three-hour walk crossing the suspension bridge adjacent to the Wangdue-Tsirang highway. Rock imprints of Guru Rinpoche, a Dakini's foot and an elephant's head can be seen from the village of Thasa.



## Nye (Sacred sites)





Photo Courtesy: Fb, Choki Wangmo

## DHO RANGTHA

Dho Rangthang was a stone mill used by Bhutanese in the olden times to grind cereals like maize and rice. In Dagana, there is a huge rock that resembles Dho Rangthang.

The local people believe that the rock represent a demonic spirit who used to kill people by crushing them and squeezing out their blood in that huge Rangthang. The evil spirit was later subdued by Guru Rinpoche when he reached Dagana from Tibet.



Photo Courtesy: uwice.gov.bt

## SACRED TREES

The Bhutan Weeping Cypress tree (*Cupressus corneyana*) which is almost 60 meters tall in Peling Tseza gewog and a Khasi tree in Khebisa village is believed to have grown from the walking stick of Zhabdrung Jigme Chogyel (1862-1904). The local people worship the trees as Lhashing (sacred tree).

Likewise, the 9.3-meter tall Khasi (*Ficus glaberrima*) tree located in Bartsa village in Kana gewog is believed to have grown from the walking stick used by the 12<sup>th</sup> Je Khenpo (Dharma Raja) Kuenga Jamtsho (1761-1771).

# HISTORY & CULTURE



Photo Courtesy: Fb, Dagana Bhutan

## DHO NAMKHAI KAW

Dho Namkhai Kaw meaning the “Sky Pillar Rock”, is a monolithic rock which is believed to have reached its present spot miraculously in Dagana from Bodh Gaya (India) where Buddha attained enlightenment. The rock is about 20 meters in height with a foot print of Yeshe Tshogyal (the Guru’s consort) on the top. It is believed that there are 1,000 statues of the Buddha embedded inside the rock as relics.

The trees and stones in the vicinity are said to have bowed to the holy stone pillar as a mark of respect and can still be seen drooping to this day. Some say that fortunate people can hear mysterious sounds from inside the rock.



Photo Courtesy: heavenlybhutan.com

## DHO KEPAI GOENTHOE

Dho Kepai Goenthoe means “the Rock of Ancient Steps”. The rock, located in Tanajbi village in Kana gewog. It has five steps carved on its surface which is believed to disappear beneath the earth and enter into the world of Nagas (serpents) overtime which would mark the end of present life forms.





Photo Courtesy: heavenlybhutan.com

## DORJI PHU NYE (RANGA NYE)

Mahadev Dham in Karmaling - also known as Ranga Nye - is a calcium rich cave by the side of Piping River, about an hour's walk from the road. It is worshiped as the cave of Lord Shiva as the protruding formations of stalactites and stalagmites inside appears like Shiva Ling (phallus) and Yoni (vulva). The local people come to the cave once every year to conduct rituals and pay homage.

The cave has two entrances, east and the west, and can accommodate up to 1,000 people at any given time. The cave-walls have strange inscriptions, paintings and other decorations whose significance is still unknown. This mysterious and transcendental site is located close to the Gesarling secondary school.



Photo Courtesy: Fb, ExPlore Bhutan with Phub TsheRing

## WANGCHEY CAVE / GANGJAB NYE

Wangchey Cave, also known as Gangjab Nye, is located about an hour's drive from Dagapela town. It is an old limestone cave with large stalactites and stalagmites and spreads about 150 feet wide and 30 feet high.

The people in the locality worship the place as an abode of the Hindu god Shiva. Shiva is the supreme being in Shaivism, one of the major traditions within Hinduism. He is known as "The Destroyer" within the Trimurti, the triple deity of supreme divinity that includes Brahma and Vishnu.

# HISTORY & CULTURE



Photo Courtesy: heavenlybhutan.com

## DHO DUNGKAR

This rock, located about one hour walk from Daga town. The local people believe that several Ter (religious treasure) were discovered in the form of Conch at Dho Dungkar. One of such conch is still preserved in Daga Dzong while others are said to have miraculously vanished in different directions. Dho Dungkar is also believed to have the power to bestow fertility to barren women. A male child born with its blessing is named as “Dungchen” and the female child as “Dungchenmo”.



Photo Courtesy: heavenlybhutan.com

## DHO PATA CHAPSA

Dho Pata Chapsa is the name of a rock which bears an imprint of a sword. It is located two hours walk from Daga Dzong. The mark of the sword on the rock was believed to have formed when a Nyagay (someone who has a gigantic build, possessed super-human strength) named Tseza hurled his sword at the rock in a fit of fury. Since then, the mark of the sword remains.





Photo Courtesy: Fb, Inside Bhutan

## MAHAY RAO

Daga Dzong has a sacred Buffalo horn with a fascinating story. The first governor of Dagana, Daga Penlop Tenpa Thinley, once heard the grunt of a buffalo from eastern side of the Dzong (fortress) and upon visiting the site his chamberlain found a pair of huge Buffalo horns (Mahay Rao) rather than finding a buffalo.

One horn was kept in the Dzong while the other is taken to Talo monastery in Punakha. In return, the people of Dagana received a statue of Buddha Maitreya as a gift from Talo monastery. It is said that while transferring the statue from Talo Monastery to Dagana by eight men the statue spoke and directed two of them to cross a narrow and precarious path at Pelzom Gyalmo ridge. The men were having difficulty crossing the ridge which was later achieved after following the directions given by the statue.



Photo Courtesy: Fb, Tseza Gewog Administration

## TAKTSHANG GANG BURPA

Taktshang Gang Burpa is one of the local deities of Dagana. It takes approximately three hours to reach Taktshang Gang Burpa from Tseza gewog. The sacred site is residing on a ridge surrounded by snow-capped mountains of Lingzhi in the east, Kaka and Jumolhari in the north, Jumo Yangtham in the south and Daga Dzong in the west.

There is a rock protruding out from the ridge and is said to resemble a gun. The locals believe that it is a weapon used by the deity to hunt. There is also a spring water, Drupchu (holy water) owing below the ridge.



# HISTORY & CULTURE



Photo Courtesy: Fb, Sonam Tshering

## ZHABJEYTHANG

A legendary story narrates that in olden days a village called Wogbab in Dagana was plagued with evil spirits. Guru Padmasambhava meditated at a nearby cliff called Bowchung Nye and subdued these spirits. The site is now called Zhabjeythang which is believed to be named after Guru Rinpoche's foot print. Body print of seven dakinis are also found prostrating on the rocks just next to the Zhabjeythang temple in Thasa village.





## Tshachu & Menchu

# HISTORY & CULTURE



Photo Courtesy: heavenlybhutan.com

## TSHANGKHA TSHO

This holy Tsho (Lake) is not only worshiped as sacred lake but is also a source of water for the village community of Tsangkha gewog in the past.

The lake is considered sacred as locals believe that there is a Tshomoen (mermaid) who came all the way from a village called Tshang in Tibet. She was believed to have sought refuge in the lake following Guru Padmasambhava's attempts to subdue her from Tha Namkhai Dzong (Frontier Sky Fortress). The rocks resembling ritual cakes are still seen near by the lake.

The holy lake of Tshangkha has been drying in recent years without any probable cause and local people are worried.



Photo Courtesy: heavenlybhutan.com

## LHAMOI LATSHO

Palden Lhamoi Latsho (the “soul lake” of goddess Maha Kali) also known as Khurul Lake (Oyster Lake) in Lhamoidzingkha is not only worshiped as a sacred lake but it also has a huge ecological significance. The lake is located 10 kilometres away from Lhamoidzingkha town. The name as oyster lake is derived due to the oysters present in that lake. It also has unique red fishes that are usually found only in oceans.

Environmentalists say the lake is the last remnant of the Tethys Sea where sea horse and other sea creatures still survive.

The lake is visited by thousands of pilgrims who come to perform sacred rituals.

The local people believe that any disturbance to the lake would provoke the lake's deity to unleash thunderstorms and other natural disasters.





Photo Courtesy: kuenselonline.com

## DHUNGCHEN MENCHHU

Dhungchen (ritual trumpet) Menchhu (medicinal spring) is a popular mineral spring which flows out of a granite rock just below the Dagana district guest house. It is believed that the spring gushed out from a depression left behind when a large ritual trumpet miraculously flew out of the rock. The trumpet is now preserved in Chizhi Goenpa in Thimphu district where it is preserved as Goenpa's (temple) main relic.

It is believed that this medicinal spring helps cure several diseases.

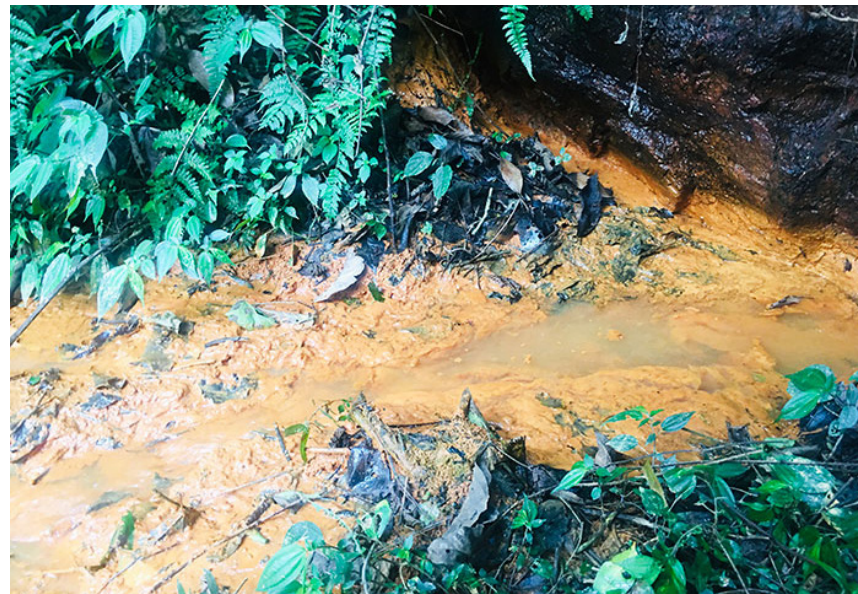


Photo Courtesy: kuenselonline.com

## PELING MENCHHU

Peling Menchhu (medicinal spring) is located deep into the woods about one and a half kilometers away from Peling village in Tseza gewog. This place can also be approached from Daga Dzong through a 19 kilometer road stretch along the Dagana-Wangdue bypass.

This Menchhu is believed to help cure tuberculosis, urinary tract infection, joint pains and fractures. Road facility along with other amenities like guest house, kitchen and bathtubs are constructed for easy access of the menchu to people visiting.



## Monasteries & stupas





Photo Courtesy: heavenlybhutan.com

## PELING STUPA

This stupa is located in Peling village in Tseza gewog is located about five hours' walk from Daga Dzong.

It was believed that a black dog was frequently seen in the location of where the stupa stands now at Peling village in Tseza gewog. Upon being informed about the unusual occurrence by locals, Zhabdrung Jigme Chogyel divined that an evil spirit from Khebisa had taken the form of a dog to harm the local people. To help the local people a stupa was constructed on the stone slab which today is called the Peling chorten. After the stupa was consecrated the dog disappeared.



Photo Courtesy: Fb, Jamyang Dorji

## BARTSHA LHAKHANG

Bartsha Lhakhang in Bartsha village, Kana gewog, was founded by Je (chief abbot) Kinga Jamtsho and Je Tenzin Jamtsho.

The relics inside the temple consist of the statues of Je Kinga Jamtsho and Je Tenzin Jamtsho, and a set of Kanjur (translation of Buddha's teachings) and Tenjur (translation of treatises) texts written by the two chief abbots. The parchment on which the texts were written was sponsored by a local woman named Hadhom.

Every year, rituals such as Mani Zha Sum, Tshechu, Kanjur recitation, Zhabdrung Kuchoe and Trochap are performed at the temple.

# HISTORY & CULTURE



Photo Courtesy: heavenlybhutan.com

## SHATHONG LHAKHANG

This Lhakhang is located on a ridge above Dagana Dzong. Shathong Lhakhang (temple) was founded by yogi Shawaripa. Shawaripa was one of India's 84 Mahasiddhas and a former hunter who turned to Buddhism and renounced the mundane world. He received the teachings of Mahamudra from Nagarjuna and later became the teacher of Maitripa.

It is said that Shawaripa saw two stags taking a dip in a pool below the hillock when he was meditating. Taking this as an auspicious sign, he built a hermitage on which the Shathong Lhakhang stands today. A unique mask dance called Shau Gangley which is associated with this temple is performed annually during the Daga Tshechu (festival).



Photo Courtesy: Fb, Ugay Dagap Dorji

## CHOEJEY PANGKHA LHAKHANG

Choeje Pangkha Lhakhang originated as the residence of Druptob (yogi) Ngawang Samten in the 10<sup>th</sup> or 11<sup>th</sup> century. A “self-arisen” conch with a right-sided whorl is believed to have been left behind by the Druptob as his legacy and it can be seen in Dagana Dzong today. There is a holy spring water and remnants of a lake above the temple.





Photo Courtesy: bhutantoday.bt

## OTHER TEMPLES

The unique Tamang Lhakhang in Namchala village is located about an hour's walk from Sunkosh bridge. It serves as the community temple of the Tamang (an ethnic group) natives living in the vicinity.

About five hours' hike from Dagana town is the Tsezakha Geteg Goenpa which is believed to have been blessed by Zhabdrung. The powerful deity of the temple is worshiped by the people of Tseza gewog.

Chhoto Goenpa, founded by Drupthob Sangay Tenzin, is located about three hours walk from Dagana town.

Nearby Drujeygang, Namdra Choling Goenpa and Pang Serpo Lhakhang were established by Lopen Tsam Drukpa nearly a century ago.

Pelri Goenpa which is also located near Drujeygang, is said to have been built by Haap Doley, a Daga Dzongpon.



Photo Courtesy: heavenlybhutan.com

## ROCK FORMATION OF LAMA LAMINI

This beautiful rock formation is unique to a place called Lama Lamini, about 15 kilometers from the Lhamoidzingkha town. They are small buttes formed of sedimentary rocks which when exposed to heavy rainfall gets denuded leaving behind innumerable dagger shaped land formation. Besides its wonderful appearance and variegated color, these salt-lick rocks attract wildlife due to its rich nutrients and mineral.

The local people consider Lama Lamini sacred and perform rituals

# HISTORY & CULTURE



Photo Courtesy: kuenselonline.com

## RUINS OF SHERPA LHAKHANG/ GOMPA TAR

This Lhakhang is located in the forest of Tashithang hills in Dagapela,. It was once a popular Sherpa Lhakhang which today lies in ruins. Suray Lama, also known as Sherpa Lama, from upper Gozhi is said to have built the Lhakhang. After the Lama was relocated to Lhamoidzingkha, there was no one to look after the temple which eventually turned into ruins.

While the origin of the Lhakhang is unclear, the Sherpas and Tamangs of Gozhi and Geserling gewogs, who are mostly Buddhists, seek connection to their roots through this ancestral temple.

.The place has numerous traces of human settlement in the temple's vicinity in the past, including the presence of cypress trees and flowers surrounding the ruins. There are four beautiful lakes located about 30-minutes hike above the ruins which has been revived by the government.



Photo Courtesy: heavenlybhutan.com

## ZHABDRUNG'S RESIDENCE

The birth place and residence of the first mind reincarnation of Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyel, Sungtrul Chogley Namgyal, in Nindukha village is now a well-preserved heritage house. It was also used as the official residence of Daga Penlop Rinzin Dorji.

The sacred Nindukha Lhakhang is located on a hilltop over looking the Daga Dzong and the Zhabdrung's residence.





# Festivals

# HISTORY & CULTURE



Photo Courtesy: Fb, Dagana Dzongkhag Administration

## DAGA TSHECHU

Daga Tshechu is conducted every year as an annual event. This religious festival lasts for five days. Each day is dedicated to one of the five deities - namely Dara Yutsho, Gophu Kencho, Shatong Tsan, Jom Dagam and Pholha Tagsagam who are believed to safeguard the people of Dagana. Every morning on the days of the festival, the atsara invokes the presence of the five deities. All five days are filled with different mask and folk dances,. Neten Chudrug (16Arhats)Thongdroel is unfurled to the public on the final day of the festival to mark the end of Tshechu.



Photo Courtesy: shayarimaza.com

## DIWALI – THE FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS

Diwali is a main Hindu festival celebrated all over the world including the Hindu communities of Bhutan. The festival occurs around mid-October and ends in mid-November which is said to coincide with the darkest day of the lunar month, the day of the new moon. In Bhutan, the festival is observed by the Lhotsham communities of the southern districts, including Dagana. The five day festival symbolizes the victory of light over darkness. It is celebrated by lighting myriads of lanterns, candles and clay lamps (diyas) to brighten up the night sky on the eve of Diwali. Diwali is also time for illumination, a moment of joy and celebration, which is celebrated with lots of sweets, foods, family unions, and a lot of pomp and gala.





Photo Courtesy: bbs.bt

## DASHAIN

As one of the most important festivals of the Hindu community, Dashain commemorates the victory of good over evil. Historically, the festival re-enacts the celebration of the victory of Rama, a Dharma king, over Ravana, an evil ruler who kidnapped Rama's wife, Sita.

During this festival, the head of the family applies a vermilion, known as Tika, on the forehead of every member of the household to bless them.

Every home is cleansed and decorated, symbolizing an invitation to the mother goddess, Durga, so that she may visit and bless the house with good fortune.

In Bhutan, His Majesty the King observes the Dashain festival with Hindu communities across the country by partaking in the Tika ceremony.



Photo Courtesy: twitter.com/sonamktobgay

## SHAM SHA DOLEY

This is an ancient Zhungdra song unique to Dagana district but is, unfortunately, waning in popularity. Zhungdra is characterized by the use of extended vocal tones in complex patterns over a relatively simple instrumental melody. Sham doley was a sacred song composed by Zhabdrung Jigme Chogyal, the fifth mind reincarnation of the Zhabdrung and performed in Sham-Doley village in Tashiding gewog during his first visit. The Dolep (a large stone slab) over which the singer stood and performed the song for the first time can be still seen today. Zhabdrung Jigme Choegyel is said to have left his footprint on the flat stone and hence the village is called Sham Doley. In Tamang dialect, Sham means foot and Doley is a flat stone.

Today, the song is sung only in Khebisa gewog on rare occasions during rituals and festivals.



*Thasa village*







# Accommodations



# ACCOMMODATIONS



## Neelam Hotel

Lhamoidzingkha

Dagana Bhutan

Phone: +975 6 481180

Mobile: +975 77303550

### Amenities/facilities

- Bar
- Parking

### Restaurant

- A La Carte and Buffet
- Bhutanese, Chinese and Indian

### Rooms

Number of Rooms: 2

- Attached bath
- Balcony
- Cable TV
- Room heating

Distance from Town (in kms): 0

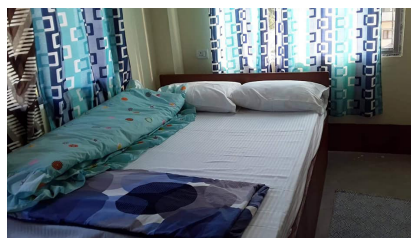


## Lhamoizhingkha lodge

Lhamoidzingkha, Dagana Bhutan

Mobile: +975 17584426

Email: hamoizhingkhalodge@gmail.com



### Amenities/facilities

- Bar
- Parking
- Swimming Pool

### Restaurant

- A La Carte and Buffet
- Bhutanese, Chinese and Indian



### Rooms

Number of Rooms: 7

- Attached bath room 5
- Balcony -
- Cable TV 7
- Room heating -

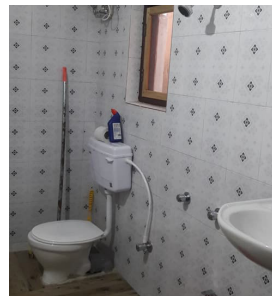
Distance from Town (in kms): 1



### **Maitay Hotel**

Below BoD, Tshendagang  
Dagapela, Dagana, Bhutan

Phone: +975 17860466/17618706/778660466



#### **Amenities/facilities**

- Bar
- Parking

#### **Restaurant**

- A La Carte and Buffet
- Bhutanese, Chinese and Indian



#### **Rooms**

Number of Rooms: 2

- Attached bath
- Balcony
- Cable TV
- Room heating

Distance from Town (in kms): 0

### **Sangay Hotel**

Dagana town, Bhutan

Rooms: 5

Phone: +975 17816944

### **Reema Hotel**

Dagapela town, Bhutan

Rooms: 8

Phone: +975 17860466



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