

SAMPLE TOUR ITINERARY



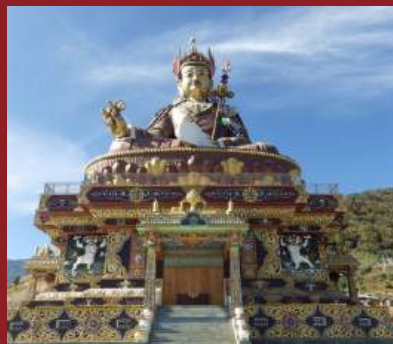
HISTORY AND CULTURE



ACCOMMODATIONS

LHUMENTSE

TOURISM ATTRACTIONS







LHUMENTSE

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

Contents

1. Introduction.....	09
2. About the District	10
3. Lhuentse map of Human Settlements	11
4. Sample Tour Itineraries	12
5. History & Culture	16
6. Accommodations	54
7. References	62

Khoma village in Lhuentse



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

The ancient region of Kurtoe, present-day Lhuentse, lies in northeastern Bhutan. In the olden days, the district played a key role in the country's political and religious transitions because of which many of the houses of Bhutanese nobility trace their origin from there. More famously, the district is the ancestral home of Bhutan's Kings.

The district - located about three hours drive from Mongar is endowed with steep cliffs, gorges, narrow valleys, and dense coniferous forests. By way of history and culture, it is one of the richest in the country with numerous ancient temples, holy sites, monuments, myths, and legends. The district is also famous for its weavers and their distinctive textiles, especially Kishuthara which is highly regarded for its artistic aestheticism.

Despite of difficulty, the pilgrimage/trek to Singye Dzong is much acclaimed. Located in the extreme northern frontiers of the district, it is considered a lifetime endeavor for most Bhutanese, whose daily lives and existence revolve around the many tenets of Buddhism and spiritualism, to go to the Dzong. In addition, the district houses the world's largest Guru Statue, a gigantic 173-foot bronze sculpture, which towers above the Tangmachhu village, a settlement occupying a hill on the upper reaches of the Kurichhu River.

The people of Lhuentse speak a variety of languages. Those who dwell in the east speak Dzalakha, an East Bodish language; in the south, Chochangacha kha which resembles Dzongkha is spoken; and Kurtoe in the north-western region speak Kurtoep, the East Bodish language.

Lhuentse lies in the environmentally protected area comprising of Wangchuck Centennial Park in the north, Thrumshingla National Park in the south, and Bumdeling Wildlife Sanctuary in the east.

LHUENTSE AT A GLANCE

National Statistical Bureau	2021	EDUCATION	
Area (sq. km)	2,854	Tertiary Institute under RUB	0
Altitude (masl).	1452	Central Schools	2
Gewogs	8	Higher Secondary School	1
Chiwogs	40	Middle Secondary Schools	1
Villages	297		
Gungtong	317	AGRICULTURE	
Households	3111	Dry land (acres)	3894.38
		Wet land (acres)	10697.19
		Orchard (acres)	2.47
POPULATION		INFRASTRUCTURE	
Total	13,974	Roads (Kms.)	889.42
Population density (per sq. km)	5	Electricity Coverage (%)	99
		Telephone Connections (Nos).	488
HEALTH		Internet Connections (Nos).	88
Hospitals	1	Religious Institutions	19
Indigenous Units	2	Religious Monuments	123
Basic Health Units (BHUs)	14	No. of tourists visited (2019)	761
Rural water supply coverage (%)	99.8		

DISTANCE BY ROAD

From	To	Distance	Duration
Paro	Thimphu	65 kms	1 hr 15 mins
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	Lhuentse	70 kms	3 hrs
Lhuentse	Maenbi	25 kms	1 hr
Lhuentse	Khoma	11 kms	30 mins
Khoma	Nyalamdung	10 kms	30 mins
Lhuentse	Jarey	56 kms	1 hr 30 mins
Lhuentse	Kurtoe	40 kms	1 hr 15 mins
Lhuentse	Tangmachu	27 kms	45 mins
Lhuentse	Trashigang	151.5 kms	5 hrs
Trashigang	S/Jongkhar	180 kms	7 hrs
S/Jongkhar	Guwahati, Assam	110 kms	3 hrs

LHUENTSE TEXTILE TOURISM - INTO THE HEART OF BHUTAN'S TEXTILE JEWEL.



Handicrafts, Culture,
Monasteries, Sacred Places



February - May,
September - November



1000 - 2854m



Warm



Moderate



8 Nights 9 Days

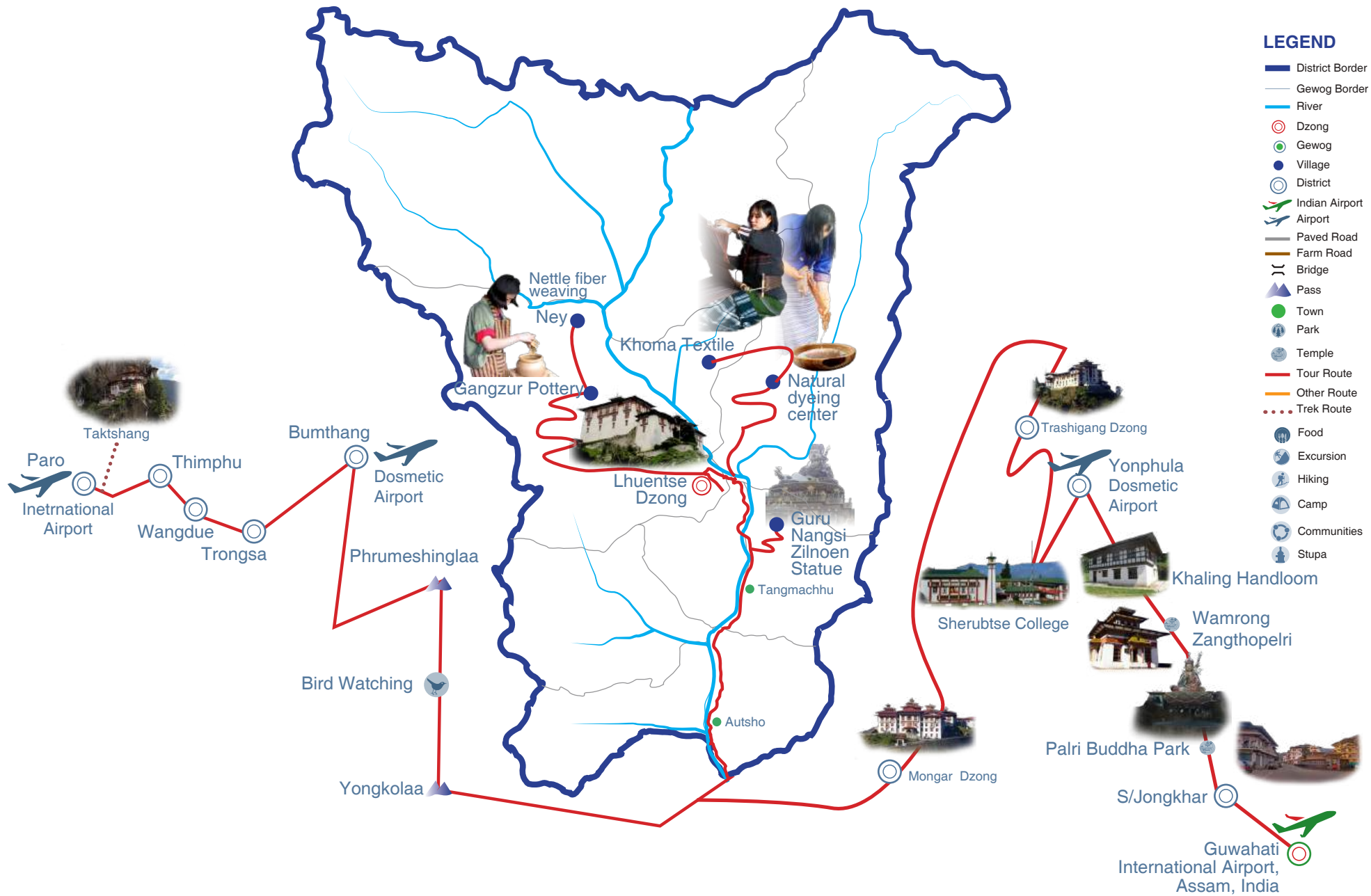
Khoma village in Lhuentse is popular for Kishuthara, Bhutan's gem amongst handicraft products. Women weavers in Khoma are credited for the finest quality and design variety of the textile, which requires endurance, resilience, and great skill. Kishuthara has ventured into the international market and contributed to promoting Bhutanese textiles. It is considered the most desired product of Bhutanese women to own and is valued as a family heirloom.

Another omni-temporal art is pottery and it is practiced in Gangzur village, just two kilometers away from the Lhuentse town. There are only a handful of craftsmen left trying to keep the art alive. Lhuentse also houses one of Bhutan's popular landmarks, the Guru Nangsi Zilnoen Statue of 173 feet (52.73M) in height, which is one of the tallest statues in the world.

Lhuentse also has a large number of monasteries, stupas, myths, hot springs, etc. that are associated with historic figures like Guru Padma Sambhava, Terton Pema Lingpa, and Terton Ratna Lingpa. All these elements make Lhuentse a district that promises incomparable excitement.

- 01 DAY**
 Activity Arrival at Paro international airport: explore Paro valley. **Night halt** Paro
- 02 DAY**
 Activity Thimphu - Bumthang: en-route visit Trongsa Dzong **Night halt** Bumthang
- 03 DAY**
 Activity Bumthang - Mongar: en-route cross Thrumshing La pass & Yongkola - the capital of bird watching. **Night halt** Mongar

- 04 DAY**
 Activity Mongar - Khoma: en-route visit Lhuentse Dzong, Gangzur pottery, Ney nettle fiber weaving centre. **Night halt** Khoma VHS
- 05 DAY**
 Activity Explore Khoma textile village & experience the traditional weaving & visit the natural dyeing center at Goenpa Karp. **Night halt** Khoma VHS
- 06 DAY**
 Activity Khoma - Tangmachu: en-route visit Takila & explore community life **Night halt** Tangmachu VHS
- 07 DAY**
 Activity Tangmachu - Mongar: en-route Autsho, Midroling Lhakhang & explore community life. **Night halt** Mongar
- 08 DAY**
 Activity Mongar - S/Jongkhar: en-route visit Palri Buddha Park in Wamrong. **Night halt** S/Jongkhar
- 09 DAY**
 Activity Depart from Bhutan via Guwahati, Assam, India.



DUNGKAR VALLEY TOUR - TO THE ROOTS OF THE WANGCHUCK DYNASTY



A Village of Craftsmen,
Ancient Temples & Bon Festivals



March - May,
September - November



1200 - 3800m



Cool & temperate



Moderate



8 Nights 9 Days

Jigme Namgyel, the father of the first king of Bhutan, was born in Dungkar, in Kurtoe in 1825. He later moved to Trongsa and became the Trongsa Penlop (Provincial Governor) in 1853 and he gradually unified the state. His birth place was later renovated and converted into a Jigme Namgyel Museum. The building boasts its monumental architectural structure, style, and prominence in the landscape.

Dungkar Naktshang was built in 1595 by Dreykha and Langkha, the descendant of Terton Pema Lingpa, 12th Century Treasure Discoverer. It is another historical and architectural feast for visitors. The mask of Raksha Lango (ox mask), which was worn by the Dungkar Choeje, is exhibited in the heritage house. Another hallmark of your trip is the historic Lhuentse Dzong, which was built by the Trongsa Penlop Minjur Tempa in 1654 upon the site of an older temple built by Nagi Wangchuk in 1552. Along the path, you can experience Buddhist culture and practices, explore communities and learn their ways of life.

01 DAY
Activity Guwahati - Samdrup Jongkhar: explore Samdrup Jongkhar town & nearby communities. Night halt S/Jongkhar

02 DAY
Activity S/ongkhar - Trashigang: en-route visit Palri Buddha Park, Wamrong Monastery & Khaling Lhakhang. Night halt Trashigang

03 DAY
Activity Trashigang - Autsho: en-route visit Drametse Lhakhang, Ngatshang Monastery & Mongar Dzong. Night halt Autsho

04 DAY
Activity Autsho - Dungkar: en-route visit Gangzur Pottery, explore Dungkar Naktshang (Heritage House) & the valley. Night halt Dungkar VHS

05 DAY
Activity Dungkar - Khoma: visit the textile village in Khoma, the Natural Dye Centre & explore Khoma village. Night halt Khoma VHS

06 DAY
Activity Khoma - Tangmachhu: en-route visit Takila, Lhuentse Dzong & Lekpagangi Tshenden. Night halt Tangmachhu VHS

07 DAY
Activity Tangmachhu - Trashigang: en-route Autsho visit Namdroling Lhakhang & explore community life. Night halt Trashigang

08 DAY
Activity Trashigang - Yonphula - Paro: explore Paro valley. Night halt Paro

09 DAY
Activity Depart from Bhutan via Paro International Airport.



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

Lhuentse valley with the Dzong sitting on a hillock





HISTORY & CULTURE

Photo courtesy: bhutan4joy.com

HISTORY & CULTURE

Cultural Map of Lhuentse





Photo Courtesy: Fb. dzadminhuentse



Historical Sites & Heritage



Photo Courtesy: bhutandzongs.com

LHUENTSE DZONG

During a sojourn in Kurtoe, Yongzin Ngagi Wangchuk came across a white bleating goat. Taking it as a good omen, he meditated at the site and built a small temple in 1552. However, the Dzong as such was built on the same spot by Trongsa Penlop Chogyal Minjur Tempa after defeating his enemies of Kurtoe valley in 1654.

Currently, the Dzong has two divisions: Dzong Thogma (upper Dzong) which is used by the clergy, and Dzong Wogma (lower Dzong) housing the offices of the district administration. The Dzong has eight temples with the Tshepamed (Amitabha) Lhakhang at the top, the Goenkhang (inner sanctum) in the middle, and Guru Rinpoche temple on the ground floor. The temples of Tara, Avaloketeshvara, and the Akshobhya assembly hall surround the Utse (the pinnacle).

Legend says, a bronze statue of Tshepamed was found in the fishing net of a local fisherman and then kept as a relic in Kidlung Lhakhang (located 20 minutes drive from the Lhuentse Dzong). However, the statue repeatedly tried to escape, at one point even penetrating through an iron chain mail, until it was miraculously found in an altar in Lhuentse Dzong. It remains there today as the Dzong's most sacred artifact.



Photo Courtesy: bhutanbutterlamp.blogspot.com

JIGME NAMGYEL NAKTSHANG

Pila Gonpo Wangyel, the 12th in-line descendant of Tertön Pema Lingpa (a Bhutanese saint) and the forefather of Bhutan's kings, was born to Choeje Pema Rinpoche and Geleg Wangzom in 1782 in Dungkar, Kurtoe. His mother was the daughter of Dungsam Bangtsho Gyalpo who was a descendant of Lhasey Tsangma.

He studied under illustrious Buddhist masters from the age of 15 both in Bhutan and Tibet. Later, along with his younger brother Pala Gyeltshen and Sumthrang Choeje Thrinley, he served under Zhabdrung Jigme Drakpa (1791-1830) in the capital (then Punakha) for several years. Later, as his health deteriorated, he returned to his village and married Sonam Pelzom of Jangsa, and constructed the Khetangbi Naktshang, which later came to be known as Pila Naktshang. Jigme Namgyel, a predestined hero, and father of Bhutan's first King, Gongsar Ugyen Wangchuck, was born in the house in 1825 and today the house is called Jigme Namgyel Naktshang - the illustrious home of the Wangchuck Dynasty.

HISTORY & CULTURE



Photo Courtesy: tripadvisor.com

DUNGKAR CHOEJE NAKTSHANG

Dreykha and Langkha, descendants of Terton Pema Lingpa (a Bhutanese saint), constructed the Dungkar Naktshang (Choeje Naktshang) in 1595 when they were just 17 years old. Numerous sacred relics were placed inside the Naktshang.

Dreykha and Langkha were twin sons of Kuenga Gyeltshen and great grandsons of Khedrup Kuenga Wangpo. They were instructed to build the Naktshang by their three elder brothers, all renowned Buddhist masters. In turn, the elder brothers were asked to build the Naktshang by the local deity of Dungkar, Ama Wangchen Zangmo, who is said to have appeared in person requesting them to establish a seat on top of a ridge, which resembled a conch shell. She also promised that she would help them fulfill all their wishes. Thus, the brothers appointed the deity as the protector of their descendants.

Ever since, the descendants of Dungkar Choeje renovated the Naktshang and introduced religious festivals and mask dances. The mask of Raksha Lango (an ox head Mask), worn by the Dungkar Choeje is used even today during the mask dance festivals. The Mask was discovered by the 12th century treasure discoverer, Terton Pema Lingpa, and brought to Dungkar Naktshang from Khowchung.



Photo Courtesy: Fb page, All about Lhuentse Dzongkhag

RUINS OF BANGTSHO CASTLE

In Umling village in Tshangkhar gewog, there exists the ruins of an underground fortress / castle that supposedly was nine storeys tall. Nobody knows its exact history but the ruins intrigue people's imagination. The castle-fortress is known as the Bangtsho Gyalpoi Phodrang. Bangtsho is originally the name of a place and the house of nobility from Dungsam, while Gyalpo means king, and Phodrang is a castle. The story goes that the house of Bangtsho had two brothers. They divided the family property among themselves but on the condition that the younger brother would leave Bangtsho for good. He settled in Umling where he built the nine-storey castle and became the local king of Umling, Tshangkhar and the surrounding areas.

Legend goes that the Gyalpo stayed underground in his castle, hidden from internal and external threats. However, the fame about his astonishing wealth spread far and wide. A Tibetan king in particular coveted his wealth and managed to kill him after several attempts. The king was betrayed by a local woman who shared his secrets with his enemy. It is believed that Bangtsho Gyalpo was reborn as a snake which guards the ruins of his fortress/castle to this day.



Photo Courtesy:bcci.org.bt

TRI-COLOURED STUPA

At Ngangel village in Jarey Gewog stand three stupas on a single base but each in different colour - red, white and black. It is believed that each colour represents the stupa's power to subdue and counteract evil and harm originating from three sources: Lu (naga or water spirit), Dued (demon), and Tsen (Atmospheric spirit).

The stupas were constructed to overcome threats posed by the local deity of Chakphula and Tsatichu. The local people say that a big dog that used to roam at the place got disappeared after constructing the stupa. People also say that even today they can hear the sound of a bear and wild boar at the place where the stupas are standing and horrifying sounds in Tsatichu lake when a fatality is likely to occur in the community.



Photo Courtesy:uvice.gov.bt

Photo Courtesy:uvice.gov.bt

SACRED TREES

The Bhutan Weeping Cypress (*Cupressus corneyana*) tree in Zamling village, Gangzur gewog is believed to have been planted upside down by Terton Pema Lingpa (1450-1521). Similarly, another cypress tree at Goenpa Karp in Khoma village is believed to have grown from the walking stick of Lama Choney Rangdol, the founder of Goenkhar Lhakhang. The tree is estimated to be about 200 years old.

A third such tree exists at Zarthang Lhakhang in Menbi gewog. It is believed to be the walking stick of Lama Karma Rabzur (root guru of the 16th Karmapa) who planted his walking stick upside down.



Myths & Legends



Photo Courtesy: Dorji Gyeltsen, 2011.

MYSTERIOUS STONE MORTARS

There are 108 mysterious stone mortars littered in the upper valley of Minje village, which appeared to have been carved hundreds of years ago. The local people do not really know the origin and the purpose, but some believe that the stone mortars originated in the 8th century to be used for the preparation of Tshog offerings (ceremonial food offering) to the Guru Padma Sambhava by his one of the Dakini, Khandro Yeshe Tshogyel.



Photo Courtesy: Fb page, All about Lhuentse Dzongkhag

LEKPAGANGI TSHENDEN

A grove of cypress (Tshenden) trees grown below the Lhuentse Dzong, presumably among the oldest cypress trees in Bhutan is believed to have grown from the wooden nail that fell in the area from the flying wooden Jachung - a wooden mythical birth built by Guru Padma Sambhava to ferry the evil son of Tibetan King Trisong Deutsen. Khikha Rathod was born to one of the wives of the King owing to forbidden affairs and later exiled to Mon Yul (Bhutan) and settled in Khenpajong, Lhuentse.

As an act of revenge, Khikha Rathod made frequent raids to usurp the throne in Tibet from Khenpajong. Seeing the threat, Guru Rinpoche disguised himself and ferried Khikha Rathod and five hundred of his men away from the Khenpajong and hid the valley from him. Therefore, the valley is today known as Baeyul Khenpajong (the hidden land), and amazingly, the trees emit plumes (pollen) of smoke once every year, just before Bhutanese celebrate Thru-Bab (Blessed Rainy Day).

HISTORY & CULTURE



Photo Courtesy: Fb, Druk gi Nye

WAGA PANGTSHO LAKE

Upon five hours uphill walk from Ladrong village, a mysterious lake called Waga Pangtsho is found on the mountain top, which neither has a source nor an outlet, yet the water level remains the same throughout the year despite changes in weather conditions. It is believed that the lake originated in Tokari village in Tsamang, Mongar and it had attracted many high-level officials and elites, which burdened the community people since they had to run errand services. Thus, people started defiling the lake with human feces and animal carcasses to chase it away, and the mermaid had to leave the place. Upon reaching the current lake site, people say that the mermaid had asked for permission from a farmer nearby for a night halt in his house but the farmer instead offered his field. As a token of gratitude for his hospitality, the mermaid had offered the farmer a milk churner the next morning.



Photo Courtesy: venturablvd.goldenstate.is

TERDAG: THE TREASURE GUARDIAN

Prior to the advent of Buddhism in Bhutan in the 8th century, the practice of Bon (a shamanic faith) was predominant. In Bon faith, occult and shamanism take centre stage where by natural elements like mountains, cliffs, forests, lakes and rivers are seen as abodes of invisible spirits or forces of nature.

One such residual offshoot of this practice is the Terdag (Treasure Guardian). While some Buddhist texts trace the origin of the Terdag to the Gelugpa sect of Buddhism, many believe it is a remnant of an ancient Bon ritual like that of the Pawos and Pamos (traditional tantric healers). It is believed that the Terdag acts as a conduit between humans and the subterranean spiritual elements. During the ritual, which is usually performed to ward off illnesses and evil spirits, the Terdag goes into a trance and makes prophetic recitations while invoking the deities which is believed to enter his conscience and communicate with him.

The Terdag dons peculiar outfits, including five-petal tiara (zhidag gi ringa), and become mouthpieces of the deities they invoke. Like astrologers, they foretell obstacles and accidents that might befall a family or the community and the means to cure and avert them. The Terdag still plays a vital role in the spiritual well being of communities.



Photo Courtesy: Fb, Druk gi Nye

TSHOKAR & TSHONA

Of the many sacred glacial lakes around Singye Dzong, the most popular are Tshokar and Tshona, translated as the “White and Dark lakes”, located at an elevation of 3,800 meters amid alpine flowers and rhododendron trees. Devotees also visit the nearby Terdha Latsho to offer prayers and receive blessing.

While meditating at Singye Dzong, the deities of Tshokar and Tshona promised to submit to the will of Guru Rinpoche. However, the deity of Tshona, Drakpa Gyeltsen, reneged on his promise and fled downstream along Khomachu (river) by transforming himself into a large serpent. The guru followed the serpent and subdued it in a cave below Khoma village where he meditated for six months. Ratna Lingpa (1403-1478) discovered a Phurpa, a ritual dagger, hidden by the Guru Rinpoche from that area.



Festivals



Photo Courtesy: Fb page, Bhutan's story

KHARAM FESTIVAL

One belief has it that Kharam (curse) originated after a child was born out of an incestuous affair between a brother and a sister. Considered a defilement of the worst kind, the community, worried that a curse would befall it, took advice from a rooster from Tang, Bumthang, which promised that it would break the spell by using its beak to peck the curse away, its wings to wipe it away, and its claws to scratch it away.

Rooster is thus an important part of Kharam festival in Kurtoe which falls on the 28th day of the 8th month of the Bhutanese calendar. The community believes that this festival takes away their bad luck of that particular year. The villagers rub their cattle, household items, and their bodies with the body of a live rooster.

In the past, a rooster would be slaughtered for the festival but this practice is not followed any more. Further, during the festival, an effigy of a cow is erected and painted red. Prayers are chanted and offerings made to the effigy. The meal served during the occasion consists only of dairy products.



Photo Courtesy: Fb page, Bhutan's story

KESIBI LHA

Kesibi Lhakhang was built by Terton Rigzin Jigme Lingpa (1730–1798). Today, the local communities of Nyebi, Zhungkhar, Dangling and Manjabi re-enact the event of the temple's consecration by celebrating an annual festival called Kesibi Lha from the 17th to the 19th day of the 7th month of the Bhutanese lunar calendar.

During the three-day festival, the local people make various offerings. They sing a song called Bro, and perform various mask dances, of which the dances of Gonpo (Mahakala) and Gonmo (Mahakali) take center-stage. A mask dance called Tsen Cham, which begins from a forest nearby, is performed on the second day of the festival.

The devotees believe that the offerings, songs and dances ensure their well-being, bring good health, timely rainfall and good harvest.

HISTORY & CULTURE



Photo Courtesy: Fb page, Dzongkhag Administration Lhuentse

LHUENTSE TSHECHU

Lhuentse Tshechu is the biggest annual religious festival attracting thousands of spectators from all over the district. Held in December over a duration of three days, the festival comprises of various masked and folk dances which are performed at the courtyard of Lhuentse Dzong. The people come dressed in their finest attire.

Lhuentse Tshechu was instituted about three centuries ago by Yongzin Ngagi Wangchuk. Some of the prominent mask dances showcased are Sachhog Zhang Cham, Sha Zam Cham, and Daegye Bak Cham. The Tshechu concludes with the unfurling of Thongdrel in the morning followed by the Guru Tshengye blessing in the afternoon.



Photo Courtesy: bhutanstudies.org.bt

HA - THE BON FESTIVAL

One of the objectives of the Bon festival called Ha in Gortshom village is meant to seek protection for crops and livestock against natural calamities. Ha embraces a series of activities over six months, different from other isolated festivals. During this festival, sexual inhibitions are reduced and sexual innuendos become a norm during the entire festival. The symbols and images used are predominantly male and female genitals. The following is a popular verse sung at the festival:

*The Bonpo's phallus is a wooden phallus,
The wooden phallus never breaks.
The Bonmo's vagina is a leather vagina,
The leather vagina never wears.
Oh Bonpo, do not let your mind go astray,
Others are taking your Bonmo away.*



Photo Courtesy: Fb page, All about Lhuentse Dzongkhag

WANGZHING RABNEY

The temple at Wangzhing was built by Tertön Pema Lingpa (1450–1521). A story goes that the people gathered to receive “wang” (blessing) from the Tertön during the consecration of the temple, hence the name “Wangzhing”. Tertön Pema Lingpa initiated diverse Terchams (treasure dances) during the consecration of the temple, which is re-enacted and known as Wangzhing Rabney today.

The Nubcham is performed during the 1st day of the festival with the dances of Gonpo and Gonmo as the key event. On the second day, the Phag Cham (hog dance) is performed followed by Zhana Cham and other sacred dances. The festival concludes with the dance of the “three male relatives” on the final day.



Photo Courtesy: Fb page, All about Lhuentse Dzongkhag

TAKILA CHHA

Once a year, the communities of Phagidung-Dromzhong, Gorgan-Tagmochu and Khamdhar-Murmo appease the local deities of Wokhor Zhelngo, Kharshong Zhelngo, Chhami, Gyem and Lhamo by organizing an age-old festival. On day one, dancers from lower Tangmachu wearing traditional garment called Kigo Shingka perform “Bro”, a local folk song and dance, at Phagidung village. This dance is dedicated to the local deity of Wokhor Zhelngo (female) and Kharshong Zhelngo (male).

On day two, the dancers come to Baypazur where, under a cypress tree the Bro song and dance continue. They are joined by a new group of Bro dancers from upper Tangmachu-Khashiling. The dance of the day is offered to the local deity of Kusemphen known as Chammi. On day three, the festivity is held at Takila temple. Bro is performed followed by the Gonpo and Gonmo dance and a feast of foods and beverages. Finally, the devotees gather at Baypazur and conduct a ritual called Dued Gi Tangrab to propitiate an evil spirit. In the past, the propitiation used to be done by slaughtering a pig but today the tradition is no more followed.

HISTORY & CULTURE



Photo Courtesy: bcci.org.bt

PREW CHOE

Prew Choe festival, celebrated all over Lhuentse, is dedicated to Guru Padmasambhava from whom the devotees seek blessings and protection from natural calamities, disease, famine and other misfortunes. The people gather at a sacred place and offer butter lamps, Tshog (food offerings), chant prayers and perform ritual dances.

In Minjey Gewog, the festival is celebrated on the 10th day of the 4th month of the Bhutanese calendar at the sacred Rewachen Nye. In Jasabi, Prew Choe is celebrated at Tergang Lhakhang from the 10th to the 13th day of the 4th month of the Bhutanese calendar.

About 55 different food offerings are made to Guru Rinpoche. The villagers gather and spend one night at the temple before the main event the next day. On the way back home from the festival, they sing, dance and solicit blessings of wealth and long life.



Photo Courtesy: images.mandala.library.virginia.edu

NEY PAI CHHA

The Ney Pai Chha, performed from the 7th to the 14th day of the 8th month of the Bhutanese calendar in the remote Ney village in Gangzur Gewog is a vociferous annual affair. Men and women come out to perform dances, make offerings and propitiate local gods and deities. The dancers are costumed in white shorts and shirts with red strips and rings made of cloths or artemisia plants on their heads.

It is believed that before Shakyamuni Buddha was born, Lha Tshangpa (Brahma) in order to safeguard human beings, manifested himself as four gods and four goddesses. The festival appeases these gods and goddesses and solicits well-being, prosperity, timely rainfall and other blessings. The villagers believe that without the festival, misfortunes will pervade their community.



Photo Courtesy: bayuel.com

KIDLUNG CHOEDPA

Kidlung Choedpa is celebrated every year on the 14th and 15th day of the 11th month of the Bhutanese calendar at Kidlung Lhakhang in Gangzur Gewog. The celebration starts early in the morning. Although the first day's celebration concludes with the Nubchham (dance), there is a midnight dance called Re-Chham. On the second day, the people witness the dances of Gonpo (Mahakala) and Lhamo (Mahakali) the entire day. Offering prayers and sampling various food and beverages are part of this festival. Kidlung Lhakhang has a sacred iron chain which was used to prevent the statue of Tshepagmey (Amitayus) escaping from the temple. One can also see a footprint of Tshepagmey (Amitayus) outside the temple.



Nye (Sacred sites)



Photo Courtesy: Fb page, ExPlore Bhutan with Phub TsheRing

NYE CHEN PHUNYING

Nye Chen Phunying is located on the mountain top at an altitude of 3,700 meters, southeast of Lhuentse Dzong in Tsenkhar gewog. A visit to the Nye (sacred place) is said to achieve liberation and cleansing of defilements. It is believed that Guru Rinpoche meditated within the Phunying mountain ridges for a few months while in pursuit of the evil king Khikha Rathoed.

Nye Chen Phunying is regarded as the heart of all mountains on the planet and contains more than 50 sacred sites associated with the Guru, including his treasure box and imprints of Khandro Drowa Zangmo's skull. Further, there are sacred sites associated with the Naga (serpent), Garuda (mythical bird), Neten Chudrug (16 Arhats), and Dakini besides the meditation cave of Yogi Milarepa. The temple at Phunying has a statue of the Guru that is destined to "speak" one day. November to February is the only season for pilgrimage as the other months fall on Ladam during which period visits are forbidden.



Photo Courtesy: khomopkuzangdorji.blogspot.com

SANGJA LODRU NYE

Sangja Lodru, where Guru Rinpoche and his consort meditated, is considered to be a sacred site with the power to fulfill the wishes of visiting devotees. It takes about one hour to reach Sangja Lodru from Goenpa Kabarp monastery in Khoma. Just before reaching the holy site there is a big rock on which are inscribed sacred syllables. It is believed that the temple at Sangja Lodru houses some of the rarest relics of Guru Rinpoche. Adjacent to the temple is the Khandro's Drupkhang (Dakini's meditation place) in a beautiful cave. On the roof of the cave, one can see the fingerprints of Guru Rinpoche. A short distance above the temple is the Guru Drupkhang embedded into a rock where the Guru meditated.

Nearby Sangja Lodru, about an hour's uphill climb, is Zepadur, an outcrop of rocks on which one can see some crops growing throughout the year. It is called Matapai Lotho - which literally means crops that grow without having been sown.

HISTORY & CULTURE

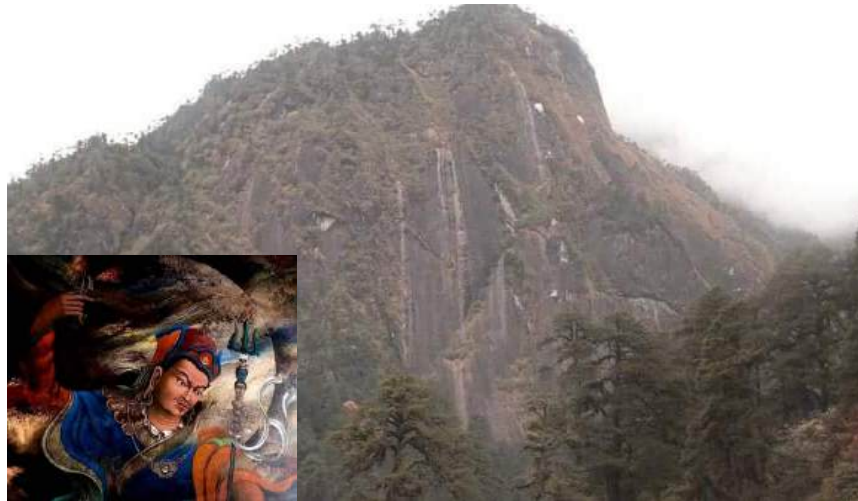


Photo Courtesy: Fb page, Druk Ge Nye

KHENPA JONG

Baeyul Khenpa Jong, or the “Hidden Land” of Khenpa Jong, is located in northern Lhuentse. In the 8th century, Khikha Rathoed, a demonic prince born to King Trisong Deutsen, was exiled from Tibet. He took a vow to destroy Buddhism and establish the base of his evil empire at Khenpa Jong. Guru Padmasambhava secretly followed him to Khenpa Jong where he presented himself before the king in the guise of Haranagpo. Stupefied by his magical powers, the king agreed to Haranagpo’s ruse to jointly defeat the powers that be in Tibet. Through ingenuity and divine powers, the Guru managed to fly the king out of Khenpa Jong in a flying wooden object into an unknown land. Meanwhile, he concealed Khenpa Jong so that the king would never be able to find it again.

Khenpa Jong was rediscovered by Tertön Pema Lingpa in the 15th century, becoming thereafter a highly revered sacred site in the Himalayan Buddhist world. Lama Sonam Zangpo lived at Khenpa Jong between 1939 and 1961. It was a community of about 62 households, all devoted to religious pursuits. However, the village was entirely abandoned because of tensions resulting from the Sino-Indian war of 1962.



Photo Courtesy: tourgenie.com

SINGYE DZONG

Singye Dzong, located at an altitude of about 3,000 meters, is one of Bhutan’s most sacred places. It was founded by Khandro Yeshe Tshogyal and concealed as Ter (spiritual treasure) by Guru Rinpoche in the 8th century. It was here that the Guru meditated after subduing an anti-Dharma evil.

The place has eight dzongs (sacred rock monoliths) - Singye Dzong, Rinchen Dzong, Tsemo Dzong, Gawa Dzong, Dulwa Dzong, Namkha Dzong, Drakri Dzong and Pema Dzong. In the 19th century, Zilnon Namkha Dorji discovered a treasure called Tse-Drup-Chimi Sogthig - a religious scripture that is believed to possess the power to prolong life, at the site. According to sacred scriptures, a visit to Singye Dzong shall liberate oneself from being born in lower realms and can fulfill one’s wishes.

Singye Dzong is about three days walk from the nearest road point and is situated within the Boomdeling Wildlife Sanctuary very close to the Tibetan border. The closest communities to Singye Dzong are Khomagang and Denchung villages.



Photo Courtesy: Fb page, Druk Ge Nye

RINCHEN BUMPA NYE

Considered one of the most sacred, the Rinchhen Bumpa Nye (sacred site) in Kurtoe was prophesied by Ratna Lingpa (1403-1478). It was further blessed by the omniscient Longchenpa (1308–1363) and Tertön Pema Lingpa (1450–1521). It is said that Guru Padmasambhava meditated at this place for three months.

Among numerous sacred objects at Rinchhen Bumpa, there is a white cliff formed in the shape of a stupa, and facial impressions of wrathful and peaceful Buddhas. A footprint of Yeshey Tshogyel and an object associated with Monmo Tashi Khedron are found among many others like the Lamp of Aeon, Cave of Wishes, Hill of Prostration and the Hill of Chanting. The Guru's foot-prints and Yeshey Tshogyel's meditation cave are other significant places to see.

The most intriguing object however is a large stone slab which, as the sun rays fall on its surface early in the morning, reveals sacred letters. The letters however fade away when the sun rays disappear. Rinchhen Bumpa Nye is open to visitors from November to March.



Tshachu & Menchu

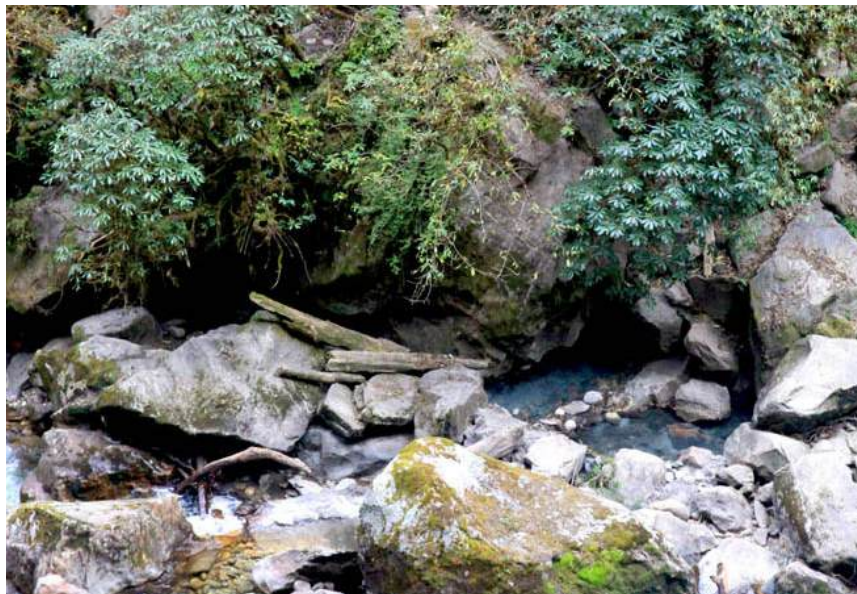


Photo Courtesy: thrillophilia.co

YOENTEN KUENJUNG TSHACHU

Yoenten Kuenjung Tshachu popularly known for the treatment of memory disorder among the Bhutanese was named after the Guru Rinpoche's accomplishment of knowledge and techniques to conquer the resident demon, probably the Khikha Rathoed who lived in the locality after his exile from Tibet, while dipping in the Tshachu. It is located at an elevation of 2761 masl. and one of the rarely visited Tshachu in the country owing to the long walking distance (two to three days). La-Dham-Rig-Dham (Restriction) imposed by the community of Nye in the autumn season (September to November) to perform offerings to their mountains and ridges.

The site around the Tshachu is stunningly beautiful and gives relief to your long and weary walk. A beautiful waterfall on the opposite side of the Tshachu has believed as the saliva fall of Guru Rinpoche while he was playing flute in the area. Visitors are advised not to burn meat or any other substances along the route or at the site to avoid unexpected rainfall and thundering that will make the trip and stay difficult.



Photo Courtesy: thrillophilia.co

PASALUM TSHACHU

Pasalum Tshachu (hot spring) in Gangzur Gewog is located in the extreme north at an elevation of 4,795 meters within alpine scrub vegetation. From the road point of Nye village, it takes about five days on foot to reach the hot spring and if you travel from Choekhor Toed, Bumthang it takes roughly three days.

The hot spring is believed to possess medicinal properties to cure 13 different ailments (Nye Rig Chusum) including headache, backache, and stomach ache. It is believed that Guru Rinpoche bestowed the Tshachu with the power to bless people with longer lives and liberate them from the three realms: Ngelwa (hell), Yidag (hungry ghosts), and Duedro (animals). Visitors can visit the Tshachu throughout the year without seeking any special dates.

HISTORY & CULTURE



Photo Courtesy: uwice.gov.bt

BHARAB MENCHU

Bharab Menchu is located in the Eastern Range of Wangchuck Centennial National Park, on the bank of Kurichu, at an altitude of 1,770 meters and about an hour's drive on the feeder road from Dungkar village. The site has a small concrete pond. Unlike other mineral springs, Bharab Menchu is warm and flows continuously from an underwater cave and was used as a hot spring in the olden days.

Bharab Menchu is known for healing arthritis, body aches, and tuberculosis. It is also recommended for recovering from maternity sickness. The site is typically visited from the twelfth to the second month of the Bhutanese calendar, which are believed to be particularly auspicious.



Photo Courtesy: uwice.gov.bt

KHAMBALUNG NYE TSHACHU

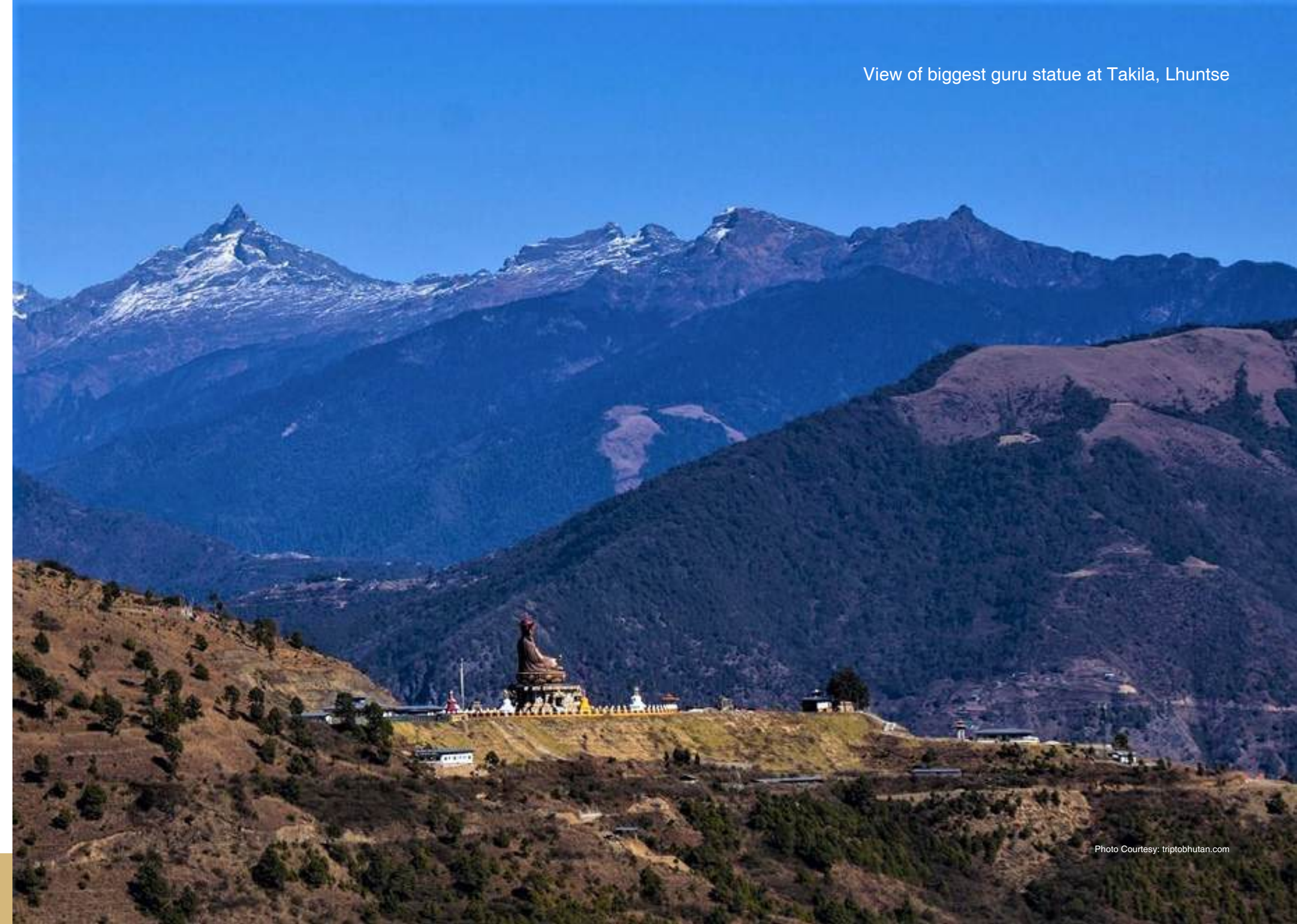
This Tshachu has profound religious, spiritual, and historical significance. It was blessed by Guru Rinpoche in the 8th century and rediscovered by Terton Pema Lingpa in 1475. For these reasons, it is considered one of the most sacred hot springs in Bhutan.

Amongst the three ponds at the hot spring, the Guru Tshachu is the biggest and is found just near the foot of the cliff with a beautiful waterfall. Just below to the right of the Guru Tshachu lie the Tshepamed and Khandroi Tshachus respectively. The pool of Khandroi Tshachu is located within a beautiful bowl-shaped rock.

The Guru Tshachu is believed to help treat indigestion, urinary tract infections and sexually transmitted diseases. It is also known to cure skin diseases. People suffering from atrophy, bone, tendon disorders and scabies use the Tshepamed Tshachu. The Khan-dro Tshachu is known to be an effective in treating rheumatoid diseases, gout, arthritis and paralysis.

The best time to visit Khambalung Nye Tshachu is from November until the end of March. It is located at 2157 masl, and it takes about a day on foot from Ney village of Gangzur Gewog.

View of biggest guru statue at Takila, Lhuntse





Monasteries & Stupas



Photo Courtesy: lhuentse.gov.bt

JANGCHUBLING GOENPA

Located in Gangzur gewog, the foundation of the monastery began with the construction of a hermitage by Choje Pekar Jamtsho, a disciple of the 9th Je Khenpo, Gyalwa Shakya Rinchen, in the 17th century. Later, Pekar Jamtsho handed over the hermitage to Lam Ngawang Samten Jamtsho who then constructed a temple and instituted monks. In 1942, Azhi Kencho Wangmo Wangchuck, the daughter of Gongsar Ugyen Wangchuck, the first King of Bhutan, expanded the monastery to its present size.

The main relics inside the monastery comprise of Namza (dress), a leather boot and a cap of the 16th Karmapa, a cup and a rosary of Situ Rinpoche, among others. The monastery also houses seven different temples and is the main base of Kamtshang Kagyu (one of the four major schools of Tibetan Buddhism) in Bhutan. Every year a Tshepamed Wang (blessing) is organized on the 10th day of the 8th month of the Bhutanese calendar.



Photo Courtesy: Karma Tenzin (Bhutan Lilly Travels)

KHAWCHUNG LHAKHANG

“To the opposite side of Khenpa Jong, there is a ridge resembling the trunk of an elephant where you will find a hamlet which would be of immense benefit to you. Go there and work for the good of all beings,” Pema Lingpa thus prophesied and sent his heart-son Khedrup Kuenga Wangpo to Lhuentse in 1505.

As prophesied, Khedrup Kuenga Wangpo proceeded towards the present day Zhamling area and found the ridge described by his father. He constructed the temple which became his main seat from which emerged the famous lineage of Khochung Choeje. The temple was also known as Rangjung Lhuendrupling.

A stone bathtub filled with water especially in the 4th month of the Bhutanese calendar and footprint of Terton Pema Lingpa’s horse can still be found there. Every year, Terma Wang (treasure blessing) is organized at the temple for the benefit of the community.

HISTORY & CULTURE



Photo Courtesy: FB Page, Druk Ge Ney

YODRA GOENPA

Choeje Pekar Jamtsho, a contemporary of the 9th Je Khenpo of Bhutan, was the first to construct a small temple at Yodrak Goenpa in 1772. The temple later fell into ruins until the 20th century when Lam Rinzin, a reincarnation of Choeje Pekar Jamtsho, rebuilt the temple to fulfill the wishes of his teacher Togden Shakya Shri, an accomplished Buddhist master of the time. Lam Rinzin returned to Bhutan from Tibet after completing his studies and mastery over Buddhism under the guidance of Togden Shakya Shri.

Lam Rinzin introduced himself as the reincarnation of the Choeje Pekar Jamtsho to the local community and the people saw a rainbow over the Yodrak where the temple was built. The rainbow was considered to be an auspicious omen.



Photo Courtesy: bayuel.com

KIDLUNG LHAKHANG

Kidlung Lhakhang is situated on a ridge above the road leading to Kurtoed Dungkar overlooking the Kurichu river and Thimyul Nagtshang. It is believed the temple once housed a statue of Tshepamed discovered by a fisherman, which is currently in Lhuentse Dzong. The story goes that the statue would fly out of its lodge and had to be guarded on several occasions. At one point, the statue was encased in an iron-chain to prevent it escaping from the temple. However, one day, it was found that the statue had snapped the iron chain and escaped. Today, the statue is kept in Lhuentse Dzong.

Besides the sacred iron-chain, one can see a footprint of the Tshepamed statue outside the temple.



Photo Courtesy: bcci.org.bt

CHARBEE LHAKHANG

Charbee Lhakhang in Gangzur gewog was built by Lama Zhang, best known as the founder of Zhemgang Dzong, who pledged to build 108 temples during his lifetime. Charbee Lhakhang, built in 1153, was one of them. Sangay Shacha Thuba (the Buddha of the present aeon) is the main statue of the temple.

Lama Zhang of Zhamling, Tibet, was a renowned Drukpa Kagyud scholar who lived in the 12th century.



Photo Courtesy: bcci.org.bt

GOENPA KABAAP LHAKHANG

The temple, located atop a ridge that overlooks Lhuentse Dzong, was built by Lama Choeying Rangdrol in the 19th century, who was the teacher of the first king of Bhutan, Gongsar Ugyen Wangchuck. Upon his return to Bhutan from Tibet, the lama, while meditating, is said to have seen butter lamps glittering on the opposite ridge for three consecutive nights. To his surprise, upon investigation, the glittering lights emanated from a sandalwood tree. On account of this good omen, the Goenpa Kabaap temple was built.

It is said that the king and a woman from a noble family in Kurtoe constructed 108 statues to be installed inside the temple as relics.

HISTORY & CULTURE



Photo Courtesy: bcci.org.bt

KARPHU LHAKHANG

The temple, located four hours uphill walk from Khoma village, was founded by Terton Ratna Lingpa (1403-1478), a Tibetan treasure finder who compiled the Collected Tantras of the Nyingmapas in the 15th century. Also known as Drodul Lingpa, this great Buddhist master, during a single lifetime, is said to have revealed the destined Termas (religious treasures) of three successive lifetimes.

The temple houses numerous precious relics and treasures discovered by Terton Ratna Lingpa. The most popular are the ritual daggers that were discovered from the Khoma Zampa (Khoma bridge).



Photo Courtesy: authenticbhutantours.com

GURU NANGSI ZILNOEN AT TAKILA

Several Buddhist masters prophesied the construction of the statue of Guru Nangsi Zilnoen in Takila village. Among other Buddhist masters, the two great leaders of the Buddhist ecumenical movement in Tibet - Jamyang Khentse Wangpo (1820–1892) and Jamgon Kongtrul Lodro Thaye (1813–1899) - foretold the need to construct a statue of Guru Nangsi Zilnoen in Takila village for peace, prosperity and happiness in the universe. Furthermore, the great Terton Lerab Lingpa (1856–1926) prophesied the need to build the same statue to avert misfortune in Kurtoe. Similarly, lam Sonam Zangpo, the most revered Yogi of Bhutan, pointed out that a statue of Guru Rinpoche at Takila would ensure prosperity in Bhutan and the world.

To fulfill the prophecy, the Druk Odiyana Foundation led by Khenpo Karpo built the world's largest Guru statue, which has a height of 173 feet (52.73m), standing imposingly on the Takila mountain slope, overlooking the valley of Tangmachu. The gigantic sculpture is flanked by eight big and 108 small stupas.



Photo Courtesy: bayuel.com

KHOMA LHAKHANG

The two-storey Khoma Lhakhang is unique in that each floor was built by two different persons. The lower floor is said to have been built by Lama Zhang of Zhamling, Tibet, who was a renowned Drukpa Kagyud scholar. Lama Zhang is also the founder of Zhemgang Dzong.

The upper storey is believed to have been built by Gelong Kado from Dromazhong in Maenbi gewog. The flooring has been done with pebbles rather than the usual wooden planks.

The temple was founded in the 12th century and houses statues of the eleven-headed Avalokiteshvara and the local deity, Yanag Tingkar.



Photo Courtesy: bcci.org.bt

SAMDRUP CHOLING LHAKHANG

Located in Nyalamdung village, this temple was built in the 13th century as the winter residence of treasure revealer Tertön Chokyi Wangchuk popularly known as Guru Chowang (1212-1270). The Lhakhang, which is about two hours walk from the road point, houses the Kudung Chorten of Tsheden Chekey Gyeltsen, the son of Guru Chowang.

Guru Chowang is said to have revealed eighteen troves of earth treasure (texts and objects physically concealed in the earth) and one trove of mind treasure (scripture concealed in one's mind-stream). Among the most influential are the Lama Sangdu, a sadhana practice that includes the widely used prayer known as the Seven Line Supplication.

HISTORY & CULTURE



Photo Courtesy: bcci.org.bt

LADRONG LHAKHANG

For the people of Jaray, Ladrong Lhakhang is a prized Buddhist heritage. Whenever there is a misfortune or need of spiritual refuge, the people turn to the temple for its blessing.

Literally, Ladrong means the “Hamlet of the Lam”. The Lam indicated here is Terton Drimed Lingpa, a 19th century “treasure revealer”, who constructed the temple which stands on a ridge of a cliff facing south. The temple’s most sacred relic is Gyalwa Jampa, a Buddha statue, brought from Tibet by the founder.

Ladrong Lhakhang is famous for Ladrong Rabney, an annual religious event which attracts devotees from places as far as Mongar and Trashiyangtse. The Rabney takes place on the 18th day of the 10th month of the Bhutanese calendar and preserves the essence of how it was performed by Terton Drimed Lingpa himself. A five-day mask dance festival was introduced by Aja Lam Dorji Tenzin in 1970.



Photo Courtesy: bayuel.com

GARMEY LHAKHANG

Garmey Lhakhang at Tungkhar near Tangmachu village in Maenbi gewog is built at the base of a cave surrounded by large rocks. The temple houses one thousand statues of Guru Rinpoche.

There are imprints of various animals on the rocks near the cave which is also believed to contain religious treasures hidden by Guru Rinpoche. Locals say there was once a hot spring that flowed from the cliff-top which dried overtime.



Photo Courtesy: FB, Druk ge Mey

YAMALUNG GOENPA

Located on top of a secluded ridge overlooking the beautiful valley of Ungar in Metsho, it is believed that visiting Yamalung monastery would earn a devotee as much merit as visiting the Yamalung monastery in Tibet. According to religious scriptures, Guru Rinpoche meditated and attained immortality at Yamalung.

The vicinity of Yamalung Goenpa is filled with sacred objects such as a conch-shaped rock, an imprint of the Chhokoey (a classical Tibetan script) letter 'Aa' and the cave where Guru Rinpoche meditated. The Guru's Uzha (hat), Khandroi Baga (Yoni), Drupchu (sacred spring) and footprints of Khandroma and Guru can also be prominently seen today.



Photo Courtesy: heavenlybhutan.com

GOSHOGPANG LHAKHANG

The Goshogpang temple was built by Terton Pema Lingpa. Literally, Goshogpang means "a place of vulture's feathers" as the rocky ridge just above the temple resembles the flying posture of a vulture.

Terton Pema Lingpa once lived in Ney village. As there was no temple in the village, he asked the villagers for a plot of land to build one. Unfortunately, the villagers construed his request as greed in spite of them having offered him food and a lodge to stay. They even conspired to murder him. He fled to the neighbouring Tangrung village where he was welcomed.

Like Ney, Tangrung village did not have a place of worship. So Pema Lingpa built a temple as a token of his gratitude to the local community. The sacred objects and statues in the temple are said to have been crafted by Pema Lingpa himself.

HISTORY & CULTURE



Photo Courtesy: bcci.org.bt

KHINYEL LHAKHANG

It is believed that the foundations of Khinyel Lhakhang in Medtsho, Lhuntse, and Samye monastery in Tibet were laid on the same day in 779 AD. In 1228, Gyalwa Lhanangpa built a proper temple which was later renovated by Terton Pema Lingpa who also installed several statues. The main relics inside the temple are the statues of the Buddha and Guru Padmasambhava along with ancient scriptures of which one is written in gold.

An oral account suggests that Drukpa Kuenley's pet dog once slept at the temple, hence the name Khinyel Lhakhang or the "temple of the sleeping dog".

Every year, on the 15th day of the 10th month of the Bhutanese calendar, people from the nearby villages gather at Khinyel Lhakhang to observe Ramda, which celebrates the laying of the temple's foundation and its renovation as well as consecration.



Photo Courtesy: bcci.org.bt

DROWAZHING LHAKHANG

Also known as Bamdir Lhakhang, Drowazhing Lhakhang is located at the base of Bamdir village on the way to Zhongmay village. It is said that the place where the temple stands today was once haunted by evil spirits who tormented passers-by. In order to tame the spirits, the local people built a small temple in 1228 under the guidance of Somrang Rinpoche from Bumthang.



Photo Courtesy: bcci.org.bt

NYAG LHAKHANG

A statue of the Buddha, believed to have been sculpted on the instructions of the Buddha himself, was offered to Guru Rinpoche by his disciples. The Guru gave the statue to the queen of Tibet during the construction of Samye monastery. The queen however returned the statue to the Guru with the request that it be hidden as Ter (treasure) to be rediscovered by Terton Pema Lingpa (1450-1521).

As prophesied, centuries later, the statue was discovered from Bumthang by the great Terton. Also as per the Guru's prophecy, Pema Lingpa built a stupa at Nyag in 1501. The Guru said the stupa would ward off diseases, epidemics and all kinds of turmoil in Bhutan.

Down the years, as the stupa started falling into disrepair many renowned Lamas tried to repair it but with dire consequences. The stupa would emit smoke or cause heavy rainfall stopping the renovation works. Much later, the 20th century scholar and philosopher, Lam Sonam Zangpo, said there would be famine, disease, epidemic and other misfortune if the structure of the chorten was disturbed or vandalized.



Photo Courtesy: bcci.org.bt

KHAMPHU LHAKHANG

The Khamphu Lhakhang is located in the middle of the cliff in Jasabi, Kurtoe, Terton Pema Lingpa (1450-1521) constructed it in 1479. As prophesied by Guru Rinpoche, Terton Pema Lingpa discovered a bronze statue of the Buddha from a rock near the temple.

The statue was a Ter (spiritual treasure) of great significance. Pema Lingpa also left his footprint on top of the rock. The discovery of the treasure, however, did not augur well for Pema Lingpa and his disciples. They fell sick and it took a divine instruction from Guru Rinpoche to perform an appeasement ritual to the local protective deity, Zola Rakey, to recover.

The bronze statue of the Buddha is the main relic inside the temple.

HISTORY & CULTURE



Photo Courtesy: FB, Druk Ge Nye

TIMULA THEKCHENTSE GOENPA

Timula Thekchentse Lhakhang was built in 1546 by Ralung hierarch Yongzin Ngagi Wangchuk (1517–1554). He considered the place to be sacred as it was associated with goddess Dorji Phagmo (Vajravahni), the “Mother to all Buddhas” and the “Ultimate Refuge” for all deities and practitioners. The temple became the main seat of Ngagi Wangchuk until he passed away.

The temple was also referred to as Dzong (fortress) with the appointment of a Dzongpon (governor). One of its governors, Dzongpon Lhadar, was assassinated in the Dzong by Phagidung Gyalpo Gawa and Kidlung Gyalpo Dharma Poenchen. Since then, the Dzong has been reduced to a mere temple.



Photo Courtesy: FB page, Karney Monastery

KARNEY & ZARTHANG GOENPA

Karney Goenpa is believed to be more than 400 years old. It is situated on a hilltop about two and a half hours walk from the road point. The temple was built by Togden Karma Rabjur as per the prophecy of the eighth Karmapa Mikyo Dorje (1507-1554). A hermitage for meditation existed before it evolved into a temple as seen today.

The two statues of Karmapa, brought from Tibet, are considered to be the main relics of the temple. The people of Khamdar conduct their annual festival on the 4th day of the 6th month of the Bhutanese calendar at the temple.

Togden Karma Rabjur also built the Zarthang Gonpa in the nearby area. A few meters walk from the temple is a Drupchu (holy spring) founded by Togden Karma Rabjur. A giant cypress tree next to the temple is believed to have sprouted from the walking stick used by the temple's founder.



Photo Courtesy: FB page, AutshoNamdrollingGoenzinDratshang, Lhuntse

NAMDROLING GOENZIN DRATSHANG

Located in Autsho, Tsaenkhar gewog, which is considered the gateway to Lhuentse Dzongkhag, Namdroling Goenzin Dratshang is constructed at the sacred site of Guru Drakmar. The construction of the Dratshang began in 2002 and nearly took two decades to complete. It was consecrated by His Holiness the 70th Je Khenpo, Trulku Jigme Choe-da. Among many other sacred relics, the monastery houses a Chenrezig Ri-nga Thongdrel. The 35-foot tall appliqué is the first of its kind in the country. A week-long Guru Drakmar Drupchen is held every year in the month of January. The Dratshang has several monks and teachers.



Rice fields in Tangmachu village



Photo Courtesy: TCB

Accommodations

ACCOMMODATIONS



Photo Courtesy: hotel.bt

Amenities/facilities

- Bar
- Laundry
- Parking

Restaurant

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

Rooms

- Number of Rooms: 10
- Attached bath
- Choice of double and twin beds
- Room heating (on request)
- Tea/coffee maker in rooms (on request)
- Distance from Lhuentse town (in kms): 35

Phayul Resort

Autsho, Lhuentse

Mobile: +975 17624046 / 17407055



Photo Courtesy: windhorsetours.com

Shangrila Hotel

Lhuentse Town

Phone: +975 4 545123

Amenities/services

- Bar
- Laundry
- Parking

Restaurant

- A la carte and buffet
- Bhutanese cuisine

Rooms

- Single (Common Bath) 3
- Double (Common Bath) 3
- Double (Attached Bath) 1
- Distance from Lhuentse town (in kms): 0

ACCOMMODATIONS



Photo Courtesy: bhutanhomestay.com

Ney Chukpo Heritage Homestay

Facilities: Indoor toilet, traditional setting, hot water on demand.



Photo Courtesy: bhutanhomestay.com

Tangmachu Chukpo Heritage Farmstay

Facilities: Outdoor bathroom and toilet, very traditional setting, hot water on demand



Photo Courtesy: tourism.gov.bt

Tshering VHS

Location: Khoma
Phone: 17531557



Photo Courtesy: tourism.gov.bt

Bumpa Dema VHS

Location: Khoma
Phone:
77714102/17303515



Photo Courtesy: tourism.gov.bt

Chimi Yuden VHS

Location: Khoma
Phone: 17576688



Photo Courtesy: tourism.gov.bt

Chozom VHS

Location: Khoma
Phone:
17565010/17268885



Photo Courtesy: tourism.gov.bt

Deki Peldon VHS

Location: Minjey
Phone: 17814374



Photo Courtesy: bhutanhomestay.com

Baminbrangsa Farmstay

Location: Tangmachu

Amenities: home cooked meals prepared from locally grown vegetables, ara (home-brewed alcohol), entertainment with folk songs.



Photo Courtesy: bhutanhomestay.com

Peljorling Yurbi Farmstay

Location: Yurbi

Facilities: indoor toilet and bathroom. Hikes to Yodrak Goenpa, Janchubling Monastery, Sangay Lodrak cave, Ney village or Dungkar village.



Photo Courtesy: tourism.gov.bt

Jigme Tshewang VHS
Location: Minje
Phone: 17712127



Photo Courtesy: tourism.gov.bt

Kinzang Tobgay VHS
Location: Minje
Phone: 17626618



Photo Courtesy: tourism.gov.bt

Namgay Zam VHS
Location: Khoma
Phone: 17788383



Photo Courtesy: tourism.gov.bt

Norbu VHS
Location: Khoma
Phone:
17310774/77600877



Photo Courtesy: tourism.gov.bt

Norbu Lhaden VHS
Location: Khoma
Phone:
17700848/17932885

ACCOMMODATIONS



Photo Courtesy: tourism.gov.bt

Pema Dechen VHS
Khoma
17638394/17714728



Photo Courtesy: tourism.gov.bt

Rinchen Yangtso VHS
Gangzur
17813058



Photo Courtesy: tourism.gov.bt

Sangay Wangmo VHS
Maenbi
17541811/17820313



Photo Courtesy: tourism.gov.bt

Sonam Zangmo VHS
Gangzur
17380638



Photo Courtesy: tourism.gov.bt

Tsheringmo VHS
Khoma
17576688/17708618



Photo Courtesy: tourism.gov.bt

Tashi Chozom VHS
Location: Maenbi
Phone: 17788394



Photo Courtesy: tourism.gov.bt

Tashi Pelmo VHS
Location: Khoma
Phone: 77388121



Photo Courtesy: tourism.gov.bt

Tshering Dolma VHS
Location: Maenbi
Phone: 17701038



Photo Courtesy: tourism.gov.bt

Yangkula VHS
Location: Khoma
Phone: 17788454



Photo courtesy: beyondtheclouds.org.nz

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