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Festivals Calendar

2025 & 2026

Bhutan

Festival or 'Tshechu' in the local language is a religious event celebrated every year in various monasteries, temples and fortresses across the Kingdom of Bhutan. The dates and duration of the festivals vary from one district to another but they are always held on or around the 10th day of the lunar calendar corresponding to the birthday of Guru Padmasambhava, an 8th century Buddhist scholar.

During Tshechus, dances are performed by monks as well as laymen wearing ornate costumes and masks; each aspect of dance has a symbolic meaning. Some of these festivals are observed to purify one's soul and ward off evil spirits. The Thimphu Tshechu, Paro Tshechu and Jambay Lakhang Drup are among the biggest in terms of participation and audience. Most Tshechus also feature the unfurling of a Thongdroel (or thangkha) – an embroidered painting. Thongdroels are especially impressive examples of Buddhist art and are considered so sacred that simply seeing a Thongdroel is said to cleanse the viewer of sin.


Note - The festival dates are tentative and subject to change.


1 JANUARY 2025

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
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JANUARY

FEBRUARY

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2 FEBRUARY 2025

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3 MARCH 2025

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09 Punakha Tshechu

14 Chhorten Kora

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Punakha Tshechu

Punakha Dzong, Punakha

March 09 – 11, 2025/ To be advised

In 2005, a festival called Punakha Tshechu was introduced in response to requests for better preservation of Buddhist teachings and to keep alive the noble deeds of Zhabdrung Rimpoche.

This festival not only plays an important role in preserving Bhutan's rich culture and traditions but also provides devout Buddhists with an opportunity for prayer and pilgrimage. It reflects the richness of the Bhutanese cultural heritage and is very special in the eyes and hearts of both the Bhutanese people and the tourists.



Chorten Kora

Chorten Kora, Tashiyangtse

March 14 - 29, 2025/ To be advised

The Chorten Kora Festival is one of the most popular events in eastern Bhutan. 'Kora' means circumambulation and the main activity of the festival is circumambulating the Chorten Kora. This festival brings out colorful aspects of Bhutanese culture such as mask dances, and the rich textiles and brocades worn by the locals a Masutaki Mushroom Festival midst the triumphant atmosphere of the festival itself.

Dakpa Kora is held on the 15th day of the 3rd month corresponding to 28th February and Drukpa Kora (circumbulation by the Bhutanese) is held on the 30th day corresponding to 15th March every year.

The Chorten (Stupa) was built by Lama Ngawang Loday in 1740 at the site, where a demon was subdued. It is believed to be a replica of the Boudhnath stupa in Nepal and was consecrated by the 13th chief Abbot of Bhutan Je Sherub Wangchuk. Today, it is considered one of the most important historical Buddhist structures.

A legend states that a young girl from Tawang, believed to have been a Khando (Dakini) agreed to be buried alive inside the Chorten. For this reason, the ritual known as Dakpa Kora is organized every year, wherein hundreds of people from Arunachal Pradesh known as the Dakpas visit Chorten Kora to circumambulate.



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APRIL 2025

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05 Gomphu Kora

08 Paro Tshechu

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Gomphu Kora

Gom Kora Lhakhang, Trashigang

April 05 - 07, 2025/ To be advised

Gomphu Kora lies in the heart of the agrarian belt of eastern Bhutan.

In Chokoe (a classical script), Gomphu means 'Meditation Cave' and Kora means 'Circumambulation'. The name is derived from a cave formed out of a rock-face next to a temple that has been built as a tribute to this sacred site. The story of Gomphu Kora goes back to the 8th century AD. Legend has it that an evil spirit called Myongkhapa escaped from Samye in Tibet, where Guru Padmasambhava, the progenitor of the Nyingma strand of Buddhism, was spreading the Dharma in the Himalayas. Myongkhapa concealed himself inside a rock where Gomphu Kora stands today. The Guru followed the evil, meditated for three days inside the rock cave and finally vanquished it.

The Gomphu Kora temple was renovated and enlarged in the 15th and 16th centuries.

'Go around Gomphu Kora today for tomorrow may be too late', so goes a local song that entices devotees to visit Gomphu Kora. The place comes alive, once every year, when people all over eastern Bhutan descend upon the narrow valley, dressed in fineries, to partake in the festivity, to worship and to reunite themselves with their illustrious past.



Paro Tshechu

Rinpung Dzong, Paro

April 08 - 12, 2025/ To be advised

Paro Tshechu is one of the most popular festivals in Bhutan, held annually since the 17th century when Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal, the founder of the state of Bhutan, and Ponpo Rigzin Nyingpo initiated the festival together with the consecration of Paro Dzong (fortress) in 1644. Featuring dances performed by trained monks as well as laymen in amazing masks and costumes, Paro Tshechu (festival) is one of the best ways to experience Bhutan's ancient living culture. The festival is observed in three specific parts – the pre-festival rituals on the first day, ceremonies are undertaken on the second day inside the Paro Dzong and the main festivities on the festival ground on the remaining three days.

A highlight of Paro Tshechu is the unfurling of the silk Thangkha – so large that it covers the facade of an entire building and is considered one of the most sacred blessings in the whole of Bhutan. The 'Thangkha, known in Bhutan as a 'thongdroel' is a religious picture scroll, and is only exhibited for a few hours at daybreak on the final day of the festival enabling the people to obtain its blessing. This holy scroll 'confers liberation by the mere sight of it'.



5 MAY 2025

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09 Ura Yakchoe

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Ura Yakchoe

Ura Lhakhang, Bumthang

May 09 - 13, 2025/ To be advised

Ura is a strikingly beautiful village in Central Bhutan. As per local legends, the Ura community once prayed to Guru Padmasambhava to save them from an outbreak of leprosy. The Guru responded by magically sending a charmed statue of the Buddhist deity Vajrapani. Finally, when the statue reached Gadan, a nine-headed snake rose out of the place that is now known as 'the nine-headed snake' (*puguyungdhogo*) and slithered out of the valley. Leprosy, the disease spread by the serpents, was eventually overcome by the blessing of Vajrapani, the subjugator of the subterranean world.

The Yakchoe is a commemoration of this important event and an offering in gratitude. It formally begins on the 12th of the third Bhutanese month with a procession from Gadan to Ura. The Vajrapani relic and the Gadan Lam are received by Ura's priests in a long procession through scenic landscapes and past *chortens* and *mani* walls.

Having arrived in Ura, the *gomchens* perform their dance tests and a religious ceremony dedicated to Vajrapani, which begins with the ritual of exorcism. This religious ritual continues for several days in early mornings and late evenings, while several masked, religious dances alternated by folk dances occupy most of the daytime. The festival ends on the fifth day.



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JUNE 2025

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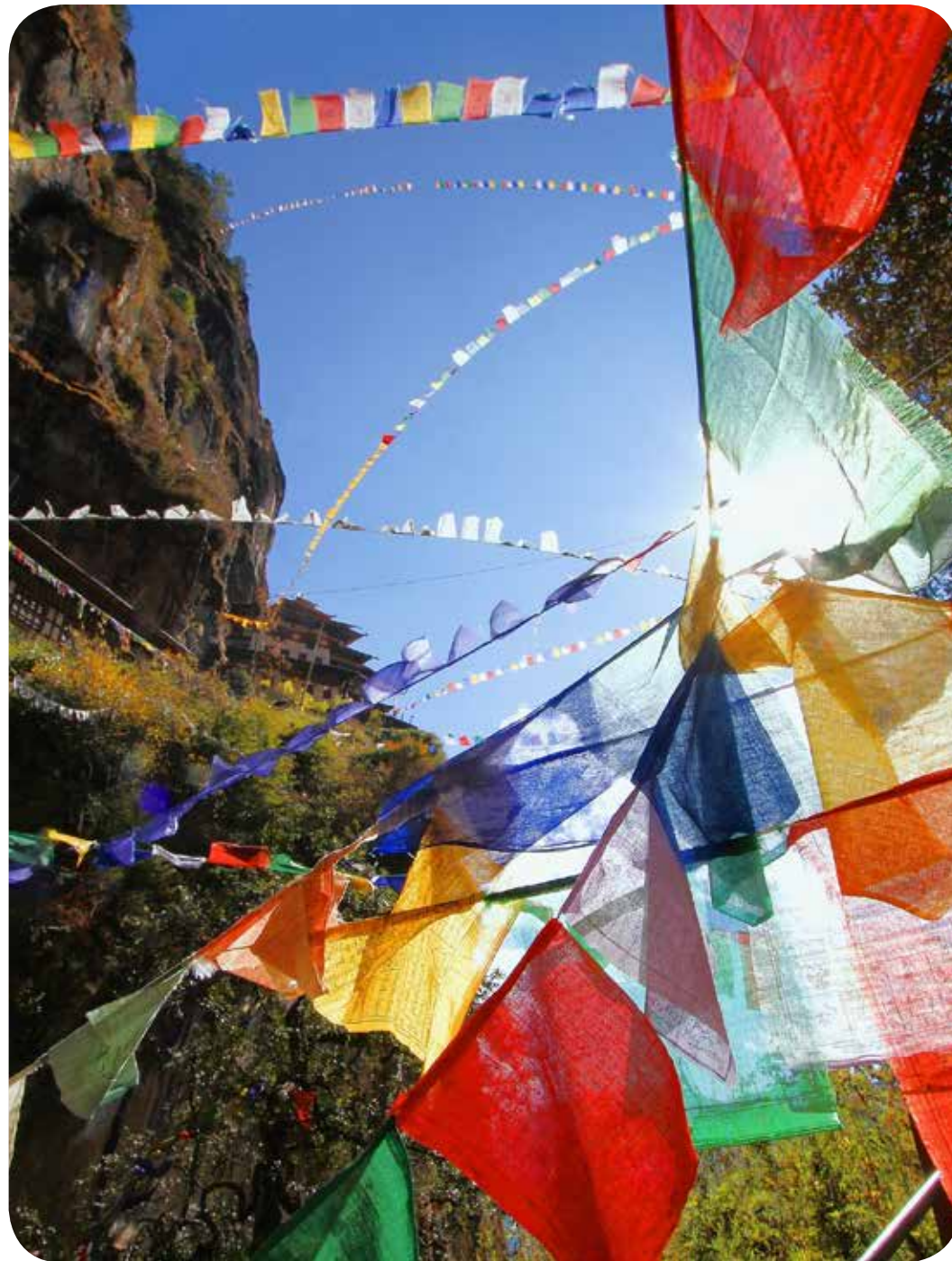
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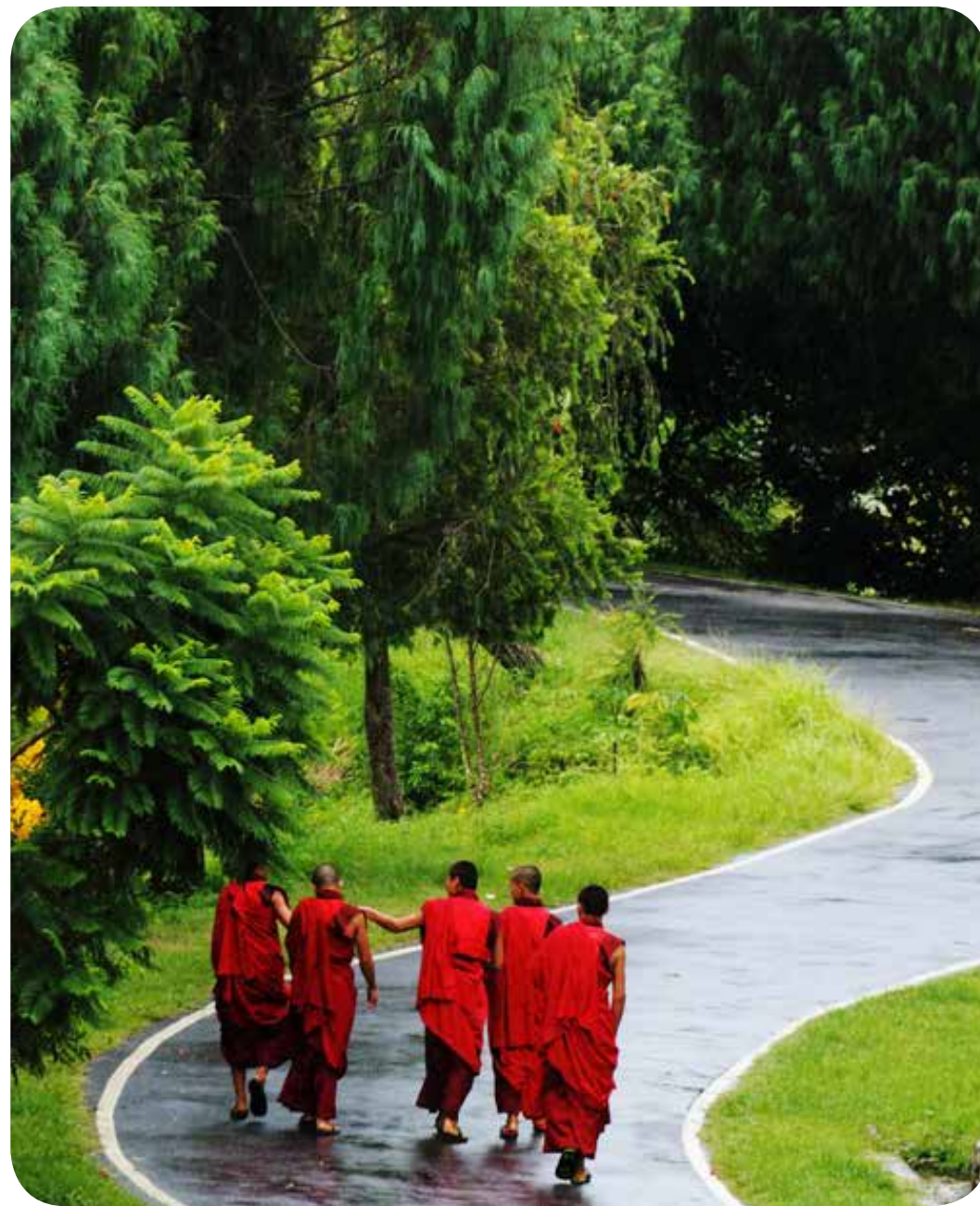
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28 Thimphu Tshechu

30 Wangdue Tshechu

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Thimphu Tshechu

Tashi Chhodzong, Thimphu
September 28, 2025/ To be advised

Thimphu Tshechu, held in Bhutan's capital city, was initiated by the 4th Temporal Ruler of Bhutan, Gyalse Tenzin Rabgay, in 1867. The festival underwent a change in the 1950s, when the third King Jigme Dorji Wangchuck, introduced numerous Boed Chhams (mask dances performed by monks). The addition also added colour without compromising the spiritual significance.

Thimphu festival begins on the 9th day and ends on the 12th day of the eighth Bhutanese month. Generally, the four-day Tshechu program consists of 24 folk songs and 25 sacred dances. Usually the program for each day begins by 9 a.m.

Since the year of its establishment in 1687, Thimphu Tshechu was performed inside Trashichhoedzong courtyard until 2007. However, because of the steady increase in attendees, the inner courtyard became too congested to properly perform the rites. Therefore, to accommodate a growing number of viewers, a new Tshechu stadium was constructed and named Tendrel Thang, meaning 'Auspicious Ground'.



Wangdue Tshechu

Tencholing Army Ground, Wangduephodrang
September 30 - October 02, 2025/ To be advised

The annual Wangduephodrang Tshechu was introduced by Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal after the completion of the dzong (fort cum monastery). The three-day annual Tshechu is attended by people from Punakha and Thimphu and provides the people with an occasion for merrymaking and revelry. The Tshechu is known for the Raksha Mangcham or the Dance of the Ox. It concludes with the unfurling of the Guru Tshengye Thongdrol where people throng to receive blessings.

Note: Wangduephodrang Dzongkhag Dzong was burnt to the ground on the 24th of June 2012. Plans are well underway to re-build it. While the Tshechu will be held, please confirm the location with your tour operator. After the fire, the Tshechu was held at the nearby Tencholing Army ground in Wangduephodrang.



10 OCTOBER 2025

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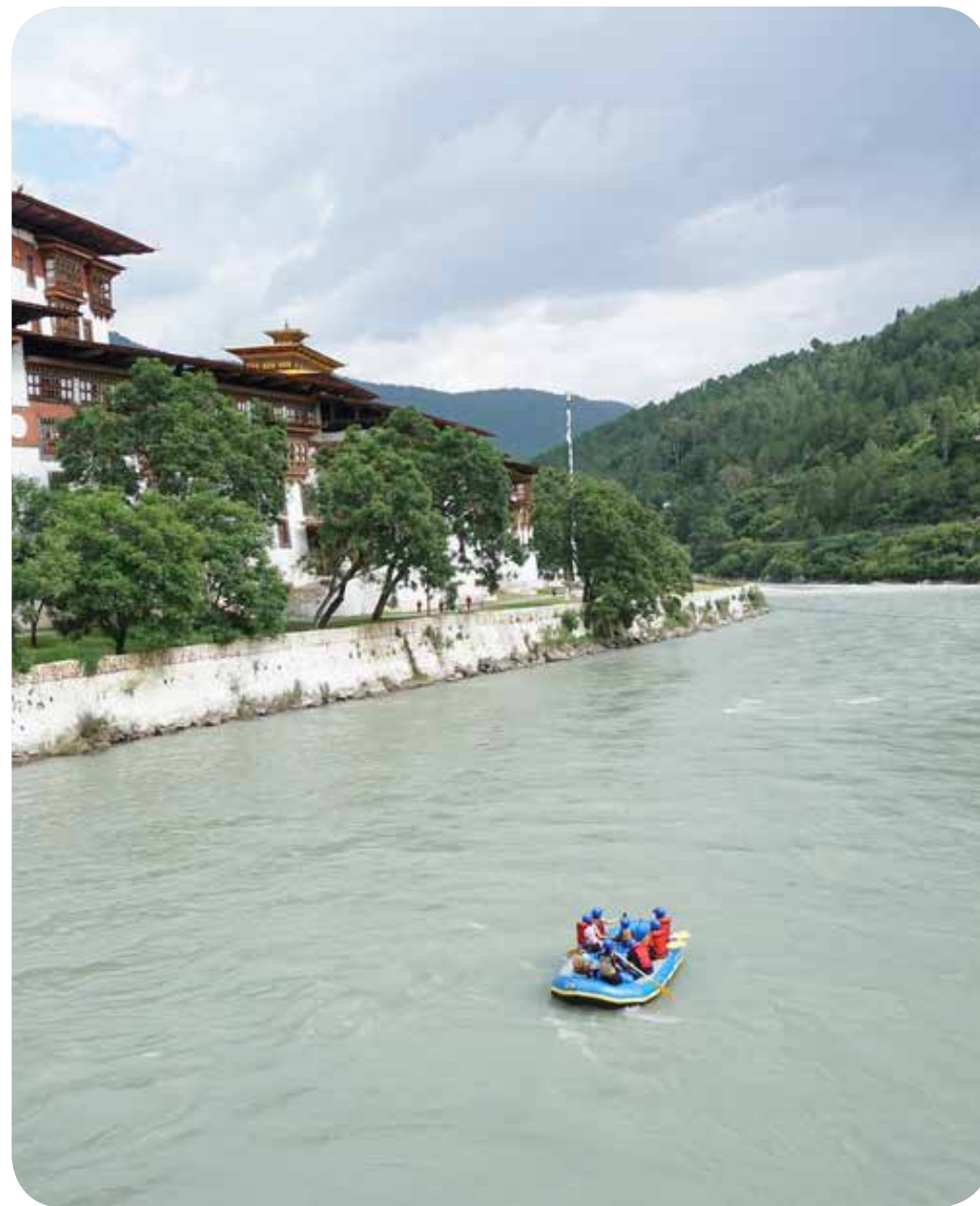
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07 Thangbi Mani

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Thangbi Mani

Bumthang

October 07 - 08, 2025/ To be advised

The Thangbi Mani festival is held at Thangbi Lhakhang, which was founded in 1470 by Shamar Rinpoche of the Kagyupa religious school.

Located at an elevation of 2730m, the historically significant Thangbi Temple is one of the temples managed by lay monks called Gomchens who are responsible for all rituals. The festival is organized jointly by the people of the three villages of Bumthang, Thangbi, Goling. The Gomchens of the monastery exhibit vibrant rituals, and young boys and girls wear masks of demons and animals to showcase hypnotizing masked dances and other paraphernalia, believed to have hidden powers to bless onlookers with unending fortune. Also, it is local belief that those who manage to jump over the magical flame here three times, will be protected from every impending misfortune for at least one year.

Thangbi Mani festival starts on 14th and concludes on the 16th day of 8th Bhutanese month.



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05 Jambay Lhakhang Drup

06 Prakhar Duchhoed

11 Black Necked Crane Festival

28 Mongar Tshechu

29 Trashigang Tshechu

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Jambay Lhakhang Drup

Choekhor, Bumthang

November 05-08, 2025/ To be advised

Jambay Lhakhang Drup is one of the most spectacular festivals celebrated in the 'Land of Thunder Dragon'. The venue is Jambay Lhakhang – one of the oldest temples in Bhutan. The festival pays tribute to Guru Rinpoche, the saint who introduced the Tantric form of Buddhism in the country. Jambay Lhakhang Drup also commemorates the establishment of the Jambay Lhakhang temple in the 8th century.

This festival is a colourful and merry affair, complete with entertaining traditional mask dances. Besides the entertainment factor for onlookers, these dances also have deeply significant meanings related to tradition.

The top highlights include a fire ceremony called 'Mewang' and a religious dance known as 'Tercham'. Other exciting events include, a famous drum beat dance, a clown dance called Dola Pangtoy Shazam, Raksha Mangcham (a dance symbolizing life after death) and many more. These colourful performances easily grab the attention of the onlookers. Anyone visiting Bhutan during the festival, should definitely consider witnessing this magnificent spectacle.

There is an interesting story behind the construction of the Jambay Lhakhang Temple. It was founded by Songtsen Gampo, a Tibetan King in the 7th century AD. The king was destined to build 108 temples known as Thadhul-Yangdhul (on and across the border) in a day to subdue a demoness. This is one of those temples. Legend also goes that Guru Rinpoche, visited the site several times and deemed it exceptionally sacred.



Prakhar Duchhoed

Bumthang

November 06 - 08, 2025/ To be advised

This annual festival is held at the Prakhar Lhakhang in the Chumi Valley of Bumthang, which is about a half an hour drive from Chamkhar town. Built in the 16th century, it is the main temple of the village and is a roughly 10-minute walk from the road. It is said that monkeys helped in building this Lhakhang, wherein humans would work during the day and the monkeys would take over in the night. Hence the name, 'Prakhar', which means 'White Monkey'.

The festival lasts for 3 days from the 16th to the 18th of the ninth lunar month in the Bhutanese calendar. It is celebrated to honor Lama Thukse Dawa, one of the sons of the 15th century Buddhist master, Terton Pema Lingpa, who was one of the greatest Buddhist masters to be ever born in Bhutan. Several kinds of mask dances are performed during the festival.



Black Necked Crane Festival

Gangtey, Phobjikha

November 11, 2025/ To be advised

The annual black-necked crane festival is celebrated in the courtyard of Gangtey Gonpa, in Phobjikha valley. Through this festival, the local folks heartily celebrate the arrival of the majestic black-necked crane in their part of the world. This magnificent bird spends the winters here. The festival also generates awareness amongst locals and visitors about the importance of conserving the endangered black-necked crane.

This is an excellent time to visit Bhutan. Cheerful cultural programs such as folk songs and dances (some with black-necked crane themes) are usually held. The local people dress up in elaborate costumes and perform highly entertaining mask dances. Other interesting highlights are crane dance as well as environment-related drama performances and songs by school-going children. Most of the programs start in the morning and stretch late into the afternoon.

The festival generally includes cultural programs such as folk songs and dances (some with black-necked crane themes) and mask dances performed by the local people, crane dance and environmental-related drama and songs by the school children. The program usually starts by 9:30 am and lasts till late afternoon.

The black-necked crane festival also institutes economic incentives (payment) to strengthen the linkages between conservation and economic welfare, while ensuring sustainable livelihoods.

Furthermore, it's an avenue for the local community to renew its commitment to the conservation of the black-necked cranes, and also provides them a platform to showcase their cultural heritage and talents to visitors.



Mongar Tshechu

Mongar Dzong, Mongar

November 28-30, 2025/ To be advised

Mongar district, previously known as Zhongar, is one of the six districts that make up eastern Bhutan, bordering Bumthang, Lhuntse, Pemagatshel and Trashigang districts. The region's landscape is spectacular with stark cliffs, gorges and dense conifer forests, while the area is notably famous for its textiles, fabrics and wood carvings.

The 3-day long Mongar Tshechu is the most exciting annual festival, besides several local festivals. Celebrated inside the Dzong, draws people from as far as Trashigang, Trashiyangtse and Lhuentse. The festival includes numerous mask dances and is one of the most important events in the area.



Trashigang Tshechu

Trashigang Dzong, Trashigang

November 29 - December 01, 2025/ To be advised

The annual three-day distinctive Trashigang Tshechu is one of the biggest festivals in eastern Bhutan. The 16th-century Trashigang Dzong hosts the festival from the 7th to the 11th day of the 10th month in the Bhutanese calendar. The Tshechu is largely attended by the Brokpas, a community of semi-nomadic people, who reside in the valleys of Merak and Sakteng. The Khengpa community and people from as far as Samdrup Jongkhar, Pema Gatshel and Trashiyangtse also show up.

Preparations for the Tshechu begin two days prior to the actual festival. On the 7th day of the month, monks perform ceremonial ablutions, and rehearsals are held on the 8th day to prepare for the Tshechu. The Tshechu formally starts on the 9th day of the month. Finally, on the 10th day, the Thongdroel (large tapestry) of Neten Chudrug (Sixteen Arhats) is unfurled amidst a flurry of mask dances. On the last day, the old Thongdroel of Guru Tshengyed (eighth manifestation of Guru Rinpoche) is displayed. The unfurling is accompanied by the performance of Guru Tshengyed Chhams.

The festival is held at Trashigang, at an altitude of around 1100m/3610 ft.) in the far east corner of Bhutan on the banks of the River Gamri Chhu.

Trashigang used to be the centre of a busy trade route with Tibet, and is now the junction of the east-west highway, with road connectivity to Samdrup Jongkhar and then to India.



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04 Jambay Lhakhang Singye Cham

04 Nalakar Tshechu

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Jambay Lhakhang Singye Cham

Bumthang

December 04, 2025/ To be advised

Jambay Lhakhang is one of the oldest temples in the kingdom, founded by Songtsen Gampo, a Tibetan King in the 7th century AD. The king was destined to build 108 temples known as Thadhul- Yangdhul (temples on and across the border) in a day to subdue a demoness. This temple is one of them.

One of the most spectacular festivals in the country, called Jambay Lhakhang Drup is hosted here with a dual purpose and agenda. Firstly, it is a tribute to Guru Rinpoche, a saint who introduced Tantric form of Buddhism in the country and secondly, this festival commemorate the establishment of Jambay Lhakhang (temple) in the 8th century.

During the festival, a variety of traditional and mask dances are performed. Each dance has a significant meaning. However, the highlight of Jambay Lhakhang Drup remains the fire ceremony named 'Mewang' and the religious dance known as 'Tercham'.

Apart from these, the other activities include- a famous drum beat dance, a clown dance called Dola Pangtoy Shazam, Raksha Mangcham (a dance symbolizing life after death) and many more. With the proceedings of the events, this festival captures the attention of the onlookers and creates a magnificent spectacle.



Nalakhar Tshechu

Choekhor, Bumthang

December 04 - 06, 2025/ To be advised

Ngang Lhakhang, sometimes also spelt as Nalakhar, is a private temple built in the 15th century by a Tibetan lama called Namkha Samdrup.

It's a two-storeyed structure. The lower temple has beautiful statues of Guru Rinpoche as padmakara with his two consorts. The upper temple is a *gonkhang* dedicated to protective deities and houses the masks for the festival.

The community holds a festival from the evening of the 15th day to the 17th day of the 10th Bhutanese month. The family members from the two main lineages of Samdang Dung (said to be descendants of the 8th Tibetan King Trisong Detsen) who had settled there, and the Ngang Lhakhang Choeje, heirs of Lama Namkha Samdrup, play a central role.

People from all over the village and from various parts in Bhutan visit the festival annually in order to celebrate and to pray for better harvest, prosperity and happiness of the villages and the whole country of Bhutan. The spectators dress in their finest National Bhutanese Dress and also relish the special Bhutanese packed lunch namely Shaakam Paa (Dried Meat) with Rice and Ema Datshi (Chilli curry made with lot of cheese).

