

BHUTAN & INDIA ESCAPE

Darjeeling

15 Days / 14 Nights

Bhutan is a land of tradition, culture, and mythological mysteries. Yet, one of the most memorable factors of this land is its people who leave a mark right in the heart, merely by a soft stroke of warm smiles. Bhutan's architecture, landscape, and prominent attractions are like no other in this world! The Land of Dragons has left every visitor spellbound, as each one's visit is completely different than the other. Here at Citibond Tours, we handcraft one of the must-have experiences into Bhutan tour along with places like Kolkata and Darjeeling in India. Awaiting you is an experience of pleasant greetings of fresh mountain air, clean roads, zero pollution, zero traffic, a simple yet beautiful culture, and happiness. And when in India, experience Kolkata and Darjeeling as they are: the panoramic sites with surprises of all kinds. A wonderful kaleidoscope of Himalayan culture, scenery, mountain ranges interspersed with passes, and an unbelievable array of flora and fauna; these mystical lands cherish the enthusiasm of every traveler!



Highlights: Kolkata City Tour • Darjeeling Toy Train • Phobjikha Valley • Punakha Dzong • Tiger's Nest

Day 1: KOLKATA (D)

Welcome to your Citibond Bhutan & India Escape tour! On arrival, an English representative will greet you at the meeting point and, after immigration and customs, transfer comfortably to your hotel. Rest of the day at leisure. Dinner and overnight at a hotel in Kolkata.

Day 2: KOLKATA (B/D)

After breakfast, proceed for the sightseeing of Kolkata city, including a visit to the Victoria Memorial, Kolkata's most imposing and monumental dream in marble opened by the Prince of Wales in 1921 and often called the "Taj" of the British Raj, St. Paul's Cathedral. Drive past BBD Bagh (commercial area), St. John's Church, Raj Bhavan (the residence of the Governor of West Bengal), High Court, Legislative Assembly, Eden Gardens, Strand (River Side), and Racecourse. Also, visit Mother Teresa's home. Dinner and overnight at a hotel in Kolkata.

Day 3: KOLKATA - DARJEELING (B/D)

After breakfast at the hotel, proceed to

Kolkata airport to board flight to Bagdogra. On arrival at Bagdogra Airport, you will be transferred to Darjeeling. The rest of the day is at leisure. Dinner and overnight at a hotel in Darjeeling.

Day 4: DARJEELING (B/D)

After breakfast, proceed for the sightseeing of Darjeeling and a toy train ride. The Himalayan Mountaineering Institute was started in Darjeeling when Tenzing Norgay climbed Everest and wished to give training in mountaineering and other adventure sports. In this institute, Norgay's equipment is on show, and the Everest Museum has complete details on Everest. The Himalayan Zoological Park will also be visited, where you can see Himalayan animals like snow leopards, Tibetan wolves, Tibetan yaks, Himalayan black bears, and several varieties of birds. Dinner and overnight at a hotel in Darjeeling.

Day 5: DARJEELING - PHUNTSHOLING (B/D)

Today, post-breakfast you will drive from Darjeeling to the Bhutanese border at Phuntsholing (approx. 5hrs), where your local guide will be waiting to receive you

at the border gate. Our tour leader will collect all the group's passports to get the visa process underway to save time in the morning. Later, proceed to the hotel for check-in and the rest of the day is at leisure. Dinner and overnight at a hotel in Phuntsholing.

Day 6: PHUNTSHOLING - THIMPU (B/L/D)

This morning start your journey into Bhutan after breakfast with a drive in a locally chartered bus from the warmer climes of Phuntsholing up to the capital of Thimphu, nestled in the foothills of the Himalayas. Lunch at a local restaurant. You will have time in the evening to take a stroll around Thimphu and start to take in the atmosphere and culture of this beautiful country and its gentle way of life. Dinner and overnight at a hotel in Thimphu.

Day 7: THIMPU (B/L/D)

Today, post-breakfast, you will proceed on a city tour of Thimphu including the Changangkha Temple, Memorial Chorten, and the Takin Reserve, and there will also be plenty of time for free exploration and visiting the Thimphu markets. Enjoy lunch

at a local restaurant. Return to the hotel and evening at leisure. Dinner and overnight at a hotel in Thimphu.

Day 8: THIMPU - GANGTEY (B/L/D)

Today, after breakfast, proceed to enjoy a dramatic drive over the high mountain pass of Dochu La and on to the Phobjikha Valley, passing through dense forests and oak rhododendron trees. The highway follows the scenic Dang Chhu before climbing through forests of bamboo and oak. Later, explore Gangtey Village and Phobjikha Valley on foot. Post-lunch visit Gangtey Gumpa. Perched on a small hill that rises from the valley floor, the Gangtey Monastery is the only Nyingmapa monastery on the western side of the Black Mountains and the biggest Nyingmapa monastery in Bhutan. Dinner and overnight at a hotel in Gangtey.

Day 9: GANGTEY (B/L/D)

Today, after breakfast, explore Gangtey (Phobjikha Valley) on foot. Visit Black Necked Crane Information Centre, situated on the edge of the forest and wetland along the main road of Phobjikha Valley. Post-lunch continue exploring the valley. Walk to Kilkhorhang, located between the upper and lower valleys of Phobjikha and extending from Kilkhorhang on the eastern side, crossing the main river to the other side of the valley. Dinner and overnight at a hotel in Gangtey.

Day 10: GANGTEY - PUNAKHA (B/L/D)

Today, after breakfast, drive back to Punakha. After reaching take a short drive to Sangchhen Dorji Lhuendrup Lhakhang Nunnery. Perched on a ridge, amid pine trees and overlooking valleys of Punakha and Wangduephodrang the magnificent structures of Sangchhen Dorji Lhuendrup Lhakhang (temple). The temple houses a 14-foot main bronze statue of Avalokiteshvara (chenrigzig chagtong chentong). After lunch, explore other statues including those of Guru Padmasambhava, Gautama Buddha, Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyel, Tsela Namsum, the 21 Taras, and Tsepamay (Buddha of longevity). The Avalokiteshvara statue, one of the biggest in the country, was the handiwork of entirely local Bhutanese artisans. Dinner & Overnight at a hotel in Punakha.

Day 11: PUNAKHA (B/L/D)

After breakfast, visit Punakha Dzong, a massive structure built at the junction of two rivers. It was the capital of Bhutan until 1955 and still serves as the winter residence of the monk body. Afternoon walking excursion to Chimi Lhakhang, situated on a hillock in the center of the valley, also known as the Temple of Fertility. The trail leads across rice fields to the tiny settlement of Pana, meaning 'field'. After lunch, go on a walk through the village near the temple, which will give you rare glimpses into the daily life and lifestyle of the villagers. Later, visit Richengang Village, one of the oldest villages in Bhutan with traditional architecture and delightful locals. Walk into a local farmer or stonemason's house at Richengang Village, and peep into the daily life and lifestyle of the villagers. Most of the population of Bhutan continues to live as it has for centuries – in small, isolated farms and hamlets, surrounded by terraced fields of rice, maize, and buckwheat. Dinner and overnight at a hotel in Punakha the rock faces 900m above the valley floor. Lunch at the Taktshang cafeteria, from where you will get a spectacular view of the monastery. In the afternoon, you will visit the ruined Drukgyel Dzong (Fortress of Victory), constructed to commemorate the victory over Tibetan invaders in 1644 CE, and destroyed by a butter lamp fire in 1951. After lunch, you will also visit the 7th Century Kyichu Lhakhang, a temple of historical significance and one of the most sacred shrines in Bhutan. Dinner and overnight at a hotel in Paro.

Day 12: PUNAKHA - PARO (B/L/D)

Today, after breakfast, you will drive back to Paro, descending back down from Dochu La. Follow the way back up the dramatic Wang Chhu and Paro Chhu River valleys, before crossing through Paro Town towards the north end of the valley. En route, visit Simtokha Dzong, the place of profound tantric teaching. Later in the day after checking into the hotel, proceed for lunch and then to visit Ta Dzong, originally built as a watchtower, which now houses the National Museum. Along the wooden galleries lining the inner courtyard are fine wall paintings illustrating Buddhist lore such as four friends, the old man of long life, the wheel of life, scenes from the life of Milarepa, Mount, Sumeru, and another cosmic Mandala. Dinner and overnight at a hotel in Paro.

Day 13: PARO (B/L/D)

Today, after breakfast, you will take a day walk to the 'Tiger's Nest', the sacred Taktsang monastery which clings to the rock face 900m above the valley floor. Lunch at the Taktshang cafeteria, from where you will get a spectacular view of the monastery. In the afternoon, you will visit the ruined Drukgyel Dzong (Fortress of Victory), constructed to commemorate the victory over Tibetan invaders in 1644 CE, and destroyed by a butter lamp fire in 1951. After lunch, you will also visit the 7th Century Kyichu Lhakhang, a temple of historical significance and one of the most sacred shrines in Bhutan. Dinner and overnight at a hotel in Paro.

Day 14: PARO - KOLKATA (B/D)

After breakfast at the hotel, you will be transferred to Paro Airport to take a flight to Kolkata. On arrival at Kolkata Airport, you will be met and transferred to the hotel. Rest of the day at leisure. Dinner and overnight at a hotel in Kolkata.

Day 15: DEPART TO LONDON (B)

Today, after a leisurely breakfast at the hotel, good times never end! As you get ready for the airport and your flight back home, relive the high points of your 'Citibond Bhutan & India Escape' tour. We are confident you will join us again, sometime soon...

Departure dates

Departure	Number of days	Price per person
17-Sep-24	15 days / 14 nights	from £3999
18-Feb-25	15 days / 14 nights	from £3999

What's Included in Your Tour?

- Accommodation as specified in the itinerary.
- Meals as mentioned in the itinerary.
- Sightseeing as mentioned in the itinerary.
- English-speaking tour manager throughout the tour.
- All transportation is in an air-conditioned private vehicle.

Tour Ref: PCT24_BI

