

Getting There

Route 1 (1 day by car and 4 days on foot): Follow this route through Punakha, the ancient capital of Bhutan, and Gasa, well known as organic and medicinal bath district. Visit the famed Gasa hot spring and get pampered by the warm hospitality of Laya's yak-herder communities. Enjoy the trek through mixed coniferous forests and alpine meadows, and relish the splendor of Mt. Ganchentag (popularly known as Tiger Mountain). One may occasionally spot the rare snow leopard and takin on the way.

Route 2 (7 days on foot): This route begins at Dodeyna which lies on the outskirts of Thimphu town, presenting a stark difference between bustling city life and sheer wilderness. At Dodeyna, be greeted by Chari Monastery perched on an iron-like hill. Be awed while walking through the breeding habitat of Tiger and be mesmerized by the steep rocky cliffs carved by the crystal clear Wangchhu River.

Route 3 (1 day by car and 7 days on foot): The adventurous journey begins from Paro. Take the rigorous trek through spectacular mountain scenery, serene country side and upland communities, thundering waterfalls, rushing rivers, and colorful alpine meadows. Imposing Mt. Jhomolhari, Mt. Jichudrakey, and Mt. Tsherimgang will make your journey memorable with greatest sense of achievement.

Route 4 (12 days on foot): The adventure begins from Phajoding, Thimphu. Come prepared to enjoy the beauty of multicolored alpine lakes and rhododendron-covered hills. Get to see the bird's eye view of Thimphu town. Enjoy the walk through pure stands of fir and juniper forests. Discover the habitat overlap between snow leopard and tiger. Know the varieties of medicinal plants and alpine flowers.

Route Map



A Takin Festival

on the Salt Licks of Tsharjathang
in Jigme Dorji National Park

9th - 10th June



CONTACT

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in collaboration with



Department of Forests
and Park Services

Showcasing Bhutan's conservation
heritage of nature and culture in harmony
in the upper Himalayas



Takin Fair on the Salt Licks of Tsharijathang

Encounter Bhutan's exotic national animal, the Takin (*Budorcas taxicolor*), at their native summer habitat. Witness the largest congregation at the mineral lick, and take part in counting the number of individuals. Embark on a breath-taking trek, go bird watching and experience the nomadic life, including opportunities to sample meals prepared from yak dairy. Also, ride a yak and sleep in a real yak-hair tent. Learn to identify Bhutan's treasure trove of native medicinal herbs and step yourself in the kingdom's homeopathic lore with a unique chance to see the mythic cordyceps, which is creating a sensation in the world of natural medicine. Bring the right level of curiosity and you might even glimpse one of Bhutan's rare wildlife royalties: the tiger or the elusive snow leopard!



Regional Background

Tshajarithang is tucked away in the rugged wilderness of the Jigme Dorji National Park (JDNP). The widespread collection of natural salt licks in this area favored by the Takins makes this the best place to view some of the largest wild herds of Bhutan's curious-looking national animal. The JDNP offers spectacular Himalayan vistas and serves as a model for the harmonious coexistence of Bhutan's highland nomads and the royal government's efforts at wildlife conservation. An ideal addition to any hardy trekker's Bhutan travel plans, the area has some of the most stunning glacier-fed lakes in Bhutan and wildlife habitats extending up to the stunning heights of 7,000 meters. The annual summer Takin Fair at Tshajarithang (please check our web site for dates and details) offers adventure travellers the rare opportunity to visit one of the most isolated and starkly beautiful corners of Bhutan.

JDNP harbours some of the most elusive and endangered plants and animals in Bhutan: The Royal Bengal tiger, the elusive snow leopard, clouded leopard, common leopard, red panda, Asiatic wild dog, Asiatic golden cat, Himalayan



black bear, blue sheep, monal pheasant, satyr tragopan, Tibetan wolf, spotted linsang, musk deer and takin. There are an estimated 300 species of birds. Along with a range of medicinal herbs, alpine meadows full of rhododendrons bloom in a spectrum of hues to delight the eye, adding to the drama of the snow-capped peaks.

According to Bhutanese legends the Takin was created when the ancient tantric master, Lama Drukpa Kunley, performed a miracle at the end of a feast to please his devotees. It is said that he took the remains of his meal, which included the bones of a goat's head and a cow's body and reassembled them into a new creature which became the Takin, an explanation for its uncommon resemblance to both animals. Considered a vulnerable species worldwide, healthy populations of the animal still survive in Bhutan and large herds of this sure-footed animal are found roaming wild on the Tsharijathang plains and neighbouring valleys of Soe, Thongphu, Dodena, Rimchu, Tshachuphug, Lunana and Ramena several times a year.

Accommodations in the region are basic with many campgrounds en route. This is mainly an excellent opportunity to experience the great outdoors and sleep under the stars. At Tsharijathang, bed down in a yak hair tent.

Things to See & Do

During the Takin Fair, watch skilled nomadic herders as they weave tents, blankets, rugs and bags from raw material culled by shearing yaks. You might also like the demonstrations of local cane work tradition, which includes the much-photographed conical hats that are a specialty of the region. Enjoy rich meals derived from yak meat and dairy, and try chugos, the dried and hardened cubes of yak cheese that are a popular snack. Learn about some of the environmental issues gripping the region and the world from the the Wildlife Conservation Division's information booth, or catch a high-altitude screening of a documentary film about the Takins and the issues undermining their survival and habitat. Pick up some locally harvested medicinal herbs, the mysterious cordyceps, watch the largest congregation of takin at the salt lick, and visit their grazing areas along the broad slopes of Tsharijathang valley. Become the natural observer of Bhutan's little-known national animal as you track their salt licks and watch their mating and social behaviour.

