

Bhutan Folk Festival

- Location:** Vicinity of the Punakha *Dzong* (Fortress)
- Season/dates:** December 2009 (dates to be confirmed).
- Duration:** 7 nights/8 days
- Cost:** \$1805 per person (inclusive of hotel room, all 3 meals, English speaking guide, driver/vehicle, visa fee and taxes. Also includes the Folk festival entrance fees. Does not include airfare.
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Punakha is the winter residence of the *Je Khenpo*, the Chief Abbot of Bhutan. Situated at an elevation of 1350 meters or 4430 ft. from the sea level, it was once the capital of Bhutan. The valley has a sub-tropical kind of climate and winters are very pleasant.

The landmark of the place is its *dzong* or fortress-like structure called *Punthang Dewachengi Phodrang*. The *Pho-chu* or the male river flows to its right and the *Mo-chu* or the female river flows to its left offering a picturesque beauty to all who visit the valley. The *dzong* was the second of its kind built by *Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal* in 1637, who unified Bhutan under one authority, the first being *Semtokha dzong* built in 1629. It was also in this *dzong* where the first king of Bhutan *Sir Ugyen Wangchuck* was enthroned as the first hereditary king of Bhutan in 1907.

It is in the vicinity of this *dzong* where a three-day festival captioned the '**Bhutan Folk Festival**' will be held starting from 13th to 15th December 2008. The event is organized to commemorate the hundred years of monarchy in Bhutan. It will be a very special occasion for the tourists where they can get to participate with the local people in all of the events.

You will experience and discover the living tradition and culture of Bhutan which form very much the part and parcel of present-day Bhutanese life. You will also discover for yourself what **Gross National Happiness** really means to the Bhutanese people which otherwise is difficult to define in words.

The event will showcase different artifacts, games, dances, food, folk and religious performances. It is a festival which will portray the simplicity, complexity and understanding of Bhutanese life.

In addition, you will experience how closely-knit a family the Bhutanese people is. The monks will see that the gods are appeased through their rituals so that the festival goes on un-hindered till the end. The lay people will come forward in contributing what they can towards such events while seeing the guests are at ease and happy. Traditional games may look very simple and yet very testing in their real performance. And yes, the Bhutanese are voracious eaters and one will find lots of choice during the festival with villagers bringing their pack lunches to the ground and sharing with others.

For those who like colors and dances there can be no better choice than mask and folk dances. Mask dances are not only a source of entertainment but one which embodies spiritual enrichment. Then while you will see the richness of Bhutanese textiles on display, you will also see the real processes as to how they are done from dying to carrying out intricate designs. This too goes for other handicrafts which will all be displayed for the benefit of the visitors.

Traditional etiquette demands for harmonious behavior including serving food, eating, dressing and even walking. You will observe all of them during this festival. Therefore, it will be an opportunity one may not want to miss. You can read Bhutan in a period of three days' time.

The scene is set and we invite you all to come and partake in this grand festival.

Tashi Delek!