



foodiam
Culinary Curious Travel

Indulgence - Food - Culture - Small Group Tours

BHUTAN

8 nights/9 days



Authentic



Flavour Filled



Culinary Adventure



Fully escorted by



foodiam



An unforgettable journey through the enchanting Himalayan kingdom of Bhutan.

Join Food I Am, your Culinary & Cultural Specialists, on an unforgettable journey through the enchanting Himalayan kingdom of Bhutan.

Known as the Last Shangri-La, Bhutan has been preserved by the mighty Himalayas, allowing its rich culture and history to flourish. The Drukpa Kagyupa sect of Mahayana Buddhism has shaped this land's unique identity, safeguarded by its people through centuries of isolation.

Our thoughtfully designed itinerary reveals Bhutan's captivating landscapes, from towering sacred mountains to dense forests and the purest of air. Explore ancient wonders such as fortresses (known as Dzongs), temples, monasteries, and prayer-flag adorned high ridges. Bhutan's unspoiled beauty, diverse flora and fauna, and vibrant Buddhist culture await your discovery. Learn about the history of Thimphu, visit the valleys of Punakha and ascend to the legendary Tiger's Nest in Paro.

Delight in traditional Bhutanese cuisine, reflecting the simplicity of Himalayan life, and savour unforgettable flavours with just the right spice. Interact with locals over suja (Bhutanese butter tea) in a farmhouse, master the art of authentic Bhutanese cooking and sample offerings from artisanal breweries. Visit bustling farmers' markets and taste traditional cheese.

Bhutan, with its unique focus on Gross National Happiness over GDP, offers a truly exceptional cultural experience.

Don't miss this opportunity to check Bhutan off your bucket list with Food I Am.

Tania Sibrey
Creator & Global Food Explorer, Food I Am



Culinary Curious Travel - Food I Am Luxury Food Tour - Bhutan 2024
For bookings or further information go to foodiam.com.au/tours/bhutan
tania@foodiam.com.au 0427 250 498


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Arrival to Paro, Bhutan

Day 1

Your journey to Bhutan with Food I Am commences after independent arrival to Bhutan. The flight into Paro is renowned as one of the most spectacular journeys, offering fascinating views of the Paro Valley and the Himalayan Mountains and an exhilarating descent into the Kingdom. Bhutan's first gift to you as you disembark from the aircraft will be the cool, clean, fresh mountain air. After completing immigration formalities and collecting your baggage, you will be met by a Food I Am representative.

After checking in to your heritage hotel, perfectly situated in the Paro Valley, you may wish to take the opportunity to explore your surrounds or Paro.

The hallmark of Bhutanese food is the generous use of cheese and chillies. The basic staple foods include red rice and curry, with the most popular curry being Emma Datsi. In Bhutan, chilli is predominantly considered a vegetable rather than a condiment. Today you begin your exploration into Bhutanese cuisine

Prior to our Bhutanese welcome dinner, we enjoy a traditional Bhutanese cultural performance. Dancers, adorned in traditional attire, elegantly narrate stories from mythology and daily life, accompanied by instruments. These cultural programs preserve and celebrate Bhutanese identity, showcasing its rich heritage and deeply rooted customs.

Accommodation: Boutique Hotel, Paro (Altitude 2280m)



Paro to Thimphu

Day 2

Today, we drive to Thimphu, Bhutan's capital, stopping en route at Chuzom, where three distinct stupa styles, Tibetan, Nepalese and Bhutanese, meet at the junction of the Thimphu and Paro rivers.

In Thimphu, modernity blends harmoniously with tradition. This unique city combines contemporary development with ancient customs, showcasing a distinctive architectural style that reflects the nation's strong national character.

At the King's Memorial Chorten, a monument built for world peace and dedicated to Bhutan's third king, His Majesty Jigme Dorji Wangchuk, it stands as both a memorial to the late King and a symbol of peace, continually circled by people reciting mantras and spinning prayer wheels.

We explore the Textile Museum, highlighting Bhutanese textiles as an art form and then enjoy lunch at a local restaurant. Next, a special visit to a traditional weaving village to witness the skilled weavers at work, creating exquisite textiles. We share stories and tea with local weaving families. This cultural experience fosters a deep appreciation for Bhutanese artistry and genuine connections with its people.

After check into our hotel, we have organised an exceptional experience for our group - a meeting with a senior monk to gain insights into Buddhism and Bhutanese culture. You will have the opportunity to engage in meaningful discussions about philosophy, meditation and the monk's journey towards enlightenment. This exchange will foster introspection and understanding, leaving you with a profound sense of inner peace and a deep connection to Bhutan's spiritual heritage.

The day concludes with an authentic Bhutanese dinner at our hotel.

Accommodation: Boutique Hotel, Thimphu (Altitude 2400m)



Thimphu

Day 3

In the morning, we visit the magnificent Buddha Dordenma statue, an impressive 51 metre bronze statue of Shakyamuni, gilded in gold. Inside, 125,000 smaller bronze and gilded Buddha statues emanate an aura of peace and happiness.

We visit Trashichhoe dzong (monastery), Bhutan's 'fortress of the glorious religion'. This historic site is both the centre of government and religion. Constructed in 1641 by Bhutan's unifier, Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal, it was later faithfully reconstructed in the 1960s using traditional Bhutanese techniques, without nails or architectural plans.

Next, a visit to the Ser Bhum Brewery for a tasting and tour. Our day continues with a visit to the Centenary Farmers Market, known as the Weekend market, where farmers from across the country gather to sell their fruits, vegetables and fragrant spices.

Before we head back to our hotel we visit the Craft Bazaar, where traders sell traditional textiles, handicrafts and homemade delicacies, the market offers a diverse and authentic taste of Bhutanese culture. It's a colourful and lively spot, amidst the lively chatter of the locals.

Accommodation: Boutique Hotel, Thimphu (Altitude 2400m)



Thimphu – Gangtey

Day 4

After breakfast, we embark on a journey to Gangtey, passing through the scenic Dochu-la pass at an altitude of 3,088 meters. We will stop to admire the breathtaking views, featuring chortens, a mani wall and prayer flags adorning this high-altitude spot.

At Dochula Pass, explore the Druk Wangyal Chortens, a collection of 108 stupas arranged in three tiers, encircling the central main stupa.

Continue to Gangtey, one of the most beautiful and unspoiled places in Bhutan, a valley renowned for its unique, wide, flat landscape nestled amidst dense forests. This spacious valley is a rarity in Bhutan, where most valleys are tightly enclosed.

We take a walk through the Phobjikha Valley and visit Gangtey Goemba, the largest Nyingmapa monastery in Bhutan, perched on a small hill in the Gangtey valley. The monastery is surrounded by a village inhabited by the families of the 140 Gomchens who care for it. You can witness a prayer ceremony at the monastery.

In Bhutan, most people live in charming traditional villages nestled along riverbanks and hillsides, surrounded by terraced fields and pastures. These self-sufficient communities grow their own crops and raise animals for essential food items like meat, butter, cheese, and milk. Houses, resembling Swiss chalets, are crafted from stone, wood, and clay, often adorned with vibrant motifs. These remarkable structures, reaching up to three stories high, are constructed without nails, a feat mirrored in the building of grand dzongs, the heart of community life. Heavy stones secure the shingled roofs against the valley's strong winds. We will visit a traditional village farmhouse offering a glimpse into the villagers' lifestyle, culture, and traditions, with an opportunity to try making Suja, the traditional salted butter tea.

Upon arrival in Gangtey, we check in at our hotel and enjoy dinner in house tonight.

Accommodation: Boutique Hotel, Gangtey (Altitude 3000m)





Gangtey – Punakha

Day 5

In the early morning, you have the option to witness Morning Prayer rituals at a village monastery.

After breakfast, we checkout and depart for Punakha, Bhutan's former capital. Nestled in the fertile Punakha valley, blessed by the Pho Chhu and Mo Chhu rivers, this region yields abundant crops and fruits.

En route, we visit Wangdue Phodrang Monastery (Dzong), perched on a high ridge, offering fantastic valley views. It played a crucial role in protecting key routes, making its governor one of Bhutan's most powerful rulers.

Bhutan offers idyllic settings for a memorable picnic, amidst serene riverbanks and mountain vistas, creating lasting memories in nature's embrace. Our picnic lunch today is a traditional Bhutanese picnic basket, brimming with local delights, red rice, momos and more.

After our picnic lunch, we explore Punakha Dzong, known as the Palace of Great Happiness, constructed in 1637. This grand dzong served as both a religious and administrative centre, providing insights into Bhutan's rich culture.

Later, we walk across Punakha Suspension Bridge, spanning 160 metres over the Mo Chu River. With prayer flags fluttering in the wind and the river's roar below, it offers a blend of natural beauty and cultural significance.

Our hotel is situated in lush Punakha Valley, surrounded by pine forests and paddy fields. Known as the "Rice Bowl" of Bhutan, Punakha is famous for its rice paddy fields. You may have the opportunity to help farmers thresh rice during the season.

We gather for dinner, savouring home-style Bhutanese cooking using local and organic produce.

Accommodation: Boutique Hotel, Punakha (Altitude 1300m)



Punakha

Day 6

After breakfast, we visit Sangchhen Dorji Lhuendrup Lhakhang Nunnery, beautifully located on a ridge surrounded by pine trees, with stunning views of Punakha and Wangdue valleys. This temple houses a 14-foot bronze statue and serves as a higher learning and meditation centre for nuns, offering not only religious training but also valuable life skills such as tailoring, embroidery, statue making, and thankha painting.

At the monastery, you can experience a traditional blessing and butter lamp ceremony (optional), deeply rooted in Buddhist culture. Monks in vibrant robes recite powerful prayers, invoking blessings, protection and guidance. Lighting yak butter lamps symbolises wisdom and dispelling darkness, fostering enlightenment.

Next, we experience the unique flavours of Bhutan at our cooking demonstration featuring authentic Bhutanese cuisine. Learn about the techniques and ingredients native to this Himalayan country, using locally sourced ingredients. From mastering the intricate techniques of making 'Ema Datshi', the country's famous spicy cheese and chilli dish, to creating delectable 'Momos', steamed dumplings filled with savoury fillings. Lunch, featuring the dishes prepared during class, will be served on the terrace overlooking the Mo Chhu River. You will cherish these recipes and memories long after your holiday has come to an end.

The rest of the afternoon is yours to enjoy at your leisure. Relax at the hotel or perhaps experience a Bhutanese cultural tradition with a hot stone bath. This cherished ritual combines relaxation and therapy as red-hot river stones, infused with medicinal herbs, transform a wooden tub into a soothing aromatic bath. The warmth eases tension, enhances circulation, and promotes well-being. Beyond its physical benefits, this practice connects you to Bhutan's natural healing traditions.

Accommodation: Boutique Hotel, Punakha (Altitude 1300m)



Punakha to Paro

Day 7

After breakfast, we drive back to Paro, descending from Dochu La. We follow the scenic Wang Chhu and Paro Chhu River valleys, passing through Paro Town towards the northern end of the valley.

Paro Valley is a treasure trove of culture and natural beauty. At the northern end of the valley, Mount Chomolhari (7,314m) stands majestically, and its glacial waters flow through deep gorges to create the Paro River. The valley is also renowned for its terraced fields, producing the famous red rice.

Upon arrival we check in and enjoy lunch, before we visit Ta Dzong, the National Museum. The museum boasts an extensive collection, including antique thangka paintings, textiles, weapons and armour, household items, and a diverse range of natural and historical artifacts.

Following our visit to the museum, we take a short walk to Rinpung Dzong, also known as the "fortress of the heap of jewels". This dzong has a rich history, and its wooden galleries feature exquisite wall paintings depicting Buddhist tales and cosmic mandalas.

Enjoy the evening at leisure to stroll around the quaint market streets of Paro.

Accommodation: Boutique Hotel, Paro (Altitude 2200m)



Paro, Tigers Nest

Day 8

After breakfast, we embark on a captivating trek to the Tiger's Nest Monastery, a renowned Bhutanese monastery perched on a cliffside 900 metres above the Paro valley floor. The walk is 6.4km, approximately a 5 hour round trip, with stops along the way. Legend has it that Guru Rinpoche arrived here on the back of a tigress and meditated at this sacred site, hence its name, 'Tiger's Nest'. This revered place is a must-visit for all Bhutanese, at least once in their lifetime.

After a well deserved lunch enjoy some free time, you could explore the bazaar or visit the Namgay Artisanal Brewery, where a variety of beer styles are crafted using fresh Bhutanese ingredients.

As the day comes to an end, we come together for our farewell dinner, with a magnificent backdrop of the Paro River and the Himalayas. Here, you'll indulge in a culinary journey that combines the flavours of Bhutan with global influences, creating a truly memorable experience for our final evening.

Accommodation: Boutique Hotel, Paro (Altitude 2280m)



Departure

Day 9

Wow, where did that time go!

As we bid farewell to the enchanting world of Bhutan, it's hard to believe how swiftly time has flown by. While all good things must eventually conclude, the memories of our extraordinary adventures will linger on.

Savour your final Bhutanese breakfast, allowing the experiences of this remarkable journey to wash over you one last time. It's time to bid adieu to Bhutan.

Your transfer awaits to take you to Paro International Airport.

As we conclude this tour, we want to express our heartfelt gratitude for choosing Food I Am Culinary and Cultural Tours as your trusted guide through the wonders of Bhutan. Until we meet again on another culinary and cultural exploration.

The tour is now concluded.



Snapshot

PRICE INCLUDES

- Eight (8) nights of accommodation, offering a blend of traditional, 5-star and boutique hotels, carefully chosen for their beauty and exceptional locations.
- Most meals, including a delightful array of modern and traditional culinary experiences such as street food, traditional dishes and fine dining. Enjoy multi-course meals, tastings and hearty breakfasts every morning. With a focus on culinary exploration, expect exceptional food in remarkable settings, ensuring you won't leave hungry.
- SDR - Sustainable Development Fee & Taxes: \$800 USD. (Fee is \$100 USD per person per day - Bhutan Government Royalty Charges).
- Bhutan Visa Fees: USD \$40 per person.
- All ground transport with professional drivers, allowing you to explore Paro, Gangtey, Punakha, and Thimphu comfortably.
- Private transfer for arrival and departure pickups from the airport.
- Traditional Bhutanese cultural program and dance experience.
- Bhutanese picnic lunch by the river.
- Guided visits, tours and tastings, including an exploration of the Artisan Brewery, a trip to the Farmers Market and breakfast with Bhutanese monks.
- Visit to Sangchhen Dorji Lhuendrup Lhakhang Nunnery.
- An exclusive cooking class with a private chef, where you'll learn to prepare Bhutanese dishes.
- Guided visits to iconic locations such as the Tiger's Nest, King's Memorial Chorten, Buddha Dordenma, Rinpung Dzong, the Textile Museum, the National Museum, Trashichhoe Dzong (Monastery), Nyngmapa Dzong and Wangduephodrang Monastery.
- Visit to a Traditional Weaving Village. Meet the local weavers.
- Visits and tours of a traditional farming village and farmhouse, allowing you to meet the locals and immerse yourself in their culture.
- A visit to Druk Wangyal Chortens and the Punakha Suspension Bridge, providing unique insights into Bhutan's heritage.
- Guided visits to Phobjikha Village and Valley.
- Breakfast with Bhutanese monks.
- Fully escorted by Food I Am and a National Bhutanese Tour Escort.
- Being part of a small group tour, ensuring personalised attention.

PRICE EXCLUDES

- International Airfares: **Please book your airfare into Paro, Bhutan when you pay your deposit. Further details available in resources on YouLi.**
- All beverages (alcoholic and non-alcoholic), laundry, phone and personal items.
- Tipping
- Passport
- Travel Insurance (COMPULSORY). You should organise travel insurance at the time of paying your deposit. Ask your travel agent or contact an insurance provider such as NRMA & Covermore.

WHY A FOOD I AM TOUR?

- Fully escorted by Food I Am
- Our itineraries are carefully thought out and put together with the assistance of our worldwide culinary connections
- Small groups - no waiting
- Unique food and wine experiences. Our tours are not cooking tours
- No decision making needed - Sit back and relax, we have done all the hard work for you
- Guaranteed the best meals without having to look for the perfect restaurant
- Experience - our tours are full of surprises!
- Authentic and cultural regional experiences balanced with free time
- Travel and share experiences with like-minded people
- Meet the passionate producers and artisans, learn about their craft
- Comfort and luxury - travel and accommodation
- Stress free - no google maps required
- Gastronomy experts and local English guides with exceptional knowledge
- Hosts that care about you as an individual

PRICING INFORMATION:

Cost Per Person (Twin Share)
\$8790

Single Supplement (Room on your own)
+\$2900

For solo travelers willing to share, please contact us.

TOUR PRICE INCLUDES:

- SDR - Sustainable Development Fee & Taxes: \$800 USD. (Fee is \$100 USD per person per day - Bhutan Government Royalty Charges).
- Bhutan Visa Fees: USD \$40 per person.

**CLICK HERE
TO SECURE YOUR SPOT
ON THE 2024 TOUR**

Sharing the love of Food | Am Luxury Food Tours



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Morocco 2023 with Foodiam was my first experience of a group tour and it was truly one of the best travel experiences I have ever had. From the quality and authenticity of the accommodation to the immersive cultural experiences, every aspect of the tour was meticulously planned. The blend of cultural exploration and sheer fun made this tour unforgettable. From bustling markets to hidden culinary gems the whole experience was a treat for the senses. Our local guide was an absolute wealth of knowledge and no request went unanswered. Thank you Tania and the Foodiam team for your commitment to excellence in every aspect of your tours. I can't wait to join you again!

- Ali Reid, Morocco 2023

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This was a perfectly curated and carefully considered Northern Italy experience that delighted the taste buds, stimulated the mind and generated huge appreciation for Italian food. We loved the Food | Am tour experience because the tours take you to places less touristy and really expose you to a truly local experience.

We felt very safe and supported with Melina as our guide - she is warm, upbeat and informative all the way through. The small group nature of these tours is appealing too as it keeps things pretty intimate and informal, unlike the hustle and bustle that can come with larger group tours.

We look forward to travelling with Food | Am again!

- Sarah & Rob Wardman - Northern Italy 2023

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Thank you so much for organising such a wonderful holiday. It was very relaxing as everything was organised and taken care of. I just sat back and enjoyed the ride! The group was also a perfect size - intimate yet social, lifelong friendships and amazing experiences were made. Attention to detail was excellent with a vast range of activities to enjoy.

- Jo Stroud

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Michael and I had the absolute privilege of attending the Food | Am tour to Sicily.

The locations and accommodation are thoughtfully hand-picked by Tania & Melina with their incredible travel experience. Visiting places not on the usual tourist tracks make this a special and easy way to experience the destination.

Looking back over the itinerary I could list every day and every location as a highlight. They were all so special. The history, the local tour guides, the food, the people, it was just perfection.

The only downside was the tour finishing!

- Nerida & Michael - Sicily 2023

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We have had a wonderful time - THANKS so much. All of our food has been EXCEPTIONAL and choices of accommodation superb. Have really loved seeing the back roads of Italy and staying in the "countryside". Food I Am has given us beautiful and amazing memories of the tastes, landscapes and people of Italy.

- Gary & Pam Krieg

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The Food I Am Northern Italy Tour was absolutely amazing. Melina was the tour guide extraordinaire. Her connection with people and places made for a very interesting insight into local productions and cultures of this beautiful countryside. So many taste sensations. We wined and dined at such a variety of restaurants/trattorias/osterias. Nadia's was our favourite. The Antinori Winery was simply awesome. The vintage sports cars and "driving" the Ferrari simulators was such fun. We indulged in new and unique experiences every day with the best group of fun people. We loved it all. Thank you for organising this wonderful experience!

- Bryan & Sally Short - Northern Italy 2023

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Our recent Food I Am Tour to Northern Italy was everything we hoped for and so much more. Indeed having driven ourselves through northern and central Italy several years ago, we now appreciate how much we missed, not having someone like Melina with her contacts, immense local knowledge and love for Italian food and culture. The tour itself was well balanced and flexible enough to cater for individual interests and we recommend it without hesitation to anyone wanting a quality Italian culinary and cultural experience.

- Duncan and Louise Fraser - July 2019

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If you are single, couple or a group looking for a holiday idea fuelled with delicious food, culture, fun and adventure then a Food I Am culinary tour is for you. Perfectly organised with attention to detail, Tania has perfected her itinerary to cater for a wide genre.

After heading on the Northern Italy Tour in 2017 I knew it wouldn't be my last. I've just returned from the Food I Am Vietnam Tour and I know that won't be my last either! It really is a great opportunity to be able to immerse yourself into the culture of a Country.

- Jodie Hamilton, Nth Italy 2017, Vietnam 2019

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What an amazing adventure Food I Am provided. The tour was so much more than we expected. Everything was thoroughly planned and highly organised but at no time did you feel you were on a tour, it was more like travelling with a group of friends. We saw so much more than we thought we would and got a real sense of the authentic Italian way of life.

Tania and Melina's passion and enthusiasm set the tone from the moment we began our journey and remained throughout the entire adventure.

This trip was excellent value for money, however the sense of belonging created amongst the group was something no amount of money could buy.

- Vicki & Anthony

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For anyone that wants to experience the real Italy this is the tour for them. Brilliantly organised with personalised attention to detail to maximise the adventure for everyone. Very pleased to have made so many new friends whilst enjoying a daily aperitivo... Or two. Highly recommended for single travellers as well as couples. Will definitely be coming back to do another tour.

- Geoff Crouch

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Everything about the Northern Italy tour was amazing. The food, the back roads we travelled, the restaurants, Melina's local knowledge, our travelling companions, the wonderful accommodation, the once in a life time experiences and our host, Tania. Be prepared for a case of the Italian blues when you arrive home!

- Adelle & Milton

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tania@foodiam.com.au

www.foodiam.com.au

Tania 0427 250 498

