

Getting There

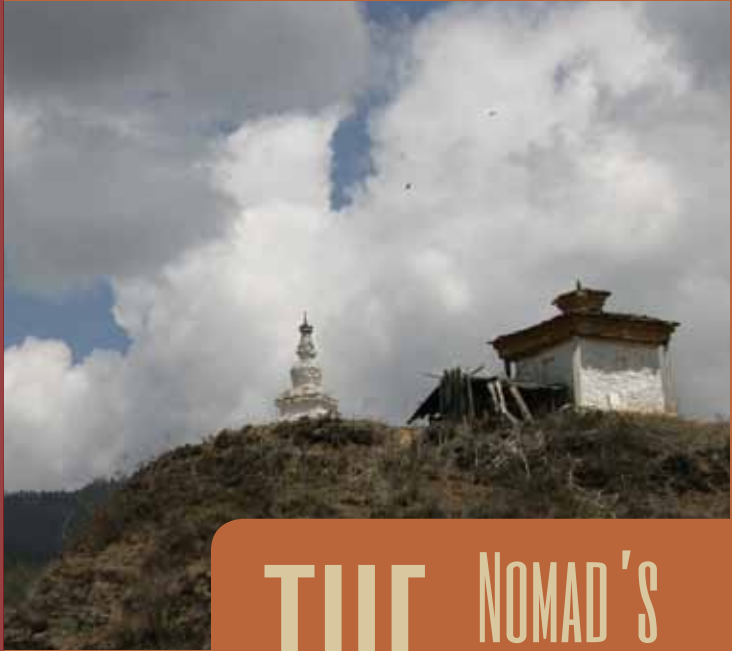
The Nomad's festival is held in Bumthang Dzongkhag (district) in Central Bhutan. Bumthang is approximately an 8 hour drive from the capital city of Thimphu. To get to Bumthang you must follow the national highway east, past Wangdue and Trongsa Dzongkhags. You cross 3 high mountain passes wreathed in cool mists, offering spectacular views of the Himalayan landscape and through stunning, unspoiled forests rich with a wide array of flora and fauna. Travelers can elect to either spend a night in Trongsa or to travel straight to Bumthang. It is recommended that you leave lots of time for your journey to better allow you to appreciate the beautiful sights.



Animals typically spotted along the winding mountain roads include monkeys, yaks and deer.



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THE NOMAD'S FESTIVAL



The Annual Gathering of Bhutan's Nomadic Highlanders

The Nomad's Festival

This annual gathering of Bhutan's nomadic highlanders brings together the nomads of the northeastern and northwestern Himalayan frontiers in an unforgettable celebration of their unique culture and traditions.

You'll gain an intimate glimpse into the proud communities that have survived virtually unchanged to this day and form a rich part of Bhutan's ethnic and cultural diversity. Dine on delicious traditional recipes whilst sitting cross-legged around a stone hearth as nomadic families have done for ages.

Dress like a Bhutanese highlander and try on an entire costume spun from yak hair, including the Brokpa black hat with five long fringes down the front or the conical bamboo Layap headgear. Ladies can wear the wide, beautiful hand woven aprons decorated with colorful motifs of flowers and animals traditionally worn by women. They can even have their hair plaited and decorated with colorful ribbons in the traditional style of the region.

Regional Background

The festival takes place in Bumthang, the sacred heartland of Bhutan. This region is dotted with some of the most beautiful and ancient monasteries and temples in the Himalayas.

The two major nomadic tribes of Bhutan, the Brokpas in the east and the Layaps in the west, inhabit some of the most rugged terrain in the kingdom. Their economy still mainly consists of ancient bartering practices and is heavily dependent upon their yaks and the products they derive from it such as milk, meat, wool, cheese and leather. In recognition of this interdependency, the yak features prominently in many of the nomadic festivals and celebrations.

Things to See and Do

The festival will give you the opportunity to witness the grand pageantry of the Chipdrel, a ceremonial procession usually reserved for royalty.

Adventurous visitors will definitely want to try some yak riding. Immerse yourself in the festival-wide demonstrations of traditional Bhutanese village life including using ancient mill-stones to grind maize, husking harvested rice and tilling fields with ox-drawn ploughs.

Attain inner peace as you visit some of the most exquisite Buddhist temples in Bhutan.



Food

Sample the nomadic twist on Bhutan's classic ema datshi. This fiery, cheesy dish is accompanied by highlander staples made from maize and buckwheat flour. You'll definitely want to try some *Pin*, a fragrant and spicy roll stuffed with flat onions (*Ram* in Dzongkha) cheese, chili powder and local spices. This delicacy is unique to the region and is extremely popular amongst the locals.

Experience the simple delectability of buckwheat pancakes coated in generous helpings of melted butter and served with ema datshi.



Arts and Crafts

Not only will you be able to shop for some of the most exquisitely made Bhutanese handicrafts but you'll actually be able to witness skilled artisans breathing life into bronze statues, blacksmiths utilizing their time-honed skills to forge beautiful and lethal swords, potters crafting delicate vessels and much more!



Sports/Games

Keyshey (traditional Bhutanese wrestling): Marvel at the competition as some of Bhutan's toughest highlanders grapple together in this traditional test of skill and strength.

Join in the fun and try your hand at some traditional Bhutanese sports like *Khuru* (darts), archery, *Soksum* (light javelin throwing), *Degeo* (similar to throwing horseshoes but with stones).

