

# Eco-tourism in Bhutan

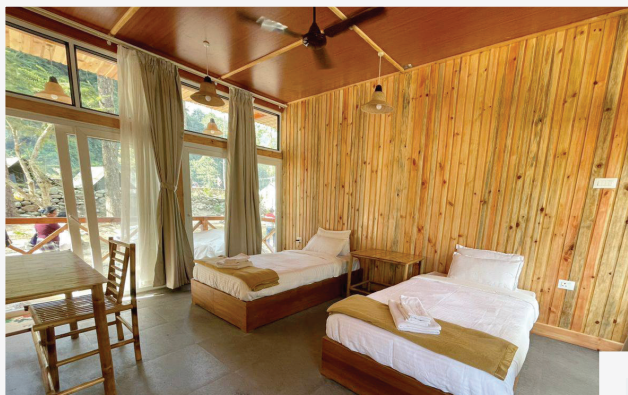
**BHUTAN**  
*Believe*

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**DEPARTMENT  
OF TOURISM**

# BHUTAN

Believe





# Biodiversity conservation in tourism

**B**hutan is slowly emerging as a model ecotourism destination in the world. With its rich natural resources and diverse wildlife, the tiny Himalayan Kingdom is a haven for nature enthusiasts. More than 70 percent of the country is under forest cover while the constitution mandates 60 percent coverage at all times.

The country's socio-economic development is underpinned by conservation of its pristine environment and distinct culture. The promotion of ecotourism in Bhutan reflects Bhutan's commitment towards protecting its rich biodiversity and ensuring a harmonious balance between people and the environment. If you are seeking an authentic and immersive travel experience, Bhutan is the right destination.

Located in the eastern Himalayan biodiversity hotspot, Bhutan's flora and fauna include some of the most critically endangered, rare and endemic species. In total there are 11,284 known species of animals, plants, birds and insects. There are more than 200 species of mammals, 27 of which are globally threatened and 6,000

species of vascular and non-vascular plants out of which 94 percent are native species and 144 endemic to Bhutan

With 52 percent of the country marked as protected areas and 20 percent as biological corridors, the wildlife in Bhutan is well protected. However, Bhutan is witnessing multiple threats to biodiversity conservation, both manmade and natural such as human-wildlife conflict, habitat loss and other climate-induced disasters.

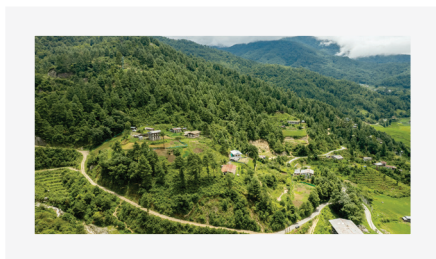
With support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Global Environment Facility (GEF), Bhutan has embarked on a new pursuit to mainstream biodiversity conservation into tourism.

The project helps generate livelihood opportunities through community based tourism enterprises and motivate the communities and stakeholders to support conservation programs including biodiversity threat reduction and habitat enrichment, reducing the risk of human-wildlife conflict.

Venture into the wild, discover the unseen, experience the Bhutanese way of life while exploring one of the world's richest biodiversity hotspot - Bhutan.

# Ludlow's Bhutan Glory Trail

Lush green, naturally pristine and a biodiversity hotspot, the Boomdeling Wildlife Sanctuary in Trashiyangtse district is home to one of the rarest species of butterfly, the Ludlow's Bhutan Glory (*Bhutanitis Ludlowi*) which was considered extinct since it was first seen in the 1930s. Rediscovered 75 years later in Boomdeling valley through a chance sighting, the species, which is listed as endangered by IUCN subsequently became Bhutan's National Butterfly in 2012.



Trashiyangtse, in eastern Bhutan is generally considered a butterfly paradise with a rich variety of species. Considered important indicator species, the abundance of butterflies in the wild indicates a healthy ecosystem. Bhutan has over 750 species of butterflies, more than what is

recorded in the whole of North America.

According to butterfly enthusiasts, autumn is the best season to spot the Ludlow's Bhutan Glory flying around in Boomdeling. A wetland of international importance, the Boomdeling wildlife sanctuary is also the winter roosting habitat for another endangered species, the Black Necked Cranes. Boomdeling also observes annual crane festival in February.

The trail connects two districts through ancient routes and follows the mighty Drangme River, one of Bhutan's biggest rivers. Besides offering a rich array of flora and fauna, with vegetation ranging from temperate to alpine, Trashiyangtse also offers a wide range of cultural attractions with a rich history, including the famed and legendary Chorten Kora where people from as far away as Tawang in India visit the famed stupa to seek blessings.

## Popular species

The sanctuary is home to the Royal Bengal Tiger, Snow Leopard, Himalayan Musk Deer, Rufous-necked Hornbill, Chestnut-breasted Partridge, Wood Snipe and Palla's Fish Eagle. It is one of the few locations where the endemic species of East Himalayan Pine (*Pinus bhutanica*) is found.

## Elevation

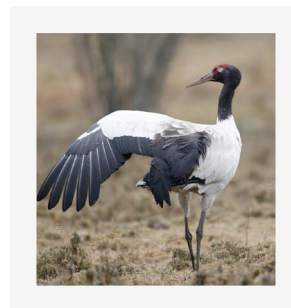
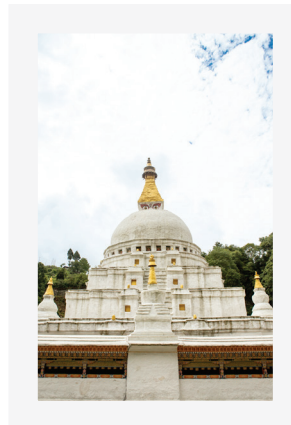
1,500 to 6,000 masl

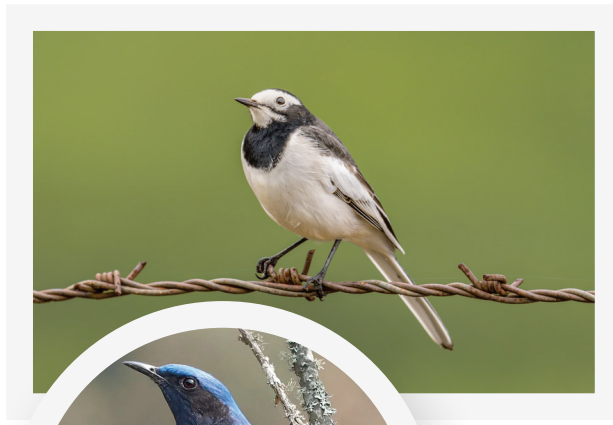
## Places of interest

Chorten Kora, Gomphu Kora, Omba Ney (Tigers Nest of the East), Institute of Zorig Chusum (13<sup>th</sup> arts and crafts), Aja Ney

## Travel distance

511 Kms from Thimphu by road. 55Kms from Yonphula Airport in Trashigang





# High-end birding trails

Known as birders' paradise, Bhutan's unique landscape with rapidly varying elevation and climatic conditions makes it relatively easier for the birdwatchers to spot multiple habitats almost anywhere along the trail. With 739 species of birds, of which 26 are endangered, bird watching in Bhutan can enrich your outlook towards the nature while connecting with the local communities, their culture and tradition.

The High-end birding trail connects a popular birding hotspot in Asia (Sengor to Yongkola bird trail) to an ancient Bhutanese trail (Latongla to Zhonggar), located in Mongar district in Eastern Bhutan. The trail is home to more than 300 species of birds, offering you with a wonderful opportunity to explore the avian world.



**Popular species**

Rufous-throated Partridge, White-throated Fantail, Himalayan Monal, Blood Pheasant, Satyr Tragopan, Rufous-necked Hornbill, Tawny Fish Owl, Scarlet Minivet, Pallas's Fish Eagle, Rufous-bellied Eagle.

**Elevation**

1,425 to 3,800 masl

**Places of interest**

Ruins of Zhonggar Dzong, Thrimshingla Pass, Lingmethang town, Genila, Weringla, Saling, Yangbari

**Travel distance**

400 kms from Thimphu by road. 67Kms from Yonphula Airport



# Yangbari-Manas rafting and high-end Mahseer fly-fishing

Originating from glacial lakes, gushing through the mountains, meandering across the valleys and gently flowing through the foothills, Bhutan river system offers an exhilarating experience for water enthusiasts. Yangbari-Manas Rafting is stalked along the mahseer migratory route. It takes you through a popular biodiversity hotspot, the Royal Manas National Park. The adventure becomes even exciting with first-hand experience of flyfishing the rare golden mahseer.

Known as the tigers of the river, golden mahseer is one of the world's most prized catches. It is one of the world's biggest and strongest fresh water fish, making it the most prized game fish. Golden Mahseer is renowned for its strength, size and beauty and has a reputation as one of the world's hardest fighting fish. They can grow upto 9 ft. in length and over 54 Kgs in weight. The species is also listed as endangered on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species.

Covering an area of 1,057 sq.km the Royal Manas National Park shares its border with India's World Heritage site, Manas Tiger Reserve, and is also connected by corridors to Phibsoo Wildlife Sanctuary and Jigme Singye Wangchuck National Park.



## Popular species

About 58 mammal species have been recorded in the park to date such as Royal Bengal Tiger, Clouded Leopard, Swamp Deer, Elephant, Golden Langur, Asiatic Water Buffalo, Guar, Rhino and Pigmy Hog. More than 426 bird species are said to be found in RMNP like Great Hornbill, Rufous-necked Hornbill, Grey Peacock Pheasant and the Black Francolin.

## Elevation

80 to 700 masl

## Places of interest

Jungle camp

## Travel distance

337 kms from Thimphu by road. 200 Kms from Gelephu Airport.





# Golden Langur Trail



Considered one of the world's most threatened primates, the Golden Langur (*Trachypithecus geei*), famous, as the name suggest, for its gold-colored coat is a visual treat for travelers along the Zhemgang highway. This rare and unique species is today facing its biggest habitat loss due to development activities and human wildlife conflict. There are about 6,000 individuals of Golden Langur in Bhutan and around 11,000 in the world. With the species preferring temperate broad leaf forests, the Golden Langurs in Bhutan are mostly found in Zhemgang.

In Bhutan, it is considered a sign of good luck when you see Golden Langurs on your way.

Zhemgang is a natural biodiversity hotspot that is home to many endangered species of plants, animals, insects and birds. Besides its rich biodiversity, Zhemgang also has a lot to offer in terms of culture and tradition. It is one of the last regions where the ancient bon religious practices are still carried out.

## Popular species

Zhemgang is home to 22 endangered species of fauna some of which include the Royal Bengal Tiger, Red Panda, Wild Dog, Musk Deer, Golden Langur, Capped Langur, Asian Elephant, Great Hornbill, Rufous Necked Hornbill, Chestnut partridge, Wards Tragopan, Beautiful Nuthatch.

## Elevation

95 to 4,500 masl

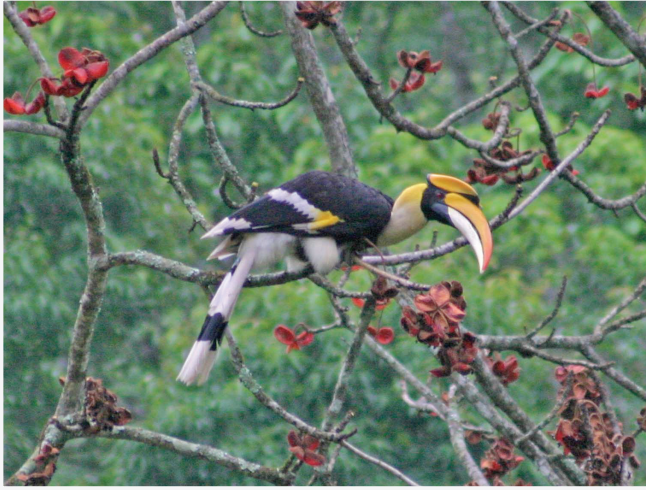
## Places of interest

Zhemgang Dzong, Trong Heritage Village

## Travel distance

263 kms from Thimphu by road.





# Hornbill and Nuthatch Trail and homestays along Dakphel-Tali

Un-spoilt, exclusive and less visited, Zhemgang district in central Bhutan has an incredibly rich biodiversity with lush green forests, fast flowing rivers and imposing valleys and cliffs that is home to an array of species, including several endangered and endemic ones.

Zhemgang is particularly famous as a Birders' Paradise and rightly so, as the district has recorded around 500 species of birds while there are a total of 739 species in the whole of Bhutan.

The trail will take you into one of the remote interiors of rural Bhutan where you can spot the globally threatened Rufous Necked Hornbill and the small and elegant Nuthatch. The hornbill is a giant and colorful bird with a powerful flight. Its wingspan can grow up to 180 centimeters.

With the government now seriously promoting eco-tourism, travelers can find better amenities here including home-stays in typical traditional Bhutanese homes and facilities for birders such as birding decks, hideouts, and campsites.

## Popular species

Pallas's Fish Eagle, Satyr Tragopan, Rufous-necked Hornbills, Ward's and Red-headed Trogons, Spotted Elachura, Blue-capped Rock Thrush, Emerald Cuckoo, Beautiful Nuthatch, and the critically endangered White-bellied Heron

## Elevation

95 to 4,500 masl

## Places of interest

Zhemgang Dzong, Trong Heritage Village, Buli Tsho (lake)

## Travel distance

263 kms from Thimphu by road.





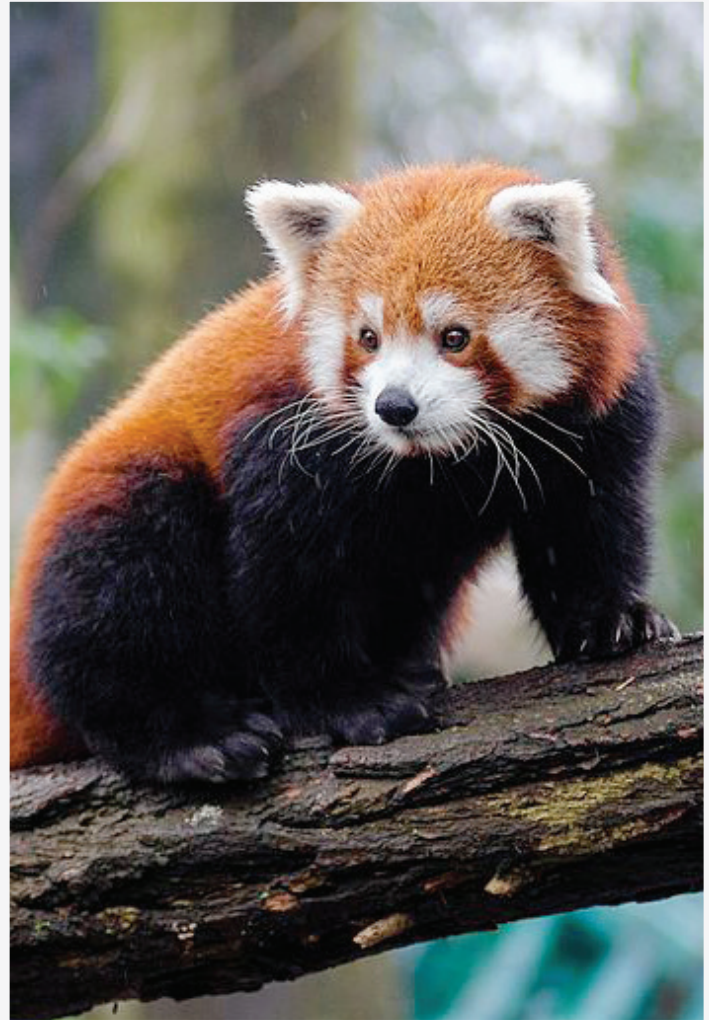


# Jomo-Panda Trail

Highly sought after by explorers, naturalists and scholars and popular among tourists, the shy, charismatic and endangered Red Panda can be found inside the Sakteng wildlife sanctuary located in Merak and Sakteng, a nomadic community in north east Bhutan. While the sanctuary is home to many species of plants and animals, it was created to protect the mythical and mysterious Migoi (Yeti), the abominable snowman, that has captured the Bhutanese imagination since eons.

Due to its shy and elusive nature, the Red Panda is difficult to spot and the best months to sight them are May – July in summer and October – February in winter. Around 39 individuals of Red Panda has been recorded inside the Sakteng Wildlife sanctuary.

The semi-nomadic people of Merak and Sakteng are said to have arrived in Bhutan from Tibet. The local Deity Aum Jomo is said to have led the people to Bhutan. Sakteng is also famous for its unique mask dance called the 'Achi Lhamoi Chham,' a dance drama that dates back to the 8<sup>th</sup> century.



## Popular species

Red panda, Himalayan black bear, Snow leopard, Barking deer, and Himalayan red fox, Blood pheasant, Grey backed shrike, Grey headed woodpecker, Dark breasted rose finch. Bhutan's national flower, Blue poppy is also found here as well as Rhododendrons, Primulas, Gentiana and Cordyceps.

## Elevation

1,700 to 4,100 masl

## Places of interest

Trashigang Dzong, Merak village, Rangjung monastery, Radhi Village, Rangshikhar monastery, Khabte hotstone bath, Buddha Pelri Park, Herbal tea processing plant

## Travel distance

546 kms from Thimphu by road. 68 Kms from Yonphula Airport



# Biodiversity Immersion Trail along Tingtibi- Manas route

Immerse yourself in one of Bhutan's most pristine natural environments while traversing the warm, sub-tropical jungles of south-central Bhutan within Bhutan's oldest national park, the Royal Manas National Park, which serves as an important corridor for wildlife to move between the plains of India and the forests of Bhutan.

While home to hundreds of species of plants, birds and animals, the iconic ones found along the Tingtibi-Manas route are the Asian Elephants, the Royal Bengal Tiger, Golden Langur, Hornbills and the Golden Mahseer.

Tingtibi is also a popular birding site with hundreds of species of birds including the endangered Rufous-necked hornbill. The Annual Bird Festival is held in Tingtibi in the month of November. With project support from various partnerships like the World Wildlife Fund, various tourist amenities such as campsites for wildlife viewing are being built to enhance your experience and adventure along the Tingtibi-Manas route.



## Popular species

Royal Bengal Tiger, Red Panda, Wild Dog, Musk Deer, Golden Langur, Capped Langur, Asian Elephant, Great Hornbill, Rufous Necked Hornbill, Chestnut partridge, Wards Tragopan, Beautiful Nuthatch.

## Elevation

80 to 600 masl

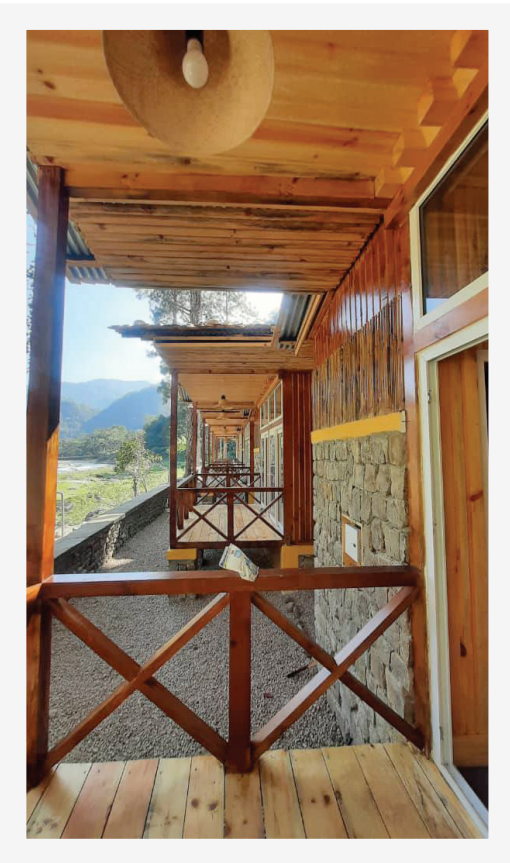
## Places of interest

Zhemgang Dzong, Trong Heritage Village, Twin waterfall, Buli Tsho (lake)

## Travel distance

263 kms from Thimphu by road.





# Community-based birding and butterfly tour in Berti

The tiny and remote fishing community of Berti in Zhemgang is drawing an increasing number of nature enthusiasts from both within and outside Bhutan for its breathtaking natural beauty and diverse wildlife. The area is the habitat of the critically endangered White Bellied Heron. Considered one of the 50 rarest bird species in the world, there are only 60 herons in the world of which 28 are believed to be in Bhutan.

Besides a host of many other species of birds, Berti is also considered a butterfly hotspot and is a must visit for butterfly enthusiasts. Species of butterflies such as the Common Grass Yellow, Common Pierrot, Common Sailer and Fulvous Pied Flat among many others, can be spotted here. Berti is also a popular fly fishing area for tourists.

A community built eco-lodge in Berti has become the center of attention among nature enthusiasts and travelers. Well-furnished cabins with bedrooms, toilets and bathrooms and located amidst the serene and tranquil natural environment, surrounded by the sounds of birds and insects, Berti is a perfect destination for nature lovers.

## Popular species

Other bird species like the Rufous-Necked Hornbill, Siberian Rubythroat, Black-Crested Bulbul, Great Racket-Tailed Drongo, and Golden-Throated Barbet are sighted in Zhemgang. Some experts believe there are still undiscovered bird species in the area.

## Elevation

80 to 600 masl

## Places of interest

Zhemgang Dzong, Trong Heritage Village, Berti Village, Tingtibi town, Tama monastery, WBH eco-lodge






## Travel distance

263 kms from Thimphu by road.



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