

Countries A-Z: Bhutan

Check out this South Asian country!



A Buddhist monastery in Bhutan

Thunder sometimes rumbles throughout the mountains in Bhutan. Some Bhutanese people believe this is the voice of dragons. They even call their home “Land of the Thunder Dragon.” Let’s learn more about this nation!

Where in the World

Bhutan is located in southern Asia. The country shares borders with China and India. The Himalaya Mountains rise up in northern Bhutan. Gangkhar Puensum is Bhutan’s highest peak. The mountain is about 24,836 feet (7,570 m) tall.

Many rivers divide up Bhutan’s mountains. The four major waterways are the Torsa, Wong, Sankosh, and Manas rivers. Some of Bhutan’s wildlife can be found here. That includes rhinos, elephants, tigers, and more!

History

Little is known about the early history of Bhutan. In fact, the country’s forests and mountains cut the nation off from the world for much of its past. Rulers in Bhutan even banned outside travelers until the 1950s.

People from Tibet probably settled in Bhutan in the 800s. A Buddhist leader from that area of China became king of Bhutan in the 1600s. Different countries tried to take control of Bhutan. They included China and Great Britain. Throughout the 1800s, Bhutan experienced lots of civil wars as leaders struggled for power.

During the 1950s, Bhutan began building roads and got its first cars. These steps helped the country end its isolation. Bhutan welcomed tourists in the 1970s. And Bhutan joined the United Nations in 1971, ending its political isolation as well.

Bhutan's king began to change the government by the 1990s. The country held its first elections in 2007.

The People and Culture

More than 700,000 people call Bhutan home. More than half of the population is made up of people with ancestors from Tibet. That group is called the Bhutia. Most Bhutia practice Buddhism. And most speak the nation's official language of Dzongkha. The other two major ethnic groups are the Nepalese and the Sharchop. Most Nepalese speak Nepali. Most practice the religion of Hinduism. The Sharchop are the smallest of the main ethnic groups. Most practice Buddhism.

Lots of people in Bhutan make a living by farming. Their main crops include corn, rice, and potatoes. Bhutan's national dish is called ema datshi. That is a spicy meal made with chili peppers and a cheese sauce served with rice.

Yaks are very important to Bhutan's culture. Many households own a yak. People use the animal for its milk. Some tribes around the nation still herd yaks and rely on them for food as well.

Bhutan's most popular sport is archery. Villages often hold competitions where people gather to socialize.

Meet a Local

Name: Euesel Yoezer Dema

Age: 10

Birthplace: Gelephu, Bhutan

What does it mean to you to be from Bhutan?

Bhutan believes in happiness of the people. I am very lucky to be born here.

Name: Norzang Rabten

Age: 11

Birthplace: Thimphu, Bhutan

What is something you wish children knew about Bhutan?

Bhutan has fresh and clean air. It has a rich culture.

Name: Chhoenam Kisel Pema

Age: 9

Birthplace: Thimphu, Bhutan

What is your favorite place in Bhutan and why?

Thimphu is my favorite place. It is where the royal family lives. I saw the king's palace, and it is a beautiful place. I wish to meet the king and queen when I grow up.

Flag

The Bhutanese flag has the colors orange and yellow. There is a white dragon in the middle. Orange stands for the country's Buddhist tradition. Yellow represents the power of the nation's king. The dragon stands for purity, and the jewels in its claws represent the wealth of the nation.

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