



Kuengkhar. These competitions are invariably part of larger celebrations, including dancing (notably the yak cham or “dance of the yaks”), singing, and generous amounts of home-brewed wine. Assuming you have not overindulged in the local firewater, set off early the following morning to complete the trail’s final leg: an easy 7-km (4.3-mi) stroll downriver to the village of Thakthri (2,200 m/7,218 ft).

The secluded valleys of Sakteng Wildlife Sanctuary are not as isolated as they once were. Ongoing road construction has made access easier, which in turn has led to an upswing in ecotourism. Some have questioned the impact that these changes will have on the local populace. It is an understandable concern; however, given Bhutan’s excellent record in embracing change without sacrificing its environment and cultural heritage, it is hoped that the Brokpa (and yeti!) population of Bhutan’s far east will continue to practice their traditional way of life for generations to come. ▲

← Sacred mask dances are synonymous with Tshechus (Buddhist religious festivals) in Bhutan.

↓ International Day of Happiness ceremony in Mongar Dzong, located a short drive west of Trashigang.

→ The seventeenth century fortress-monastery of Trashigang Dzong (see Info Box).

