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Our current focus areas are defined by needs and challenges within Bhutan and outside. We recognize interlinkages between the way forestry is practiced to the dynamics of species conservation and persistence. We understand the implications of landuse practices and global climate change on water resources and energy requirements. Above all, we appreciate and seek to understand human impacts and impacts on humans by studying social patterns and economic implications of management and policy interventions.

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**ADDRESS:**

UWICE, Lamai Goempa Dzong,  
Jakar, Bumthang

**TEL:** +975-3-631926/631924

**FAX:** +975-3-631925

**EMAIL:** info@uwice.gov.bt

**WEB:** [www.uwice.gov.bt](http://www.uwice.gov.bt)

[www.facebook.com/uwice.web](https://www.facebook.com/uwice.web)



# Hot Springs and Mineral Springs of Bhutan

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We would also like to thank the support of our colleagues at UWICE.

# DEDICATION



“

*We humbly dedicate this to the  
60<sup>th</sup> Birth Anniversary of the Fourth Druk Gyalpo,  
His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck.*

*Long Live His Majesty, The Fourth Druk Gyalpo!!!*

”





སོ་ནམ་དང་ནགས་ཚལ་ལྷན་ཁག  
ROYAL GOVERNMENT OF BHUTAN  
Ministry of Agriculture and Forests  
Thimphu : Bhutan



ལྷོ་ནམ་

MINISTER

MoAF/UWICE/2015-16/ 237

11<sup>th</sup> November 2015

**Foreword:**

From ancient times, Bhutan has been referred to as *Lhojong Menjong*, the land of medicine towards the south. With a rich array of medicinal plants and age old healing traditions, Bhutan remains a stronghold of indigenous healing systems.

Medicinal hot springs (Tsachus) and baths (Menchus) are an important component of this traditional system of healing and wellbeing. Scattered all across Bhutan and considered sacred, these hot springs and medicinal baths provide effective cures against various ailments.

Hot springs and baths are also places where Bhutanese families gather during winter and provide a unique space for familial bonding and interaction between people from across the country thereby fostering communal harmony and social cohesion.

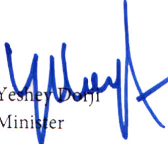
It is therefore of immense pleasure that a guide on the hot springs and medicinal baths has been produced. I remain confident that the guide will be of great value to the common Bhutanese as well as the specialist tourist seeking to explore the hidden gems of our magical country.

Healing and wellbeing are an indispensable part of the Bhutanese spiritual heritage. We owe an immense debt of gratitude to our Monarchs, who through their visionary and farsighted leadership has ensured that treasures such as the hot springs and medicinal baths continue to benefit many from Bhutan and outside.

On behalf of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forests, I humbly dedicate this publication as part of our efforts to commemorate His Majesty the 4<sup>th</sup> Druk Gyalpo's 60<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary.

May health and wellbeing prosper in our country under the wise and benevolent rule of His Majesty the 5<sup>th</sup> Druk Gyalpo of Bhutan.

Tashi Delek.

  
Yeshey Dorji  
Minister

# INTRODUCTION

The origin of hot springs and mineral springs in Bhutan can be linked with the visit of Guru Rinpoche and the advent of Mahayana Buddhism in 746 AD as the Mahayana texts cover so-wa-rigpa, the science of healing in the Buddhist tradition. Tshachus in Bhutan are believed to be blessed by the great masters (Bodhisattava), and are therefore considered as sacred sites.

Unlike many other countries, where Hot Spring(Tshachu) serve the purpose for recreation and relaxation, Tshachus in Bhutan are looked after as a therapy to treat diseases.

Mineral springs (Menchus) does not have higher water temperature as Tshachus. However, they are believed to possess minerals with therapeutic characteristics. The Menchus are generally collected in wooden bath tubs and usually warmed by heated stone before taking a dip in it.

Throughout the year, people from all over the country visit different Menchus and Tshachus to cure various illnesses. Considering its importance to the Bhutanese, we tried to document brief histories, location and therapeutic value of 10 Tshachus and 26 Menchus in Bhutan.

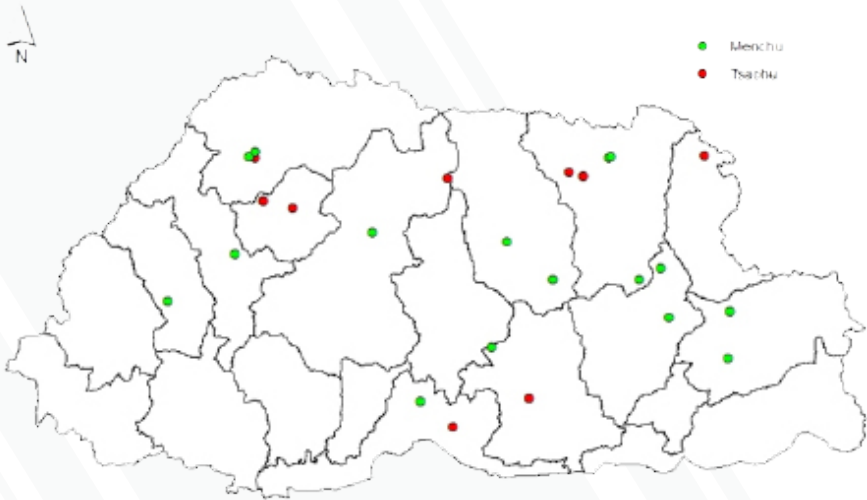


Figure 1: Distribution Map of Tshachus and Menchus of Bhutan

## Glossary of Bhutanese Terms

<i>Bjagay</i>	<i>Vulture</i>
<i>Boog</i>	<i>Center</i>
<i>Chhu</i>	<i>Water</i>
<i>Duedhro</i>	<i>Animals</i>
<i>Duetsi</i>	<i>Holy water</i>
<i>Dungkhag</i>	<i>Sub-district</i>
<i>Dzong</i>	<i>Fortress</i>
<i>Dzongkhag</i>	<i>District</i>
<i>Gewog</i>	<i>Block</i>
<i>Goenkhang</i>	<i>Sacred Chapel of the local deity</i>
<i>Gongma</i>	<i>Upper/above</i>
<i>Guru Rinpoche</i>	<i>Buddhist Tantric Master</i>
<i>Lhakhang</i>	<i>Monastery</i>
<i>Menchu</i>	<i>Mineral Spring water</i>
<i>Mo</i>	<i>Female</i>
<i>gNey Rig Chobgay</i>	<i>18 types of diseases</i>
<i>gNey Rig Chusum</i>	<i>13 types of diseases</i>
<i>gNeys</i>	<i>Sacred places</i>
<i>Pho</i>	<i>Male</i>
<i>Tertoen</i>	<i>Treasure discoverer</i>
<i>Torma</i>	<i>Ritual cakes for offering</i>
<i>Tshachu</i>	<i>Hotspring</i>
<i>Wogma</i>	<i>Lower/Below</i>
<i>Ngelwa</i>	<i>Hell</i>
<i>Yidag</i>	<i>Preta</i>

## PART 1 TSHACHUS/ HOTSPRINGS

## CHUBOOG TSHACHU, PUNAKHA



Figure 2: Chuboo Tshachu

The direct translation of the name would read as 'water in the centre' (Chu-water, Boog-Centre). The name of this Tshachu probably originated from its geographical location since it is located in the centre of two rivers;- the Pho chu and Mo chu.

The origin of Chuboo Tshachu remains obscure even today. According to the caretaker of the site, Mr. Namgay Wangchuk, the hot spring dates back to the time of Guru Rinpoche and is believed to have been discovered by him.

The present local deity of the site is Dralay

Gyelpo. Legend says that in 1627, during the construction of Punakha Dzong by Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyel, Dralay Gyelpo volunteered to provide all the timber required for building the Dzong. He supplied the timber via Pho Chu river, but he was anguished because Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyel didn't provide any information about the sufficiency of the timbers. With much consternation, he went to examine the Dzong site but he found all the timber stacked in a lake called Lhamochey<sup>1</sup>, on the river's way. Meanwhile, Dralay Gyelpo received a message from Zhabdrung scolding him for failing to supply the timber on time ('khachaep' in Dzongkha) and warned Dralay Gyelpo not to show himself in public. Since then, Dralay Gyelpo has remained at the site of the hot spring, becoming its local deity, and hidden from public. He is now popularly known as Khachaep Dralay Gyelpo in the region. The figure of this Deity can be seen today, with his face half black and half white, in the Goenkhang of Ngyerchu Lhakhang<sup>2</sup>.

### Therapeutic Values

Chuboo Tshachu has two ponds. With a temperature of 39.9°C, the first pond (Gomgma) is believed to be beneficial to those suffering from chronic stomach ache, tuberculosis and skin diseases.

The other pond, known as Wogma, has a temperature of 43.5 °C and is known for curing stomach ailments, muscle sprains, diabetes and certain forms of tuberculosis.

*"My diabetic illness has become less troublesome after visiting the Tshachu twice, and it is also important to soak with a mindfulness that makes the water more therapeutic." Says Ap Sherab from Taewang geog, 40*

<sup>1</sup> The lake is located about 150 metres below Chuboo Tshachu

<sup>2</sup> Lakhang (Temple) of Deity, Khachaep Dralay Gyelpo located in Jaynee village, Punakha

## Trek Route and Trip Plan

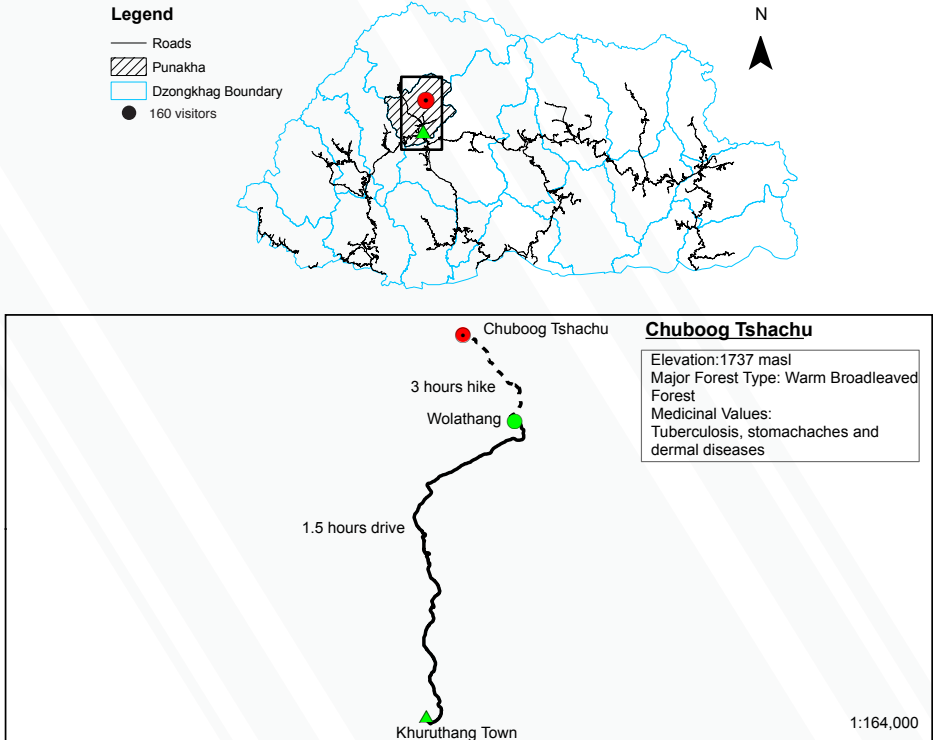


Figure 3: Route Map for Chuboo Tshachu

Located at 1737 masl, Chuboo Tshachu is more than three hours' walk from the road head in Wolathang under Toewang Geog. From where visitors can hire horses to carry their rations after consulting with the Geog Tshogpa. The trail runs gently through chirpine forests and cool, temperate mixed forests. Prior to the hike, it's about a 1 ½ hour's drive from Khuruthang to Wolathang, via Samdingkha. The road and mule track are well-paved with resting places along the way.

- Start At : Khuruthang Town, Punakha
- Khuruthang Town to Wolathang via Samdingkha: About 1 ½ hours drive by car.
- Wolathang to Chuboo Tshachu : 3 hours hike.

## KOMA TSHACHU, PUNAKHA



Figure 4: Koma Tshachu

Koma Tshachu also in Punakha district is another popular Tshachu mostly visited for its healing properties. It is visited from the eighth month of the Bhutanese calendar until the twelfth month (september - December). It is believed that one should dip for at least three continuous days to get the full effect of the minerals in this Tshachu.

### Therapeutic Values

There are three pools in this Tshachu and all three pools are well-known for healing all kinds of skin diseases, tuberculosis, accident wounds and fistula.

### Trek Route and Trip Plan

After an hour's drive from Punakha towards Gasa, there is a diversion called Tshorim zam. After crossing the bridge, a walking journey of about two and half hours begins, moving uphill through warm broadleaf forests. After an hour's hike, the slope gets gentler and runs alongside a rumbling river, beside which the hot spring is located.

There are three dipping ponds covered with corrugated galvanized roofing sheets, and a four-room building for visitors. Around the site, there is much space to pitch tents, as well as overhanging rocks to camp under. Porters and ponies can be hired by consulting the local leader of the Tshori zam community.

*"I usually bathe and soak in the pond from 9 am till 11 am with few -minutes break during meal hours. I have been visiting this hot spring for 3 consecutive year now and found out that it has the medicinal values of healing dermal diseases and arthritis."*

*-Says Dorji, 54 from Kabisa*

- Start At : Khuruthang Town, Punakha
- Khuruthang Town to Tshorim Zam: *About one hour drive along Punakha Gasa highway.*
- Tshorim Zamto Koma Tshachu : *2 ½ hours hike.*

**Legend**

- Roads
- ▨ Punakha
- Dzongkhag Boundary
- 10 visitors

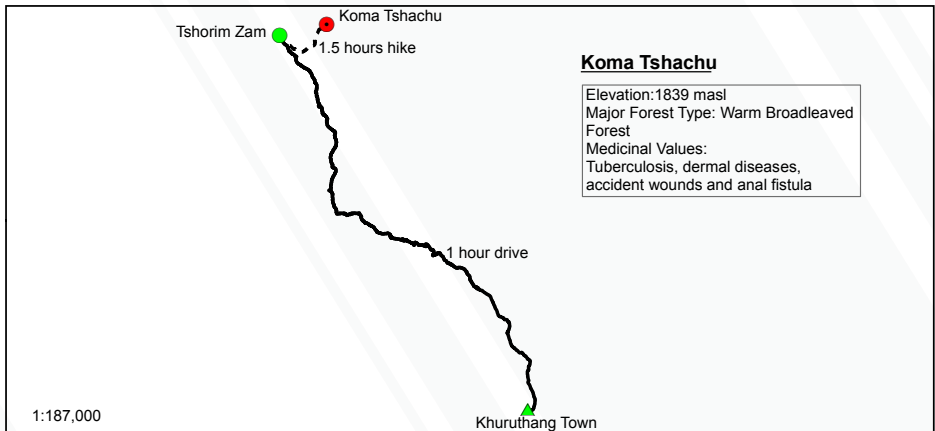
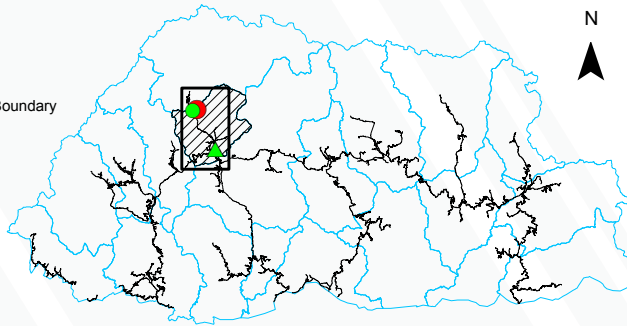


Figure 5: Route Map for Koma Tshachu

## GASA TSHACHU, GASA



Gasa Tshachu is situated near the bank of the Mo Chu at an elevation of 2100 metres in Gasa Dzongkhag. It can be reached after a 2-hours drive from Punakha, followed by 20-minutes walk through the cool broadleaf forests. It is considered by many as one of the most beautiful hotspring in the country.

Gasa Tshachu has guest house accommodation for visitors as well as spaces for camping. This Tshachu is usually visited between mid-October and the end of January.

### Therapeutic Values

According to visitors, the hot spring provides excellent healing for chronic headaches, paralysis, syphilis and arthritis.

The hot spring consists of four pools including one that is solely used for taking a shower prior to getting into the other pools. The healing properties offered by the pools are all same.



## Trek Route and Trip Plan

- Start at Gasa Town
- Gasa to Gasa Tshachu: About 30 -minutes descent downhill towards the hotspring



Figure 6: Gasa Tshachu

### Legend

- Roads
- ▨ Gasa
- Dzongkhag Boundary
- 180 visitors

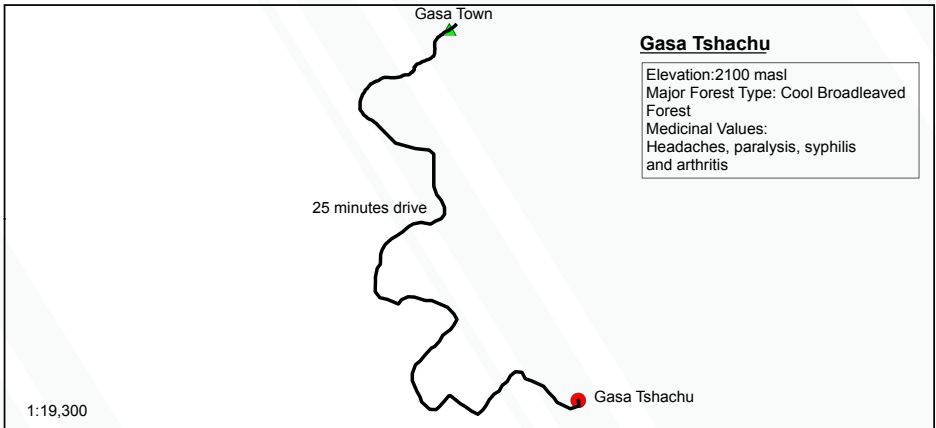
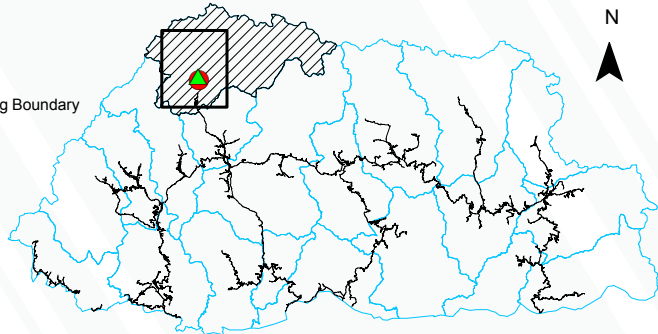


Figure 7: Route Map for Gasa Tshachu

## GAYZA TSHACHU, GASA



Figure 8: Gayza Tshachu

Gayza Tshachu is located in the northern part of Laya geog, which is two-days hike from Gasa town. Located at an elevation of 3826 metres, the hot spring sits beautifully within high altitude flora. The hot spring is three-hours walk from Gayza village of northern Gayza geog.

### Therapeutic Values

The Tshachu is believed to be beneficial to people suffering from poisoning, conjunctivitis, arthritis and inflammations. Unlike other hot springs, Gayza is best visited in the summer, due to harsh climatic conditions in the winter.

## Trek Route and Trip Plan

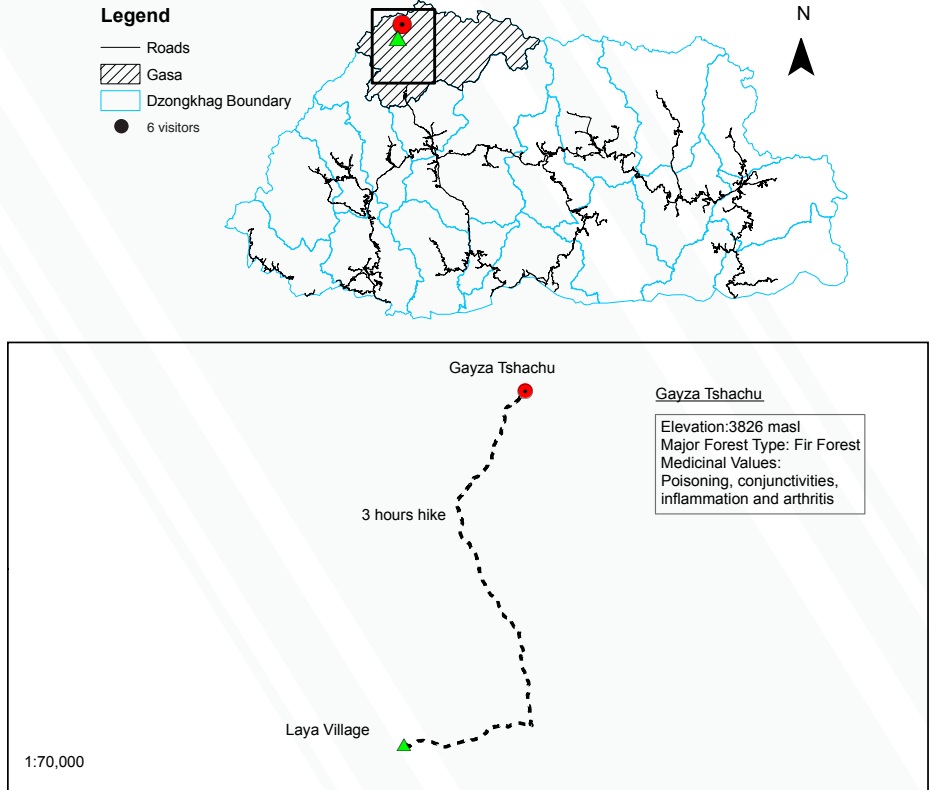


Figure 9: Route Map for Gayza Tshachu

## DHUR TSHACHU, BUMTHANG



Figure 10: Dhur Tshachu.

Dhur Tshachu is a hidden gem, considered by some as the most beautiful and significant Tshachu. In Bhutan located within the jurisdiction of Wangchuck Centennial National Park (WCNP). WCNP has built guest houses that can accommodate up to sixty visitors . WCPN has also recently renovated all the pools. Today, Dhur Tshachu is considered one of the most hygienic and properly managed Tshachu in Bhutan.

### Therapeutic Values

In Bhutan, Dhur Tshachu has the largest number of pools in a single Tshachu complex. There are seven Tshachus in Dhur Tshachu area: *Chenrezig Tshachu*, *Zekham Tshachu*, *Dangwa Mochu Tshachu*, *Dangwa Phochu Tshachu*, *Gunay Tshachu*, *Guru Tshachu*, and *Beken Menchu Tshachu*. Each Tshachu is believed to possess its own healing properties as below:

- i. *Chenrezig*—vision defects
- ii. *Zekham*—tetanus
- iii. *Dangwa Mochu*—sexually transmitted diseases such as syphilis and gonorrhea. As indicated by the name Mo (female), only females benefit.
- iv. *Dangwa Phochu*—provides similar benefits as Dangwa Mochu, but only for male. Pho means 'male'.
- v. *Gunay*—chronic and acute headaches
- vi. *Guru*—a general pond with healing properties for all kinds of diseases
- vii. *Beken*—tuberculosis

## Trek Route and Trip Plan

There are two different routes to reach Dhur Tshachu—one from Sephu geog in Wangdue Phodrang district and the other via Dhur village in Bumthang.

It's about half an hour's drive through beautiful Blue pine forest from Chamkhar town to reach Dhur village. The route crosses a great diversity of vegetation, including forests of Cypress, Juniper, Spruce, Hemlock and Maple. Porters and pony can be arranged at the starting point of the hike.

Dhur Tshachu is about a three and half days hike from Dhur village. The first two days of

hiking consists of moderate slopes, initially through Blue pine forest and then through broadleaf forest along muddy tracks. The last day of the trip is a light and adventurous one. Hikers have to climb uphill and then downhill to reach the hot spring site. The journey promises spectacular scenery, with two giant lakes along the way. Blue Sheep are commonly spotted in the area.

Although there are many suitable places for camping, Chokchormi and Ngondong are the most recommended sites for night halts, due to their beautiful natural sceneries.

- Start at Chamkhar Town
- Chamkhar Town to Dhur Village: About 45 -minutes drives
- Dhur village to Dhur Tshachu: 3 days

### Legend

- Roads
- ▨ Bumthang
- Dzongkhag Boundary
- 30 visitors

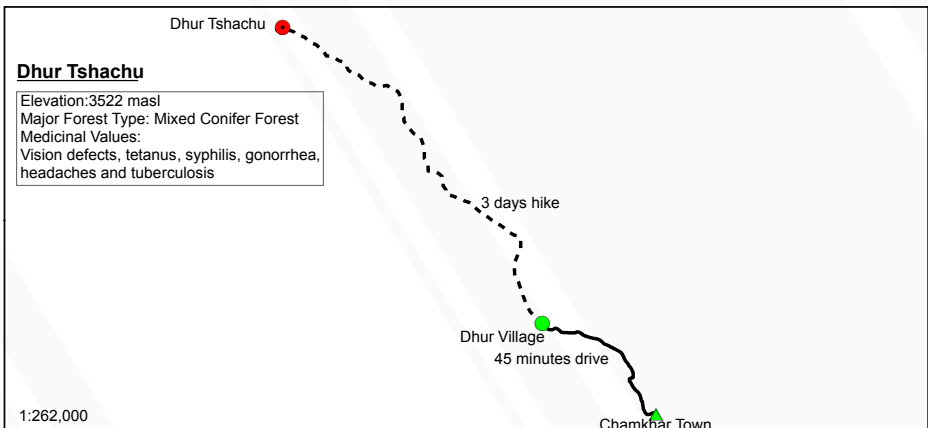
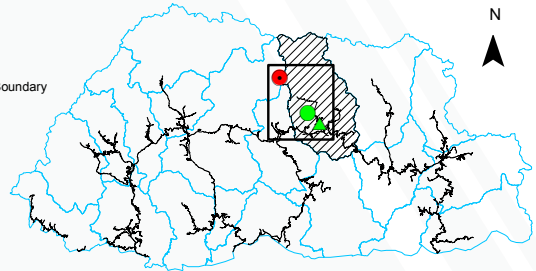


Figure 11: Route Map for Dhur Tshachu

# DUENMANG TSHACHU, ZHEMGANG



Duenmang Tshachu is located about 40 km away from Tingtibi, a satellite town of Zhemgang. It is also considered as one of the most sacred Tshachu in Bhutan. Locals believe that it immediately heals any ailment, as Guru Rinpoche is believed to have blessed the Tshachu.

It is believed that Duenmang Tshachu was initially located in Kamjong, but later moved to its present location after people started dumping waste and even animal corpses in nearby. Duenmang Tshachu is commonly known as Khyeng Tshachu, since it is located within the Khyeng region. Every year, from September to January, about 500 to 800 people from around the country visit this Tshachu.

## Therapeutic Values

Duenmang Tshachu is well known for curing joint pains, sinusitis, skin diseases, headaches and tuberculosis.

## Trek Route and Trip Plan

One can reach the Tsachu after an hour's walk from Gomphu road head (under Nangkhor Geog) descending through warm broadleaf forest. It is located on the right bank of the Mangede Chu river, along steep foothills of Gomphu village.

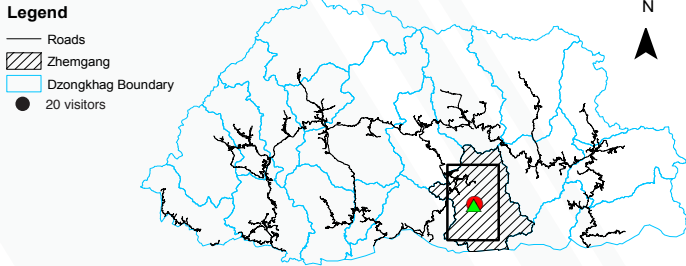


Figure 12: Duenmang Tshachu

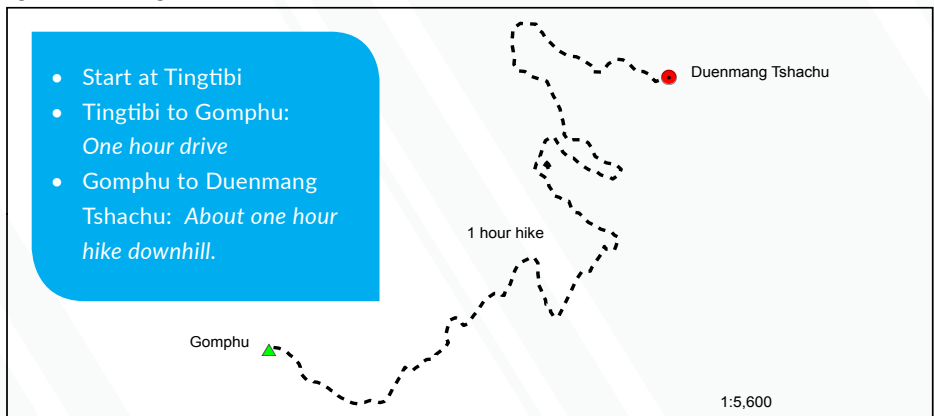


Figure 13: Route Map for Duenmang Tshachu

## GELEPHU TSHACHU, GELEPHU



Gelephu Tshachu, is only one that does not require a hike, amongst all the Tshachu in Bhutan. It is located below the road after driving for about 45 -minutes from Gelephu town towards Trongsa. It falls under Serzong geog and is taken care by Gelephu Dungkha. This Tshachu was inaugurated by the third Druk Gyalpo Jigme Dorji Wangchuck in 1968.

Every winter, thousands of people from various parts of the country visit the Tshachu.

All four pools are confined under a single roof. The healing properties are the same for all the pools.

### Therapeutic Values

According to the board displayed by the traditional medicinal unit of Gelephu hospital, the tshachu is believed to be beneficial for curing trauma, orthopaedic disorders, anal fistula, dermatitis, constipation, hemorrhoids, wounds and ulcers. The Tshachu is also valuable for people suffering from hypertension, tumours, conjunctivitis, dropsy and chronic fever.



## Trek Route and Trip Plan

One can reach the Tshachu after 40 minutes drive from Gelephu towards Trongsa.

### Legend

- Roads
- ▨ Sarpang
- Dzongkhag Boundary
- 20 visitors

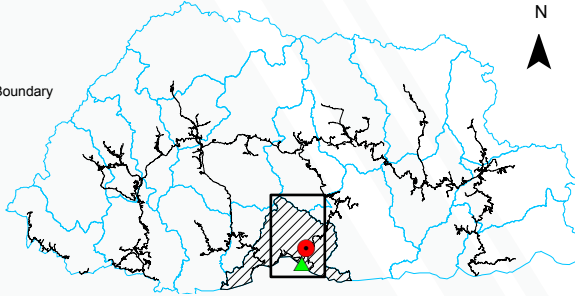


Figure 14: Gelephu Tshachu

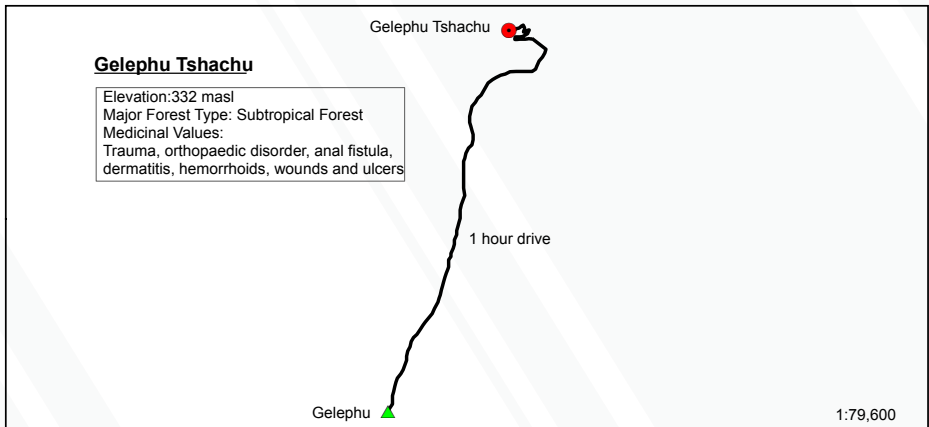


Figure 15: Route Map for gelephu tshachu

# KHAMBALUNG gNEY TSHACHU, LHUENTSE



Khambalung gNey Tshachu is considered as part of Bay-yul gNey, a hidden sacred land which was prophesied by Khandro Yeshey Tshogyal, consort of Guru Rinpoche. Accordingly, this hot spring was revealed in the 14th century by the Tertoen Pema Lingpa who considered it to be blessed by Guru Pema Jungney.

Khambalung gNey Tshachu is also chronicled to be part of Ba-yul-Khempa Jong, believed to have been once inhabited by the Khykha-Ratoe, a local deity when he was sent on exile from Tibet by the king Thrisong Duetsen. However, the present Deity of the site is *gTer-Dag Zorara Skyes*. It is believed that Khykha-Ratoe evacuated the place and lives near the Yoenten Kuenjung Tshachu. People claim that the Deity gets easily annoyed by noise and bad aromas.

## Therapeutic Values

Khambalung gNey Tshachu has three pools: Pool I (Guru Tshachu), Pool II (Tshepameg Tshachu) and Pool III (Khandro Yeshey Thsogyal Tshachu), as illustrated in Figure 16.

Among three pools, Guru Tshachu is the largest. It is located at the foot of a cliff that has a beautiful waterfall. According to oral accounts, while Guru Rinpoche was soaking in this pool, a Demon tried to channel cold water into the pool. However, Guru Rinpoche used a magical pen to divert the water. The cold water channel as carved on the stone can be seen even today.

The other two pools lie immediately below Guru Tshachu. Amazingly, Khandro Tshachu is located in a beautiful stone bowl.

Guru Tshachu is believed to help indigestion, urinary tract infections and sexually transmitted diseases. It is also known to cure skin diseases. People suffering from atrophy, bone, tendon disorders and scabies uses Tshepameg Tshachu. Khandro Tshachu is known to be effective in treating rheumatoid diseases, gout, arthritis and paralysis.

## Trek Route and Trip Plan

This hot spring sits at an elevation of 2157 masl, about a day's walk from gNey village of Gangzur Geog.

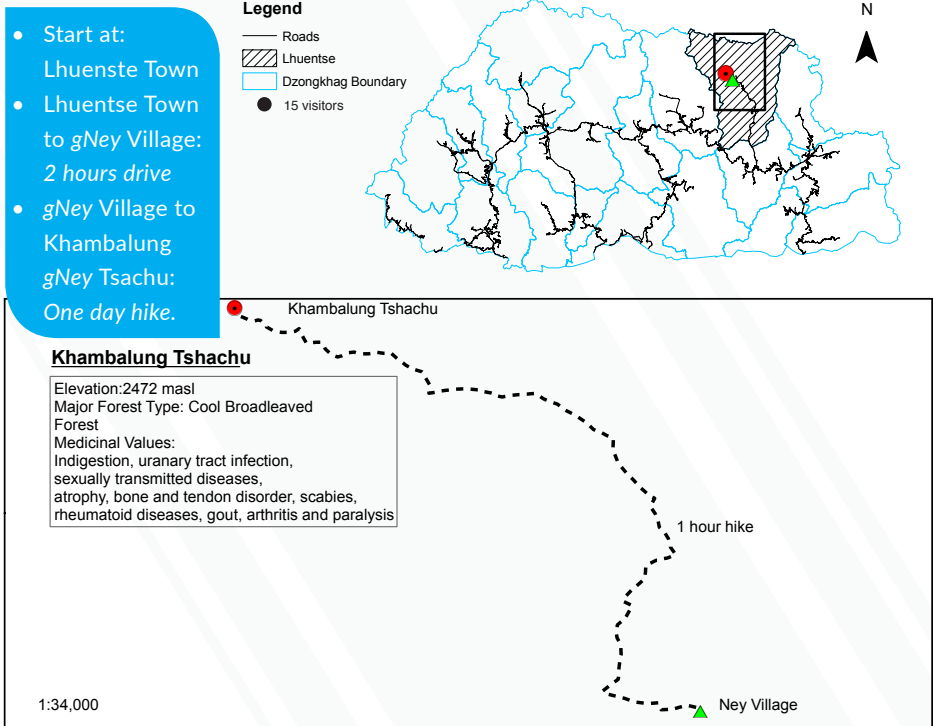


Figure 17: Route Map for Khambalung gNey Tshachu



Figure 16: khambalung gNeyTshachu

# YOENTEN KUENJUNG TSHACHU, LHUENTSE



Figure 18: Waterfall on the way to Yoenten Kuenjung Tshachu



Figure 19: Yoenten Kuenjung Tshachu

Yoenten Kuenjung means 'source of all wisdom'. The name Yoenten Kuenjung was derived from the accomplishments of Guru Rinpoche while he was dipping in this Tshachu. The local community leader, Tshogpa Pema, said, it was in this Tshachu that Guru Rinpoche gained the knowledge and techniques to conquer the resident Demon, probably the Khykha-ratoe (a demon with a dog's mouth and goat's head). He added that Khykha-ratoe had arrived there while exiled by his father, Thrisong Duetsen to Khambalung.

The beautiful waterfall (Figure 18) on opposite bank is believed to be the saliva falling from the lips of Guru Rinpoche while playing flute. When the Demon was lost in the melody of the flute, Guru Rinpoche brought him under his control. Visitors are advised not to burn meat or any other substances that may produce a foul aroma. If violated, it is believed that there will be unexpected rainfall and thundering that will make the trip difficult.

## Therapeutic Values

In addition to many benefits offered by Tshachu in general, Yoenten Kuenjung Tshachu is often visited to treat memory disorders. There are two ponds; One pond located under a cave, is considered the main Tshachu, while the other pond is used for bathing prior to dipping in the main Tshachu.

## Trek Route and Trip Plan

This Tsachu is rarely visited and it is located at an elevation of 2761 masl. It is about a 2-3 days' walk from gNey village, passing through dense cool broadleaf forest following an old ill-defined path bypassing the Khambalung gNey Tshachu. Therefore, finding a competent porter from the nearby villages is crucial for reaching the site. The old existing path is not accessible to mules

and horses since path demands climbing up and down through rocky cliffs and also crossing rivers without proper bridges. The long hike is difficult, but the site itself is beautiful and sacred.

Finding a camping place along the way depends on the knowledge of the local porter. There is no fixed place to camp. Mostly, visitors accommodate themselves in beautiful caves and under trees along the way.

Yoenten Kuenjung Tshachu usually receives visitors from all around the country before the 10<sup>th</sup> month of the Bhutanese calendar. Access to the site is restricted for the following three months. This restriction is made mandatory by the community of gNey village, because they perform offerings to their mountains and ridges during these months. So people cannot enter the area (*La-Dham-Rig-Dham*).

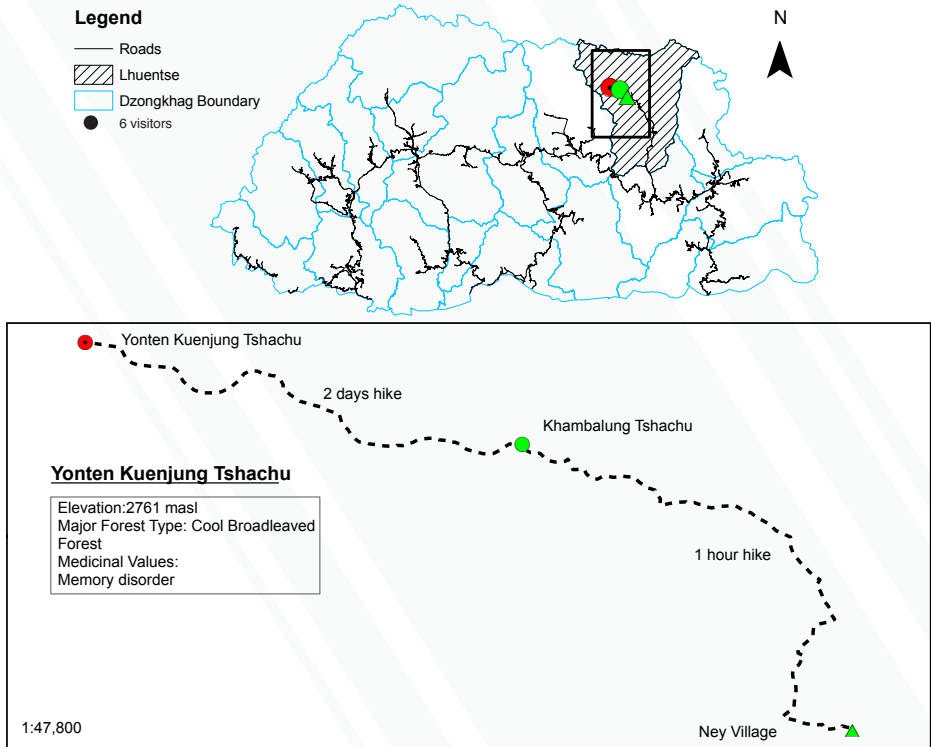


Figure 20: Route Map for Yoenten Kuenjung Tshachu

- Start At : Lhuentse Town,
- Lhuentse Town to gNey Village: 2 hours drive
- gNey Village to Yoenten Kuenjung Tshachu: 2-3 days hike bypassing the Khambalung gNey Tshachu.

## PASALUM TSHACHHU, LHUENTSE



Figure 21: Pasalum Tshachu

Pasalum Tshachu is located in Gangzur Gewog, under Lhuentse Dzongkhag. It is about 4 days hike from gNey Village in Lhuentse.

The Tshachu is said to be blessed by Guru Rinpoche and any one visiting the Tshachu will be blessed with longer life. It is also said that, if anyone visits the Tshachu once in their life, one will not be reborn in the three realms of “*Ngelwa* (hell), *Yidag* (hungry ghosts) and *Duedhro* (animals)”.

### Therapeutic Values

Generally, the Tshachu is known to cure all thirteen diseases; “*gNey Rig Chu sum*.” This Tshachu is believed to mainly benefits against headache, backache and stomach ache.

Since the Tshachu was blessed by Guru Rinpoche, visitors can visit the Tshachu throughout the year without seeking any special dates and year.

## Trek Route and Trip Plan

There are two options to reach the Pasalum Tshachu. One can travel from Bumthang and also from Lhuentse.

### OPTION A : From Bumthang Chamkhar to Pasalum Tshachu

- Start At: Chamkhar Town, Bumthang – Chamkhar Town to Chhoekhor Toe - 45 -minutes drive
- Chhoekhor Toe –Zampa Nyipa - 1 Day hike
- Zampa Nyipa to Gomthang – 1 day hike
- Gomthang – Pasalum Tshachu – 1 day hike

### OPTION B: From gNey, Lhuentse to Pasalum Tshachu

- gNey Village to gNey Tshachu – 1 day hike
- gNey Tshachu to Yoenten kuenjung Tshachu – 1 day hike
- Yoenten kuenjung to Pangkhang - 1 day hike
- Pangkhang – Lhalung Lhakhang ruins - 1 day hike
- Lhalung Lhakhang to Pasalum Tshachu – 1 day hike

#### Legend

- Roads
- ▨ Lhuentse
- Dzongkhag Boundary
- 8 visitors

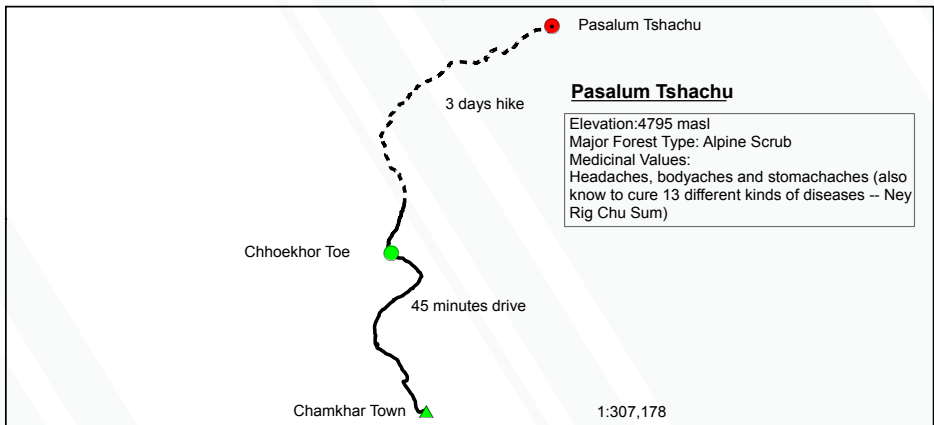
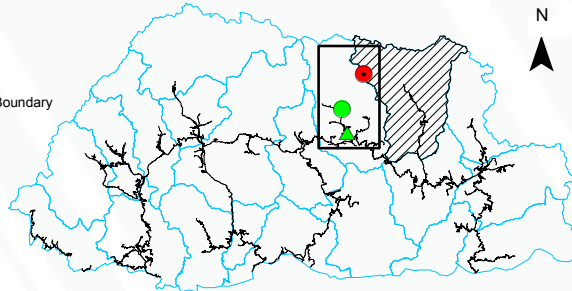


Figure 22: Route Map for Passalum Tshachu Trek

## PART2 MENCHUS/ MINERAL SPRINGS

# BJAGAY MENCHU, PARO

Bjagay Menchu, meaning 'vulture mineral spring', is located in Lunyi Geog under Paro Dzongkhag at an elevation of 2110 masl. It is about half an hour drive from Bondey town towards Haa. The site is located near the road head, under the jurisdiction of Lunyi Community Forest.

This Menchu was first discovered by a lama of Dzongdrakha, a monastery nearby. The story goes that the Lama who came across a vulture with broken wings made it soak in the nearby pond for a week. The vulture's wings were healed, and the vulture happily flew away. Thereafter, the pond was known as Bjagay (vulture) Menchu and started gaining popularity for its therapeutic benefits.



Figure 23: Bjagay Menchu

The waters of Bjagay Menchu are commonly used to treat arthritis, ulcers, cardiac diseases and physical wound.

Bjagay Menchu has two bathtubs in a temporary shed (Figure 23), with a combusting zone nearby to heat stones. The site includes four small wooden huts constructed by Community Forest staff to accommodate 5 to 6 visitors per shed, with a well-maintained toilet and proper places to dump garbage.

*"I brought my 3-year-old son here recently, after he was in a car accident. He was kept in the orthopedic ward at a referral hospital for a month and then discharged. But he still suffered from unbearable pain. So I dipped my son in Bjagay Menchu for two days. His pain subsided and I could finally see a smile on his pale face. I feel that we are fortunate to have such blessed natural resources in our country." - Chainga, Civil Servant*



## Trek Route and Trip Plan

Bjagay Menchu is located in Lunyi Geog under Paro Dzongkhag at an elevation of 2110 masl. It is about half an hour's drive from Bondey town towards Haa. The Menchu is located near the road head.

- Start At : Bondey Town, Paro
- Bondey Town to Bjagay Menchu: *About half an hour's drive along Paro-Haa highway towards Chelayla*

### Legend

- Roads
- ▨ Paro
- Dzongkhag Boundary
- 4 visitors

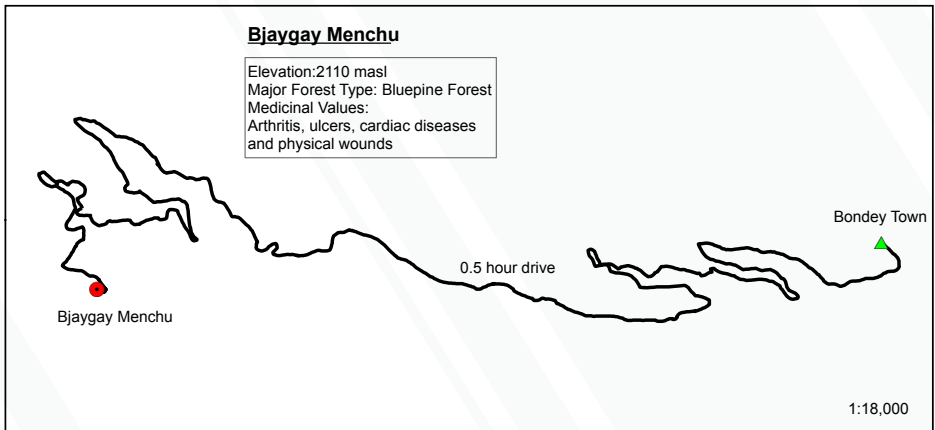
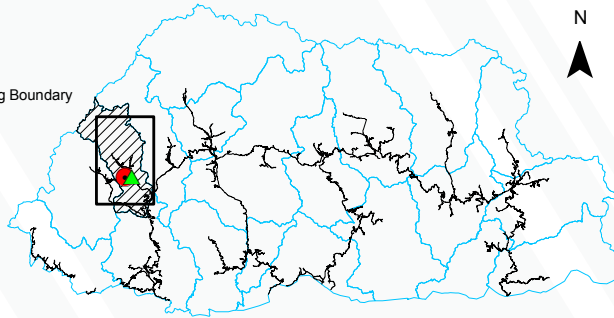


Figure 24: Route Map for Bjagay Menchu, Paro

## DOBJI MENCHU, PARO

Dobji Menchu is also known as Milarepa's Menchu and the menchu is located within ten-minutes walk from the road point near Dobji dzong, in Paro district. The Menchu that flows beneath a giant rock is believed to have sprung in 1539.

The Menchu is believed to have originated from Ralung and also from Kya Ngagtsa, the birthplace of Jetsun Milarepa in Tibet. Local believes that a statue of Jetsun Milarepa which was brought to Tsamdrag gNye in Paro was kept for a night at Dobji dzong. Next morning the statue was found stuck in its seat with water. It was then the Drupchu was also named as Milarepa's Drupchu.

Visitors believes that the Menchu cures food poisoning, diabetes, ulcers and other minor diseases like cough and cold. Currently, the Menchu is famous for curing cancers.



Figure 25: Dobji Menchu, Paro

## Trek Route and Trip Plan

- Start At : Road point near Dobji Dzong
- Ten -minutes walk from the road point

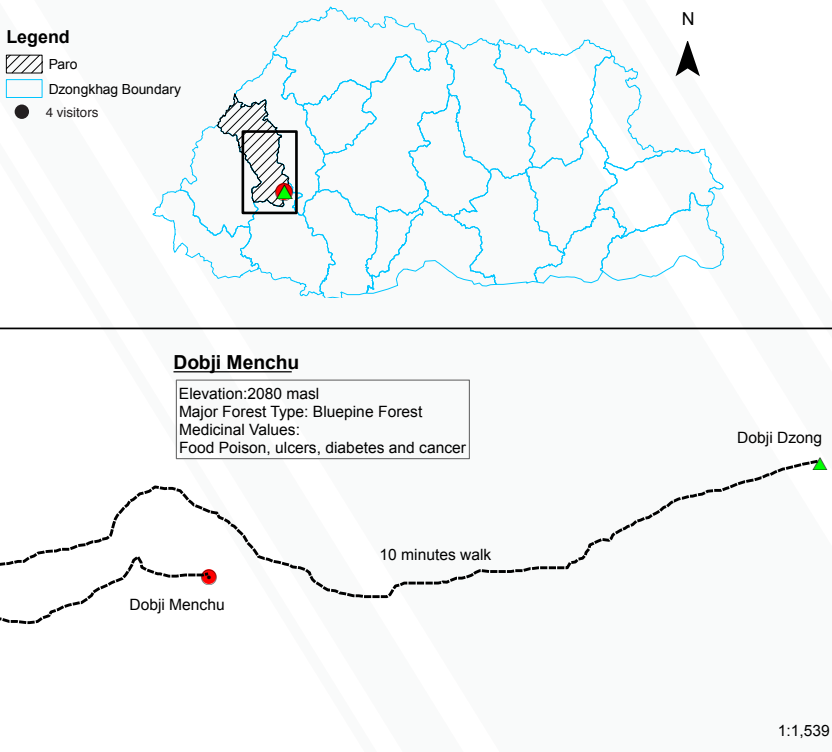


Figure 26: Route map for Dobji Menchu, Paro

## BJAGAY, TOKAY, MAGE-PHENDAY, LOYEE MENCHU, GASA

According to Dago, (Caretaker of Gasa Tshachu), the chronicle of Guru Rinpoche states that Gasa is blessed with 108 Menchus. However, only four Menchus have been discovered: Bjugay, Loyee, Tokay, and Mage-phenday Menchu.

Most people visiting Gasa Tshachu also visit Bjugay and Loyee Menchu, since these Menchus are located nearby. These two Menchus therefore witness more visitors than the Tokay and Mage-phenday Menchu, both of which are far from the Tshachu site.

**Bjugay Menchu** is only about 20 -minutes' walk from Gasa Tshachu.

Bjugay Menchu is believed to cure arthritis and joint pain. Its history is similar to that of Bjugay Menchu in Paro. It is believed that a vulture, having erroneously swallowed a metal piece placed in the *torma* (ritual cake), was suffering from severe choking. It was healed after it was soaked in the water's of Bjugay Menchu for a few days. The Menchu was thereafter named Bjugay Menchu.



Figure 27: Bjugay Menchu ,Gasa

## Trek Route and Trip Plan

- Start At: Gasa Tsachu
- Gasa Town to Bjagay Menchu: *Hike about 20 -minutes along the Mochu.*

### Legend

- Roads
- ▨ Gasa
- Dzongkhag Boundary
- 6 visitors

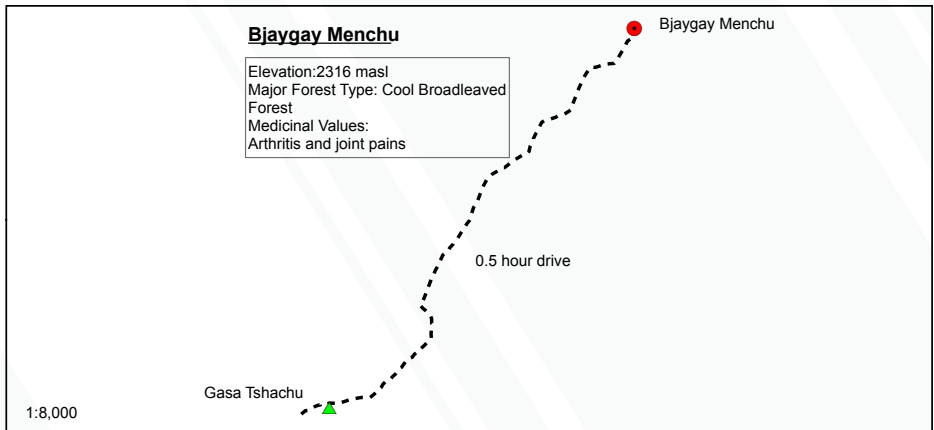
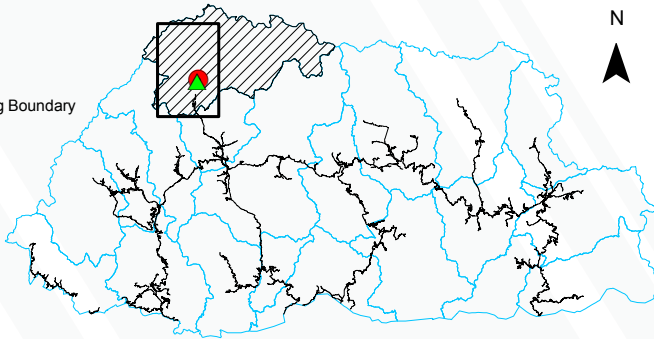


Figure 28: Route Map for Bjagay Menchu, Gasa

## TOKAY MENCHU

Tokay Menchu is about 5-minutes drive from Remy village near Gasa Tshachu followed by about 15-minutes walk, downhill from the road head. The site has properly built shelters for bathtubs and also for heating stones. Tokay Menchu is effective in curing gastritis, headaches and stomachaches.



Figure 29: Tokay Menchu

## Trek Route and Trip Plan

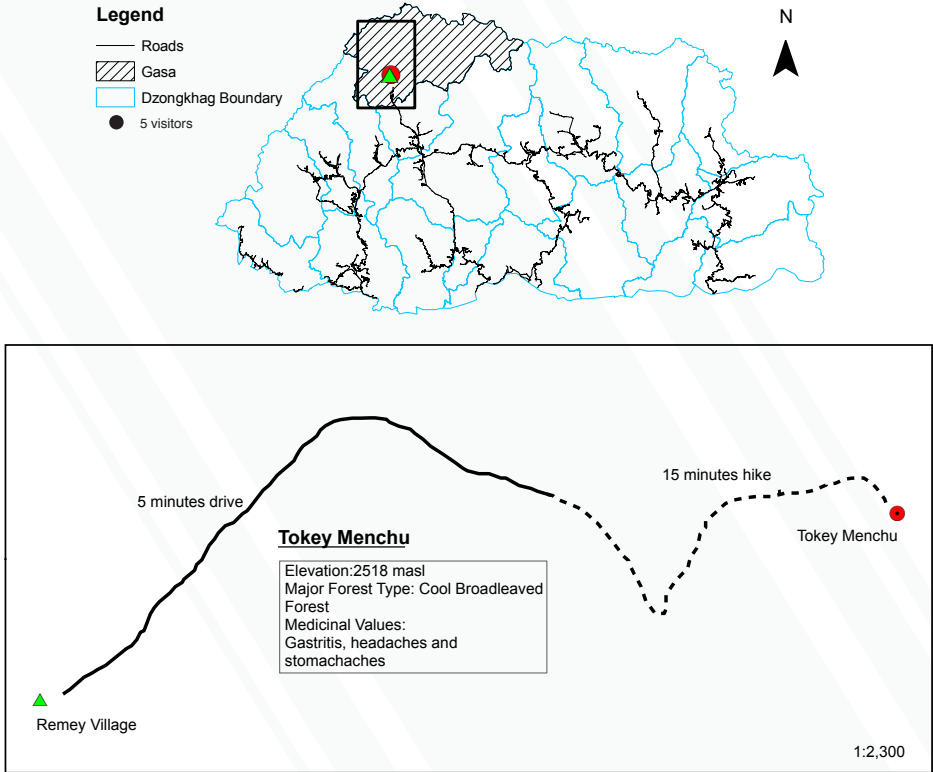


Figure 30: Route Map for Tokey Menchu, Gasa

## MAGE-PHENDAY MENCHU

Mage-phenday Menchu is located at an elevation of 1640 masl. The hiking path follows a trail descending towards Laya after crossing a wooden bridge. It is about 30-minutes hike to reach the site. The Menchu has beautifully constructed bathing tub. The shelter is attached to a stone heating spot for warming the water. The Menchu also has a small camping area, but most visitors arrive early in the day and return to Gasa for camping.

According to the caretaker of the Gasa Forestry Range Office, Mage-phenday Menchu cures sore infections and other skin related ailments. It is through these healing properties that the Menchu got its name, Mage-phenday, which can be translated as 'beneficial for sore and inflamed wound.'



Figure 31: Mage-phendey Menchu



## Trek Route and Trip Plan

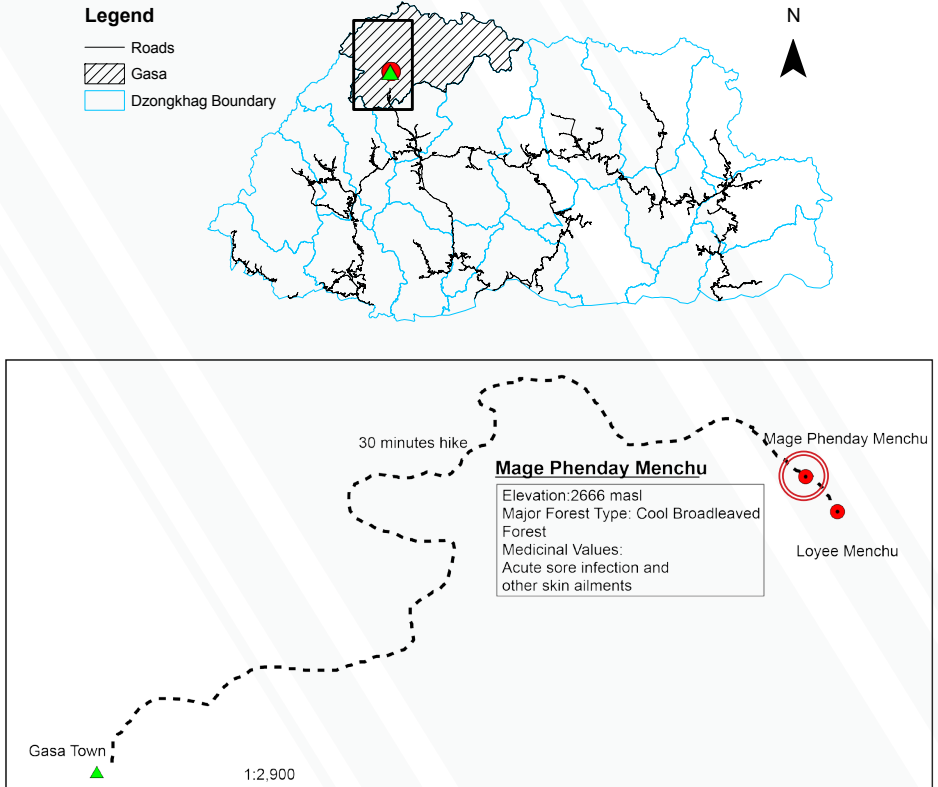


Figure 32: Route Map for Mange-Phenday

## I LOYEE MENCHU

Loyee Menchu, is located at an elevation of 1635 metres. This Menchu has significant therapeutic properties for persons suffering from asthma and tuberculosis. Benefits of this Menchu is felt only upon drinking and its is generally not used for hot stone baths.

*“My grandfather who is an asthma patient became less troubled after drinking the Loyee Menchu which was brought by one of our villagers while visiting Gasa Tshachu. He gradually gained his strength and the symptoms lessened. I haven’t been there yet. I definitely will go there after spending a week here.” –Pema, Gasa Tshachu Visitor from Serzhong, Mongar*



Figure 33: Loyee Menchu

## Trek Route and Trip Plan

### Legend

- Roads
- ▨ Gasa
- Dzongkhag Boundary

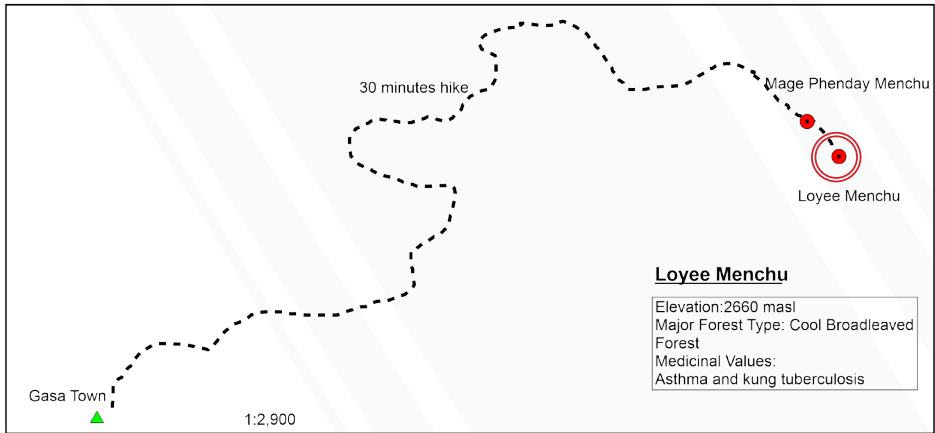
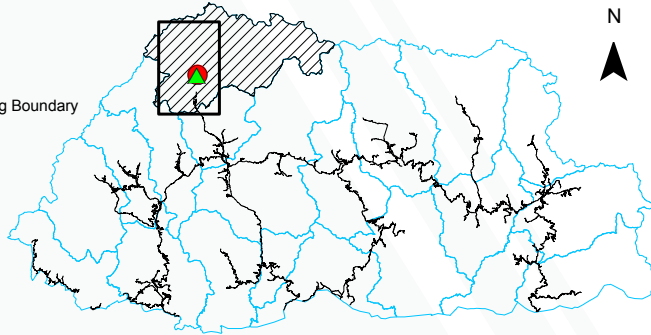


Figure 34: Route Map for Loyee Menchu

## KABISA MENCHU, THIMPHU

Kabisa Menchu is the only Menchu located in the capital city, Thimphu. Sitting at an elevation of 2393 above sea level, it can be reached after 20 -minutes drive from Dechencholing.

The Menchu is considered to be blessed by the saint Phajo Drugom Zhigpo in 1222 A.D. This is believed as a religious text of son Nima was found at the site convincing locals that it might have been once used by descendents of Phajo.

According to Tenzin from Kabisa, the Menchu is especially for women suffering from delivery complications. He recalled an incident where his wife, after giving birth to a baby boy, had extraordinarily regained

her health without any complications, after soaking in the Menchu for several times.

He also said that many visitors recovered from joint pains and stomachaches after bathing in the Menchu.

*"I am not sure who discovered the Menchu but whenever I see the text of Phajo's son Nima as I visit the site, I prostrate to it three times and only then get into the bathing tub. I feel better and the health benefit it offers seems powerful" – Tenzin, Farmer, Kabisa*



Figure 35: Text of Nima, Son of Phajo Drugomzhigpo



Figure 36: Kabisa Menchu

## Trek Route and Trip Plan

- Start at Dechencholing, Thimphu
- Dechencholing to Kabisa Menchu: *About 20 -minutes drive*

### Legend

- Roads
- ▨ Thimphu
- Dzongkhag Boundary
- 5 visitors

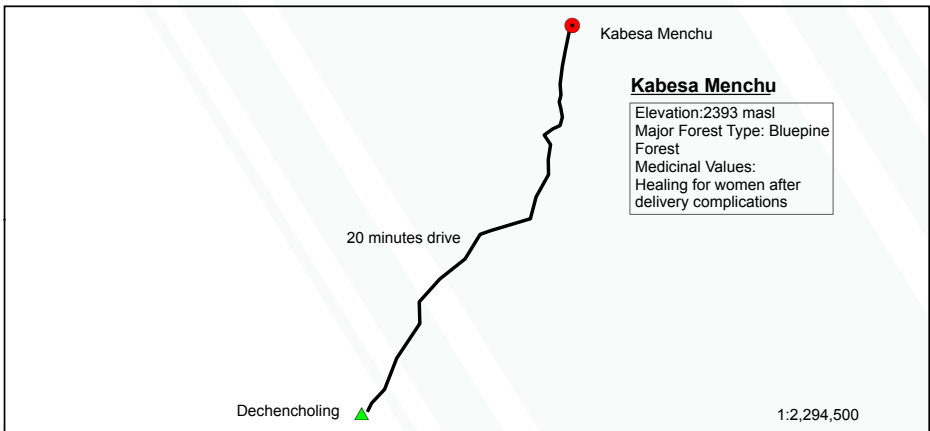
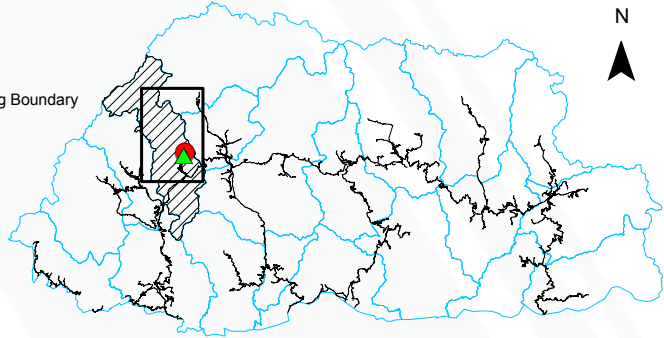


Figure 37: Route Map for Kabisa Menchu

# DANGCHU WANGCHU MENCHU, DANGCHU, WANGDUEPHODRANG

Dangchu Wangchu Menchu is located at an elevation of 2355 metres in Dangchu Geog in Wangduephodrang. It is about 18 km drive from Nobding through warm broadleaf forests. The site has space for camping, but most visitors prefer the affordable lodging provided by the villagers. The main bathing site comprises bathtubs, a water tap, and a small house for lodging (Figure 38).

The Menchu is believed to be founded by Lama Khenchen Sonam Yoezer. It happened one day when he was invited for the consecration of a *stupa* ('chorten'). While the Lama was blessing his devotees, the chalice containing holy water was exhausted. He then meditated for a while and pointing at the nearby dense jungle, commanded a girl to go and collect water. The people were amused since there was no known source of water in that area. The

girl, however, went towards the direction he pointed and to everyone's surprise came back with water. The water has flowed continuously since then. Thus, the spring is considered holy and is named after that particular incident. *Dang Chu* means 'clear water' and *Wang Chu* means 'blessed water'. The spring has been preserved and worshipped thereafter.

Today, people worship and consider the spring as a '*Duetsi*' (blessed water) and drink it for health benefits. Although it is hardly used for bathing, combining drinking and bathing is found to be more effective in curing certain illnesses.

The Menchu is visited for healing 13 different types of diseases known as *gNey-Rig-Chusum*.



Figure 38: Dangchhu-Wangchhu Menchu

## Trek Route and Trip Plan

- Start At: Norbding
- Nobding to Dangchu Wangchu Menchu: *About 18 km drive from Nobding towards Dangchu feeder road*

### Legend

- Roads
- ▨ Wangdue
- Dzongkhag Boundary
- 2 visitors

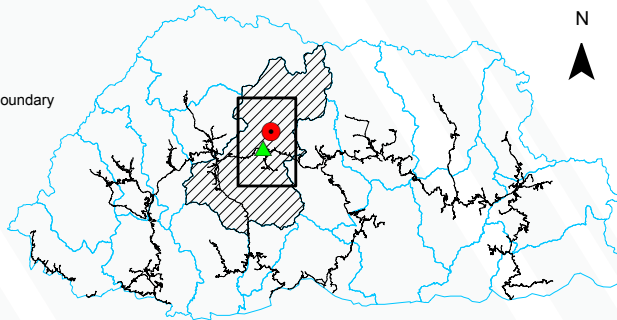


Figure 39: Route Map for Dangchu Wangchu Menchu

## URA DRAKCHU MENCHU, BUMTHANG

Ura Drakchu Menchu is located below the road, about a 10 minutes drive from Ura towards Mongar. It is locally known as Ura Drakchu Menchu, since it flows from a cliff (known as *Drak* in Bhutanese). The site has ample space to pitch tents.

The Menchu falls under the jurisdiction of Phrumsiangla National Park. Through their efforts, Ura Drakchu Menchu is equipped with a beautifully built shed housing bathtubs and resting areas for

visitors. The Menchu is managed by the Ura Mushroom Conservation and Tourism Group (UMCTG) after construction of hot bathing tubs and resting sheds in August 2008.

Ura Drakchu Menchu is fed by two streams, Pho Chu (male water) from the right and Mo Chu (female water) from the left. This hot stone bath is found beneficial for people suffering from arthritis, stomachaches, skin diseases and eye disorders.



Figure 40: Ura-Drakchu Menchu



## Trek Route and Trip Plan

- Start At: Ura Village Bumthang
- Ura to Ura Drakchu Menchu: About 10 -minutes drive along the Ura - Mongar Highway

### Legend

- Roads
- ▨ Bumthang
- Dzongkhag Boundary
- 6 visitors

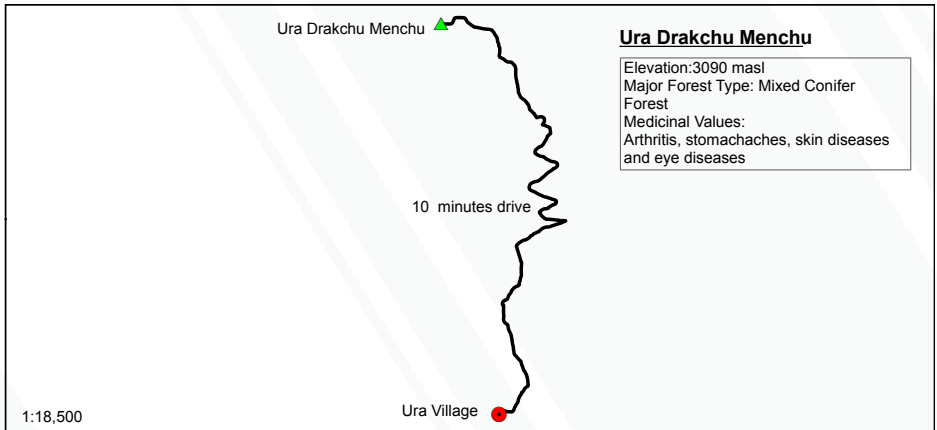
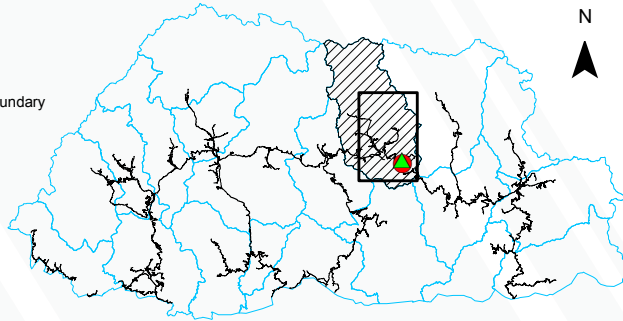


Figure 41: Route Map for Ura Drakchu Menchu

## DANGKHAR MENCHU, ZHEMGANG

Dangkhar Menchu falls in zhemgang district at an elevation of 1533 masl in the core of warm broad-leaved forest. It is looked after by Zhemgang Forestry Division. The Menchu is part of the Dangkhar eco-trail. It has a beautifully

designed house containing wooden dipping tubs (figure 42)

There is no proper account of the discovery and origin of Dangkhar Menchu, but it is said to be effective in curing joint pains, ulcers, headaches and tuberculosis.



Figure 42: Dangkhar Menchu.

## Trek Route and Trip Plan

Dangkhar Menchu is about 30 -minutes drive from Zhemgang.

- Start At: Wangdigang
- Wangdigang to Dangkhar Menchu:  $\frac{1}{2}$  hour drive

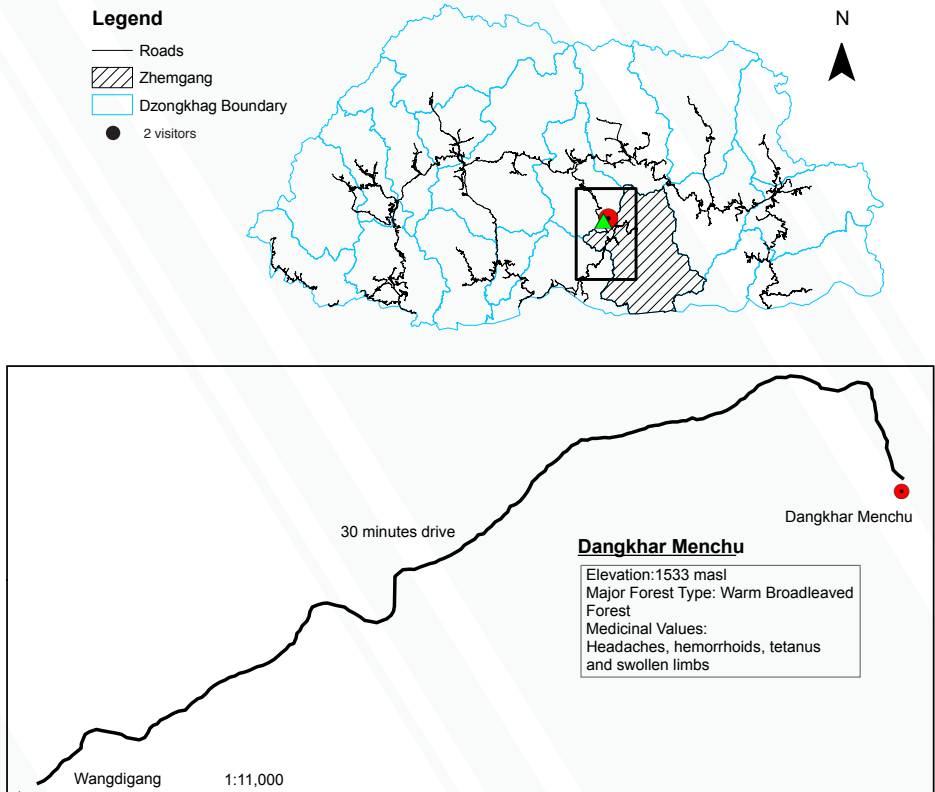


Figure 43: Route Map for Dangkhar Menchu

## AJA gNEY MENCHU, MONGAR

Aja gNey Menchu in Mongar Dzongkhag at 2513 masl is located within the sacred site of Aja which was blessed by Guru Rinpoche.

Along with the Menchu, there are many other gNeys (sacred places) associated with Guru Rinpoche.

*“Guru Rinpoche visited this place in the form of a Garuda, due to the complicated landscape here. One can clearly make out that the shape of this Menchu resembles a Garuda. Moreover, the wings are believed to have 108 butter lamps, 108 lakes and 108 Tsha-Tsha (small stupas). It also has a pair of golden fish,” said Thukten, a villager from Sherimung.*



Figure 44: Aja gNey Menchu

## Trek Route and Trip Plan

Aja gNey Menchu can be reached after 2-hours drive on the feeder road from Yadi to Serzhong, followed by at least 8 hours of walking from the foothills of Yarab village in Serzhong Geog.

- Start at Yadi, Monggar
- Yadi to Serzhong: *About 2 hours drive along the feeder road*
- Serzhong to Yarab and Aja gNey Menchu: *Atleast 8 hours hike*

### Legend

- Roads
- ▨ Monggar
- Dzongkhag Boundary
- 2 visitors

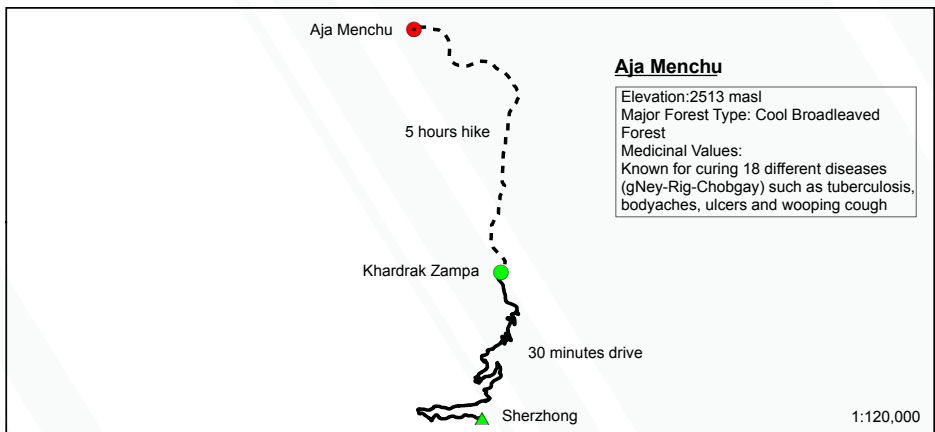
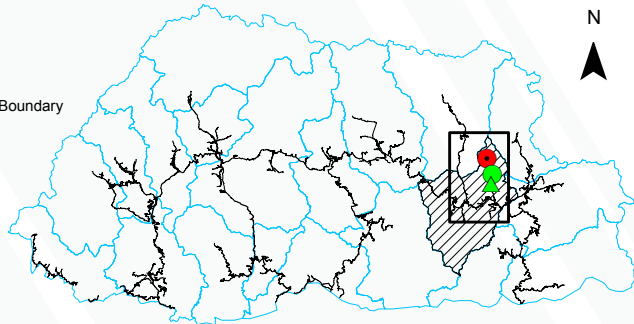


Figure 45: Route Map for Aja Menchu

## BHARAB MENCHU AND CHETHGANG MENCHU, DUNGKAR, LHUENSTE

Bharab and Chethgang Menchus are the most popular Menchus of Dungkhar. Both of these Menchus fall within the Eastern Range of Wangchuck Centennial National Park.

Located on the bank of Kuri Chu, Bharab Menchu (Figure 46) sits at an altitude of 1770 masl and is about an hour's drive on the feeder road from Dungkhar. The site has a small concrete pond built with the support of Wangchuck Centennial National Park.

According to villager Ap Dorji, Bharab Menchu was used as a hot spring in olden days. Unlike other mineral waters, Bharab Menchu is warm and flows continuously from an underwater cave. Today, it is

well-known as a Menchu. The transition from Tshachu to Menchu occurred when a traveller in olden days unknowingly disposed a baby's corpse in the cave while passing the site. Bharab Menchu was a major route for travelers from eastern Bhutan to central region.

Bharab Menchu is known for healing arthritis, body aches, and tuberculosis. It is also recommended for recovering from maternity sickness. Visitors to Bharab Menchu are mostly local people and the site is typically visited from the twelfth to second months of the Bhutanese calendar, as these months are believed to be very auspicious.



Figure 46: Barab Menchu, Kurtoe

## Trek Route and Trip Plan

### Legend

- Roads
- ▨ Lhuentse
- Dzongkhag Boundary
- 2 visitors

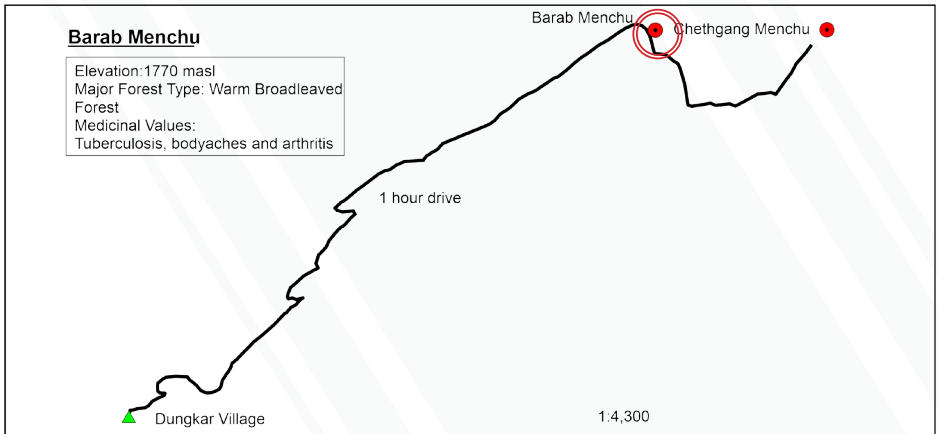
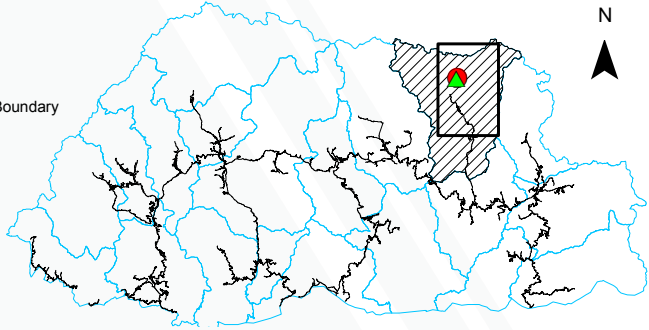


Figure 47: Route Map for Barab Menchu

## CHETHGANG MENCHU

Chethgang Menchu is located right above Bharab Menchu, at an elevation of 1900 masl and surrounded by beautiful cool broadleaf forest (Figure 48). A bathtub has been placed about 10 meters away from the water source. This Menchu was popular in olden days, but no one in the nearby village could explain its recent degeneration. The medicinal value and benefits offered by Chethgang Menchu are similar to that of Bharab Menchu.



Figure 48: Chethgang, Kurtoe



## Trek Route and Trip Plan

- Start at Dungar
- Dungkar to Bharab to Chethgang Menchu: *About one hour drive along the feeder road to Bharab*

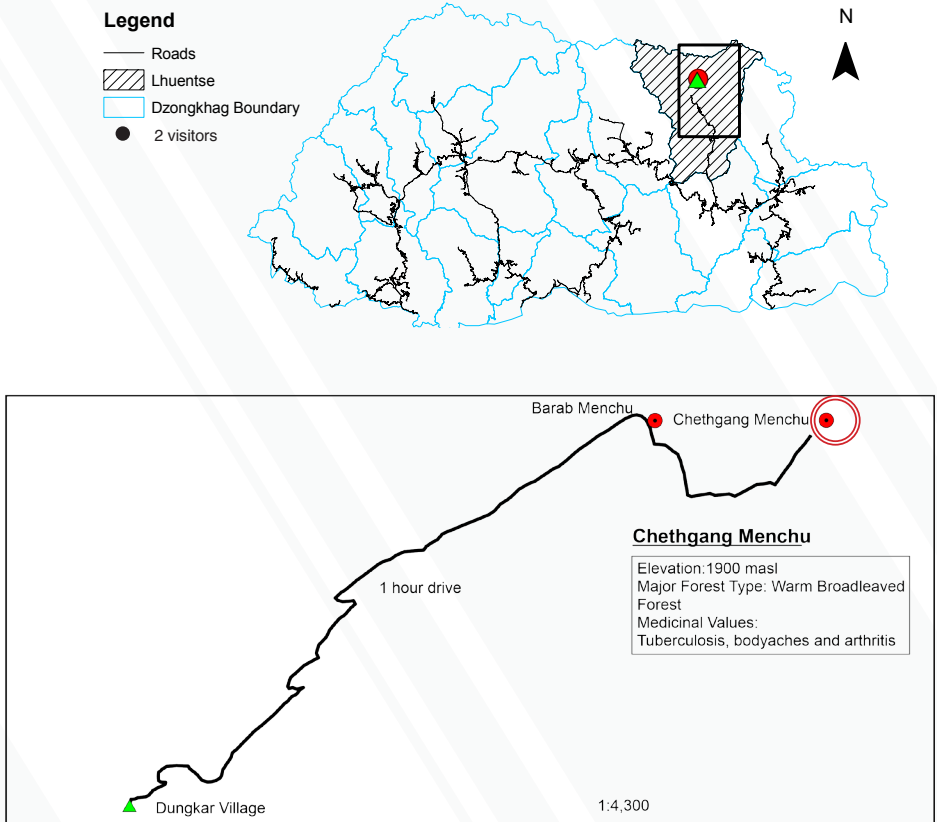


Figure 49: Route Map for Chethgang Menchu

## MENCHUGANG PHO-MO MENCHU, LHUENSTE

Menchugang Pho-Mo Menchu is located at an elevation of 2095 masl, and is a most significant mineral spring site. It has two sources, shaped like the naturally curved genital organs of both genders—from which water flows down into the same Menchu. Thus, it is known as the Pho (male) and Mo (female) Menchu.

According to the caretaker of the medicinal water, visitors are mainly comprised of people suffering from severe dermal diseases such as scabies and leprosy. Those with sexually transmitted diseases also visit this Menchu.



Figure 50: Menchugang Pho-Mo Menchu

## Trek Route and Trip Plan

Located on the banks of the river Menchugang, Pho-Mo Menchu is 45 -minutes drive from Autsho, following the feeder road towards Tsenkhar village, and then 30-minutes hike through cool broadleaf forest. Upon reaching the site, visitors will find abundant space for camping, as well as small houses that can accommodate 7 to 10 people. Menchugang Pho-Mo Menchu is commonly visited in the late summer, as people are mindful of the risky river crossings along the way.

- Start at Autsho, Lhuentse
- Autsho to Kharphu Village: About 45 -minutes drive towards the feeder road
- Kharphu to Menchugang Pho Mo Menchu: 1 hour hike

### Legend

- Roads
- ▨ Lhuentse
- Dzongkhag Boundary
- 4 visitors

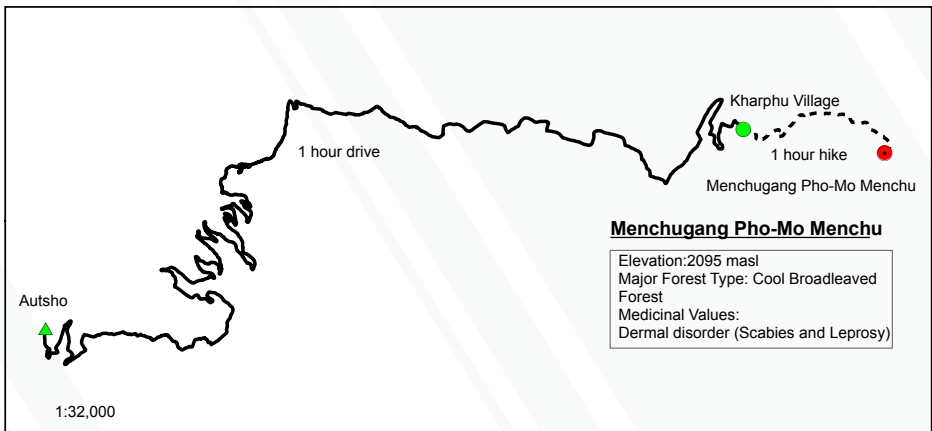
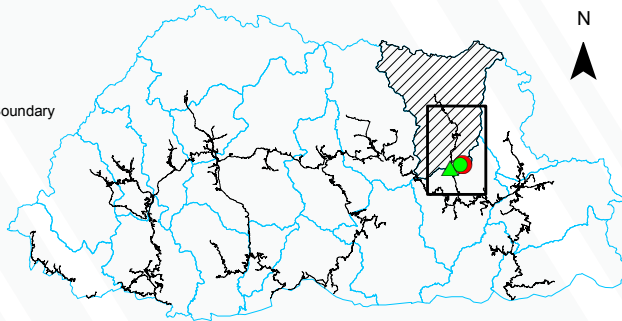


Figure 51: Route Map for Menchugang Pho-Mo Menchu

## DHONPHANGMA MENCHU, KHALING, TRASHIGANG

Dhonphangma Menchu is about 30--minutes drive from Khaling towards Samdrupjongkhar followed by a 15--minutes hike below the road from Dhonphangma. Unlike other Menchus, it doesn't have a natural or man-made pool for soaking but its healing power is acquired through washing head at a flowing spring.

The curative effect provided by the Menchu can be related to its history. It is said that a traveller once had a severe headache while returning home. While he was struggling with the unbearable pain, a woman appeared from nowhere and directed him towards the spring (present Menchu).

He washed his head with the water and was completely cured. The woman then disappeared. The Dhonphangma Menchu has gained in popularity since then and is preserved by the local community. Today, people worship the unknown woman as a goddess, and consider her to be the mother of Dhonphangma Menchu.

Dhonphangma Menchu is specifically beneficial to people suffering from dizziness and headaches, besides other ailments. Despite its healing benefits, the Menchu does not have many visitors other than from the local community.



Figure 52: Donphangma Menchu

## Trek Route and Trip Plan

- Start at Khaling Town
- Khaling to Donphangma: *About half an hour drive along Tashigang – Samdrupjongkhar Highway*
- Dhonphangma to Menchu: *About 15 -minutes hike below the highway*

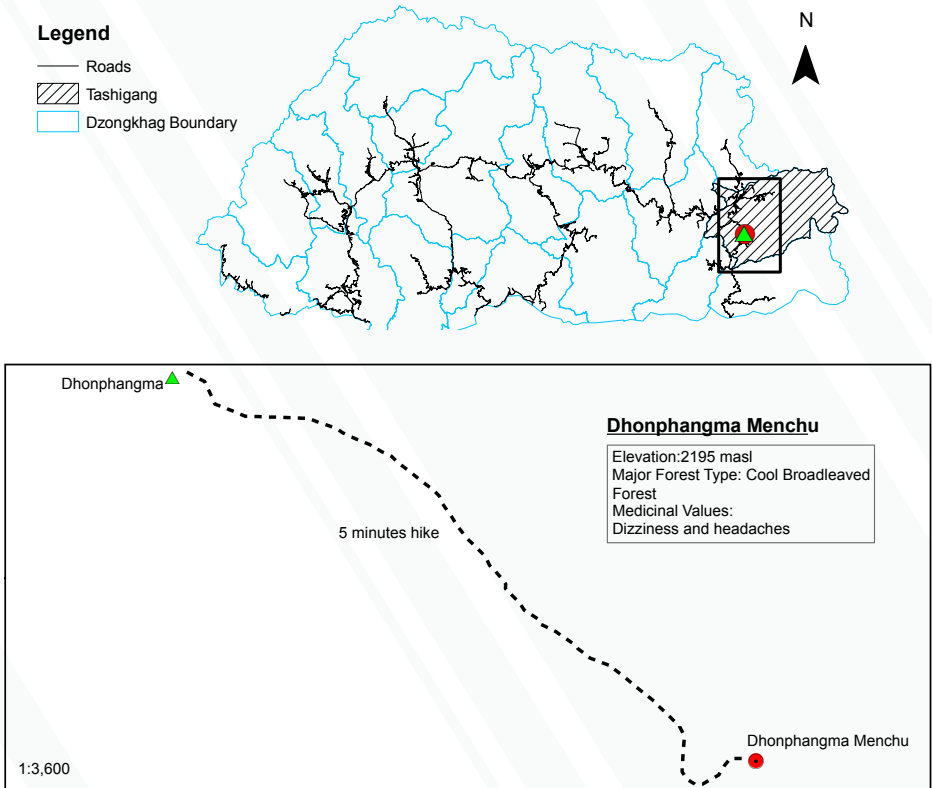


Figure 53: Route Map for Dhonphangma Menchu

## KHABTEY MENCHU, TRASHIGANG

Khabtey Menchu can be seen on the way to Rangjung, about a 15-minute ride from Tashigang. The Menchu is lukewarm and has been found to be beneficial in curing joint pains, backaches, fever, arthritis, and tuberculosis.

In the olden days, people from across the country used to visit Khabtey Menchu, as it was well-known for the treatment of tuberculosis.



Figure 54: khabtey Menchu

## Trek Route and Trip Plan

- Start at Tashigang Town
- Tashigang Town to Khabtey Menchu: *About 15 -minutes drive along Tashigang – Rangjung Highway*

### Legend

- Roads
- ▨ Tashigang
- Dzongkhag Boundary
- 2 visitors

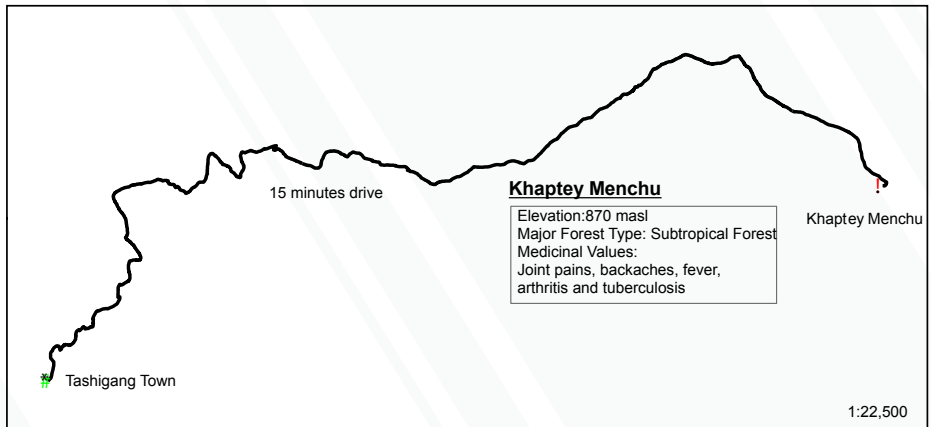
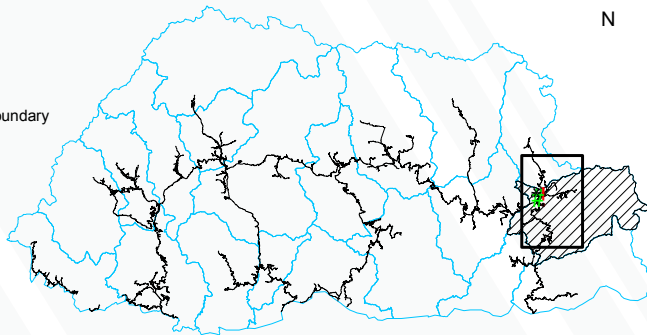


Figure 55: Route Map for Khabtey Menchu