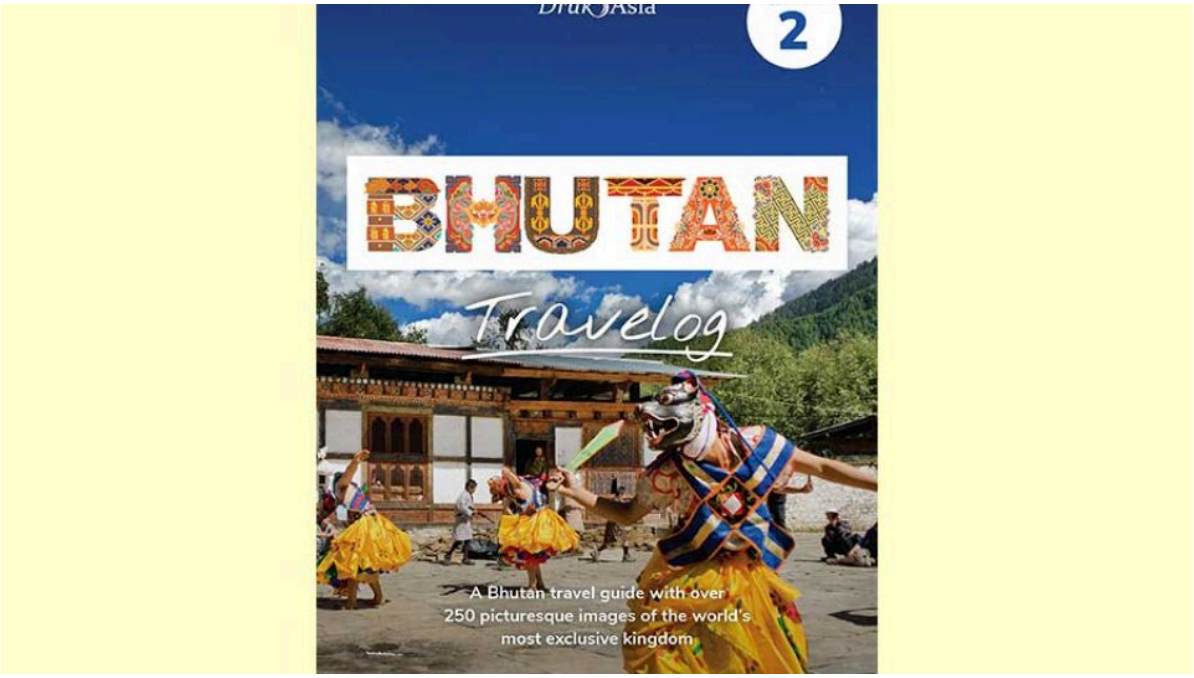
Beyond a visit: ‘Bhutan Travelog’ makes us want to experience Bhutan and not just see it

The guidebook covers all the essentials while going beyond logistics to contextualise Bhutan’s culture and traditions. Each chapter explains not only where to go but why each place matters, presenting information in an accessible, enjoyable style.



If Bhutan is on your travel list, this is a book you'll definitely want to read before you start planning. PHOTO PROVIDED BY KUENSEL

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Of course, it contains everything you would expect from a comprehensive guidebook. There are sections on visas, suggested itineraries, festivals, accommodation, photography spots and practical travel tips. But what makes the book stand out is that it goes beyond logistics. Every chapter provides context about Bhutan’s culture, traditions and way of life, helping readers understand not just where they are going, but why each place matters. Rather than overwhelming readers with facts, the information is presented in a way that feels accessible and enjoyable to read.

That depth of knowledge is hardly surprising. The book is co-authored by Ashley Chen and Joni Herison of Druk Asia, a Bhutan travel specialist agency. Together, they have collectively visited Bhutan more than 40 times and have spent close to two decades introducing the Kingdom to international travellers. Their extensive experience is evident throughout the book, from the practical advice and carefully planned itineraries to the lesser-known recommendations and cultural insights that can only come from years of exploring Bhutan firsthand.

The photography deserves special mention. Every page is filled with stunning images that showcase Bhutan in different seasons and from different perspectives. It’s the kind of book you can easily leave on your coffee table, yet it’s equally practical when you’re planning a trip to Bhutan. I found myself pausing on many pages, not just to admire the photographs but to imagine what it would be like to stand in those places and experience them in person.

One feature I particularly enjoyed was the collection of interviews with travellers from different backgrounds. Rather than hearing from just the authors, readers get to learn from photographers, families, first-time visitors and repeat travellers who share their own experiences, favourite moments and travel tips. These interviews make the book feel more personal and relatable, reminding us that everyone experiences Bhutan differently. Some travellers are drawn by the mountains and monasteries, while others are captivated by the country’s people, culture and slower pace of life. Reading these different perspectives makes the journey feel more authentic than a conventional guidebook.

Another pleasant surprise was how much attention the book gives to places beyond the obvious highlights. While iconic sites such as Paro Taktsang are, rightly, featured, there is also plenty of inspiration to venture further into Bhutan's valleys, villages, hiking trails and lesser-known corners. It encourages readers to slow down and appreciate the country rather than simply ticking attractions off a list. That philosophy of travelling more meaningfully seems to run through the entire book.

The latest edition has been updated with new destinations and refreshed travel information, making it an even more valuable resource than previous editions. If there's one guidebook to read before travelling to Bhutan, this is it. Comprehensive yet approachable, it covers everything from planning the journey to understanding the culture and making the most of every day in the Kingdom.

In a world where travel planning often means jumping between dozens of websites, blogs and social media posts, Bhutan Travelog brings everything together in one place. It feels thoughtfully curated, well organised and surprisingly comprehensive. If Bhutan is on your travel list, this is a book you'll definitely want to read before you start planning.

Rachel Chong is an avid traveller and cultural explorer who is drawn to Buddhist destinations across Asia. She enjoys visiting monasteries, attending local festivals, and learning about the traditions and stories that shape each place.