

2013 (11-13 May)



The ANNUAL RHODODENDRON FESTIVAL





The festival will focus around three main themes: ecological; cultural; and food & entertainment. While the first two themes will signify the ecological and cultural richness or the interactions between the two, the third theme will indicate the willingness and capacity of the local communities and school children.

All themes will be integral part of the 3-day program, but will be dominated by ecological themes, particularly Rhododendron and supported by two other themes. A special focus will be to integrate between the ecological and cultural themes, and where possible through entertainment.

En-route, visitors will get to see many mountain peaks from Dochula pass, Rhododendrons in bloom, awe-inspiring sceneries on the way.





I. Cultural themes

For years, Bhutanese culture has played an integral part of environmental conservation. The festival will highlight some of the cultural richness of the area and interrelate with nature. Boedra (Tibetan sound), a famous song/dance originated from Tibet and now popular in Bhutan signifies the preservation of ancient culture with nature. Similarly, Zhungdra which dates back to 17th Century to welcome Zhabdrung reveals Zhabdrung's historical connection with the Park. Among other dances, attractions include the 'Tiger & Bear Dance'. Other songs and shows will reveal modern day culture, yet still connecting to nature. The modern Rhododendron song/dance praising the wild flowers will probably highlight the cultural show. Students will try to educate the gathering through skits and dramas on environment. Come early to enjoy the cultural shows.

S/N	Program	Program timings	Remarks
1	Cultural performance and entertainment	0900to1030Hrs 1100to1230Hrs 1330to1500Hrs 1530to1700Hrs	Four times a day. First day flexible and rest days will remain programmed





II. Exploring the mini-Himalayas through guided walks: FREE with FREE guidebooks & maps

a) Greeting Spring Birds – Birding trails (Serichu Trail & RBP campus)
The wild rhododendrons in bloom throughout spring also mean hundreds of birds. Along with the extravagant wild flowers in bloom, enjoy the sight and flight of birds in myriad colours and listen to their melodious songs. While there are more than 220 birds in the Park, you are guaranteed to see at least 30 in a span of less than an hour along the Serichu trail and the Garden campus. Watch out for And yes, if you are lucky you may spot a red panda as many groups did while bird-watching.

Birding trails timing – 0530 hours – 0630 hours; 1600 hours – 1700 hours, daily from evening of 11 May to morning of 13 May; meeting point – Visitor Information Centre, Lamperi, 10 minutes before the guided walk

b) Celebrating wild rhododendrons – RBP

1. Bhutan boasts of over 46 different species of Rhododendrons, of which you will find 29 in the park. Spread over 124 acres and about 1 km long trail, you can take a short hike of about 30 minutes; the walk will showcase the diversity of rhododendrons. It is an ideal place to learn about them and appreciate their beauty. Few species will be in flowering such as *Rhododendron griffithianum*, *R. arboreum*, *R. camelliiflorum*, *R. falconeri*.

Walk timings – 1030 hours – 1115 hours; 1415 hours – 1500 hours, daily; meeting point – Visitor Information Centre, Lamperi, 10 minutes before the guided walk

c) Reliving the history – Dochula Trail/Lumitsawa Ancient Trail

These two trails combined is a mixture of ecology and history. It is an ancient route that linked Punakha and Wanduephodrang to Thimphu and embellished with many stories associated to Zhabdrung and Lam Drukpa Kinley. You will also walk along different ecological zones and forest types, almost replicating the vegetation of the entire Himalaya. Wildlife sighting is not guaranteed but do watch out for signs.

You may end with Dochula Trail at Lamperi or continue to walk further down to complete along the Lumitsawa Ancient Trail. Or you may wait at Lamperi and start the latter trail. Watch out for Maja Chamsa, Sissa and many more!

Timing Only on 12 May	Trail	Distance & duration	Altitude & rating	Meeting point
0900 hours – 1100 hours	Dochula Trail	1.2 kms, 1-2 hours	3100 m – 2700 m	Dochula pass
1120 hours – 1500 hours	Lumitsawa Ancient Trail	4.7 kms, 2-3 hours (with lunch break)	2700 m – 1800 m	Lamperi (trail point)



d) The Forest Bath – Lungchu Tsey Pilgrimage Trail
The forest bathing along this trail will help you relax through breathing fresh air and antimicrobial volatile substances believed to emit from the trees; while also cleanse your spiritual mind by visiting the Lungchu Tsey Goenpa. The total length of the trail is about 2 hours walk, but an hour walk up to Metopang will see many wild rhododendrons with few in flowering.

Timing Only on 13 May 2013	Distance & duration	Altitude & rating	Meeting point
0900 hours – 1200 hours	2 kms, 2 hours	3100 m – 3400 m	Dochula pass





III. Entertainment & Information stalls

The festival will be incomplete without some entertainment. At the same time, education and information stalls will keep entertaining the guests throughout. While some of the entertainment will be charged, some will showcase the rich bio-cultural diversities and efforts towards their conservation.

Talk shows, documentary and slide show for free will be from 1500 to 1700Hrs daily at the park visitor information center.

Entertainment with charges

Boating – Take a 10 minute boat-ride next to the sacred Baritsho. Towards evening, you will have some company of birds visiting to the lake.

Horse riding – Local communities will take you around the festival ground and short trail on a horse ride. Enjoy the diversity of ecology as well as people!

Yak riding – Perched on a gentle slope at the corner of the festival ground, you will see a nomad's tent and a family with yaks. You may discover their lifestyle or even sit for a cup of tea with the family for a minimal fee. You can also take a short yak-ride.

Taa-da-Nor traditional game – This game is chess-like in which you save your cows from a hungry tiger. You can learn and enjoy the game with the locals.

Rhodo-wish-game – An innovative game designed for the festival by the primary students will entertain you with a wish-game on a rhododendron tree. Explore it for yourself!

Instant photo and stamps – You can also take memories of the festival through printed photos or stamps and even post a postcard to your loved ones, from a stall run by students.

And many more activities including sale of plants, sale of waste products and others!





Food & beverages

Worried about food? You will easily get food and beverages at our stalls run by the local communities. Try out local cuisines and beverages. Local people will sell traditional meals at very reasonable rates. You will also get local beverages and tea with traditional snacks. If you are still not used to traditional food, you will also find a cafeteria that serves your food desires. Don't forget to taste locally brewed ara, banchang, singchang and changkoe; and butter tea with traditional snacks.

Camping

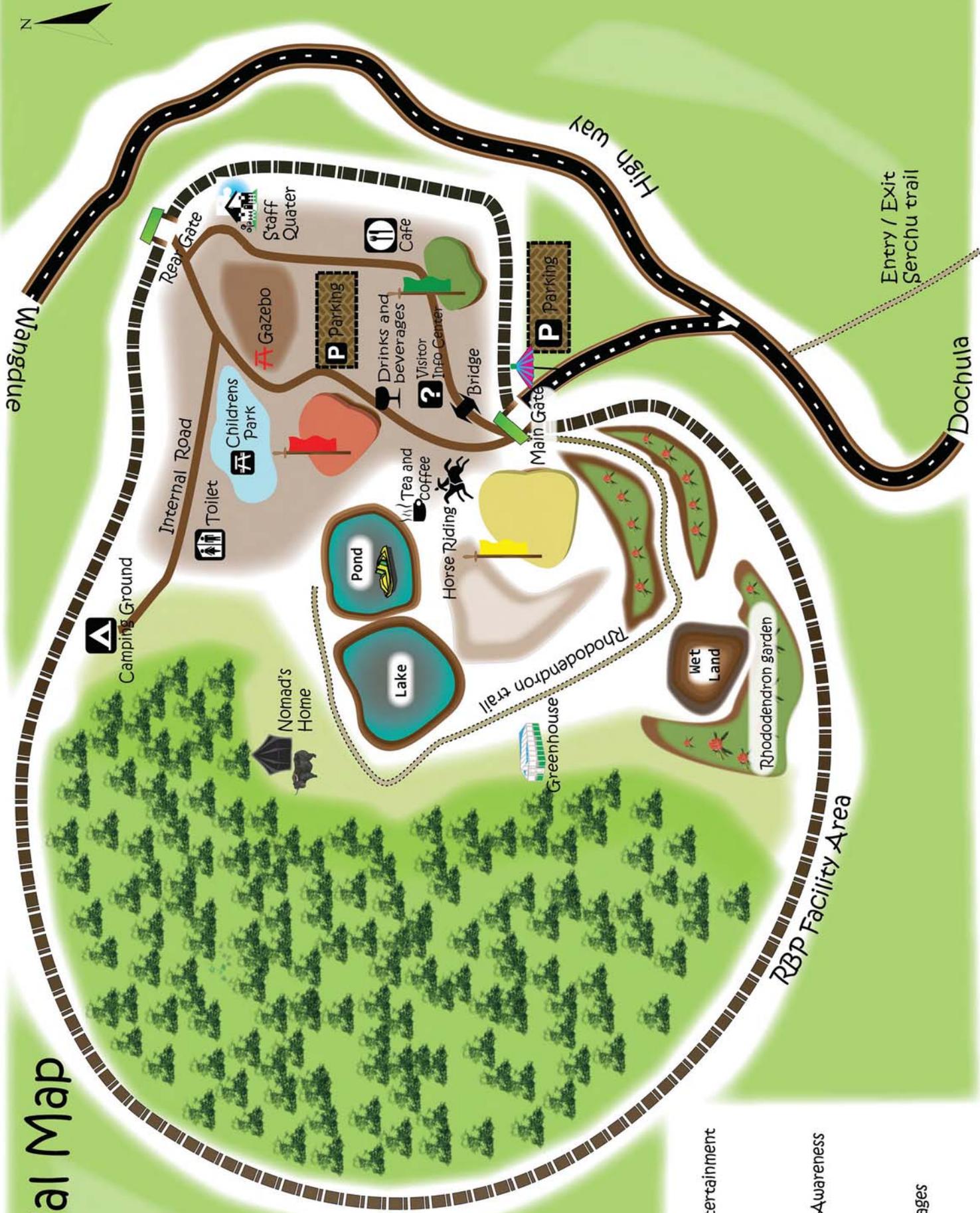
If you wish to enjoy the evenings with local entertainment, you may also opt to camp at Lamperi. We have limited tents on first-come-first-serve basis, or limited camping space if you wish to bring your own tents. Please check the availability and rates to book.

Weather

While spring weather is quite pleasant in Bhutan, the Royal Botanical Park usually receives early rainfall. You are therefore not guaranteed a perfect weather. Mornings might be pleasant but clouds gather rather sooner towards late afternoon. Please bring good walking shoes and umbrellas/rain-gears. For hikers, don't forget to wear sturdy and comfortable shoes.



Festival Map



Culture and Entertainment Village

Education and Awareness Village

Food and Beverages Village