

Takin Zoo

Takin Zoo, Thimphu

As a first step in conserving its natural heritage, Bhutan has established a system of nine protected areas. The system sets aside approximately 26% of country's total land area in national parks, nature reserves, wildlife sanctuaries and conservation areas.

Jigme Dorji National Park which is the largest protected area in the country, encompassing an area of 4,349 sq. km, covering the western parts of Paro, Thimphu and Punakha and almost entire area of Gasa district. The park is habitat of several endangered species including takin, blue sheep, snow leopard, musk deer, Himalayan black bear and red panda.

The Takin zoo which is towards the north of the capital, Thimphu falls under the park and is the perfect place to see Takin (*Budorcas taxicolor*), the National animal of Bhutan. It has been chosen due to its uniqueness and its association with the country's history and mythology. It's said that Drukpa Kunley, a popular 15th century saint who is popular known as the Divine Madman is said to have created it with his magical power at a large congregation of devotees. It resembles a cow from back, a goat from the front, and it continues to befuddle taxonomists, who cannot quite relate to other animal.

