

BHUTAN

12-days/11-nights GUIDED walking & sightseeing



Locked away from visitors for many years Bhutan is still a destination visited by the few. Once you arrive you will see a country like no other which still maintains its strong bonds with the monarchy and its Buddhist roots.

This is a culturally weighted sightseeing holiday with easy to moderate walks in the Himalayan foothills. Walks are 3-16km to a maximum altitude of 3,150m. The most difficult walk is to Taktsang Monastery, taken slowly, with approximately 453m of ascent over 3km.

Trek along rolling Himalayan pathways, visit the National Memorial Chorten and explore the legendary clifftop monastery of Taktsang. Explore Punakha, Paro and Thimpu – one of the world's quietest capital cities – and discover the scenic and enchanting Haa Valley.

Highlights:

- Experience fascinating culture and history of Bhutan, closed off for centuries
- Walk in marvellous Himalayan scenery, past historic dzong forts and monasteries in dramatic locations
- Walk up to the spectacular Taktsang 'Tiger's Nest' Monastery, clinging to the cliff face
- Explore the interesting towns of Punakha, Paro and Thimpu, one of the world's quietest capitals

Departs: ask for details

Includes: 12 nights' accommodation in comfortable rooms with an en-suite bathroom, full board (breakfast, lunch and dinner) from dinner on arrival to breakfast on day of departure, a full program of guided walks led by local guides and an English-speaking leader, all sightseeing and entrance fees, travel by coach / minibus as shown in the itinerary, return flights between Kathmandu and Paro (with Druk air) and any tips.

Not included: Private transfers, visa fees, personal expenses or gratuities, drinks with meals. Extra nights of accommodation can be arranged at extra cost.

Grading: Easy to moderate – over varied terrain with some steeper climbs. The pace allows for rest stops and photo opportunities, the tour should present little difficulty for anyone who is a regular walker.

Call OUTDOOR TRAVEL on 1800 331 582 for details or reservations



Suggested Itinerary

Days 1: Arrive Kathmandu

Arrive in Kathmandu and make your way to the hotel to meet the group leader. There will be a welcome dinner and a briefing on the tour details.

Day 2 - 3: Thimpu

Take a spectacular flight over the Himalayas to Paro: on a clear day, some of the highest Himalayan peaks can be seen.

On arrival, drive to Bhutan's laid back capital Thimpu for 2 nights. Depending on flight times, we may have time to explore Thimpu and visit the Takin Sanctuary. If this is not possible, we will try to fit this in tomorrow.

The following day enjoy a walk to the Tango Monastery, otherwise known as the 'Divine Madman' monastery. Visit the Folk Heritage Museum and the National Library of Bhutan, and enjoy an evening visit to Taschichho Dzong, Bhutan's most impressive building, and a short walk to the Big Buddha Statue, known locally as Kunsel Phodrang.

Day 4: Punakha Valley

We drive to Punakha valley via the Dochula Pass (10499ft/3200m). Weather permitting; there are some great views of the Eastern Himalayan range from here. You'll pass 108 stupas donated by the Queen for the wellbeing of the country and visit a royal chapel, Druk Wangyel lhakhang.

From the Pass, we'll hike to the Lungchusey gompa for 360 degree views of the surrounding mountain panoramas before returning to Dochula and continuing to Punakha, where we stay for 1 night.

Days 5 - 6: Gangtey, Phobjikha Valley

We drive to the Phobjikha Valley and to Gangtey, where we'll stay for 2 nights. We visit the monastery, the largest Nyingma monastery in Bhutan and dating from 1613, and hike through this beautiful glacial valley; depending on the time of year, we may spot the venerated black cranes that make this valley their home.

The next day, we drive to the village of Longtey, near to the Pele La Pass; from here, we start our walk up and over Kayche La to Gangtey. A gradual climb passes through thickets of dwarf bamboo, birch, rhododendron, hemlock and fir to Kayche LA, which is marked with prayer flags. The other side of the pass is largely meadow, and this section of our walk is all downhill through the surrounding farmland. We'll also make time to visit the crane centre near to our hotel.

Days 7 - 8: Punakha Valley

We return to Punakha. On arrival, we walk to the village of Chimi Lhakhang and the Divine Madman Temple. We continue our journey by bus from Sangchen Dorji Lhuendrup Lhakhang nunnery to Lapsakha village. We'll walk through the village, visiting farmhouses and watch the farmers go about their daily farming lives. Later this afternoon, we visit Punakha Dzong, Bhutan's former capital, and spend time exploring.

The next day, we drive to Kabisa; from here, we walk to Khamsung Yuelley Namgyal Stupa through rice fields and untouched landscapes. There is a spectacular view from this majestic temple over the Mochu river valley, which we'll take some time to enjoy before descending into the valley through rice fields to the small village of Soneagasa.

Days 9 - 11: Paro

We drive to Paro, where we'll take a walk to Kyichu Lhakhang. We'll also visit the National Museum and Paro Dzong and enjoy lunch in town. We'll enjoy another walk, following a route which winds through pine forests to the peace and tranquillity of a monastery. We continue on to explore the Dzongdrakha, an unusual village built on a rock face, surrounded by amazing panoramic views of the valley below.

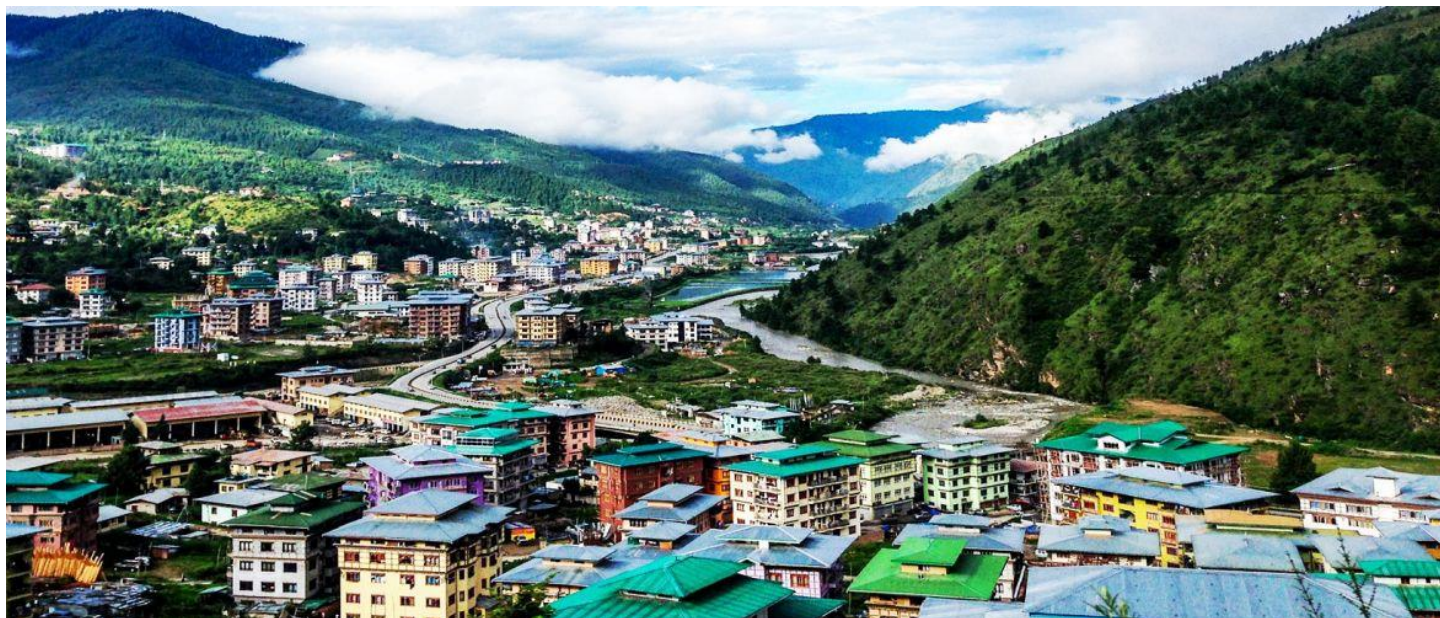
We spend the next day walking in the area around Paro. This is a gentle hike which takes us above Paro, giving spectacular views over the valley. You can visit Zuri Goenpa, a 17th Century monastery.

We'll also take the hike to the famous Taktsang Monastery, also known as the Tiger's Nest, which clings to the cliffs high above the valley floor. The ascent has a number of places to stop and admire the views, and is taken steadily. The first buildings date from around 1680 and legend says that Guru Padmasambhava, who brought Buddhism to Bhutan, arrived here on the back of a flying tigress.

Days 12: Return to Kathmandu

We fly from Paro to Kathmandu; the time of the flight may change, but there should be free time for you to relax, explore at your own pace or join your guide for a short walk around Durbar Square (additional cost, payable locally).

There is no accommodation arranged in Kathmandu but those who wish to stay here longer can book extra nights of accommodation.



Outdoor Travel offers small group guided or self-guided inn-to-inn walking tours in many areas of Asia including the Nakasendo Trail in Japan, the Camino de Santiago or Tour du Mont Blanc in Europe or England from coast to coast, the Milford Sound walk in New Zealand, Freycinet, Great Ocean walk or Flinders Ranges in Australia.

Contact Outdoor Travel direct for more details and reservations

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