

Gentle Walking Bhutan with Paro Tsechu

The best of Bhutan - gentle walks, cultural highlights and comfortable accommodation and a festival visit.



Group departures

See overleaf for departure dates

Holiday overview

Style	Walking
Accommodation	Hotels
Grade	Gentle
Duration	17 days from London to London
Trekking / Walking days	Walks on: 8 days
Min/Max group size	4 / 12. Guaranteed to run for 4
Trip Leader	Local Leader Bhutan
Land only	Joining in Kathmandu, Nepal
Max altitude	3,110m/10,203ft, Taksang Monastery, Day 14

Private Departures & Tailor Made itineraries available



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Group Departure Dates and Prices

Group departures

2027 Dates:

Sun 14 Feb - Sun 28 Feb	With Punakha Tsechu
Sun 07 Mar - Tue 23 Mar	With Paro Tsechu
Thu 07 Oct- Fri 22 Oct	With Thimphu Tsechu
Thu 04 Nov - Thu 18 Nov	With Black-necked Crane Festival
Mon 06 Dec - Wed 22 Dec	With Nalakhar Tsechu

This is the detailed itinerary for our March 2027 departure only. Detailed itineraries for all other departures can be downloaded from our website or requested from the Mountain Kingdoms office.

Group prices

Visit the holiday page of our website for up-to-date land only and flight inclusive prices for all group departure dates <https://www.mountainkingdoms.com/holiday/gentle-walking-bhutan>.

Single supplement options can also be found here.

Will the trip run?

This trip is guaranteed to run for 4 people and for a maximum of 12. In the rare event that we cancel a holiday, we will refund you in full and give you at least 6 weeks warning. Many trips do fill up quickly - we advise you to book early if you want to secure a place(s) on the dates of your choice.

No Surcharge Guarantee

The flight inclusive or land only price will be confirmed to you at the time you make your booking. There will be no surcharges after your booking has been confirmed.

Insurance

We offer a travel insurance scheme - please contact us for details.

Private Departures

We can also offer this trip as a private holiday. A Private Departure follows exactly the same itinerary as the group departure but at dates to suit you (subject to availability) - please contact us with your preferred dates.

Tailor Made service

We pride ourselves on the level of quality and choice we provide for our clients who want a fully tailor made holiday. A holiday will be created especially for you by one of our well-travelled experts. They will be able to advise on the accommodation best suited to your needs, the sights you should visit (and those to avoid!) and the best walks and activities matched to your ability. In short, we will work together with you to create your perfect holiday. If you would like to explore the idea of a Tailor Made holiday with Mountain Kingdoms then please call us on +44 (0)1453 844400 or see the Tailor Made pages of our website for further inspiration.

Your guide



You will have an English-speaking Bhutanese guide to lead your trip. Mountain Kingdoms have been working with the same partner in Bhutan since 1986 and their guides are some of the best in the Kingdom. They speak good English, as this is taught in all Bhutanese schools, and are fully qualified guides. The Tourism Authority of Bhutan insists that a Bhutanese trek or tour leader must pass his/her guiding exams in Thimphu before accompanying groups of foreign visitors.

Your trip highlights

- First rate accommodation in Bhutan using comfortable hotels and lodges
- Relax at Dwarika's hotel in Kathmandu - a unique heritage property
- Explore the cultural highlights of Bhutan including iconic Taktsang Temple
- Excellent and varied programme of gentle walks
- Join the celebrations at Paro Tsechu, one of Bhutan's most important festivals

At a glance itinerary

Days 1-3	Fly to Kathmandu. Fly to Paro. Sightseeing in the Paro Valley.
Days 4-5	Drive to Thimphu. Walk and sightseeing in Thimphu.
Day 6	Drive to Punakha across the Dochu La. Visit Chimi Lhakhang and villages.
Day 7	Visit Punakha Dzong and walk in the Punakha Valley. Drive to Gangtey.
Day 8	Gangtey Valley walk and Drive to Trongsa
Days 9-11	Drive to Bumthang with Chumey Valley walk. Bumthang temples walk and walk to Swan Lhakhang.
Days 12-13	Fly to Paro. Attend the Paro Tsechu. Walk to Kyichu Lhakhang.
Day 14	Attend the Paro Tsechu. Walk to Taktsang Monastery.
Days 15-17	Fly to Kathmandu. Fly to London.

Trip summary

The tiny Kingdom of Bhutan in the eastern Himalaya, or the 'Thunder Dragon Kingdom', successfully remained isolated from the outside world for very many centuries. Only at the time of the 4th King's Coronation (1974) was the first trickle of foreigners allowed in. Prior to the building of the road from India to Thimphu even visiting Indian presidents took six days on horseback to visit the King. It still remains a secretive Kingdom and the present 5th King is keen to preserve its unique customs and traditions.

Its history is a capsule of all that is mystical about the Himalaya; re-incarnate rulers, who used black magic to defeat Tibetan aggressors, lama-saints, who foretold the future and who fought demons opposed to the spread of Buddhism, and civil wars between powerful district governors, or penlops, who laid plot and counter-plot in an endless cycle of strife and assassinations.

This holiday offers the perfect introduction to Bhutan, for those who like to explore on foot! We have designed the itinerary to give you a wide variety of experiences though it will be an adventure enjoyed in comparative comfort because every night is spent either in a hotel, or comfortable lodge. Each walk has an interesting objective taking you to fascinating temples, hermit retreats, old palaces, ancient villages or simply into lovely scenery. This is a holiday that will be enjoyed to the full by those who enjoy weekend walks in the British countryside. As well as the main walk, on certain days a gentler or harder walk may also be possible. On certain days it is also possible to opt out of the walk, enabling you to relax in or around your hotel or lodge. There are also exciting road journeys following twisting mountain roads and crossing high passes in your comfortable mini-coach. By its nature this is an adventure with plenty of varied walking in a place that is only just emerging into the 21st Century.

This departure also joins the celebrations at the Paro Tsechu - one of the most significant and spectacular of all Bhutanese festivals.

Special notes

Kathmandu - Paro flights

Please note that there is the small possibility that flight schedules between Kathmandu and Paro could change in the coming months. This may result in alterations to the itinerary and/or the dates of travel.

Paro-Jakar flights

The domestic flights to/from Paro/Jakar are weather dependent and there can be difficulties securing these flights, so you need to be prepared for the drive between these destinations if the flight does not operate. Our itineraries are planned to allow enough time for this road journey if flights are cancelled for any reason.

Your trip itinerary

Day 1: Depart London.

Depart London on your overnight flight to Kathmandu.

Overnight: In flight

Day 2: Arrive Kathmandu. Group transfer to hotel.

You will be met and transferred to the luxurious and stylish Dwarika's Hotel which is filled with Nepalese wooden carvings and statues and has a superb restaurant where you can eat in traditional style. It also has a cool, elegant courtyard and a swimming pool. After the long flight from London there's no better place to relax.

Overnight: Dwarika's Hotel, Kathmandu

Day 3: Fly to Paro. Sightseeing in the Paro Valley.

You will transfer to the airport for the short flight up to Bhutan. On a clear day the panoramic views of the Himalaya are sensational, including Everest and Kangchenjunga, but particularly exciting is the approach through the Bhutanese foothills and the landing at Paro's tiny airstrip of Paro. Although you are at the mercy of the airline's computer, if possible try to sit on the left hand side of the plane for the most spectacular views.

On arrival you will be met by your guide and driver and then have time to see some of the sights of Paro and the surrounding valley.



Overnight: Olathang Hotel, Paro (Meals: BLD)

Day 4: Drive to Thimphu. Sightseeing including visit to giant Buddha statue.

This morning you will be driven to Thimphu, a journey of around 1½-2 hours. Thimphu has an attractive valley location and is relatively small for a capital city although it has grown greatly in recent years. When you arrive in Thimphu you will drive up to see the large Buddha statue, perched above the town, this will give you excellent views and is a good way to orientate yourself to Thimphu and its surrounds. You should also have the chance to have a look at the bustling streets of the town centre and perhaps one or two of the other sights of the area.

Overnight: Phuntso Pelri Hotel or Similar, Thimphu (Meals: BLD)

Day 5: Morning walk to Wangditse Monastery and afternoon sightseeing in Thimphu.

After breakfast today you will drive up to Sangaygang, next to the Bhutan First Broadcasting Service tower, located in the North West of Thimphu. It is only about a mile drive up to the tower so if you feel like you would like to burn a bit more energy you can always walk up instead. From the tower you will have great views over Thimphu Dzong and the Thimphu valley as you start your walk, contouring the beautiful hills to visit Wangditse Gumpa. This walk should take around 1½ hours. You will have time to visit the gumpa before you walk down for another 30 minutes to reach Dechen Phodrang Monastery. This monastery houses around 450 student monks enrolled in an 8 year course. The monastery is also home to some fantastic UNESCO monitored 12th century paintings. You will then meet your vehicle and be driven back to Thimphu.

In the afternoon there will be time to enjoy some sightseeing. There are many places of interest to visit in Thimphu, including the Tashichhodzong (the main government buildings), the Textile Museum, the Heritage Museum, the late King's Memorial Chorten, the National Library, the School of Painting and the silversmiths and pottery workshops. The Government Handicrafts Emporium is possibly the best place to look for local handicrafts. It is interesting to visit the handmade paper workshop to see the paper being made and there are some nice items made from handmade paper for sale there. You could also visit the Post Office to buy some of Bhutan's very attractive stamps, they will even print a valid stamp with your face on it while you wait!

While in Thimphu you might also like to visit the 'zoo'. This is in fact a very large enclosure (several acres) just above the town, containing only Takin, a very rare animal found exclusively in Bhutan and parts of China and possibly one of the most quirky and strangest looking animals you will ever see.

Overnight: Phuntso Pelri Hotel or Similar, Thimphu (Meals: BLD)

Day 6: Drive to Punakha 1,242m/4,075ft, over the Dochu La. Visit Chimi Lakhang and Talo Village.

Driving out of Thimphu you climb to cross the Dochu La Pass, 3,048m/10,000ft, a spot marked by 108 chortens. Here, weather permitting you may take in a magnificent mountain vista. On clear days there are fabulous views of the eastern Himalaya from here, but this is a beautiful and atmospheric spot even on misty days. You then drive down through varied forest into the lush Punakha Valley.

Firstly you will visit Chimi Lakhang, a temple built by Drukpa Kunley. Known as the 'The Divine Madman', Drukpa Kunley was a 15th Century Bhutanese Lama and is Bhutan's most popular Saint and one of the most important figures in Bhutanese folklore. Despite the apparent conservatism of the Bhutanese people, Drukpa Kunley with his unconventional views on sex is a great favourite throughout the country - the phallus symbols painted on the outside walls of many houses date back to his teachings. Chimi Lakhang is especially popular with women, who come here to make offerings and to pray for children. This charming lakhang is reached by a short walk across the paddy fields and the short excursion takes about 45 minutes each way.

Later you will drive up to the charming village of Talo (altitude 2,800m). This attractive village is famed for its pretty girls! First you will drive up to its fine gompa, built above the village and worth a visit for the spectacular views. After visiting the gompa you walk down through the village and will see traditional village life going on. It's all very pretty - the beautiful farm houses of the village have their own well-kept flower gardens and corn and vegetables are grown in abundance. There is an air of prosperity and contentment. You come out back onto the road below the village and then you may either walk down through woods and fields, or drive down, to visit the village of Nobgang, the birthplace of the four girls who in 1979 married King Jigme Singye Wangchuk to become his four queens. After the king's abdication they became Bhutan's Queen Mothers. The gompas in Nobgang are sponsored by their family. The two villages of Talo and Nobgang have a longstanding rivalry in archery. Once your walk is done you will be driven back to your Punakha hotel.

Overnight: Zhingkham Resort or Similar, Punakha (Meals: BLD)

Day 7: Visit Punakha Dzong. Walk from the dzong to village of Samdingkha - 3-4 hours. Drive to Gangtey.

You start your day at Punakha Dzong, one of the most spectacular and important in the kingdom as well as being one of the most picturesque. It is situated at the confluence of two rivers - the Mo Chu and the Pho Chu. Damaged by flooding in 1994, the dzong has now been beautifully renovated and is a real showcase for Bhutanese craftsmanship and painting. You are normally allowed into the dzong unless there are VIPs visiting.



After your visit you begin your walk which starts near Punakha Dzong and follows the left bank through forest. Sometimes the path is high above the river affording lovely views of hamlets, villages, lone houses, and the odd temple. You can see the extensive cultivation, and to the north the hills rise up and become dark hazy mountains. The languid river, braided sometimes into minor rushing rapids, has two or three bridges. The first of these is a huge, long suspension bridge that can accept brave horses in single file. As you walk further you will come across the ruins of a large old house. The walls, made in the traditional way of shuttered and packed earth, still survive. Further still there are ancient canyons whose walls and cliffs look like they are also made of fossilized mud. Finally, you can see the larger village of Samdingkha ahead which you reach by passing through cultivated fields that are fenced to protect the crops from wild animals. The village is a quiet, timeless place although it does have a couple of small shops. You'll find a more substantial steel girder bridge here which you will cross to rendezvous with your vehicle.

If the weather is inclement we may do another longer walk which we call the 'Three Temples walk' - 12½ km, 4-5 hours. This starts at the village of Jibjokha which sits up in the hills above Samdingkha. It is a circular walk that follows undulating paths and tracks through picturesque, open farmland, shady woods and vast rice terraces revealing traditional village life in rural Bhutan.

After lunch you will drive to Gangtey where you will spend the night.

Overnight: Hotel Gakiling or Yo Lo Koe Lodge or Similar, Gangtey (Meals: BLD)

Day 8: Walk in Gangtey Valley and drive to Trongsa.

In the morning you will have the chance for a pleasant walk in the Gangtey valley. The valley has glorious scenery and some lovely small villages and temples which you may visit. There is a network of footpaths through woods and meadows of the valley and a number of different walks are possible here - your guide will suggest a suitable one for your group. He will also no doubt regale you with some of the tales and legends of the valley including stories about the two different types of Yeti which are rumoured to be found here, a large one and a small one. Before heading off on your walk you may drive up to visit the Black-necked crane information centre where there are interesting displays about the cranes and the valley and also visit Gangtey's impressive 17th century gumpa, recently beautifully restored. You may start your walk down the valley from here.



After lunch you will leave Gangtey and drive out to the main road and up to cross the Pele La Pass at 3,300m/10,827ft. You might like to stop to admire the views from here. You then descend from the pass and drive down, passing the large chorten at Chendebji and on to Trongsa. You will see Trongsa's splendid Dzong long before you reach it because the road takes you up a long side valley before eventually turning back to Trongsa town. The drive from Gangtey takes between two and three hours.

Trongsa's dzong is exceptionally dramatic. It is the ancestral home of the royal family and because of its important strategic location was one of the most important dzongs in the country. Set above the dzong is the Ta Dzong, the watchtower, a lovely old building which has been beautifully renovated. It houses an excellent museum with several floors of royal memorabilia and sacred artefacts. The views from the roof are well worth the climb.

Overnight: Yangkhil Resort or Similar, Trongsa (Meals: BLD)

Day 9: Ridge walk from Tharpaling - 4 hours. Drive to Jakar, 2,580m/8,465ft.

From Trongsa you drive across the Yotong La and towards Bumthang. The Bumthang region encompasses four major valleys and Jakar town. You will stay in the main valley called Chokhor. The other valleys are the Ura Valley which is to the east, Tang Valley which is slightly more off-the-beaten-track and the Chumey Valley - your destination for today's walk.

You drive up to a cluster of temples at Tharpaling - a sacred spot and place of meditation, founded by Geluwa Lonchen Rabchampa (1308-1363) during his self-exile from Tibet for ten years. Several picturesque monasteries dot the hillside above the Chumey Valley with views over Domkhar (Chumey) and Domkhar Summer Palace. Here you begin your walk along an old trail heading in the direction of Chumey. The path starts out beneath craggy cliffs, from where it climbs fairly gently up to the ridge top and reaches the Shutre Sae Pass at 3,700m/12,139ft. Sited on the pass in a glass case is a statue of the founder of Tharpaling. From here the views are phenomenal - looking south you can see over the Chumey/Domkhar Valley with the Black Mountains in the distance. The other way you get fabulous and unexpected views over Jakar town with the airport runway and the dzong clearly seen far below. Beyond and further north, you can see towards the high mountains - perhaps even Mount Gangkar Punsum on a clear day. This may be a good place to stop and enjoy your picnic lunch.

You descend from the pass in beautiful forest, nearly all downhill. On the higher reaches, you pass through pine, fir and rhododendron forest. Eventually you reach the road again at a huge area of prayer flags where you will meet your transport and head to your hotel in Jakar.

Overnight: Ugyenling Hotel or Similar, Jakar (Meals: BLD)

Day 10: Explore Bumthang Valley and valley walk - 2-3 hours.

Today you will have free time in Bumthang and time to explore the Bumthang Valley and Jakar town.

You can make a short, almost entirely level walk taking in some of the principle sights of the valley. From the hotel you either walk, or make the short drive to reach Jambay Lakhang. This is one of the country's oldest temples, built in the mid-7th Century. One interesting feature to look for is the set of three steps in the main temple. The first step, now hidden below floor level, is said to represent the time of the past or 'historical' Buddha. The second, very well worn, step represents the present Buddha, whilst the third step above, is said to represent the age of the future Buddha. The point at which the second step is worn down to ground level is held to be the time when the world as we currently know it will end.



From Jambay you take a farm track along the valley floor and walk for 30 minutes to reach Kurjey Lakhang, a series of three large temples. The oldest of the temples here houses a rock indented with the body shape of Guru Rinpoche, whilst the most recent dates back just 25 years and was built by the Queen Mother - Ashi Kesang Wangchuck. Descending from the temples you cross a suspension bridge and walk downstream for 45 minutes to Tamshing Lakhang: the most important Nyingma gumpa in the Kingdom, established in 1501 by Pemalingpa. Inside you can see a suit of chain-mail armour, which Buddhists believe will bring good fortune if worn and then walked around the inner temple three times. Your transport will meet you outside the gumpa and return you to your hotel, with perhaps a stop in Jakhar town-ship or a visit to the spectacular Jakar Dzong (Castle of the White Bird) , so called because a white bird was supposed to have indicated the most auspicious place to build.

Overnight: Ugyenling Hotel or Similar, Jakar (Meals: BLD)

Day 11: Morning walk to Swan Lakhang and return to Jakar. Afternoon at leisure.

This morning you will visit Ngang Lakhang, known as Swan Lakhang. First you drive the short distance to arrive at a long mani wall in Tangbi. You descend to cross the river by a suspension bridge and then have a pleasant walk of about 3 hours, up the river valley through forest and meadows to reach Ngang Lakhang, also known as 'Swan Temple'. This temple has an illustrious history. Guru Rimpoche is said to have visited here and the present temple, built in the 15th century is said to be named after swans supposedly seen on a nearby lake by the temple's founder, a Tibetan lama named Namkha Samdrup. After your visit to the temple you descend to cross the river to a road and will meet your vehicle to drive back to Jakar.

The rest of the day is yours to relax at your hotel or perhaps to enjoy a little further exploration.

Overnight: Ugyenling Hotel or Similar, Jakar (Meals: BLD)

Day 12: Fly to Paro. Sightseeing as time permits.

Today you will transfer to the small domestic airport at Jakar for the short flight to Paro.

You might have time in the afternoon, depending on your flight schedule, for a visit to the Bhutan National Museum which sits above Paro Dzong in the ancient watchtower or Ta Dzong. The museum has a fantastic collection of Bhutanese treasures with displays including depictions of some of the wide range of Bhutan's history and culture and an impressive collection of ancient thangkas featuring Bhutan's important saints and teachers. You will also find some fearsome festival masks, a collection of religious statues, some early stone carvings and the original 14th century iron links from the nearby Tamchhog Bridge.

You may also like to wander round Paro town before returning to your hotel.

Please note that if your flight from Jakar is cancelled, you will drive back to Paro over the next two days instead, stopping at Wangdi or Punakha for the night.

Overnight: Hotel Olathang or Similar, Paro (Meals: BLD)

Day 13: Attend the Paro Tsechu in the morning. Afternoon walk from Olathang to Kyichu Lhakhang.

This morning you will enjoy your first visit to one of Bhutan's most significant festivals - the Paro Tsechu. Tsechus are colourful occasions full of music and ceremonial dances that are staged in honour of Guru Rinpoche. They commemorate his great deeds, all believed to have taken place on the tenth day of the month - the meaning of the word, Tsechu. Such festivals are primarily religious but they are also a rare opportunity for the people to come together in all their finery to socialise, celebrate and have fun. The Bhutanese believe that they will achieve merit by attending the festival and by watching the masked dances and the event draws people in from even the remotest villages of the surrounding district.



After lunch you will walk to Kyichu Lhakhang. You leave the hotel and walk up the hill to a small village and then continue trekking along forested ridges to reach Kyichu, where you will visit the ancient temple of Kyichu Lhakhang. This temple is one of the oldest and most beautiful in Bhutan. It was one of 108 temples built by Songtsen Gampo, an important early Tibetan king, to pin down a Bon demon that was thought to hover over the whole of Tibet and was obstructing the spread of Buddhism. Kyichu Lhakhang is said to pin down the left foot of the demon.

Overnight: Hotel Olathang or Similar, Paro (Meals: BLD)

Day 14: Walk up to Taktsang. 3,110m/10,203ft, 4-5 hours. Return visit Paro Tsechu or sightseeing in Paro.

It's an early start today for the walk up to Tiger's Nest, Taktsang - a fitting climax to your trip. The monastery is perched some 600m/2,000ft up on a cliff overlooking the valley and was said to be where the legendary Indian saint, Guru Padma Sambhava, flew from Tibet on the back of a tiger to defeat five demons, who were opposing the spread of Buddhism in Bhutan.

It's a steep uphill walk through woods, of about 1½-2hrs, to reach a tea house (an ascent of 340m/1,115ft). Apart from offering welcome refreshment this tea house is one of the principle viewpoints of the monastery, and those who prefer not to climb any further can relax here whilst others continue on. If there is a particular religious gathering or VIP visit in progress, you will not be able to enter the monastery itself but a further half an hour's ascent is well worth it in any case, as it brings you to another viewpoint directly across from the monastery. If you are able to visit the temple, the final section of the walk takes you from this point steeply down approximately 100m/330ft into the gorge that separates you from the monastery and then climbs back up again to reach the monastery gate.

You descend to the valley floor by your outward route back to where your vehicle will be waiting. The full walk to the monastery and back involves approximately 740m/2,428ft of ascent.

The remainder of the day can be used to make a second visit to the Paro Tsechu or to do some further sightseeing and last minute shopping in Paro.

Overnight: Hotel Olathang or Similar, Paro (Meals: BLD)

Day 15: Fly to Kathmandu. Time at leisure.

Again a sensational take-off and scenic Himalayan flight past Chomolhari, Bhutan's second highest peak, past Kangchenjunga and Everest back to Kathmandu, where you transfer to the Dwarika's Hotel.

The rest of the day is at leisure for sightseeing or last minute shopping.



Overnight: Dwarika's Hotel, Kathmandu (Meals: B)

Day 16: At leisure in Kathmandu. Transfer to airport and depart for London.

You will have much of the day free in Kathmandu to do some sightseeing or shopping or simply relax by the pool at your hotel. Later there will be a group transfer to the airport for your overnight flight back to London.

Overnight: In flight (Meals: B)

Day 17: Arrive London.

Our grading system

Gentle Walking Bhutan is graded as a Gentle walking holiday, as described below.

Gentle

Trips within this grade typically mix sightseeing with easy-paced half and/or full day walks. On these trips, walks will be on relatively low altitude trails, for a duration of around 4-6 hours. On all of our Gentle graded trips, some ascent and descent should be anticipated, and there may occasionally be a longer walking day. Holidays within this grade generally use hotels and comfortable lodges although a few do have some nights camping.

These holidays are suitable for people who enjoy easy-paced walks in the British countryside or exploring on foot rather than in a vehicle.

Trip altitude

Important - please be aware that this trip involves travel at altitude. Whilst all our itineraries are carefully designed to optimise acclimatisation to high altitudes, participants on this trip are likely to experience some symptoms of being at altitude. The Dossier pack we provide when you book your holiday includes comprehensive advice on safe travel at altitude. If you require further information or advice on travel at altitude prior to booking please contact the office to speak to an experienced member of our team. Alternatively we recommend www.medex.org.uk as a good source of information.

What the price includes

Mountain Kingdoms aims to offer the best value for money. We do not charge extra for meal packages or apply local charges and try to ensure that all the key elements of your holiday are included.

What's included:

- ✓ 14 x breakfasts, 12 x lunches, 12 x dinners
- ✓ Dwarika's 5* hotel in Kathmandu, on a twin-share, bed & breakfast basis
- ✓ In Bhutan, good standard hotel accommodation in main towns and best available hotels in outlying towns, on full board, twin-share basis.
- ✓ An English speaking Bhutanese leader
- ✓ Bhutan Visa
- ✓ Bhutan Departure Tax
- ✓ Single, timed group airport transfers for international flights on arrival and departure
- ✓ Kathmandu-Paro-Kathmandu flights and transfers
- ✓ Internal flights between Jakar and Paro
- ✓ All road transport by private vehicles
- ✓ Sightseeing where specified
- ✓ Economy class return air fares from the UK & UK Departure Tax (flight inclusive only)
- ✓ Carbon offsetting with the Ecoan Tree Planting Project (for clients taking our flight inclusive option)
- ✓ A free Mountain Kingdoms Water-to-Go bottle

Airport transfers

The cost of a transfer to/from the airport is included in the price of your holiday. This is a single group transfer which is arranged to coincide with the timings of the group flights. If you book your own flights which arrive/depart at different times to this, or we book flights at your request that have different timings, we will be happy to provide a quote for a separate transfer. Please contact us should you require any further information.

What's not included:

- × Travel insurance
- × Visa fees for Nepal
- × Lunch and evening meals in Kathmandu
- × Optional trips
- × Tips

Water-to-Go Reusable Bottle Campaign

We have joined the campaign to help cut down on the use of plastics and, in particular, single-use water bottles. To do this we have teamed up with the revolutionary company, Water-to-Go who have developed a multi-use drinking bottle with a reusable filter that eliminates over 99.9% of all microbiological contaminants. This makes water from virtually any source safe to drink and significantly reduces the need for travellers to buy bottles of water wherever they are in the world.

Clients who are not given a free Mountain Kingdoms kit bag for their holiday (these are required for certain treks), will instead receive a free Mountain Kingdoms Water-to-Go bottle. These unique Water-to-Go bottles can also be purchased from us at a discounted rate.

For further information about our campaign visit <https://www.mountainkingdoms.com/water-to-go-reusable-bottle-campaign>.

Your accommodation

We will endeavour to secure the hotels named in this itinerary but if our first choice of hotel is unavailable we will book a suitable alternative of a similar standard.

Hotels in Bhutan

Please note that there is generally a shortage of hotel/lodge accommodation in Bhutan, especially outside Paro and Thimphu. Although we pre-book rooms as far in advance as possible, anything can happen and probably will, e.g. if the royal family suddenly has a visiting delegation, accommodation may be changed at short notice. Additionally, during peak seasons, it can sometimes be very difficult to secure not only the hotels/lodges we want, but also the single rooms we might need. In these circumstances singles may occasionally be asked to share but in such cases we refund any single room supplements that might apply. Given these conditions we will make every effort to secure any of the following hotels:



Dwarika's Hotel, Kathmandu

Dwarika's unique 5* hotel is built in Nepalese style and features many architectural relics rescued from palaces and temples in the valley as well as Nepalese furniture, carvings and statues. The building has a palace-like atmosphere and you really feel as if you are stepping back into Nepal's history. Rooms are large and stylish and its elegant restaurant is one of the places to eat in Kathmandu. It also has a pleasant courtyard garden with swimming pool.



Phuntso Pelri Hotel or Similar, Thimphu

Despite its somewhat dark entrance hall, this new hotel is very well appointed, with custom made Bhutanese wooden furniture and good sized rooms. During busy periods, especially during festivals, we may use the Jomolhari Hotel, the Kisa Hotel, Hotel Gakyil, Hotel Osel or the Amodhara Hotel. These are amongst the best tourist class hotels in Thimphu.



Zhingkhram Resort or Similar, Punakha

Overlooking Punakha Dzong, and only opened in 2016, the Zhingkhram Resort is one of the best hotels in Punakha. The well-proportioned, stylish rooms come complete with free Wi-Fi, minibars and coffee/tea making facilities as well as balconies giving picture-perfect views of the dzong and the surrounding hills and countryside.



Hotel Gakiling or Yo Lo Koe Lodge or Similar, Gangtey

These two lodges in Gangtey and have been recently updated. They offer relatively simple but comfortable accommodation, and are built in local style with cosy rooms using a lot of wood panelling and with attached bathrooms. Food is plentiful and good.



Yangkhil Resort or Similar, Trongsa

Set within walking distance of Trongsa town, Yangkhil Resort is a small, relaxed establishment with gardens and great views of Trongsa Dzong and the surrounding countryside.



Ugyenling Hotel or Similar, Jakar

Nestled in a picturesque setting facing the Bumthang valley and river, the Ugyenling has well-appointed rooms with a seating area warmed by a bukhari (wood burning stove). Rooms also offer tea/coffee making facilities and Wi-Fi as well as a sit-out balcony with views of the surrounding mountains and valleys. Set in a walled compound, the hotel has its own international restaurant, large bar and a traditional hot stone bath.



Hotel Olathang or Similar, Paro

Originally built for the coronation of the Bhutan's 4th King in 1974, this attractive hotel stands on a hill overlooking Paro town. Rooms in the main building are set around a peaceful courtyard and there are also a number of cottages dotted around the spacious grounds. Decoration is typically Bhutanese with stripped wooden floors and colourfully painted walls. Rooms are well-equipped and the hotel has its own spa, international restaurant and bar.

Meal arrangements

14 x breakfasts, 12 x lunches, 12 x dinners. Bed and Breakfast in Kathmandu and full board elsewhere.

Flight arrangements

Flight inclusive from price

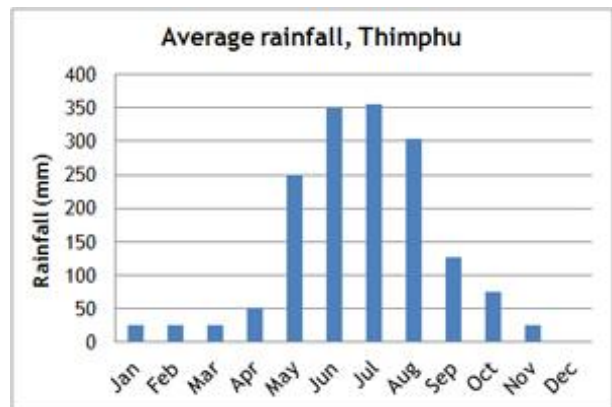
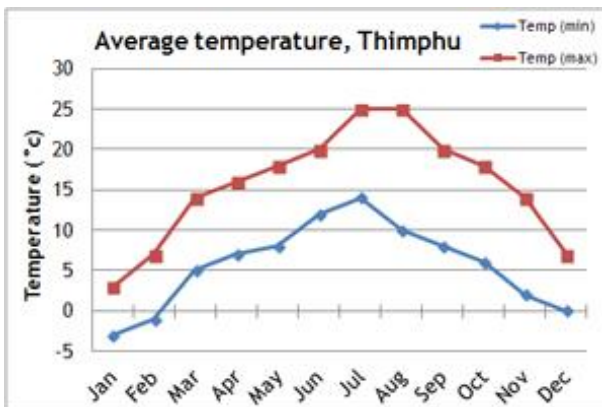
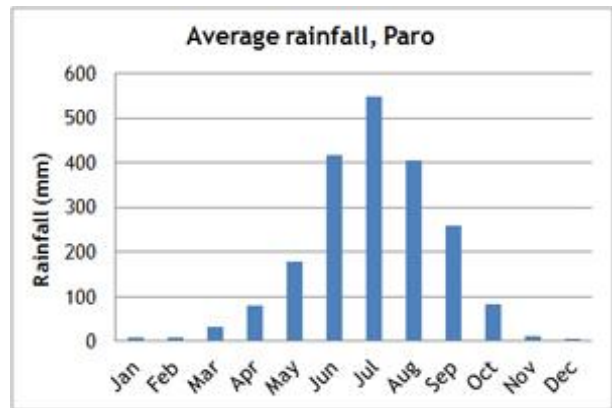
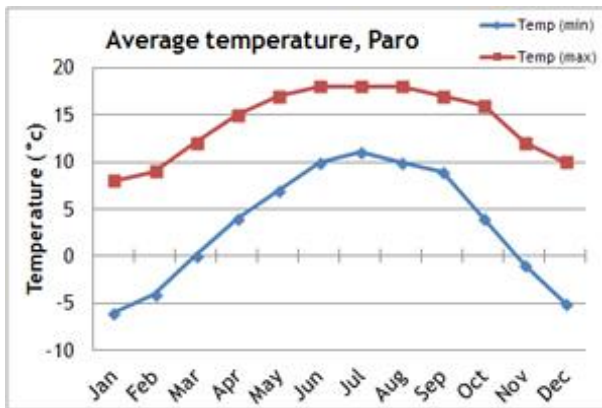
Our 'Flight inclusive from' price is based on the best fare available at the time of printing. As airfares change on a constant basis, this should be used only as a guide price. Rest assured that, at the time of booking, we will endeavour to get the best possible price for the flights you need. Remember, the earlier you book the greater your chances of securing the best fare.

Flight inclusive packages booked through Mountain Kingdoms are protected through our ATOL bonding scheme.

Flight upgrades and regional Airports

Please call us on +44 (0)1453 844400 for flight options from regional UK airports, Business Class upgrades, alternative airlines and stopovers. Please also check our website for the most up to date flight inclusive 'from' prices.

Climate information



Further information

When we receive your booking, we send you a full Trip Dossier which contains details of any visas and vaccinations required, a suggested gear and clothing list and lots of useful information. If you do have queries at this initial stage do call us on 01453 844400 and we will be pleased to offer advice.

The nature of adventure travel

Every effort will be made to keep to this itinerary but we cannot guarantee that things may not change, either before you travel or while you are away. By its very nature, adventure travel involves an element of the unexpected, particularly in more remote areas. A variety of factors such as adverse weather conditions, changes to local schedules and difficulties with transportation can all contribute to the need to make changes to the itinerary, often at the very last minute. Our Operations Manager and your Trip Leader will make every effort to maintain the integrity of the original itinerary and minimise the impact of any changes, but an easy-going and flexible nature is a real asset! Please note that all timings and distances given are approximate.

Extensions

Extending your holiday

If you would like additional inspiration on how or where to extend your holiday please call us on 01453 844400.



Hotel upgrades and extra nights in Bhutan

If you would like to upgrade your hotel during your holiday take a look at our selection of luxury properties in Bhutan such as Uma Paro or the Taj Tashi in Thimphu, you can download a leaflet from our website detailing all hotel options. We can also add additional nights in Bhutan at the start or end of your trip.



Additional accommodation in Nepal

If you would like to extend your stay in Nepal, you can add extra nights at your group tour accommodation or choose from our range of distinctive properties in Pokhara and the Kathmandu area. We can offer luxury resorts, heritage hotels, tranquil lodges and characterful cottages. Our selection includes Dwarika's Resort at Dhulikhel, Pavilions Himalaya at Pokhara, Tiger Mountain Pokhara Lodge and Shivapuri Heights Cottage. Individual extension leaflets for all these options can be downloaded from our website or requested from our office.



Kathmandu Valley sightseeing excursions

We can arrange half day or full day sightseeing tours taking you to the key cultural attractions of central Kathmandu or the Kathmandu Valley including the World Heritage Sites of Bhaktapur and Patan. Your tour will be led by an English speaking guide and you will have a private vehicle and driver.



Wildlife extensions in Nepal - Chitwan, Bardia & Koshi Tappu

Visit Chitwan or Bardia National Parks home to a rich variety of birds and animals including elephant, rhinos, leopard and Bengal tiger. Stay in a comfortable lodge and enjoy a range of wildlife viewing activities. Alternatively visit the renowned Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve - one of the finest birdwatching and wildlife areas in all Asia.



Royal Manas National Park, Bhutan

Extend your stay in Bhutan with an extension to the Royal Manas National park, a wonderful birder's paradise close to the Indian border. Our extension package gives you three full days to explore the park and surrounding area, and you will be accompanied throughout by a specialist bird and wildlife guide. We also include all meals, private transport to/from Paro, and hotel accommodation close to the park.

Bumdra Trek, Bhutan

Add an overnight trek to your Bhutan holiday. Follow a trail from Paro to the Bumdra Monastery, high above the Paro Valley then descend to Taktsang Monastery by a little trekked path. Enjoy high mountain views and spend a night camping below beautiful Bumdra Monastery. The fully supported trek includes a guide, trek crew, all camping equipment.

Why book this holiday with Mountain Kingdoms?

- This well-paced holiday offers an excellent balance between sightseeing, walking and travel as well as time to relax and explore at leisure.
- Our itinerary offers an excellent and varied programme of walks and stays in comfortable hotels in Bhutan.
- We include time at a colourful festival - a highlight of any holiday in Bhutan.
- Your tour will be led by professional, English-speaking guides who will be delighted to share their expert knowledge of the history, culture and nature of their home country.
- While in Kathmandu you will stay at award winning Dwarika's Hotel, one of the best hotels in Kathmandu and a unique heritage property.
- We have been pioneering holidays in Bhutan for over 30 years. Our M.D. Steve Berry, is one of the leading authorities on Bhutan in the travel industry and has written two books about his experiences in the Thunder Dragon Kingdom.
- Many members of the Mountain Kingdoms team have travelled extensively in Bhutan. If you have any questions about any aspect of this holiday please don't hesitate to give us a call on 01453 844400 or email info@mountainkingdoms.com.
- Our maximum group size is 12 for this trip. This provides for a genuine small group travel experience and helps reduce the negative aspects often associated with larger groups.
- We offer a flexible service and can extend your holiday with extra hotel nights, upgrades and exciting activities.
- As part of our commitment to 'Tourism Declares a Climate Emergency', we will be carbon-offsetting all international flights booked through us by donating funds to the Ecoan Tree Planting Project in Peru.
- If you wish to fly with a specific airline, from a regional UK airport or on alternative dates to the main group we would be happy to arrange this for you. Please contact our team for flight options, quotes and further information.

If we've tempted you to take your next holiday with us, we advise you to check availability and you can do this via our website: www.mountainkingdoms.com or by calling the team on +44 (0)1453 844400. Bookings can be made online, by phone or by completing a booking form and returning it to us. We can also provisionally hold places if you need time to consider your options.

What our clients say



This was a wonderful trip and an experience I will remember for a long time, particularly the climb up to the Tiger's Nest Monastery! We were very lucky to have Tshering as our tour leader, a very experienced guide and a really nice man. Everything went smoothly, thanks to the hard work he put in behind the scenes. Thanks to Mountain Kingdoms for offering such a good trip.

-Mrs L T, Oxfordshire

Personally the trip exceeded expectations in terms of accommodation, comfort, food etc and every day was just excellent. Bhutan has been a dream for a long time, and I was just in awe of the scenery, the wonderful people and all the special experiences.

-Mrs P, Devon



This trip was well structured to provide a very interesting look at a beautiful country. The balance of culture, hiking and being in nature, culminating in the Paro festival and ascending the Tiger's Nest monastery worked well. The walks were challenging but provided the perfect build up to Tiger's Nest.

-Mrs P H, London



A fantastic and memorable experience which exceeded all my expectations, superbly organised with excellent guides and drivers. A holiday of a lifetime, thank you all so very much.

-Mr R G, Shropshire

Absolutely perfect introduction to Bhutan with a mix of walks, guided tours of temples and dzongs, and a festival. Hotels were of high standard of comfort. Guide was knowledgeable, personable and really made the trip. Even the driving was a fascinating experience.

-Mr R A, Dorset



Bhutan is a magical experience - it surpassed our expectations. Excellent organisation. Superb attention to detail. This is the third time I have travelled with Mountain Kingdoms and every time the trips have been excellent. Mountain Kingdoms are our first choice of company for this type of trip.

-Mr & Mrs S, West Sussex

Mountain Kingdoms - distinctly different

Truly independent

In an age where many so-called 'independent' travel companies have in fact been bought out by multi-national giants, we remain fiercely independent with all the benefits this offers our clients.

Value for money prices with an emphasis on quality

We are not in the business of cutting our itineraries and services to the bone to offer eye-catching cheap prices. We use some of the best airlines, and typically 3 or 4 star hotels in cities. We include the majority of meals and private transport for road travel. We use excellent equipment and appoint well-trained staff and leaders. Last year, over 98% of our clients rated their Mountain Kingdoms holiday as 'excellent' or 'good'. We are members of AITO and bound by their quality charter.

Complete financial security

You can book with us confident that your holiday has full financial protection. Flight inclusive holidays are financially protected by the Civil Aviation Authority under ATOL licence number 2973 and 'Land Only' holidays are covered by a bond secured with ABTOT.

No Surcharge Guarantee

Your peace of mind is important to us so we have a No Surcharge Guarantee on all Land Only and Flight Inclusive bookings. This means that there will be no change to the price of your holiday once we have confirmed your booking, regardless of fluctuations in exchange rates or fuel prices.

Award winning Responsible Tourism

We feel strongly that all our holidays should benefit local communities, protect the environment and respect local traditions, religion and heritage. You can read more about the charities we support and our Responsible Tourism commitments and initiatives on the following page or at www.mountainkingdoms.com.

Genuine small group travel

Almost all of our holidays have a maximum group size of just 12, plus leader. This provides more contact with your leader, readier access to off-the-beaten-path areas, greater interaction with local communities and a reduced environmental impact.

Loyalty Discount

If you have previously travelled with us we recognise your loyalty with a discount on future trips.

Booking your holiday - it couldn't be easier

Once you've chosen your Mountain Kingdoms holiday you can book online, call the office or complete and post a booking form which can be found in our brochure or downloaded from our website. If you would like to hold a place on one of our trips, whilst you make up your mind, please give us a call to make a provisional booking. This is a no-obligation, no-cost booking and we will hold your place until space comes under pressure or we need your decision.

Comprehensive information

When we receive your booking we send you a full trip dossier which contains details of visas and vaccinations required, a suggested gear and clothing list and lots of useful information. In fact, everything you need to know to give you peace of mind and allow you to prepare for your trip of a lifetime.



RESPONSIBLE TOURISM STATEMENT

For almost four decades, Mountain Kingdoms has been offering people the chance to visit amazing places on this extraordinary planet. We now have trips to all corners of the globe but are conscious that our holidays can have a detrimental impact on the world around us and want to do all we can to reduce that.

We have focused our main responsible tourism efforts on reducing the carbon emissions produced by our holidays, and counterbalancing this carbon by supporting carbon offset measures. Here are some of our current and future plans to minimise the impact of our business as a whole.

Carbon offsetting

Since 2007, we have donated a percentage of our client and staff flight costs to the Ecoan tree planting project in Peru. Ecoan are a trusted local NGO who use the funds directly to purchase seedling trees with the long-term goal of restoring 2.5 million acres of Andean land.

Ecoan maintains over 100 tree nurseries across Peru where their tree saplings are grown and then transported to planting sites during the rainy season. They use native trees such as the Polylepis, as these can survive at high altitudes. As well as sequestering carbon, they help protect against soil erosion, landslides and the effects of extreme weather on local crops. As such, they are enormously beneficial to the economic well-being of the surrounding communities. This is very much a community-led conservation project, with the local Quechuan people coming together to plant tens of thousands of saplings in the Andean highlands where they live. During the annual Queuña Raymi (tree festival), over 150,000 native trees can be planted in a single day!

For every person booking a long-haul, flight inclusive holiday with us, Ecoan can purchase and plant 20 trees in Peru, and for short-haul flights, 7 trees. Typically, we send over \$7,000 per year to Ecoan, which is over 7,000 trees.

Reducing carbon emissions

- ✓ We offer the majority of our clients a free, filtered Water-to-Go bottle to help reduce the need for single-use plastic bottles during their travels.
- ✓ We predominantly use locally-owned hotels and guesthouses rather than multinational chains. In some of our destinations, such as Bhutan, we use homestays. Not only does this type of small-sized, locally-owned accommodation have a much-reduced carbon footprint, but it also helps support communities.
- ✓ We evaluate our flights to make sure we are using the most fuel-efficient airlines with the youngest fleets and, where possible, choose direct flights for each trip.
- ✓ We have stopped offering unnecessary optional flights, such as Everest sightseeing. We try to minimise internal flights where possible.
- ✓ We recycle as much of our office waste as possible and have introduced a client portal to reduce paperwork and to make it easier for clients to manage their trips online.

Wider commitment to responsible and sustainable tourism

- ✓ We are signatories to the Tourism Declares a Climate Emergency initiative to stand alongside other like-minded travel companies to initiate best practices to make tourism as sustainable as possible.
- ✓ We will continue to support several charities with whom we have a long-standing relationship, such as Shiva Charity in Nepal.

Over the years, we have given sizeable payments to emergency relief when a disaster has occurred in the countries we operate in. We always try to ensure that these funds go directly to those who need them most to help rebuild their lives.

