

Chorten Path Trek, Bhutan

Follow the original Chorten Path to reach the least visited of all the Himalayan capitals, Thimphu and continue to the original capital, Punakha.



Group departures

See overleaf for departure dates

Holiday overview

Style	Trek
Accommodation	Hotels, Camping
Grade	Moderate / Vigorous
Duration	18 days from London to London
Trekking / Walking days	On trek: 9 days Walks on: 1 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	4,210m/13,812ft, Simkota La, day 8

Private Departures & Tailor Made itineraries available



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Departures

Group departures

2022 Dates:

Mon 21 Mar - Thu 07 Apr

Sat 08 Oct - Tue 25 Oct

Will the trip run?

This trip is guaranteed to run for 4 people and for a maximum of 8. 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.

Group prices and optional supplements

Please contact us on +44 (0)1453 844400 or visit our website for our land only and flight inclusive prices and single supplement options.

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. Guides receive regular 'top-up' training and 15 of our regular leaders have completed an extended training course run by Mountain Kingdoms in Bhutan.

Your trip highlights

- Trek the original trail linking the Paro, Thimphu and Punakha valleys
- Camp in the wilderness, fully supported, amongst high mountains and pristine forests
- Experience traditional rural villages, with beautiful architecture and friendly people
- Visit dzongs and the famous Tiger's Nest Monastery

At a glance itinerary

Days 1-2	Fly to Kathmandu.
Day 3	Fly to Paro. Sightseeing.
Day 4	Walk to Taktsang Monastery.
Day 5-9	Trek to Thimphu via Jili Dzong and Jana Tsho. Cross the Simkota La to Labana. End trek. Drive to Thimphu.
Day 10	Sightseeing in Thimphu.
Day 11	Walk to Wangditse Monastery. Drive to Chumina. Trek to Bala Keba.
Days 12-14	Trek across the Sinchu La Pass and continue to Chorten Ningpo. End trek and drive to Punakha. Visit Dzong.
Day 15	Drive to Paro. Sightseeing en route.
Days 16-18	Fly to Kathmandu. At leisure. Fly to London.

Trip summary

Before the early 1960s the only means of travel within Bhutan was on foot or horseback, along mule tracks that linked one valley with another. The main route linking the most important townships and crossing the Himalayan foothills, which separate the central valleys, was known as the 'Chorten Path'. Even the Presidents and Prime Ministers of India took seven days on horseback from the border if they wished to visit the King in Thimphu.

Our trek follows the now mainly disused trail along its most interesting and scenic sections. This really heightens expectation as you first trek from Paro towards the least visited of all the Himalayan capitals, Thimphu, and then onwards to the original capital, Punakha. It gives you a real feel of how remote the Kingdom must have been before the advent of the road.

It is a tremendously varied walk on which you will see panoramas of the eastern Himalaya, visit a haunted monastery, stay in tented camps, pass mountain lakes, look around a meditation centre and hermit retreat, meet nomadic yak men, walk through virgin forests and along ridges and visit villages. One of our trek leaders has described it as having a 'chocolate box' quality.

This is one of our most popular Bhutan trips, as it is extremely varied and combines some excellent, straightforward trekking with the chance to see a lot of the culture, people and places of the 'Kingdom of the Thunder Dragon'.

Please ask us for details of our Druk Path trek if you would prefer to just trek the Paro to Thimphu section of the itinerary.

Your trip itinerary

Day 1: Depart London.

Depart London on your overnight flight to Kathmandu.

Overnight: In flight

Day 2: Arrive Kathmandu.

You will be met on arrival and transferred to your hotel. You might like to venture out to nearby Thamel for your evening meal, or eat in the restaurant if you are tired from your journey.

Overnight: Hotel Shanker or Similar, Kathmandu

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

Transfer for the flight by Druk Air, Bhutan's national airline, to Paro, the country's main airstrip. The flight often gives fantastic views of the Himalaya, including Everest, and particularly exciting is the section through the Bhutanese foothills and the thrilling landing. Try to sit on the left hand side of the plane.

You will be met on arrival by your Bhutanese guide and transferred to your hotel. Depending on the the flight schedule there may be time for a little sightseeing in the afternoon.

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

Day 4: Walk to view Taktsang Monastery. Sightseeing in the Paro Valley.

This morning you drive up the valley to the trail head for the walk up to the famous Tiger's Nest, Taktsang Monastery. 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 is 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 Taktsang, 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 but the further half an hour's ascent is well worth it in any case, as it brings you to another viewpoint directly across from Taktsang. If you are able to make a visit, the final section of the walk takes you from here steeply down 100m/330ft into the gorge that separates you from the monastery and then climbs back up again to reach the monastery gate. You descend back to the valley floor by your outward route and then drive back to Paro. The full walk to Taktsang and back involves approximately 740m/2,428ft of ascent.

In the afternoon you may visit the Ta Dzong. Situated above Paro Dzong, this 17th century circular watchtower is home to Bhutan's National Museum. Having undergone a major renovation, the museum showcases a wealth of Bhutan's most significant cultural and artistic treasures. There might also be time to visit the ancient temple of Kyichu Lakhang, which was one of 108 temples built by Songsten Gampo, an important early Tibetan king, in an attempt to 'pin down' a Bon demon, which was thought to be hovering over the whole of Tibet.

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

Day 5: Trek to Jili Dzong, 3,450m/11,319ft - 4½ hours.

Today you start your first trek. The route is part of the original mule track that linked Thimphu Valley with Paro Valley and ultimately connected Bhutan to the Indian border. The walk is always done from Paro to Thimphu, as baggage horses are only available in Paro. It is a much more exciting way of reaching Bhutan's capital than by road and after five days trekking the sense of anticipation is keenly felt.



The walk starts behind Paro Dzong itself. Starting from the watchtower, the path winds its way slowly and steadily upward, through the forest towards the ridgeline of the Himalayan foothills above. As the day passes, the views below of the highly cultivated Paro Valley, the Queen Mother's Winter Palace, and the monastery/fortress itself are wonderful. The walk is firstly through pine, then bamboo, followed by birch and finally rhododendron. You will probably have lunch near a Mani wall. Your campsite for the night is in a clearing just a few hundred feet below Jili Dzong. You will see plenty of interesting flora and fauna throughout the day and many interesting birds.

Overnight: Camp (Meals: BLD)

Day 6: Trek to a large yak herders' camp, 3,770m/12,367ft - 5 hours.

It is a short twenty minute hike from the camp to Jili Dzong. This is a large monastery which is supposedly haunted and contains a huge statue of Padma Sambhava. There are birds nesting in the arrow slits and old Mongol helmets and shields hanging on the walls. The building was until very recently deserted, but has now undergone some renovation and is in use again. It sits astride a ridge, which affords dramatic views of the valleys on both sides and the Himalaya to the north. On a clear day the second highest mountain in Bhutan can be seen, Mt. Chomolhari, 7,314m/23,997ft.

The path now follows a ridge for a short while before descending into forest. It then follows a snake-like route on rather magical paths, along mountainsides and through many different types of rhododendron. Occasionally you may meet local yak herdsman and take in wonderful views of mountains, including another large peak called Kangcheeta. You will see this mountain has two peaks and is split by a straight, pronounced gully - locals believe that Kangcheeta is the brother of Chomolhari (female mountain goddess) who hit him with a stick because he wanted to marry her.

To the south, the Dagala range dominates the skyline. Below Mt. Kangcheeta there is a temple, Tshomphu Monastery, where an idol is supposed to float in the air. Our guides tell us they visited the temple and it was possible to pass a string underneath the statue, thus proving it floated. Eventually you pass through a number of yak herder clearings, stopping for the night at the largest of them.

Overnight: Camp (Meals: BLD)

Day 7: Day 7 Trek to Jana Tsho, 3,956m/12,979ft - 7 hours.

From camp the path ascends to gain the ridge and then traverses along it, first one side and then the other, with wonderful mountain views. Eventually you cross a small pass and circle round, until above Jimi Langtsho Lake, a large, beautiful lake stocked with trout. A large chorten (religious obelisk) stands at one end. You zigzag down to the shore, which is thick with rhododendron and hemmed in by rocky bluffs. The path then leads up from the lake and along cliff paths with massive drops below. Eventually you arrive at a second lake, Jana Tsho, another magical campsite.

Overnight: Camp (Meals: BLD)

Day 8: Trek to Labana across the Simkota La, 4,210m/13,812ft - 3½ hours.

Again, there is a lovely walk today in glorious high mountain country, crossing the highest pass of your trip, the Simkota La (also known as Phume La) 4,210m/13,812ft. From the lake a wide stone path between rhododendrons leads down to traverse a basin which contains the third lake. Two other lakes are above and out of sight, one male, one female. Collectively they are called Dungkar Tsho. The latter of these has a very strong spirit and if anything 'dirty' is done nearby, a cloud comes down and only goes away with many prayers. The path is a mixture now of small passes and mountain tracks, some of which wander underneath cliffs. It is here you will reach Labana your campsite for tonight. The rest of the day will be free to explore the area.



Overnight: Camp (Meals: BLD)

Day 9: Trek to Phadjoding and on to the end of the road, 2,350m/7,710ft - 5-7 hours. Drive to Thimphu. Sightseeing.

This morning you may meet monks on their way from Thimphu to visit the sacred lake of Jimi Langtsho, where they meditate for a few days before returning. The rocky mountain next to the highest pass, Thujedraj, used to be used for sky burials in the old days. Lower down there is one smaller pass with a chorten which looks directly down onto Thimphu.

The path zigzags down to Phadjoding (2½ hours). There will be time to see the temples. There is a recent one, constructed with funds donated by the fourth king's secretary, dedicated to Padma Samb Hava, but the 9th and 16th Jey Khempos (head monks of Bhutan) built the two main ones. These are gorgeous buildings with golden roofs, and acolyte monks will show you the inner temples. Phadjoding is a great meditation centre and there are a number of houses dedicated to retreat. A particular type of branch is put outside the front door, showing that the incumbent is not to be disturbed. High up on the cliff behind Phadjoding is a famous hermit temple, built many hundreds of years ago and still used today.

It takes three or four hours to reach the road, descending through the forest, steeply at times, on a well-worn path. It is worth getting up early for the clear views of the Eastern Himalaya. Seen clearly on the horizon behind the temples is the highest mountain in Bhutan, Gangkar Punsum, at 7,550m/24,770ft now the highest unclimbed peak in the world. There are several paths leading down to Thimphu; perhaps the best is the one leading to the Radio Station, which takes about 3 hours. Quite often the valley below may be filled with cloud, with just the mountains poking up into the clear air. Your vehicle will meet you at the roadhead for the short transfer to your hotel in town. Later there should be time for a little sightseeing.

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

Day 10: Sightseeing in Thimphu.

Today you have a full day for sightseeing in Thimphu. The town has an attractive valley location and is relatively small for a capital city, although it has expanded significantly in recent years. Initially you might drive up to see the large Buddha statue, perched above the town which has tremendous views. There are many places of interest to visit in Thimphu, including the Tashichhodzong (the main government building and religious complex), 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 also interesting to visit the handmade paper workshop to see the paper being made - 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!

In the afternoon 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, the 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 11: Walk to Wangditse Monastery. Drive to Chumina. Trek to Bala Keba, 3,250m/10,663ft.

This morning 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 1.5 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 a 8 year course and is also home to some fantastic UNESCO monitored 12th century paintings. You will then meet your vehicle and be driven back to Thimphu.

After lunch you will drive to the village of Chumina where you will start your trekking again. You will trek for around 2-3 hours up through mixed forest of hemlock and fir, which get more impressive in size as you climb, also through rhododendron. Finally you arrive at a clearing amongst giant trees at a place called Bala Keba. From here you will have glimpses of snow peaks to the west.

Overnight: Camp (Meals: BLD)

Day 12: Trek to Dopshing Pang, 2,450m/8,038ft - 5-6 hours.

From the camp it takes about half an hour to reach the Sinchu La Pass, approximately 3,400m/11,155ft. The track winds up through thick forest and is quite steep and can be muddy in places, but is an easy path. The pass is marked by a square chorten and affords wonderful views of the Eastern Himalaya. Villages can be seen in the distance including Thinleygang. The walk down to camp takes about 3½ to 4 hours and the path down is easy, though rocky in places. Eventually the path opens out on to an open slope where you camp. Sunsets here can be spectacular on the peaks in the distance.

Overnight: Camp (Meals: BLD)

Day 13: Trek to Chorten Ningpo, 1,850m/6069ft - 3½-4hours.

From camp it is 1½ hrs down to the river, an easy but rocky path through the forest that becomes increasingly lush and sub-tropical. There is a clearing for a rest spot just before the river is reached. You cross it at a small waterfall, before the valley opens out into cultivated fields with occasional houses which make up the hamlet of Helo; this is a beautiful walk and a lovely village. A gentle two hours or so on the same contour brings you to the village of Gabji, where you camp outside the impressive dzong/monastery of Chorten Ningpo. There are orange groves and a temple, which dates back to 'The Divine Madman', Drukpa Kunley, which can be visited. There is a tree outside, which is supposed to have sprouted up after Drukpa Kunley sent a thunderbolt from an adjoining valley. It is possible to buy local wine, sin-chang, at the village. You may have the opportunity to visit village houses, or the very energetic may choose to trek up to Gabji Tso, a holy lake two hours through the forest along an old irrigation channel, or you could try a wash in the village 'bath'.



Overnight: Camp (Meals: BLD)

Day 14: End trek. Drive to Punakha. Visit Punakha Dzong.

If you didn't visit yesterday, the holy lake, Gab Jitso, some two hours away is worth a visit and you may like to explore in this direction and return to the village. The trek down to the rough road takes only about an hour, passing through the pretty village of Kabesa. There are fabulous views back up the valley.

The vehicle will meet you here and you drive to Punakha, the old winter capital, where you will visit the Dzong. It is said that the remains of the first Shabdrung are kept in the very top room of the highest tower of the main monastery/fortress at Punakha. Only the king and the head of the monastic order, the Jey Khempo, are allowed to enter this room. In 1994 there was a terrible flood in Punakha caused by a glacial lake bursting its banks. It killed many people and caused considerable damage. The corner of the dzong was washed away and 'miraculously' temple idols were left suspended above the water. The dzong has now been beautifully restored and embellished. As with all these places there are many fascinating stories. One of the best ones

about Punakha is how, when the Shabdrung was surrounded by enemies and under siege in the dzong, one of his followers, dressed up as a peasant and carried him out through the besieging armies in a basket on his back, pretending that he was carrying a sack of vegetables.

Overnight: Zhingkhram Resort or Damchen Resort or Similar, Punakha (Meals: BLD)

Day 15: Drive to Paro. Sightseeing en route.

The drive to Paro on winding mountain roads takes about three or four hours and crosses the Dochu La, 3,140m/10,302ft, where on a clear day panoramic views can be had of the Eastern Himalaya, including the highest peak in Bhutan, Gangkar Punsum, 7,550m/24,770ft. You will probably have lunch at one of the new cafeterias on the Dochu La before continuing on your journey back to Paro, a further 2 hours driving. Along the way there will be opportunities for sightseeing.

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

Day 16: Fly to Kathmandu.

Today you will have another opportunity to fly past Everest, Makalu and Kangchenjunga on the short flight to Kathmandu. Try to sit on the right hand side of the plane this time! There are fabulous views of the Himalaya in every direction. On arrival transfer back to your hotel. The rest of the day is yours to relax or enjoy some sightseeing or shopping.



Overnight: Hotel Shanker or Similar, Kathmandu (Meals: B)

Day 17: Day at leisure. Group transfer to airport. Depart for London.

You will have time at leisure in Kathmandu today when you may do some sightseeing or shopping or simply relax at your hotel. Later there will be a transfer to the airport for your overnight flight to the UK.

Overnight: In flight (Meals: B)

Day 18: Arrive London.

Our grading system

Chorten Path Trek is graded as a Moderate/Vigorous trekking holiday, as described below.

Moderate

Holidays in this grade typically involve 5 to 10 days of walking or trekking. They will often venture into more remote country and can cross mountain passes. Altitudes though are still relatively low, going no higher than around 4,300m/14,000ft. Accommodation can include simple hotels, tea houses, lodges and camping.

Vigorous

Typically these trips involve 8 to 14 days (occasionally more) trekking in relatively remote landscapes. High passes up to 4,900m/16,000ft may be crossed (sometimes snow-covered) and there may also be glacier travel and peak ascents. Walking days can be between 5 and 8 hours with considerable ascents and descents. This grade also covers some European treks of shorter durations. Overnight stops on trek could be in tea houses, mountain huts or camping.

These holidays would suit enthusiastic hill/mountain walkers.

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:

- ✓ An English speaking Bhutanese leader
- ✓ Economy class return air fares from the UK & UK Departure Tax (flight inclusive only)
- ✓ Single, timed group airport transfers for international flights on arrival and departure
- ✓ All internal flights and hotel/airport transfers
- ✓ Bhutan visa & departure tax
- ✓ Nepal departure tax
- ✓ 4 star hotel in Kathmandu, on a twin share and bed & breakfast basis
- ✓ In Bhutan good standard hotel accommodation in main towns and best available hotels in outlying towns, on a twin share, full board basis.
- ✓ One night homestay with all meals
- ✓ The use of a good quality down jacket and sleeping bag (when travelling to Bhutan via Kathmandu).
- ✓ All camping facilities (twin share tents) and all meals on trek. Camp staff to carry out all camp work
- ✓ All road transport by private vehicles
- ✓ Sightseeing where specified
- ✓ Carbon offsetting with the Ecoan Tree Planting Project (for clients taking our flight inclusive option)
- ✓ A free high-quality Mountain Kingdoms kit bag
- ✓ The opportunity to attend a pre-trip meet in the Cotswolds

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.

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

Your accommodation

Note: We will endeavour to secure the hotels named in the itinerary but if our first choice of hotel is not available 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:



Hotel Shanker or Similar, Kathmandu

The Shanker is a 4* heritage hotel situated just a 10-15 minute walk from the tourist area of Thamel. It has an outdoor swimming pool, a spa and a lovely garden, plus a choice of restaurants and bars. Rooms are large, elegant and well-equipped. The hotel is a converted royal palace with a fascinating history which in recent years has undergone a thorough and tasteful renovation.



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.



Phuntso Pelri Hotel or Similar, Thimphu

Despite its somewhat dark entrance hall, this relatively 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 Damchen 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. Alternatively, the Damchen Resort is a newly renovated hotel sitting on the banks of the Puna Chhu River in the Punakha Valley. Rooms are clean, cosy and bright with good amenities, wooden furniture and nice decorative touches. The hotel is a short, easy walk from the small town of Khuruthang which has a selection of shops and restaurants.

Camping

On our camping treks, the following are provided: a sleeping tent, a dining tent, a toilet tent exclusively for your group to use, and a kitchen tent. There are camp chairs or stools, a kerosene / gas lamp or candles for reading in the dining tent at night, a dining table, crockery and tableware. The staff put up and take down the tents, make the tea, cook the food, wash the dishes, and load the porters or pack animals. Your kit bag is carried for you either by porters or pack animals and you trek with just a light day sack.

Meal arrangements

Bed and Breakfast in Kathmandu, all meals included in Bhutan in hotels and on trek.

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.

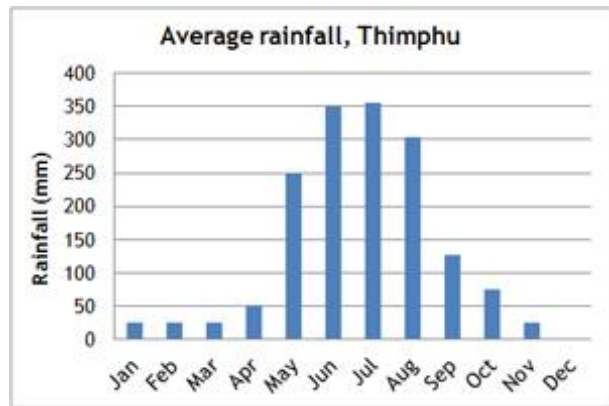
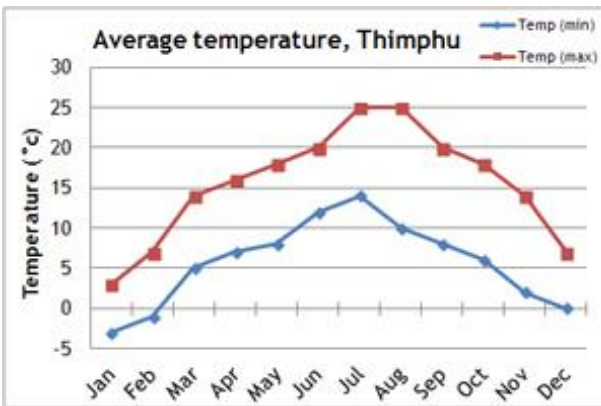
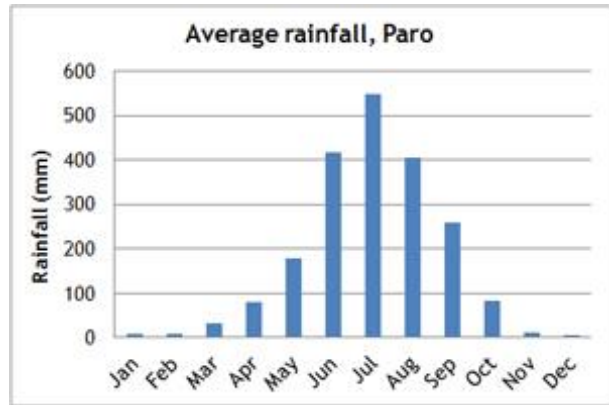
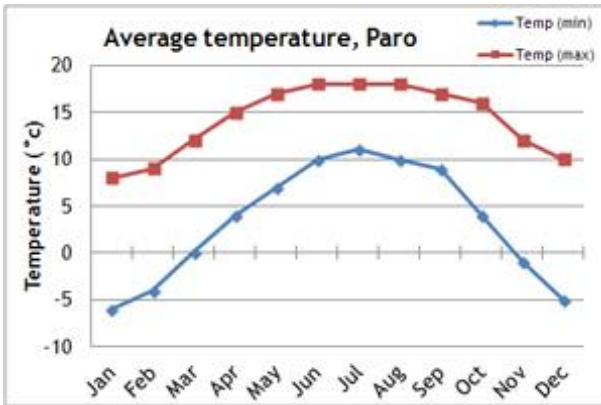
Further information

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.

Climate information



Extensions

Extending your holiday

If you would like additional inspiration on how or where to extend your holiday please call us on 01453 844400. Alternatively, you can download a range of extension information sheets on our website, at www.mountainkingdoms.com.



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.

Bumthang Extension

A five night extension taking in the key sights of the cultural heartland of Bhutan. The Bumthang region is a centre for Bhutanese weaving and is home to some of the country's most spectacular temples and fortresses. It is also very scenic and offers ample opportunities for walks along its four main valleys.



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

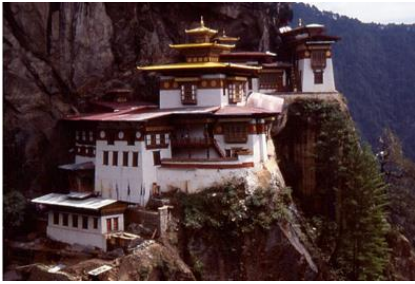
Extend your stay in Bhutan with an extension to the Royal Manas National park, a wonderful birder's paradise close to the Indian border. Our extension package gives you three full days to explore the park and surrounding area, and you will be accompanied throughout by a specialist bird and wildlife guide.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

Why book this holiday with Mountain Kingdoms?

- Other UK tour operators offer the 'Druk Path' trek. However none, to our knowledge, tie in the second 'Sinchu La' trek. This offers more time trekking in Bhutan with the opportunity to visit places such as Chorten Ningpo and its quintessential rural architecture.
- We provide a good quality down jacket, sleeping bag and liner to be used, free of charge, on trek. We also give you a high quality Mountain Kingdoms kit bag to use and keep.
- Your trek will be led by a knowledgeable, well-trained English-speaking leader supported by an experienced trekking crew who will provide an excellent standard of service. Your gear will be portered for you so all you need to carry is a small daypack.
- 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 writing two books about his experiences in the Thunder Dragon Kingdom
- We have been working with our partners in Bhutan for many years. Their knowledge, experience and attention to detail means you can be assured of a very high quality holiday.
- Many members of the Mountain Kingdoms team have first-hand experience of Bhutan. Steve and Seraphina Berry and Niki Morgan have all completed the Druk Path Trek and know Bhutan very well. They would be happy to answer any questions you may have.
- Our maximum group size is 12 for this trip. This provides for a genuine small group travel experience and helps reduce the negative aspects associated with larger trekking groups.
- 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 Flights 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



Food on trek was excellent. Well organised itinerary. Good standard of service from the office, like the personal approach.

-Mrs C, Reading

Our trek leader and his team throughout the trek could not have been more helpful - they were all knowledgeable and could not be faulted in anything they did. The food that was prepared for us was incredible compared to similar holidays we have been on.

-Mrs F, Ross-shire



The trek leader was extremely generous of himself with a great knowledge of his country - the land and its politics and religion. He and all the staff on the trek were very well organised, the cook was fantastic and the food was delicious.

-Ms A, London

The choice of route and places visited and the organisation of the holiday was faultless. Bhutan lived up to expectations and beyond.

-Mr H & Mrs W, Cornwall



Bhutan was a wonderful country to visit - we felt privileged to be able to visit - beautiful scenery, friendly people, colourful surroundings. We felt the route, accommodation and staff were carefully selected by Mountain Kingdoms, who also managed our travel arrangements and expectations very well.

-Mr H, Wiltshire

Very efficient organisation and exceptional service from local staff - very professional, courteous and attentive. Good balance between trekking (natural beauty) and well-informed sightseeing (culture). Quite apart from the astonishing beauties that Bhutan itself has to offer.

-Ms B, London

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 CLIMATE EMERGENCY PLAN



For over 33 years, Mountain Kingdoms has been offering people the chance to visit amazing places on this extraordinary planet. We now offer trips to all corners of the world, but we are conscious that inevitably our holidays have a detrimental impact on the world around us, and we want to do all we can to reduce our carbon emissions. We are a signatory to Tourism Declares a Climate Emergency, along with a growing number of like-minded, reputable tour operators. For more information, please visit www.tourismdeclares.com

From 2020 onwards, we will be focusing on how we can reduce the carbon emissions that our holidays produce, and how to counterbalance 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

Already doing:

- ✓ We have been offsetting carbon since 2007, but will be increasing our donations to the [Ecoan tree planting project](#) in Peru this year. This is with a trusted partner where the funds go directly to a project where the community plants trees on its own land.

Will do:

- ✓ We are working on making our carbon offsetting more accurate and targeted.
- ✓ In future, we will add to that a further estimate for carbon produced by hotels, local road travel, trains and internal flights to arrive at a carbon offset sum for each trip we operate.
- ✓ Carbon offsetting will be included in our holiday prices. For our Flight Inclusive holidays it will include the international flight and any emissions produced by inland travel and accommodation. Our Land Only prices will include the cost of offsetting emissions caused by inland travel and accommodation.

Reducing Carbon Emissions

Already doing:

- ✓ We already offer the majority of our customers a free filtered water bottle which means they can instantly cut down on their single-use plastic consumption. This will be an ongoing project.
- ✓ We already predominantly use locally owned hotels, but will continue to ensure that, where possible, we use these rather than multinational chains.
- ✓ We have joined the Tourism Declares a Climate Emergency initiative to stand alongside like-minded travel companies, to work together to initiate best practices to make tourism as sustainable as possible.

Will do:

- ✓ We will re-evaluate our flights to make sure we are using the most fuel efficient airlines with the youngest fleets and, where possible, direct flights for each trip.
- ✓ We will stop offering unnecessary optional flights – for example our Everest sightseeing trip.
- ✓ We will eliminate unnecessary staff flights wherever possible.
- ✓ We will look at minimising internal flights.
- ✓ We will be asking all our worldwide agents and suppliers to look at their own carbon footprint and encourage them to reduce it.
- ✓ We will promote our more low impact trips to give customers an informed choice.

As part of our wider commitment to Responsible Tourism, we will continue to support a number of charities with whom we have had a long standing relationship over many years. These include: Shiva Charity in Nepal (Ginette Harrison School), Simien Mountains Mobile Medical Service and Porter Welfare, as well as setting aside a sum for emergency disaster relief should the need arise.

