

## Lingshi Laya Trek, Bhutan

One of the finest treks in the Himalaya: remoteness, fantastic mountains and fascinating villages.



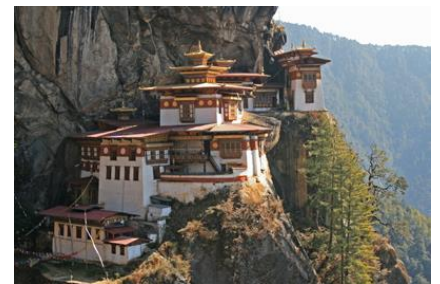
### Group departures

See overleaf for departure dates

### Holiday overview

Style	Trek
Accommodation	Hotels, Camping
Grade	Strenuous
Duration	20 days from London to London
Trekking / Walking days	On Trek: 11 days Walks on: 1 day
Min/Max group size	5 / 12. Guaranteed to run for 5
Trip Leader	Local Leader Bhutan
Land only	Joining in Kathmandu, Nepal
Max altitude	5,005m/16,420ft, Shingela Pass, day 13

**Private Departures & Tailor Made itineraries available**



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# Departures

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## Group departures

### 2022 Dates:

Sat 30 Apr - Thu 19 May

Sat 08 Oct - Mon 24 Oct      With Chomolhari Mountain Festival

### Will the trip run?

This trip is guaranteed to run for 5 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.

### 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

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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

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- Look for rare tigers in the high mountains where the BBC filmed 'Lost Land of the Tiger'
- Trek amidst the highest mountains in Bhutan with spectacular scenery from start to finish
- Spend time in the remote mountain village of Laya where the welcoming local people wear unique bamboo hats and jewellery
- Attend the Chomolhari Mountain Festival on our autumn departure
- Enjoy first-rate camping facilities on trek
- Relax in a 4 star hotel in Kathmandu before and after your trek

## At a glance itinerary

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Days 1-2	Arrive Kathmandu.
Days 3-4	Fly to Paro. Visit Taktsang Monastery and sightseeing in the Paro Valley.
Day 5	Trek from Olathang to Kyichu. Drive to Gunitsawa. Trek to Shana.
Days 6-7	Trek to Soi Thangthanka and to Chomolhari Base Camp, 4,090m/13,418ft.
Day 8	Rest day and acclimatisation walks to Tsho Phu lakes or Jitchu Drake Base Camp. Autumn departure attends the Chomolhari Mountain Festival.
Days 9-10	Trek to Lingshi via the Nyelela Pass, 4,890m/16,043ft. Visit Lingshi Dzong and trek to Chebisa.
Days 11-12	Trek to Shomuthang and to Robulathang via the Jarela Pass, 4,785m/15,699ft..
Days 13-14	Cross the Shingela Pass, 5,005m/16,420ft. Trek to Laya, 3,840m/12,598ft.
Day 15	Trek to Koena. End trek and drive to Punakha.
Day 16	Visit Punakha Dzong and Chimi Lakhang. Drive to Thimphu.
Day 17	Sightseeing in Thimphu. Drive to Paro.
Days 18-20	Fly to Kathmandu. Fly to London.

## Trip summary

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This is our most popular long distance trek in Bhutan and takes you along the remote northern border with Tibet. We were the first British company to travel this path in 1988 and have run the trek almost every year since. Our itinerary results from considerable experience. Any shorter and we believe that there would not be sufficient time for proper acclimatisation and to rush through this region would mean you miss the very point of being there; it remains rarely travelled and unspoilt.

One of the highlights of this trek is local people that you will meet en route - both the semi-nomadic yak herders that camp in black yak hair tents, often seen now with solar panels stuck outside, and the hospitable inhabitants of the unbelievably remote small stone villages that you will pass. If you travel on our autumn 2021 departure, you may join the locals in celebration of their culture at the Chomolhari Mountain Festival.

The mountain scenery is magnificent - most of the peaks being unclimbed, unmapped and un-named. You will pass underneath the second highest peak in Bhutan, Chomolhari, 7,314m/23,996ft, first climbed by Spencer Chapman in 1937 and now a forbidden peak on religious grounds. There are many passes to cross, offering tantalising panoramas of distant ranges and the opportunity to spot Blue Sheep. Flora and fauna are diverse and abundant at every stage of the journey.

We have the very best contacts in Bhutan as a result of Steven Berry's first-ever British mountaineering expedition to Gangkar Punsum in 1986. Since 1988 we have concentrated on pioneering many new trekking routes in Bhutan, quite a few of them British 'firsts' and we are proud to be the UK's leading operator to the Kingdom of the Thunder Dragon. We guarantee you will come back totally enthused about Bhutan's unique culture, people and magnificent scenery.

# Your trip itinerary

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## Day 1: Depart London.

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Fly overnight London to Kathmandu.

**Overnight: In flight**

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## Day 2: Arrive Kathmandu. Group transfer to hotel.

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

**Overnight: Hotel Shanker or Similar, Kathmandu**

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## Day 3: Fly to Paro in Bhutan.

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Transfer for the flight by Druk Air, Bhutan's national airline, to Paro. The flight often gives fantastic views of the Himalaya, including Everest, and of particular excitement is the section through the Bhutanese foothills and the thrilling landing. Try to sit on the left-hand side of the plane for the best mountain views. Your Bhutanese guide will meet you on arrival. Time permitting you may pay an initial visit to Paro town.



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

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## Day 4: Walk to Taktsang Monastery and sightseeing in the Paro Valley.

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Today you will walk up to the famous 'Tiger's nest', Taktsang Monastery, perched some 2,000ft (609m) up on a cliff overlooking the Paro valley and one of the iconic buildings of Bhutan. It is said to be the spot 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. The walk, which will provide good acclimatization, is quite steep and takes about 2-3 hours to go up, less to descend. You may choose to walk just as far as the tea house for fantastic views or climb to some prayer flags just above where the views are even better. If there is a particular religious gathering or VIP visit in progress, you will not be able to enter the monastery but in any case it is worth climbing for a further half hour beyond the tea house to another viewpoint directly across from the monastery. If you are allowed to visit the temple itself you have to descend steeply from this viewpoint about 100m/330ft on steps, only to climb again to reach the temple where it clings to the rock face. It was built to be isolated! You then descend to your vehicle and return to your hotel.

In the afternoon you will have time for some further sightseeing such as a visit to the Bhutan Museum or Paro Dzong and also time to relax and prepare for your trek.

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

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## Day 5: Trek from Olathang to Kyichu - 3 hours. Drive to Gunitsawa. Trek to Shana, 2,890m/9,482ft.

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Today you start your trek. You leave the hotel and walk up a hill to a village. You continue trekking along forested ridges until you reach Kyichu. You will visit the ancient temple of Kyichu Lhakang, one of the oldest in Bhutan, which was one of 108 temples built by Songtsen Gampo an important early Tibetan king, to pin down the Bon demon that was thought to hover over the whole of Tibet. From here it is an hour drive to Gunitsawa. It's a short walk through the army base at Gunitsawa to cross the river on a small bridge and start walking upstream to camp at Shana.

**Overnight: Camp (Meals: BLD)**

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**Day 6: Trek to Soi Thangthanka, 3,575m/11,729ft - 7-8 hours.**

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Your route still follows the river in heavily forested country, with isolated farmhouses and plenty of wildlife. The Bhutanese may advise you to walk in pairs, as there are bears in this area. You pass a junction en route, where another path leads north over the Tremo La to Tibet, crossed by Spencer Chapman in 1937 on his way to climb Chomolhari. In the afternoon the trail passes over several switchbacks and can be muddy in places - rocks have been strategically placed for you to hop across. After reaching a larger bridge, if lucky, you will get views of Chomolhari ahead, before the final climb to the large meadow which is your campsite. There is a simple hut here and you may well eat inside.

**Overnight: Camp (Meals: BLD)**

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**Day 7: Trek to Jangothang (Chomolhari Base Camp), 4,090m/13,418ft - 5-6 hours.**

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It is worth getting up early to photograph the dawn colours on Bhutan's second highest mountain, Chomolhari, 7,314m/23,997ft, which is framed at the end of the valley. After about an hour's walk, you slowly leave the forest line and gradually climb into a beautiful valley, passing Tengethang, a winter home of yak herdsman. You are still walking beside the river and you should see lots of yaks before arriving at Dangojang, the final small settlement before you reach base camp. There are a couple of stone buildings here, and nearby there are the ruins of an old fortress which used to guard Bhutan against Tibetan invasion. At the head of the valley is the huge stunning snowy peak of Jitchu Drake, 6,714m/22,027ft, with razor sharp ridges.

**Overnight: Camp (Meals: BLD)**

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**Day 8: Rest day and acclimatisation with walks to glacier, Tsho Phu lakes or Jitchu Drake Base Camp. Attend Mount Chomolhari Festival in the autumn.**

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It is highly advisable that you do some sort of walk today involving height gain in order to help with acclimatisation. There are several excellent walks to choose from. Highly recommended is to walk a short way up the valley towards Jitchu Drake before turning right to climb steeply uphill towards a hanging valley leading to the beautiful Tsho Phu Lakes, situated at about 4,350m/14,271ft. Alternatively, you can climb up the grassy ridge just north of the base camp to reach a small peak at 4,760m/15,617ft. Or you can walk up to Jitchu Drake base camp, or to the original Chomolhari base camp along the valley floor.



If travelling on our autumn 2021 departure you may join the festivities at the Mount Chomolhari Festival. This festival celebrates the culture of the local communities and the natural wonders of the region. Please note that the dates for this festival are provisional and may change.

**Overnight: Camp (Meals: BLD)**

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**Day 9: Trek to Lingshi, 4,149m/13,612ft, via the Nyelela Pass, 4,890m/16,043ft - 6-7 hours.**

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Today, weather permitting, you will have spectacular views of several stunning Himalayan peaks. You start climbing immediately and after some 3-4 hours reach the windy Nyelela Pass, 4,890m/16,043ft. You may well pass yak herders' Jhas (tents) where you may get invited in to sample tea, yoghurt and cheese - all three are acquired tastes! It is very special meeting these lovely people. After the pass you descend to a circular hut just before Lingshi, where you camp for the night. Coming down to Lingshi you obtain your first views of the truly mystical dzong atop its 183m/600ft high hill.

**Overnight: Camp (Meals: BLD)**

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**Day 10: Visit Lingshi Dzong and trek to Chebisa, 3,849m/12,628ft - 5-6 hours.**

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Today is an easier day and you will be able to view the outside of the Dzong and small settlement below it before setting off on trek. The school here serves several local villages. Leaving Lingshi behind you contour and climb gently to reach another delightful village, Gang Yul, which is set right below a 304m/1,000ft cliff. There is a very holy llakang here. Another hour's walking high above the valley floor brings you to a lovely little side

valley with a huge waterfall at one end and the Shangri-la village of Chebisa, where you camp by the side of the river. The trail leading up and past it leads to Tibet - about 12 miles away. There are plenty of blue sheep in this area and you should be able to get quite close to them. It is a very leisurely walking day today with plenty of reasons and opportunities to linger.

**Overnight: Camp (Meals: BLD)**

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**Day 11: Trek to Shomuthang, 4,220m/13,845ft - 6-7 hours.**

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Walking up to the top of the waterfall before breakfast is recommended for lovely early morning views of the valley. On your trek today you will encounter quite a stiff climb up to the Gombu La, 4,480m/14,698ft, before dropping to a deserted valley and crossing a river. You will either camp here, or climb up to Shomuthang. It will be another lovely day's walking today. You might see blood pheasants when passing through an area of rhododendrons.

**Overnight: Camp (Meals: BLD)**

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**Day 12: Trek to Robulathang, 4,160m/13,648ft, via the Jarela Pass, 4,785m/15,699ft - 7-8 hours.**

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It is a long haul over the Jarela Pass at 4,785m/15,699ft, where once again you get stunning all-round views including Mount Tsering Kang towering above. Then there is a steep drop on a forest trail to the Tcharijathang valley, where herds of Takin roam (the strange national animal of Bhutan), before crossing a river on a log bridge and steeply climbing to Robulathang where the camp will be located. Again, a stunning day's walk.

**Overnight: Camp (Meals: BLD)**

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**Day 13: Cross the Shingela Pass, 5,005m/16,420ft. Camp at Limithang, 4,140m/13,583ft - 6-7 hours.**

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This is the hardest day of the trek. Firstly you climb slowly up to the Shingela pass. This takes about 5 hours. You will be rewarded with stunning views of mountains, including the spectacular Gangchentak at the head of the valley. On a clear day almost all the mountains on the northern border are clearly visible, 10-20 miles distant. For those with energy, it is worth climbing a little higher to a small rocky peak. Eagles, griffin vultures, blue sheep and yak abound in this area. After the initial rough and rocky descent you finally reach a beautiful cedar forest and you will once again meet up with nomadic yak-herders, who may offer tea and curd in their yak-hair tents. Camp is set in a lovely spot on the riverbank.

**Overnight: Camp (Meals: BLD)**

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**Day 14: Trek to Laya, 3,840m/12,598ft - 4-5 hours. Explore village.**

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You will have a leisurely walk alongside the river through cedar and fir forest before descending to reach the largest village on the trek. The people of Laya are famous for their vertically-striped yak hair clothing and strange conical bamboo hats. The women wear long hair and a great deal of turquoise and jade jewellery. The features of the people are even more Tibetan/Mongolian than the Bhutanese who live in the central valleys. The rest of the day is spent at leisure, or visiting village houses. There are good views of Masagang, 7,165m/23,507ft, and other peaks. In the evening the local girls may dance for you. This will be the last night you spend with your trek crew.



**Overnight: Camp (Meals: BLD)**

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**Day 15: Trek to Koena, 3,240m/10,630ft - 7-8 hours. Drive to Punakha.**

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Today is a long day during which you will follow the Mo Chu River through its gorge; with an atmosphere akin to 'the Lost World' it is both gigantic and spectacular. You climb up and down through a heavily forested area with lots of birds and butterflies, to arrive at Koena - the end of your trek.

Your transport will meet you here and take you to Punakha.

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

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**Day 16: Sightseeing in Punakha. Drive to Thimphu.**

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Before leaving Punakha you will visit its spectacular Dzong. The main monastery/fortress in Punakha was the power base for the old system of re-incarnated rulers. The remains of the original ruler of Bhutan, Nawang Namgyal, are kept in a small room at the top of the highest tower; only the King and the head of the Monastic Order are allowed to enter it. Provided the head of the monastic order and his monks have not migrated from Thimphu, it should be possible to view the inner courtyards of Punakha Dzong. In 1997 there was a major flood in the town as a glacial lake burst up in the mountains causing tremendous havoc in the town. The dzong was badly damaged but has been beautifully restored and renovated.



You will also pay a visit to Chimi Lhakhang, taking a short walk across the paddy fields visit this delightful small 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 houses date back to his teachings. Chimi Lhakhang is especially popular with women who come here to pray for children. The temple is characterised by its many phallic symbols.

The drive to Thimphu, on winding mountain roads, takes about 2 hours and crosses the Dochu La, 3,116m/10,223ft where on a clear day panoramic views can be had of the eastern Himalaya, including the highest peak in Bhutan, Gangkar Punsum at 7,550m/24,770ft. You may have time for a little initial sightseeing when you reach Thimphu.

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

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**Day 17: Sightseeing in Thimphu. Drive to Paro.**

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Thimphu has been the permanent capital since 1955 and has two cinemas and a radio station. This is the least visited of all the Himalayan capitals. It has a population of around 100,000 and has wide streets and a rather relaxed air. Its sights include the Late King's Memorial Chorten, the Textile Museum, the Heritage Museum, the silversmiths and pottery workshops, the indigenous hospital specialising in herbal medicine, the thangka painting school, the Bhutanese paper factory, the recently built Changlingmithang Lhakhang temple, and the National Library.

In the afternoon you drive to Paro.

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

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**Day 18: Fly to Kathmandu.**

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Here you will have another chance to enjoy a flight along the Himalaya, passing Kangchenjunga, Makalu and Everest. On arrival in Kathmandu you will be transferred to your hotel, where rooms will be available from midday. The rest of the day is yours to enjoy some sightseeing, souvenir shopping or just relaxing at your hotel.

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

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**Day 19: Time at leisure. Group transfer to airport. Depart Kathmandu.**

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You will have time at leisure today in Kathmandu to do some sightseeing or shopping, or simply relax 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)**

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**Day 20: Arrive UK**

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## Our grading system

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Lingshi Laya Trek is graded as a Strenuous trekking holiday, as described below.

### **Strenuous**

Our strenuous trekking holidays can involve anything from 10 to 30 days on trek and are often in remote areas, far from 'civilisation'. Rest days are interspersed but there may be up to 7 consecutive days of hard walking. Most treks reach altitudes of at least 4,900m/16,000ft and there will be a great deal of ascent and descent. The majority of our strenuous treks utilise camping, tea house or mountain lodge accommodation.

These holidays are suitable for fit individuals who have regular experience of mountain walking.

## Trip altitude

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**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](http://www.medex.org.uk) as a good source of information.

## What the price includes

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**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 flights between Kathmandu and Paro and domestic transfers
- ✓ 4 star hotel accommodation in Kathmandu, on a twin share, bed and breakfast basis
- ✓ In Bhutan, good standard hotel accommodation in main towns and best available hotels in outlying towns, on twin share, full board basis
- ✓ Bhutan visa and Bhutan departure tax
- ✓ All road transport by private vehicles
- ✓ 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
- ✓ 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 one of our pre trip meets 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
- ✗ 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 [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

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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:



#### 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.



#### Zhingkham Resort Or Damchen Resort Or Similar, Punakha

Overlooking Punakha Dzong, and only opened in 2016, the Zhingkham 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.



#### 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.

### 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 lamp 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 just trek with a light day sack.

## Meal arrangements

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

## Flight arrangements

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### 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

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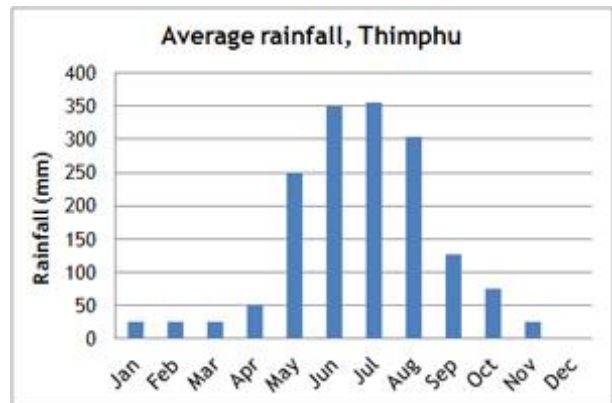
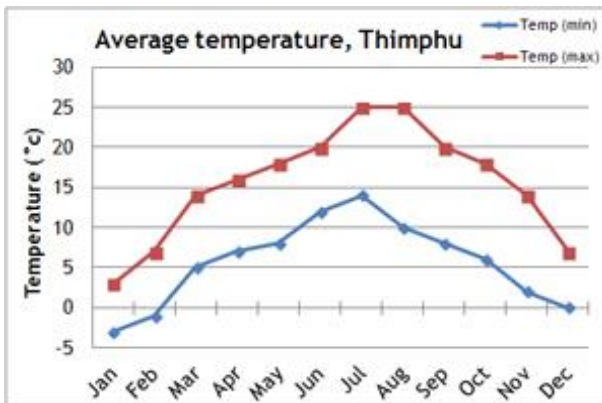
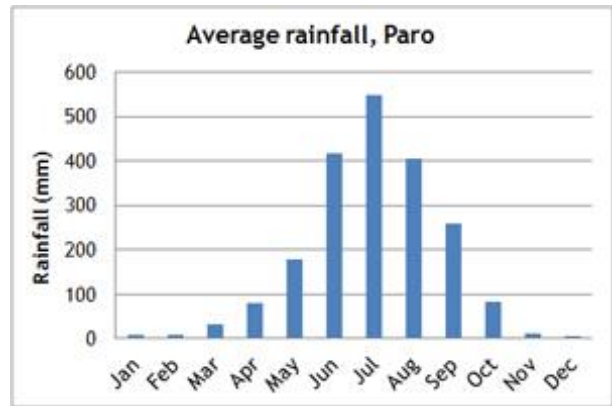
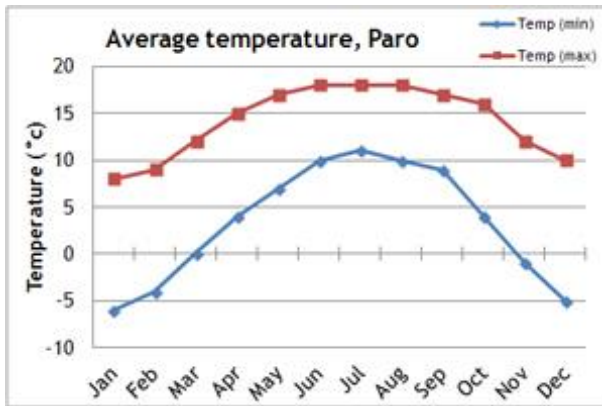
When we receive your booking, we send you a full Trip Dossier which contains details of any visas and vaccinations required, a suggested gear and clothing list and lots of useful information. If you do have queries at this initial stage do call us on 01453 844400 and we will be pleased to offer advice.

## The nature of adventure travel

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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

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## 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](http://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?

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- We were the first UK company to offer this route. Furthermore we offer a rest day at Chomolhari Base Camp.
- All of our treks are planned with the importance of good acclimatisation in mind. On this trip you will undertake an acclimatisation walk before the start of your trek.
- Your trek will be led by a knowledgeable, well-trained English-speaking guide 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 written two books about his experiences in the Thunder Dragon Kingdom.
- Many members of the Mountain Kingdoms team have first-hand experience of Bhutan. Steve and Seraphina Berry and Niki Morgan have all completed treks in this area and 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.
- 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 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](http://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

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*The trek was just absolutely brilliant. Everything from the country, to the trek, staff, support, back up, itinerary, food, everything, was faultless. The whole experience in Bhutan was unforgettable. Please pass on my thanks to all in the office for making the trip so special.*  
*-Mr S, Cornwall*

*Wonderful, we felt it gave a great picture of Bhutanese life, culture, flora and fauna and the people.*  
*-Mr & Mrs H, Bristol*



*Overall a fantastic holiday - good mix of trekking, scenery and culture. We were treated extremely well on trek - food, service - and not having to put up our own tents were all great!*  
*-Mr E, Exeter*

*Terrific location / fantastic scenery / fascinating culture particularly in Laya. Overall trip logistics in Bhutan were excellent. Group size of 10 was perfect.*  
*- Mr P, Canada*



# Mountain Kingdoms - distinctly different

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## **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](http://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](http://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.

