

Trans Bhutan Trail - Western Highlights New

Trek the best bits of Bhutan's new long distance trail, exploring villages, temples and ancient dzongs along the way.



Group departures

See overleaf for departure dates

Holiday overview

Style	Trek
Accommodation	Hotel, Camping
Grade	Moderate
Duration	14 days from London to London
Trekking / Walking days	Walks on: 5 days On trek: 3 days
Min/Max group size	4 / 12. Guaranteed to run for 4
Trip Leader	Local Leader Bhutan
Land only	Joining in Kathmandu, Nepal
Max altitude	3,140m/10,302ft, Dochu La, days 6 & 10

Private Departures & Tailor Made itineraries available



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Managing Director: Steven Berry. Registered in England No. 2118433. VAT No. 496 6511 08

Departures

Group departures

2022 Dates:

Sun 02 Oct - Sat 15 Oct

2023 Dates:

Sun 02 Apr - Sat 15 Apr

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.

Will the trip run?

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

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

- Walk and trek the best sections of the western end of Bhutan's new long-distance trail
- Experience traditional rural life, ancient cultural sights and beautiful scenery
- Avoid the toughest climbs of the trail with a carefully selected itinerary
- Visit Taktsang Monastery, the Tiger's Nest, and Punakha Dzong
- Spend time at a Bhutanese festival on the autumn departure

At a glance itinerary

Days 1-3	Fly to Kathmandu. Fly to Paro. Sightseeing
Day 4	Walk along the Trans Bhutan Trail to Dopshari. Drive to Thimphu.
Day 5	Sightseeing in Thimphu or visit Thimphu Tsechu in autumn. Walk to Simtokha Dzong.
Day 6	Drive to Dochu La. Walk trail to Toeb Chandana. Transfer to Punakha.
Days 7-9	Trek to Samtengang along the Trans Bhutan Trail via Lingmukha and Chungseykha.
Day 10	Drive to Dochu La. Walk to Hongtsho. Transfer to Paro.
Day 11	Walk to Taktsang Monastery.
Day 12	Fly to Kathmandu. Transfer to hotel. At leisure.
Days 13-14	Time at leisure. Overnight flight to UK.

Trip summary

For centuries the path connecting the villages, fortresses and sacred sites across the kingdom of Bhutan was the only way to access this remote country. Running from the Haa Valley in the west to Trashigang in the far east it provided the only route for Buddhist pilgrims as well as for internal trade and communications. With the recent development of the National Highway the trail fell into disuse until 2018 when a restoration project was set up. Led by the Bhutan Canada Foundation, with the royal seal of approval of the King of Bhutan. Its aim was to make the old trail accessible once again and to establish a new long-distance path for enthusiastic trekkers.

Over the last two years, the work has gathered pace utilising Bhutanese workers furloughed in the Covid crisis to rebuild bridges, footpaths and thousands of steps linking towns and villages with historic and cultural sites. The result is the new 250 mile long Trans Bhutan Trail that traverses one of the most unique, culturally fascinating and environmentally conscious countries in the world. A true classic in the making!

To tackle the whole trail is a major undertaking for even the most ardent of trekkers, but for those who want to experience a small part of it, and to explore some of the main sights of the Thunder Dragon Kingdom, we've created this exciting new holiday. We've carefully selected sections of the trail that avoid the steepest, most challenging climbs, yet still offer good walking through traditional, scenic landscapes.

Starting in Paro, you head east on the trail on a series of day walks via giant Buddha statues, ancient dzongs, lush valleys and panoramic Himalayan views. You then embark on a three night camping trek along a delightful section of the Trans Bhutan Trail also known as the Samtengang Trek. This takes you through the beautiful hills and valleys of rural Bhutan, where you will meet local families and see them tending their fields and crops using techniques little changed over time. Walking is on a mix of footpaths, dirt farm tracks (locally called feeder roads), and occasionally, small country roads.

Leaving the trail behind, you return to Paro and your trip ends in fitting style with a walk up to the cliff-edge monastery of Taktsang - the iconic Tiger's Nest. For those travelling in the autumn, a visit to the flamboyant Thimphu Tsechu (festival) is also included for the complete Bhutan experience.

Your trip itinerary

Day 1: Depart London.

Depart London on your overnight flight to Kathmandu.

Overnight: In flight

Day 2: Arrive Kathmandu. Group transfer to hotel.

You will be met on arrival and transferred to your hotel. You might like to venture out to 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 in Bhutan. Sightseeing.

Transfer for the flight to Paro, the country's main airstrip, 2,250m/7,382ft. 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 then transferred to your hotel.

The Paro Valley has always had a great strategic importance for Bhutan and was historically an important staging post on the trade routes with Tibet. The spectacular Paro Dzong, situated on a rocky outcrop above the Paro Chu and with views down both sides of the valley was historically one of Bhutan's strongest and most strategic fortresses. Before the rebuilding of the Tashidodzong in Thimphu, it was also the seat of Bhutan's National Assembly.



Depending on the arrival time of your flight there should be time for some sightseeing in Paro in the afternoon. You might wander around Paro township or pay a quick visit to the huge dzong. Then if there is time and you feel like a walk you could stroll back to your hotel.

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

Day 4: Walk the Paro to Dopshari section of the Trans Bhutan Trail - 9.8km/6 miles, 3-4 hours.

Drive to Thimphu.

You will step out today, for the first time, on the Trans Bhutan Trail. Your walk begins from Lamgong Village in the Paro Valley, heading east, you will see the picturesque emerald green terraces and rice fields that characterise the valley. The path rises fairly gently this morning, following the northern ridge of the valley before descending to the village of Dopshari. The Dopshari Gewog (village group) covers an area of almost 37 square kilometres and comprises 24 separate villages. It is very much a traditional farming region with vegetables, apples and rice being its primary produce.

You will enjoy lunch at a farmhouse in the village of Dopshari where you will no doubt be treated to a typical Bhutanese meal made from local produce. After lunch you return to the trail and climb up and out of the valley to Upper Dopshari, 2,826m, from where there are far reaching views.

Your driver will meet you and you will continue east to Thimphu, the capital of Bhutan, where you will spend the next two nights.

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

Day 5: Sightseeing in Thimphu or visit to the Thimphu Tsechu (autumn departure). Drive up to visit giant Buddha. Walk to the village of Debsi - 3km/2 miles, 1½ hours walking. Short drive to Simtokha Dzong.

Thimphu itself has an attractive valley location and is relatively small for a capital city, although it has grown greatly in recent years. It has various sights worth visiting such as 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. Thimphu Dzong houses the the offices for the Ministers of Bhutan as well as the monks and their Head Lama, the Jey Khenpo.

If travelling in the autumn, there will be time this morning to visit the Thimphu Tsechu. The festival is one of the most important set-piece festivals of the year in Bhutan and it is massively impressive. It is held in the inner courtyards of Thimphu's monastery/fortress, the Tashichhoedzong. Such festivals are important cultural and religious events and as well as being a chance for the local people to attain merit, are just as importantly an opportunity to socialise and have fun. The spectacular dances by the Black Hat Dancers and all the other colourful ceremonies are thought to dispel the evil spirits that have accumulated in the ground during the previous year. Beware the very naughty clowns who spend a lot of their time teasing the crowd (and the dancers).

In the afternoon you will drive up to the giant Buddha Dordenma statue which sits high above the town and offers excellent views across the Thimphu Valley. It is also the starting point of your next short section of the Trans Bhutan Trail. From the statue you descend into the Debsi Valley and eventually to the small village of Debsi. The trail ends with a small feeder road before crossing a bridge that leads to the highway. Your driver will meet you and take you to Simtokha Dzong.

Simtokha Dzong was built in 1629 and is the oldest dzong to have survived in the kingdom in its original form. It is also considered to be the first dzong in all of Bhutan to have combined both administrative and monastic functions, and as such it is of great historical interest. The interior of the dzong houses 300 slate carvings and many murals that are amongst the oldest in Bhutan. Today the dzong is home to one of the country's most prominent language institutes but you may be able to see inside if there are no official events taking place. You will also need to be wearing trousers (rather than shorts) to enter.

After time to explore, you will be driven back to your hotel at Thimphu.

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

Day 6: Drive up do Dochu La, 3,140m/10,302ft. Walk the Trans Bhutan Trail to Toeb Chandana, 1,560m/5,118ft - 13.7km/ 8½ miles.

After breakfast you will leave Thimphu driving east and joining the east-west national highway. As the road climbs out of Thimphu you will get a good view of Simtokha Dzong where your walk ended yesterday. The road climbs via a series of zigzags to the Dochu La Pass, 3,140m/10,302ft. The pass is marked by a collection of 108 chortens which were built in 2005 and make for a very impressive and photogenic sight. Similarly the panoramic views of the eastern Himalaya from the Dochu La, are quite sublime. On a clear day you can even see Bhutan's highest mountain, Gangkar Punsum, 7,550m/24,770ft. This still remains the highest unclimbed mountain in the world.



Today's walk follows a section of the trail that is also known as the Divine Madman Heritage Trail. This is because it follows the journey of Drukpa Kunley - a much loved and venerated figure in Bhutanese history. Known as 'The Divine Madman', Drukpa Kunley was a 15th Century lama and is Bhutan's most popular saint and one of the most important figures in Bhutanese folklore. He is renowned for spreading the teachings of the Buddha through unconventional and often outrageous methods - including sexual antics. Despite the apparent conservatism of the Bhutanese people, Drukpa Kunley is a great favourite throughout the country - the phallus symbols painted on the outside walls of houses date back to his teachings.

From the Dochu La, the trail descends gradually through conifer and warm broadleaf forest. The area is home to many species of birds and mammals including the red panda - although you would be very fortunate to see one. You pass through several villages and pretty rice terraces with the path undulating but mainly descending. The temple of Thinleygang Lhakhang, now a school for young monks, makes a good place to stop for refreshments before continuing lower into the valley past farms and across a suspension bridge to reach Toeb Chandana. This spot plays an important role in the legend of the Divine Madman as it is said that Drukpa Kunley

fired an arrow from Tibet to decide the course of his journey and the arrow purportedly landed on the house here. You can climb the steps to have a look inside the house and also visit the Chandana Lakhang next door which was built to mark the sacred spot and to ward off an evil demon. The murals inside the temple depict the tale.

After time for a little exploration, your driver will take you into the nearby town of Punakha which was the old winter capital of Bhutan.

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

Day 7: Visit Punakha Dzong. Trek the Trans Bhutan Trail to Lingmukha, 2,144m/7,034ft - 12.5km/8 miles, 5-6 hours.

After breakfast you make the short 10 minute drive up through Punakha to visit Punakha Dzong, one of Bhutan's most celebrated sights. The main monastery/fortress in Punakha was the power base for the old system of reincarnate 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 this room. Provided the head of the Monastic Order and his monks are in Thimphu it should be possible to view the inner courtyards of Punakha Dzong. In 1994 there was a major flood in the town as a glacial lake burst up in the Himalaya, causing tremendous havoc in the town and damage to the dzong, which has now been beautifully restored.



The dzong sits at the confluence of two rivers - the Mo Chhu and Po Chhu (mother and father rivers) in a particularly photogenic spot. If you are visiting in the spring, the whitewashed walls of the dzong will be lined with purple jacaranda blossom and the paths covered in purple petals. You will have time to visit the dzong this morning and no doubt take lots of photos before you head out on the Trans Bhutan Trail.

Over the next three days you will be walking a well-known Bhutanese trekking trail called the Samtengang trek which is also a section of the Trans Bhutan Trail. The trail starts upstream from the dzong where you cross the longest suspension bridge in Bhutan before climbing gently through terraced fields of mustard, rice and winter wheat. The route continues to ascend through forests of chir pine and oak until it reaches a clearing marked by a prayer flag. If the weather is clear you can enjoy beautiful views across the valley with perhaps a distant glimpse of the snow capped peak of Chomolhari. After a rest, you push on to a chorten that you can see on the skyline above - this marks the high point of today's trek at 2,220m.

With the climb now behind you, the trail descends into the neighbouring Lingmukha Valley, also known as 'the Golden Bowl' due to the many rice fields which cascade down the sides of the valley. Eventually you reach a feeder road which leads you into Lingmukha Village. Here you will see several large houses and a small temple (lakhang). You will camp here tonight.

Overnight: Camping (Meals: BLD)

Day 8: Trek the Trans Bhutan Trail to the village of Chungseykha - 14km/8½ miles, 5-6 hours.

Leaving Lingmukha, the day begins with a steep climb out of the valley through shady oak and broadleaf forest, that leads to a ridge. You cross the ridge and then descend before climbing again for a couple of hours to a pass bedecked in colourful prayer flags - the Dochon La, 2,645m - where you can take time to rest and enjoy the expansive views. You then continue steeply downhill along a forest track that opens up giving views ahead to Samtengang Village.

Shortly before reaching Chungseykha, the path leads to an old temple, Dargyel Gompa, once again associated with the legend of the Divine Madman, Drukpa Kuenley. Several small meditation cells can be seen on the hillside above.

Your trek ends today at the village of Chungseykha where you will camp for the night.

Overnight: Camping (Meals: BLD)

Day 9: Trek the Trans Bhutan Trail to Samtengang, 1,952m/6,404ft - 13km/ 8 miles, 5 hours. Explore the village and drive back to Punakha.

From Chungseykha you initially follow a road that descends to cross a suspension bridge over the Bae Chhu river. On the other side you leave the road and climb to a pass through several small farming villages and gorges before eventually arriving at Samtengang.

You will have time to explore the village and surrounding area before being driven back to your hotel in Punakha and a very welcome hot shower.

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

Day 10: Drive to the Dochu La. Walk the Trans Bhutan Trail to Hongtsho - 6-9½km/5-6 miles, 4-5 hours. Transfer to Paro.

Your vehicle will drive you to the top of the Dochu La pass, where you will walk a spectacular portion of the Trans Bhutan Trail in a westerly direction, back towards the capital Thimphu.

You have another opportunity to visit and photograph the 108 chortens of the Dochu La pass before starting your walk. The trail starts to gradually climb and contour along the ridge in a south easterly direction, initially past many prayer flags. The path winds upwards through a fabulous old forest of rhododendron, hemlock and spruce. There are superb views in every direction. After about two hours you reach the small meditation centre and gumpa at Lungchuzekha, situated right on top of the ridge and, weather permitting, with wonderful views of many Himalayan peaks. The path then descends gradually through forest (again with great views) and yak herder's clearings. After about an hour the small settlement of Trashigang is reached. The route then descends through further beautiful mixed forest, and passes two old chortens before joining a track which leads back to the main road at Hongtsho. Here you will be picked up by your vehicle and driven to Paro.

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

Day 11: Walk to Taktsang Monastery - the Tiger's Nest.

A short drive beyond Paro town takes you 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's a steep uphill walk through woods, of about 1½-2hrs, to reach a tea house (an ascent of 340m/1,115ft.) Apart from offering welcome refreshment this tea house is one of the principle viewpoints of 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.



Once you have walked back down you will have lunch and then the rest of the day can either be used to do any further sightseeing your guide suggests, or to do a little last minute shopping before you leave

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

Day 12: Fly to Kathmandu.

This is normally an early morning flight which takes you out and over the Bhutanese mountains and past Kangchenjunga, Makalu and Everest, finally dropping down into Kathmandu Valley. Sit on the right if you can for the very best views. You will be met and transferred to your hotel, after which there will be plenty of time to relax or for some shopping or sightseeing.

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

Day 13: Time at leisure. Transfer to airport for flight to London.

You have most of the day free to enjoy some final souvenir shopping or sightseeing, or to simply relax and enjoy the facilities at your hotel. Later in the afternoon there will be a group transfer to the airport for your overnight flight back to London.

Overnight: In flight (Meals: B)

Day 14: Arrive London.

Our grading system

Tiger's Nest & Kathmandu Valley Trek, Nepal & Bhutan, is graded as a Moderate 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.

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 guide
- ✓ All flights between Kathmandu and Paro and domestic airport transfers
- ✓ 4* hotel in Kathmandu on a bed & breakfast, twin-share basis
- ✓ 7 nights good standard hotel accommodation in Bhutan on a full board, twin-share basis.
- ✓ 2 nights full service camping Bhutan Visa and Bhutan departure tax
- ✓ Sightseeing where specified
- ✓ All road transport by private vehicle
- ✓ A Mountain Kingdoms kit bag
- ✓ Free use of a good quality down jacket and sleeping bag with liner on trek
- ✓ 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
- ✓ Carbon offsetting with the Ecoan Tree Planting Project (for clients taking our flight inclusive option)
- ✓ 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
- × 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 <https://www.mountainkingdoms.com/water-to-go-reusable-bottle-campaign>.

Your accommodation

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.



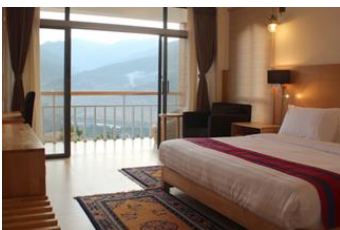
Hotel Olathang or Similar, Paro

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



Zhingkhram Resort or Similar, Punakha

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



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 in Bhutan.

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.

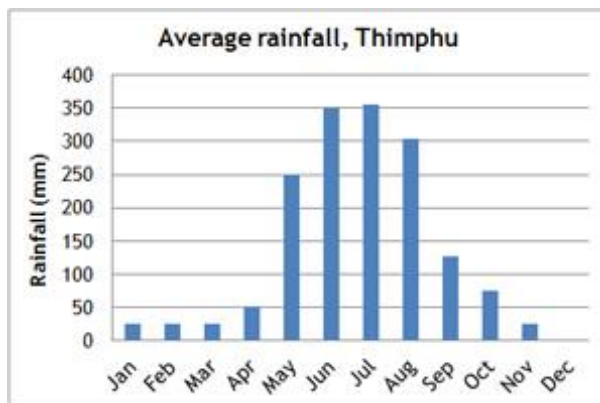
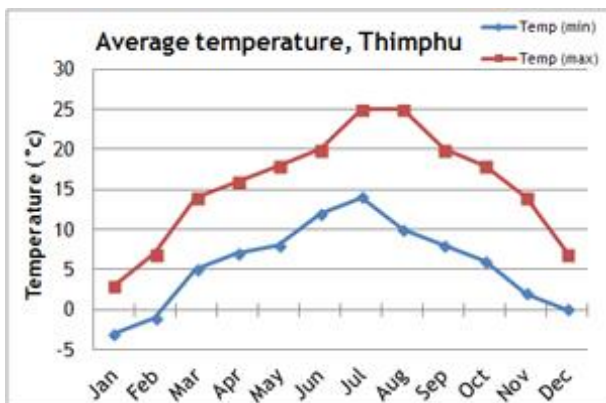
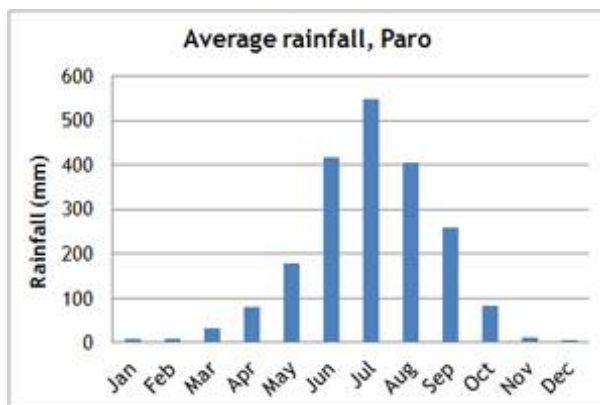
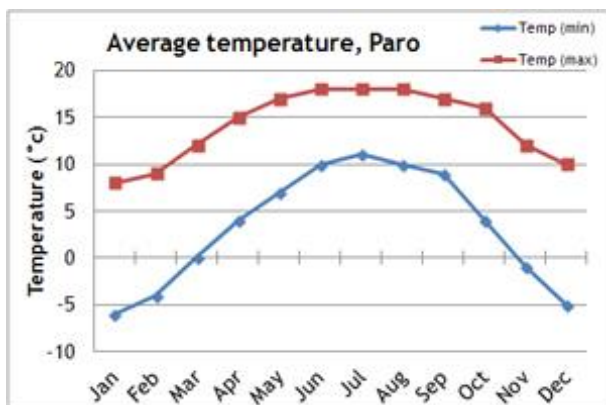
Further information

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.



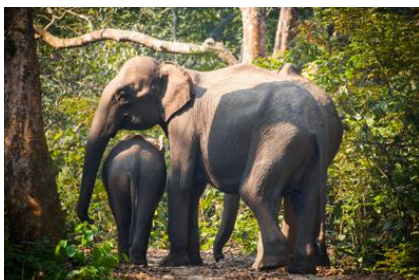
Additional accommodation in Nepal

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.



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?

- We have been pioneering holidays in Bhutan for over 30 years and have used our extensive knowledge to create this holiday that offers walks on some of the most interesting and scenic sections of the Trans Bhutan Trail without making it too arduous or challenging.
- Day walks and a short trek provide plenty of variety and the chance to also experience Bhutan's major cultural attractions in Paro, Thimphu and Punakha.
- We include a festival visit on our autumn departure.
- 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.
- Your holiday will be led by well-trained English-speaking Bhutanese guides.
- Many members of the Mountain Kingdoms team have first-hand experience of Bhutan. They would be very happy to answer any questions you may have.
- In Kathmandu we stay in a good quality 4* hotel close to the tourist heart of the city.
- 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 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 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.

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.

