Definitive Cultural Tour of Bhutan with Thimphu Tsechu

A wonderful, easy-paced tour designed to get 'under the surface' of Bhutanese culture.

Group departures

See overleaf for departure dates

Holiday overview

Style	Tour
Accommodation	Hotels
Grade	Tour
Duration	13 days from London to London
Min/Max group size	4 / 12. Guaranteed to run for 4
Trip Leader	Local Leader Bhutan
Land only	Joining in Kathmandu, Nepal
Max altitude	3,990m/13,090ft, Chele La Pass

Private Departures & Tailor Made itineraries available

Watch related videos online: Definitive Cultural Tour of Bhutan

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Last updated: 18 June 2026

Group Departure Dates and Prices

Group departures

2026 Dates:

Thu 19 Feb – Wed 04 Mar	With Punakha Tsechu
Mon 30 Mar – Sat 11 Apr	With Paro Tsechu
Thu 17 Sep - Tue 29 Sep	**With Thimphu Tsechu**
Wed 04 Nov – Tue 17 Nov	With Black-necked Crane Festival

2027 Dates:

Tue 09 Feb – Mon 22 Feb	With Punakha Tsechu
Fri 19 Mar – Wed 31 Mar	With Paro Tsechu
Fri 08 Oct - Wed 20 Oct	**With Thimphu Tsechu**
Thu 04 Nov – Wed 17 Nov	With Black-necked Crane Festival

This detailed itinerary is for our September 2026 and October 2027 departures only. Itineraries for all other departures can be downloaded from our website or requested from the Mountain Kingdoms office.

Group prices
Visit the holiday page of our website for up-to-date land only and flight inclusive prices for all group departure dates https://www.mountainkingdoms.com/holiday/definitive-cultural-tour-of-bhutan.

Single supplement options can also be found here.

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

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

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

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

Tailor Made service
We pride ourselves on the level of quality and choice we provide for our clients who want a fully tailor made holiday. A holiday will be created especially for you by one of our well-travelled experts. They will be able to advise on the accommodation best suited to your needs, the sights you should visit (and those to avoid!) and the best walks and activities matched to your ability. In short, we will work together with you to create your perfect holiday.

If you would like to explore the idea of a Tailor Made holiday with Mountain Kingdoms then please call us on +44 (0)1453 844400 or see the Tailor Made pages of our website for further inspiration.

Special notes

Travelling to Bhutan in September
Please be aware that during early September in Bhutan there can be higher levels of rainfall to the end of the monsoon season. However, the dates of this departure have been chosen to coincide with the Thimphu festival, which is being held earlier than normal in 2026. The Thimphu Tsechu is one of Bhutan's most important and impressive festivals, and we believe it is too good to miss. We have therefore included this departure despite the possibility of more inclement weather. Hopefully, the weather will not impact any other parts of your itinerary but should alternative arrangements need to be made these will be discussed by with your guide and fellow travellers at the time.

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

Your tour leader

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

Your trip highlights

- Visit the key cultural sights including the Tiger's Nest Monastery and Punakha Dzong
- Enjoy a well-paced itinerary with ample time for in-depth exploration
- Visit picturesque villages and get under-the-skin of authentic Bhutanese life
- Join the festivities at the Thimphu Tsechu
- Stay in good quality hotels throughout Bhutan and in Dwarika's unique heritage property in Kathmandu

At a glance itinerary

Days 1-3	Fly to Kathmandu. Fly to Paro.
Day 4	Drive to Thimphu via Tamchog Lakhang. Sightseeing in Thimphu.
Day 5	Attend Thimphu Tsechu. Visit Wangditse Monastery.
Day 6	Drive to Punakha via the Dochu La, 3,140m/10,302ft. Visit Drukpa Kunley's Temple and villages.
Day 7	Walk to Khamsum Yuelley Namgyal Chorten and visit Punakha Dzong.
Day 8	Drive to Paro. Visit Paro Dzong, Museum and Kyichu Lakhang.
Day 9	Walk to Taktsang Monastery. Drive to the Haa Valley over the Cheli La, 3,990m/13,090ft.
Day 10	Village walk in the Haa Valley. Drive to Paro.
Days 11-13	Fly to Kathmandu. At leisure. Fly to London.

Trip summary

Many years of isolation have left the Kingdom of the Thunder Dragon a truly unique place. The towns of Bhutan are dominated by enormous monastery-fortresses, or dzongs, that have stood for centuries and are still in use today. The architecture is unlike anything else found in the Himalaya – houses are painted with magic symbols to keep out evil spirits, national dress is commonly worn and the 'Dragon' sect of Buddhism thrives and is integral to the lives of the people. This very original cultural identity combined with spectacular scenery and charming people all goes to make a visit to Bhutan a fascinating experience.

We explore all aspects of Bhutanese culture on this captivating tour. Your expert guide will make sure you visit the must-see sights but will also take you through the beautiful countryside with which Bhutan is blessed and off-the-beaten-track villages where you will get an insight into local life and customs little-changed over the generations. There is no hard walking involved in this trip but there are opportunities for some gentle walks to stretch your legs and to enjoy the wonderful scenery.

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No other company offers such a comprehensive and well-led cultural tour of this wonderful Himalayan kingdom.

Your trip itinerary

Day 1: Depart London.

Depart London on your overnight flight to Kathmandu.

Overnight: In Flight

Day 2: Arrive Kathmandu.

On arrival in Kathmandu you will be met and transferred to Dwarika's Hotel, a luxurious and stylish 5* hotel filled with Nepalese furniture, carvings and statues. The hotel has a superb restaurant where you can try traditional Newari cuisine, as well as a beautiful swimming pool and a relaxing courtyard.

Overnight: Dwarika's Hotel, Kathmandu

Day 3: Fly to Paro. Sightseeing as time permits.

Transfer to the airport for the short flight up to Bhutan. On a clear day the panoramic views of the Himalaya are sensational, including Everest, but particularly exciting is the approach through the Bhutanese foothills and the landing, including a few steep turns on the approach to the tiny airstrip of Paro. If possible try to sit on the left hand side of the plane for the most spectacular views.

In Paro you will be met by your Bhutanese guide and taken 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 may 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 walk back to your hotel.

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

Day 4: Drive to Thimphu via Tamchhog Lhakang. Sightseeing in Thimpu.

After breakfast today you will drive to Thimphu; this will take about 1½-2 hours. En route you will stop to visit Tamchhog Lhakang. This is located before you reach Chuzom (river junction). The temple was built in the 14th century by the son of the very famous 'Iron Bridge' builder, Thangthong Gyalpo. You cross one of the eight bridges he built in Bhutan to reach the temple. It is an easy 15 minute walk from the road and has the immediate effect of transporting you back into the atmosphere of ancient Bhutan. A lovely place to visit.

Thimphu has an attractive valley location and is relatively small for a capital city, although it has grown greatly in recent years. There are many places of interest to visit there. Initially you might like to drive up to see the giant Buddha figure and enjoy the views over the town. Later you may have time for some sightseeing in Thimphu or for a wander round town.

Overnight: Norkill Boutique & Spa or Similar, Thimphu (Meals: BLD)

Day 5: Attend the Thimphu Tsechu. Visit Wangditse Monastery.

This morning you will attend the Thimphu Tsechu. This is one of the most important set-piece festivals of the Bhutanese year and is massively impressive. It is held in the inner courtyards of the main monastery fortress, the Tashichho Dzong. Such festivals are important cultural and religious events and are also a chance for the local people to attain merit, but as importantly to socialise and have fun. Beware the very naughty clowns who

spend a lot of their time teasing the crowd (and the dancers). The Black Hat Dancers and all the other colourful ceremonies are thought to dispel the evil spirits that have accumulated over the ground during the previous year. Archery is also important to the Bhutanese and if there is a competition going on you may have the opportunity to visit. These are great fun as the opposing teams take every opportunity to barrack each other.

In the afternoon 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 Gompa. This walk should take around 1.5 hours. You will have time to visit the gompa 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. The monastery is also home to some fantastic UNESCO monitored 12th century paintings. You will then meet your vehicle and be driven back to Thimphu.

Overnight: Norkill Boutique & Spa or Similar, Thimphu (Meals: BLD)

Day 6: Drive to Punakha via the Dochu La, 3,140m/10,302ft. Visit Drukpa Kunley's Temple and villages.

In the morning you will have some time in Thimphu. Later you make the ascent up to the Dochu La pass. This pass at 3,140m/10,302ft is marked by 108 chortens. Here, weather permitting you may take in a magnificent mountain vista. On clear days there are fabulous views of the Eastern Himalaya from here but this is a beautiful spot even on misty days.

Descending from the pass you come to the lush Punakha Valley. Before driving to your hotel you will pay a visit to Chimi Lakhang, taking a short walk across the paddy fields to visit this delightful small temple built by Drukpa Kunley. Known as '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 Lakhang is especially popular with women who come here to pray for children.

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

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

Day 7: In the Punakha Valley. Walk to Khamsum Yuelley Namgyal Chorten and visit Punakha Dzong.

Today you may do a lovely walk in the lush, almost sub-tropical Punakha Valley. You drive further up the valley and start your walk at a pedestrian suspension bridge that crosses the Mo Chu River and follow up through paddy fields to the base of the hill where Khamsum Yuelley Namgyal Chorten is sited. The climb to the top is then quite steep but takes only 45 minutes or so. This chorten was consecrated in December 1999 and contains sacred relics donated from Punakha Dzong.

You will then travel to fabulous Punakha Dzong. The dzong is one of the most spectacular and important in the kingdom. It has a lovely setting at the confluence of two rivers. In 1994 there was a major flood in the town which caused a lot of damage to the dzong but it has now been beautifully renovated and is a real showcase for Bhutanese craftsmanship and painting.

You are normally allowed into the dzong unless there are VIPs visiting.

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

Day 8: Drive to Paro. Visit Paro Dzong, Museum and Kyichu Lakhang.

Today you drive back over the Dochu La and on to Paro. In the afternoon you will have time for some sightseeing in the Paro valley. Firstly you may visit the huge Paro Dzong, one of the most important in the kingdom. Above the dzong is the 17th century watchtower or Ta Dzong. This unusual, circular building houses Bhutan's National Museum and has recently been fully restored. The museum has a fantastic collection of Bhutanese national treasures with displays including depictions of a wide range of Bhutan's history and culture and an impressive collection of ancient thangkas featuring Bhutan's important saints and teachers. You will also find some fearsome festival masks, a collection of religious statues, some early stone carvings and the original iron links from the nearby Tamchhog Bridge.

There will then be time to visit the ancient temple of Kyichu Lakhang which was one of 108 temples built by an important early Tibetan king, Songtsen Gampo, in an attempt to pin down the Bon demon who was thought to hover over the whole of Tibet.

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

Day 9: Walk to Taktsang Monastery in the morning. Drive to the Haa Valley. Visit Dzong Drakha Temple en route.

Today you will walk up to the famous Tiger's Nest, Taktsang Monastery - a fitting climax to your trip. The monastery is perched some 600m/2,000ft up on a cliff overlooking the valley and was said to be where the legendary Indian saint, Guru Padma Sambhava, flew from Tibet on the back of a tiger to defeat five demons, who were opposing the spread of Buddhism in Bhutan. It's a steep uphill walk through woods, of about 1½-2hrs, to reach a tea house (an ascent of 340m/1,115ft). Apart from offering welcome refreshment this tea house is one of the principle viewpoints of the monastery, and those who prefer not to climb any further can relax here whilst others continue on. If there is a particular religious gathering or VIP visit in progress, you will not be able to enter the monastery 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 the monastery. If you are able to make a visit, the final section of the walk takes you from here steeply down approximately 100m/330ft into the gorge that separates you from the monastery and then climbs back up again to reach the monastery gate. You descend back to the valley floor by your outward route back to where your vehicle will be waiting. The full walk to the monastery and back involves approximately 740m/2,428ft of ascent. Please note, if you prefer not to make the walk to Taktsang your driver will be able to take you instead further along the valley to visit Drukyel Dzong, a ruined fortress enjoying good views of the mountain.

In the afternoon you will drive to the Haa Valley. The drive to the pass takes about 1½ hours stopping off on the way at the temple of Dzong Drakha, a beautiful cliff temple spectacularly located on a broad ledge with vertical limestone cliff above and below There are lovely views from here.

Continuing up to the Cheli La, a pass at 3,990m/13,090ft, in clear weather you will have wonderful views of the snow-capped mountains to the west which mark the border with Tibet. You then descend on a long zig-zag road down into the Haa Valley. As you approach you will notice three almost identical conical hills in a line on the other side of the valley. These are believed by the locals to be the physical manifestations of three very important Buddhist saints. The left one is Manjushri (the god who holds the flaming sword which cuts the knot of ignorance), the middle one is Chenrizig (the Buddha of compassion of which the Dalai Lama is the human incarnation) and the right hand hill is Chana Dorji (this being the protector god of Bhutan). Collectively they are known as Rigsum (three hills). As you descend further you look down on the square yellow roof of the main monastery/fortress, Namgay Dzong. Spread around the dzong are the buildings of the Indian Army dating from the visit of President Nehru - the Indian army has a presence in Bhutan ostensibly to protect the kingdom from possible invasion from China. Although part of the dzong is used by the Indian Army the central tower is still used by the local people.

The old town itself is just to the north-west and is really quite attractive with traditional two storey shops and a post office. There is a large school in Haa. In the afternoon you should have time for a little exploration in the Haa Valley.

Overnight: Lechuna Heritage Lodge or Risum Resort or Similar, Haa (Meals: BLD)

Day 10: Village walk in the Haa Valley. Drive to Paro with visit to Kila Nunnery on the way.

Today you have time to explore in the Haa Valley. Initially it is worth driving up to the very top of the valley for an overview. This takes about 40 minutes and is a very pretty drive. From here you will get really good views of Haa Valley itself as well as over to the west to the mountains which border Tibet. Coming back down towards the town you may take a spur road to Talung village which is 20 minutes on a rough road. This village is situated in a small side valley and it's a good idea to take the vehicles to the top of the village and then walk down through the houses for a look at a typical Haa village. You may well receive 'invites' into one or two of the farmhouses which would provide an interesting look at the way of life and standards of living of typical Bhutanese farmers.

You can rejoin your vehicle at the bottom of the village and then drive the short distance to the bottom of a track for a nice walk up to Yongto Gompa, an ascent of 100 metres which takes about 30 minutes. Yongto Gompa is perched on a ridge overlooking the main valley and is one of the oldest monasteries in Haa, thought to have been built in the 15th century. From here you walk steeply down the hill, 30 minutes and 200m descent, through pine trees, to Yangtha village. This is a large village on the floor of the main valley. In 2001 they suffered a huge fire which destroyed 12 houses. Amazingly, the fire left the temple of the village perfectly intact. After the fire the King visited the people of the village and paid for the reconstruction. The new houses are built in exactly the same traditional style and blend in remarkably well.

After lunch you will drive back over the Cheli La Pass to Paro. On the way you may walk to the Kila Gompa nunnery. The gompa is surrounded by a lush forest dominated by tall firs and sparkling mountain streams tumble down slopes which are covered with a variety of wildflowers and plants. The Gompa is a peaceful retreat for Buddhist nuns who dedicate their lives to spiritual fulfilment. About 30 nuns live here, ranging in age from about 20 to 80 years. The community is one of the oldest of seven nunneries in Bhutan, and was initially established in the early 9th century as a meditation site. The nuns live a life of contemplation and seclusion, with daily prayer and spiritual practice. The temple itself is surrounded by numerous meditation huts, and many hidden caves lie inside the rocky cliffs. After being destroyed by fire, the temple was rebuilt and officially inaugurated in 1986.

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

Day 11: Fly to Kathmandu. Transfer to Dwarika's hotel.

You will be taken to the airport where you will say goodbye to your guide and driver. The flight to Kathmandu 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. You will be met and transferred to Dwarika's Hotel, after which there will be plenty of time to relax or for shopping and sightseeing.

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

Day 12: At leisure in Kathmandu. Transfer to the airport and depart for London

You will have time at leisure in Kathmandu today when you might do some sightseeing - you might take a trip out to Patan, one of the ancient cities of the Kathmandu Valley. It is also worthwhile to visit the important complex of Hindu temples at Pashupatinath, just a short walk from Dwarika's Hotel, where there a large temple to Shiva and the ghats on the banks of the river where cremations take place. The large stupa at Boudhanath is also worth a visit - this is a great focus for Buddhist pilgrims from all over the Himalaya. To the west of the city is another famous stupa, the so-called 'Monkey Temple', Swayambhunath, visited by Hindus and Buddhists alike. Alternatively you might do some shopping or simply relax by the pool at your hotel.

Later there will be a group transfer to the airport for your overnight flight to the UK.

Overnight: In flight (Meals: B)

Day 13: Arrive London.

Our grading system

Definitive Cultural Tour of Bhutan is graded as a Tour, as described below.

Tours
Tours may include any of the following activities: sightseeing, visiting local villages, exploring temples, game viewing, birdwatching, husky sledding, mountain flights, city tours and dramatic journeys by road, rail, or river. Occasionally there will be short, gentle walks so that you can properly explore the cultural sites you are visiting.

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:

- ✓ 10 x breakfasts, 8 x lunches, 8 x dinners
- ✓ 5* hotel accommodation in Kathmandu on a twin-share, bed and breakfast basis
- ✓ Good standard hotel accommodation in Bhutan in the main towns, and best available hotels in outlying towns, on a twin-share, full board basis
- ✓ A local Bhutanese leader
- ✓ Bhutan visa and Bhutan departure tax
- ✓ All road transport by private vehicles
- ✓ Sightseeing as specified
- ✓ A free Mountain Kingdoms gilet
- ✓ Economy class return air fares from the UK & UK Departure Tax (flight inclusive only)
- ✓ All internal flights and hotel/airport transfers
- ✓ Carbon offsetting with the Ecoan Tree Planting Project (for clients taking our flight inclusive option)

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

Your accommodation

We will endeavour to secure the hotels named in this itinerary but if the first choice of hotel is not available we will secure a suitable alternative of a similar standard.

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

Dwarika's Hotel, Kathmandu

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

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.

Norkill Boutique & Spa or Similar, Thimphu

The Norkill is a four star hotel in the centre of Thimphu town with a good range of facilities. It has a large fitness centre plus a sauna, and also has its own in-house dining plus an attractive roof terrace where you can enjoy a drink with views. Rooms are contemporary in design and very comfy with kettles and fridges.

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. Alterrnatively, 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.

Lechuna Heritage Lodge or Risum Resort or Similar, Haa

This lovely heritage lodge located in the picturesque village of Lechu, not far from Haa Village, is a renovated farmhouse. It has been beautifully restored, skillfully blending modern comforts with traditional style. The lodge has a cosy bar, common room and garden courtyard, and although its seven lovely rooms share bathrooms, they have been individually designed and offer very comfortable accommodation. Alternatively we will use the Risum Resort, another comfy hotel with traditional features overlooking the Haa Valley.

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.

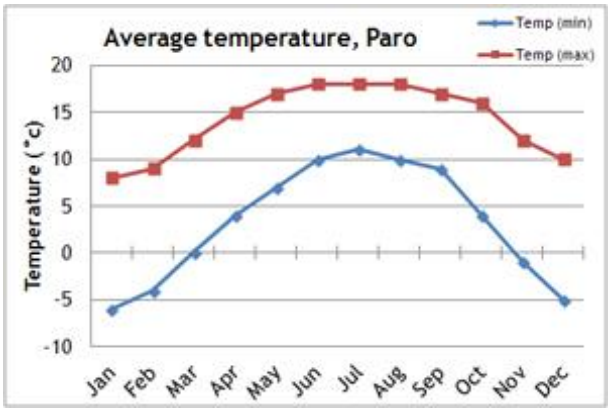
Further information

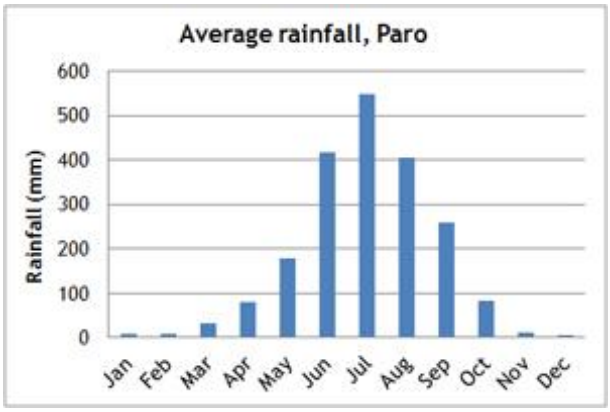
When we receive your booking, we send you a full Trip Dossier which contains details of any visas and vaccinations required, a suggested gear and clothing list and lots of useful information. If you do have queries at this initial stage do call us on 01453 844400 and we will be pleased to offer advice.

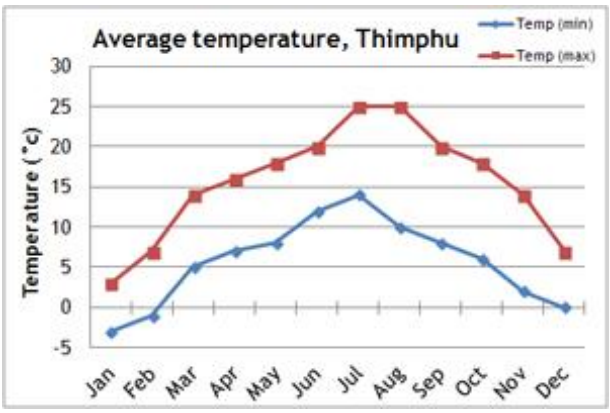
The nature of adventure travel

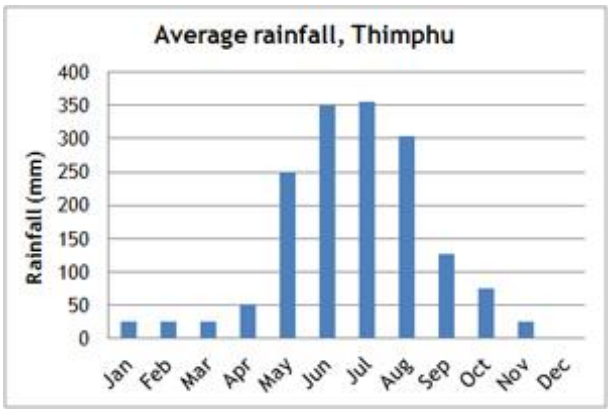
Every effort will be made to keep to this itinerary but we cannot guarantee that things may not change, either before you travel or while you are away. By its very nature, adventure travel involves an element of the unexpected, particularly in more remote areas. A variety of factors such as adverse weather 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.

Hotel upgrades and extra nights in Bhutan

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

Additional accommodation in Nepal

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

Kathmandu Valley sightseeing excursions

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

Wildlife extensions in Nepal - Chitwan, Bardia & Koshi Tappu

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

Royal Manas National Park, Bhutan

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

Bumdra Trek, Bhutan

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

Why book this holiday with Mountain Kingdoms?

- Our carefully planned itinerary offers ample time to explore Bhutan's key cultural sights but also to get off-the-beaten-track to discover other aspects of life in the Thunder Dragon Kingdom.
- We include a visit to a festival - one of the great highlights of any holiday in the Thunder Dragon Kingdom
- While in Kathmandu you will stay at Dwarika's Hotel. Dwarika's is truly unique heritage property and one of the best hotels in Kathmandu.
- 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 have visited the country on numerous occasions and would be very happy to answer any questions you may have about this holiday.
- 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 tour groups.
- 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.
- As part of our responsible tourism commitment, we will be carbon-offsetting all international flights booked through us by donating funds to the Ecoan Tree Planting Project in Peru.
- We offer a flexible service and can extend your holiday with extra hotel nights, upgrades and exciting activities in both Bhutan and Nepal.

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

We were a group of 7 led by an incredibly knowledgeable and experienced guide and a good, safe driver. We learnt a lot about the country and the Buddhist philosophy. For me, the highlight was the Heritage stay and walk in the Haa Valley. However, we ticked all the boxes - Tigers Nest is incredibly as was the Thimphu Tsechu. Would highly recommend!
-MLD, Glasgow

This holiday was excellent. Very well organised in every detail. The hotels were all very good and the guide and driver were always there to assist.- some of the best in the business. The scenery was majestic, and even though some of the walks were challenging, there was always an easier option for those who didn't wish to participate in full. A wonderful holiday. with just the right size of group, who were great company.
-Rob, East Sussex

An amazing experience. We were well looked after. The guide was excellent.
- Mrs P N, Somerset

Spectacular scenery and architecture experienced under a cloudless sky. Reaching Taktsang Monastery was the highlight of my time in Bhutan. Excellent customer service from all concerned. Would have no hesitation in recommending Mountain Kingdoms.
- Miss C N, Essex

A truly amazing experience. A well-paced itinerary, an excellent guide and driver, who enabled us to get a real feel of the country, its culture, traditions and people. In no particular order, we appreciated the support and communication from Steve and the team, the small group size, the smooth airport transfers, the care and attention we received from the staff in Bhutan and Nepal, the well-paced itinerary, the expert knowledge of our guide, the very safe driving of our driver.
- Mr P H, Devon

A relatively gentle but varied and adventurous exposure of this very different and charming country. "Unique" is a much used adjective, but Bhutan really does deserve the description from its flora, fauna, animal, and bird life. But perhaps the most striking difference is in its national outlook and pride; where else does almost everyone wear with pride their national costume everyday, or measure national and individual success in terms of happiness rather than material terms? And the scenery is breath-taking (as is the effect of the many high passes one crosses!)
- Mr J L, Hampshire

A most enlightening trip to a mountain kingdom which will remain in my memories as an extremely spiritual and peaceful experience. A great team gave us some very special insight into the harmony of life in Bhutan. The Black-Necked Crane Festival was most interesting.
- Mr L, Cheshire

It was fantastic, even better than we had imagined. Our Bhutanese guides were brilliant, and made the tour special both in their own ways. I don't know how we can find a holiday which will beat this one!
- Mr & Mrs C, Oxfordshire

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 a hold a place on one of our trips, whilst you make up your mind, please give us a call to make a provisional booking. This is a no-obligation, no-cost booking and we will hold your place until space comes under pressure or we need your decision.

Comprehensive information

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

RESPONSIBLE TOURISM STATEMENT

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

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

Carbon offsetting

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

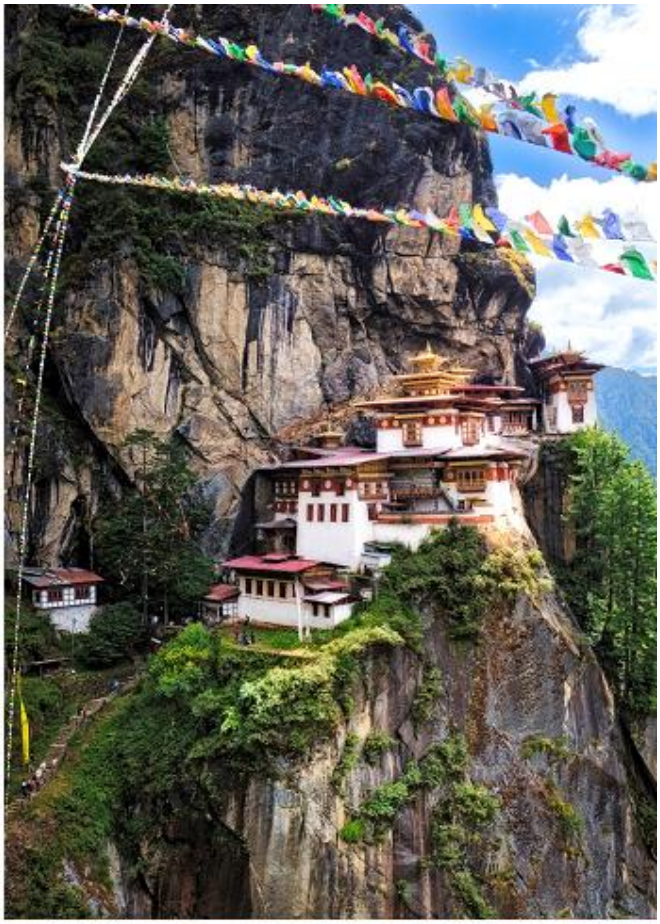
Ecoan maintains over 100 tree nurseries across Peru where their tree saplings are grown and then transported to planting sites during the rainy season. They use native trees such as the Polylepis, as these can survive at high altitudes. As well as sequestering carbon, they help protect against soil erosion,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

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

Reducing carbon emissions

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

Wider commitment to responsible and sustainable tourism

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

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