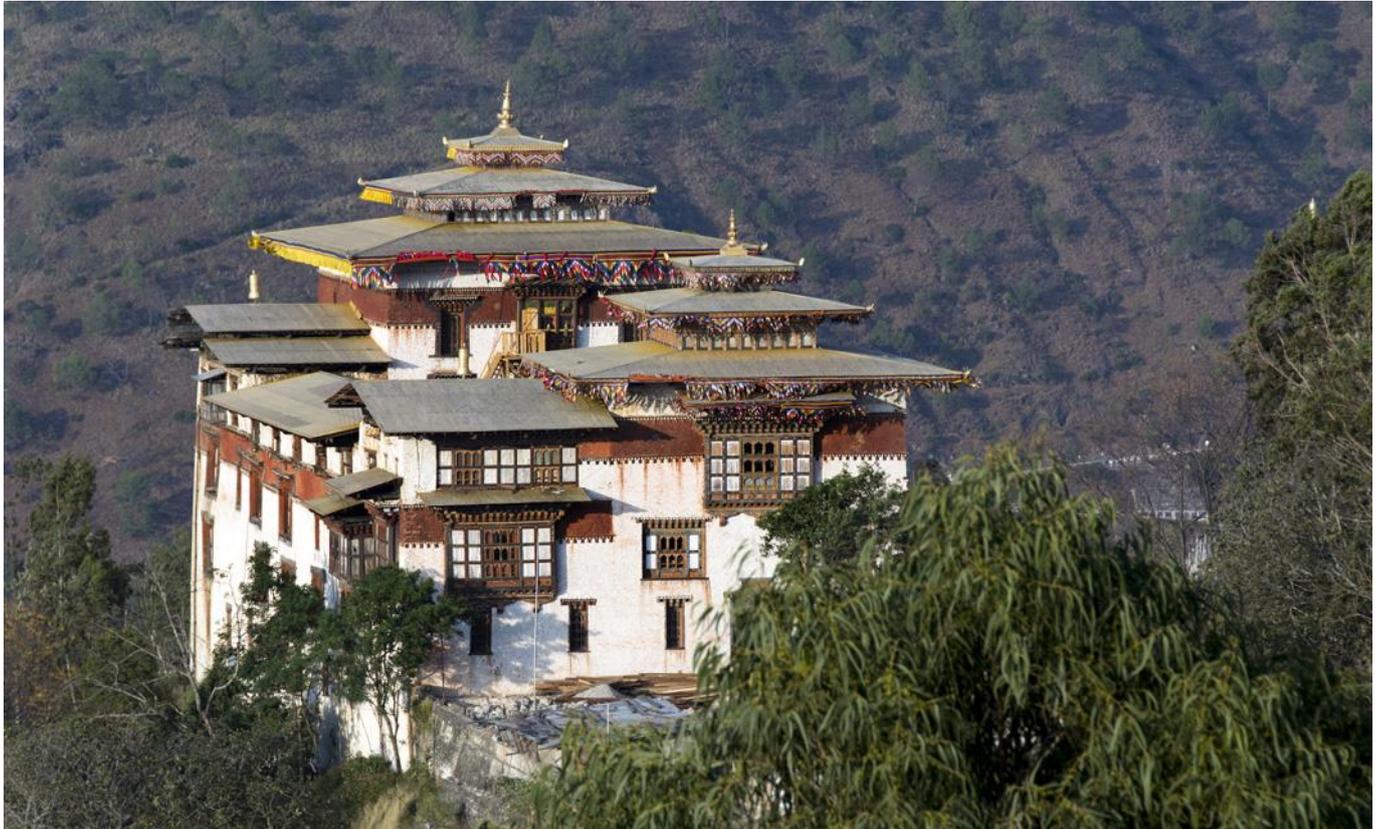


Gentle Walking Eastern Bhutan

Explore the mysterious eastern corner of the Dragon Kingdom, walk to remarkable hill-top dzongs and remote villages, and watch masked dancers at a traditional festival.



Group departures

See overleaf for departure dates

Holiday overview

Style	Walking
Accommodation	Hotels, Homestay
Grade	Gentle
Duration	18 days from London to London
Trekking / Walking days	Walks on: 9 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	3,750m/12,303ft, Thrumshingla Pass, Day 8

Private Departures & Tailor Made itineraries available



Watch related videos online: [Gentle Walking Eastern Bhutan](#)

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Departures

Group departures

2024 Dates:

Sat 06 Apr - Wed 24 Apr

Sat 05 Oct - Wed 23 Oct With Jakar Tsechu

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.

Group prices and optional supplements

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

No Surcharge Guarantee

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

Insurance

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

Private Departures

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

Tailor Made service

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

Your guide



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

Your trip highlights

- Explore the spectacular and little visited hill-top towns and temples of east Bhutan.
- Join the celebrations at a vibrant Bhutanese festival in the autumn.
- Visit the picturesque village of Ura and stay in a traditional farmhouse for one night.
- Cross the high Thrumshing La on an exciting drive to Mongar.
- See the bronze statue of Guru Rinpoche at Tangmachu and visit the palace at Dungkhar near the Tibetan border.
- Enjoy gentle walks in the beautiful valleys around Bumthang.

At a glance itinerary

Days 1-2	Fly to Kathmandu
Days 3-5	Fly to Paro. Walk to Taktsang and sightseeing in Paro Valley.
Days 6-7	Fly to Bumthang. Walk to Temples of valley. Swan Lakhang walk.
Day 8	October departure visits Jakar Tsechu in the morning. Drive to near Ura with walk down from pass.
Day 9	Full day drive to Mongar, crossing the Thrumshing La.
Day 10	Day walk to Panchula Gompa. Drive to Autsho.
Day 11	Drive to Khaine Lakhang. Continue to Tangmachu to visit Guru Rinpoche Statue. Drive to Lhuentse Dzong. Visit Khoma village. Return to Autsho.
Day 12	Excursion to visit Dungkhar Village. Visit palace and lunch with local family.
Day 13	Drive to Trashigang with visit to Dramatse Monastery. Local walk.
Day 14	Sightseeing in Trashigang including dzong. Walk to Khapti village.
Day 15	Drive to Trashiyangtse. Gom Kora Visit. Wildlife Museum and deer enclosure. Walk in upper valley.
Day 16	Visit Arts and Crafts Institute. Return to Trashigang with walk on way to Rhadi Village and lunch in farmhouse with local family.
Days 17-19	Drive to Samdrup Jongkhar. Cross into India. Drive to Gauhati. Fly Delhi. Fly to UK.

Trip summary

We are delighted to offer this holiday exploring some of the spectacular but lesser visited highlights of the Thunder Dragon Kingdom. Although this is a fabulous trip in its own right, it would also be an ideal itinerary for anyone looking to return to Bhutan for a second visit to see more of the country's unique culture and landscape.

The distance from east to west of the country is only some 315km as the crow flies, but the mountain road which links the east with the west is one of the great Himalayan road journeys. It snakes its way over high mountain passes and down into deep subtropical valleys, making the actual road journey two or three times that distance. Because of this lengthy road journey the east feels rather remote from the rest of the kingdom and the whole area is still very much 'off-the-beaten' tourist track. The region still has relatively few visitors.

However, now that there is a proper airstrip in central Bhutan at Jakar, and because there are almost daily flights in the spring and autumn (subject to weather and availability), it is now much easier to visit the east of Bhutan. Also, in recent times the government has reduced the Tourist Tax for every night spent in the eastern districts to promote the region. This has made it more affordable, and a visit to the east even more attractive.

In past times the east was controlled from dramatic dzongs such as those in Mongar, Tashigang, Trashiyangtse and Lhuentse. Although the region was linked to the rest of Bhutan by rugged trade routes, the people from here often felt more closely connected with their nearer neighbours in Tibet and India and had important trade and cultural links with them, as well as with the people of western Bhutan. This all contributes to the east having a totally different feel to the rest of the country. It has something of a feel of 'old Bhutan' about it.

Many of Bhutan's most important dzongs and monasteries are found in the east, alongside some of the most spectacular scenery in the kingdom. A semi nomadic ethnic group, the Brokpa of Merak-Sakten, live in the wilderness of the far east, and these fascinating folk have some of the wildest supernatural legends of the Himalaya, some still believe that the Migoi (yeti) roam the forests here.

Arriving in Paro you will have time to explore the Paro Valley and then, to reduce the amount of driving necessary to reach the east, you will fly from Paro to Bumthang. You will stay overnight at the picturesque, mediaeval village of Ura in a traditional farmhouse homestay, and then make the spectacular drive over the high Thrumshing La pass and down, down, down, to the river at Kuri Zampa and onto your first town of the east, Mongar. Once in the east you will explore this remote corner of the country with visits to Lhuentse, Trashiyangtse and Tashigang and on walks through the lovely countryside. If you join our autumn departure, you will also attend a traditional Bhutanese tsechu, or festival, one of the undoubted highlights of any visit to this unique Himalayan kingdom. Finally you will drive down to the border with India and fly to Delhi for your flight home.

If you haven't visited western Bhutan before, this trip can easily be combined with a short pre-extension to explore the 'must-see' highlights of Paro, Punakha and Thimphu. Please ask us for details.

Note from our MD, Steve Berry

I first went trekking in the east of Bhutan in 1990 when I led our first group on a trek to the villages of Merak and Sakten. The roads in those days were somewhat 'rudimentary' and the guesthouses were very basic. Much has changed since then. The road is hard topped (for the most part!) and the hotels and lodges are really very nice. I can say this because in October/November 2018, I took another party to virtually all the places in this itinerary. We enjoyed many wonderful adventures, and we were all struck by how charming the places and people are in the east. There is a tangible atmosphere of days-gone-by, and the scenery is just lovely. I do thoroughly recommend this trip to those people who really like to get off-the-beaten-track!!

Special notes

Flights between Kathmandu and Paro

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

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 in to nearby Thamel for your evening meal, or eat in the restaurant if you are tired from your journey.

Overnight: Hotel Shanker or Similar, Kathmandu

Day 3: Fly to Paro - 1hr 15 min flight. Initial sightseeing in Paro Valley.

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. On arrival you will be met by your Bhutanese guide and be transferred to your hotel.



The Paro Valley has had a great strategic importance in the history of Bhutan and was in the past an important staging post on the trade routes with Tibet. 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 Tashichhodzong in Thimphu it was also the seat of Bhutan's National Assembly.

Depending on your flight schedule there may well be time to do some initial sightseeing in the Paro Valley.

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

Day 4: Walk to Taktsang, 3,110m/10,203ft - 4-5 hours. Visit Paro Dzong and museum.

This morning you will 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 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.

In the afternoon you will visit Paro's impressive 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 which you will be able to explore.

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

Day 5: Sightseeing in Paro Valley. Walk to Kyichu Lhakhang - 2 hours. Drive to Drukgyel Dzong. Drive towards Chele La Pass and visit Dzong Drakha.

Today you will explore some lesser known corners of the Paro Valley.

Starting directly from the Olathang Hotel, you turn right out of the main gate and climb gradually to the temple at the top of the hill, Tshering Goempa, half an hour from the hotel.. This dates back to the 13th Century and is one of six temples in Bhutan dedicated to six sisters. Tshering means long life and people come to the six temples to pray for long life. Then the path drops down into the forested valley on the other side before climbing up to another temple. It is still in use but sadly neglected. Apparently the restoration has recently been approved. This is the temple to the Second Sister of Long Life and called Tenshea Gompa. From here the walk continues down the hill through Blue Pine Forest to the main valley arriving at Kyichu Lhakhang, half an hour down, two hours in total. Here you will visit the ancient temple of Kyichu Lhakang, one of the oldest and most beautiful temples in Bhutan. According to tradition the temple, built in the 7th century, is said to have been one of 108 temples built by the famous Tibetan king, Songtsen Gampo, to pin down an enormous demon that was believed to be thwarting the establishment of Buddhism over the whole of Tibet. Only two of the 108 temples exist in Bhutan and you will visit the other one on day 10, Khaine Lhakhang, which is rarely visited.

After your visit to Kyichu Lhakhang you meet your transport and drive up the valley to Drukgyel Dzong. This castle was built in 1649 during the time that Bhutan was resisting foreign invasion and consolidating its power, and it was an important base for defence of the region right up until 1951 when it was destroyed by fire. It lay derelict until very recent times but has now been fully renovated. From here there are good views to the north and if the skies are clear you can see Mount Chomolhari, the second highest peak in Bhutan.

After lunch, to aid your acclimatisation, you will drive up the road which leads towards the Haa Valley over the Chelela pass. You will not drive as far as the pass but part way you will leave your transport and walk the short distance to the temple of Dzong Drakha, a beautiful cliff temple spectacularly located on a broad ledge, with vertical limestone cliffs above and below and surrounded by forest. This is a tranquil spot and the views over the Paro Valley from here are fantastic. You return by vehicle to Paro after the walk.

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

Day 6: Fly to Jakar, Bumthang 2,587m/8,487ft. Gentle walk to local temples.

In the morning you will transfer to the airport to take the short flight to Bumthang. The Bumthang region encompasses four major valleys. Jakar town, where you will stay for two nights, is in the main valley called Chokhor. The other valleys are the Ura Valley to the east, Tang Valley, and Chumey Valley to the west. Bumthang is a very fertile area and is often considered the spiritual centre of the kingdom, being home to some of the country's most historic temples and sacred sites. The area is also of great cultural importance and is famous for its fine weaving. It's said that every home is equipped with a loom for weaving and that young girls are proficient in the craft before they reach the age of twenty.

In the afternoon you make an easy walk to explore some of the temples of the valley. Firstly you either walk or drive to reach Jambay Lhakhang. This is one of the country's oldest temples, built in the mid-7th Century. Look out for the set of three steps in the main temple. The first step, now hidden below floor level, is said to represent the time of the past or 'historical' Buddha. The second, very well worn, step represents the present Buddha, whilst the third step above, is said to represent the age of the future Buddha. The point at which the second step is worn down to ground level is held to be the time when the world as we currently know it will end. From Jambay Lhakhang you walk along a farm track for 30 minutes to reach Kurjey Lhakhang, a series of three large temples. The oldest of the temples here houses a rock indented with the body shape of Guru Rinpoche, whilst the most recent dates back just 30 years and was built by the Queen Mother, Ashi Kesang Wangchuck. Descending from the temples you cross a suspension bridge and walk downstream for a further 45 minutes to Tamshing Lhakhang, the most important Nyingma Gompa in the Kingdom, established in 1501 by Pemalingpa. Inside you can see a suit of chain-mail armour, which Buddhists believe will bring good fortune if worn and then walked around the inner temple three times.

Your transport will meet you outside the gompa and return you to your hotel, with perhaps a stop in Jakar township or a visit to the spectacular Jakar Dzong (Castle of the White Bird), so called because a white bird was supposed to have indicated the most auspicious place to build. (if the flight from Paro to Bumthang is cancelled for any reason you will drive there instead, over the next two days, arriving on the evening of Day 6)

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

Day 7: Walk to Ngang Lhakhang (Swan Temple) - 2½ to 3 hours. Return to Jakar.

In the morning you will visit Ngang Lhakhang, known as Swan Lhakhang. First you drive the short distance to arrive at a long mani wall in Tangbi. You descend to cross the river by a suspension bridge and then make a pleasant walk, up the river valley through forest and meadows to reach Ngang Lhakhang, also known as 'Swan Temple'. This temple has an illustrious history. Guru Rimpoche is said to have visited here and the present temple, built in the 15th century, is said to be named after swans supposedly seen on a nearby lake by the temple's founder, a Tibetan lama named Namkha Samdrup. The custodian of the temple is a man called Sonam Wangyal. His wife's family has looked after the temple since the 14th Century. He was interviewed in 2017 for a film called 'The Lost Kingdom of the Yeti'. Our own MD, Steve Berry, also took part in this film.



You will have a packed lunch at the temple and then after your visit there you descend to cross the river to a road and will meet your vehicle to drive back to Jakar. The afternoon will be at leisure or time for further sightseeing in the valley.

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

Day 8: Morning at leisure in Jakar or attend the Jakar Tsechu (October departure). Drive Ura La pass, 3,425m/11,237ft - 2 hours. Easy walk down to Ura village - 1-1½ hours.

This morning will either be spent at leisure in Jakar, or, on the October departure, you will join local people at the Jambay Lakhang Drup in Bumthang. This particular festival commemorates the establishment of the Jambay Lakhang temple. Traditional Bhutanese festivals are great opportunities for the Bhutanese to get together, not only to socialise and have fun, but also because the very act of attending a festival is thought to be a blessing and to confer merit. Village people from the area visit the festival dressed in their finest clothes to enjoy watching the singing and dancing. Many villagers also take part in the dances. The festival features different masked dances, known as chams, those that are intended to give moral instruction, those designed to drive away evil spirits and those that celebrate the Buddhist faith in its many guises. Watch out for the 'atsaras', clowns who tease both dancers and audience.



Later you will start the spectacular drive to the east. Leaving Jakar township you drive up out of the valley and to a pass above the village of Ura, the Ura La at 3,425m/11,237ft. From here, on a clear day, there are fantastic views of Bhutan's highest mountain, Gangkar Punsum, 7,550m/24,770ft. Here you leave your vehicle and walk down to Ura Village, a pleasant downhill walk through a lovely forest. When you arrive in the extremely picturesque village, you will visit the small village gumpa, dedicated to Guru Rimpoche, and will then walk through the medieval looking streets to reach the Bangpa Heritage Farmstay, a large traditional farmhouse offering comfortable if simple accommodation. Meeting the family and experiencing their way of life gives a really good insight of Bhutanese rural life.

Overnight: Bangpa Heritage Homestay, Ura (Meals: BLD)

Day 9: Full day drive to Mongar, 1,700m/5,577ft, crossing the Thrumshing La Pass, 3,750m/12,303ft - 180km, 6-7 hours.

Today you drive to Mongar. This is a long but stunning drive of many startling contrasts, crossing one of the highest road passes in Bhutan and passing through alpine scenery and sub-tropical forest and travelling one of the most dramatic and spectacular roads in the kingdom. Leaving Ura to rejoin the main highway, you enter the alpine landscapes of the Thrumshingla National Park, passing beneath overhanging cliffs to reach the Thrumshing La Pass, 3,750m/12,303ft, in about one hour. On a clear day you may be able to see Bhutan's highest peak, Gangkar Punsum, from here. From the pass the road starts its descent, in places hacked into the cliffs, with numerous streams and waterfalls crashing down. Leaving the national park the road emerges into the upper part of the Yong Khola into dense forest, where the scenery becomes lush and sub-tropical with huge trees, bamboos and ferns. This wilderness is one of the prime birdwatching areas in Bhutan. From the forest

the road continues to descend through cultivated terraces to arrive at Kuri Zampa bridge, the lowest point of the drive at 570m/1,970ft, an astonishing descent of 3,200m/10,500ft from the Thrumshing La pass. From the bridge, the road climbs up for a further hour through pine forests and cultivated fields to reach Mongar, located on top of the hill. In common with other towns of east Bhutan, Mongar is not located in a valley as the towns of the west are, but is situated on the top of a hill. There are fine views over the Kuru Chu River and surrounding countryside. Mongar's dzong is relatively new and while the town has busy shops and bars and a bustling fruit and vegetable market there is otherwise not a lot else to see in town.

Overnight: Hotel Wangchuk or Druk Zhongar or Druk Zom, Mongar (Meals: BLD)

Day 10: Walk to Pangchu La Gompa - 2,150m/7,054ft - 3½-4 hours. Return to Mongar and drive to Autsho.

Today you have a very pleasant walk, right out of the front door of the hotel. You climb up past a few houses, with the modern dzong over to your left, and soon emerge into lovely forest and farmland. After about two to three hours walking, alternately in forest and farmland, passing several picturesque farm houses, you arrive at the ridge top, making a final stiff climb of 15 minutes to reach Pangchu La Monastery. This is set right on the ridge line at 2,150m/7,054ft with tremendous all round views, including over to the west to Limithang and the Yongkhola where you travelled from yesterday. About 20 monks live at the monastery and the Lhakhang is well kept with interesting images and wall paintings. From the monastery you continue along the ridge in forest to another small temple about one hour from Pangchu La before making the descent back to Mongar township. Back in town you may visit Mongar's vegetable market and bustling streets.

Later you will drive from Mongar to Autsho, descending in zig zags to the valley and then heading north up the valley toward Lhuentse.

Overnight: The Phayul Resort or Similar, Autsho (Meals: BLD)

Day 11: Visit Khaine Lakhang. Drive to Tangmachu to see giant statue. Visit Lhuntshe Dzong and Khoma Village. Return to Autsho.

Leaving Autsho you drive through some pretty impressive gorges with vertical cliffs, and then, instead of continuing direct to Lhuentse, you turn off to the left and ascend by zig zags high above the valley into the hills, to visit Khaine Lhakhang. Your vehicle will park at one end of the village and you can then walk through to the temple. Khaine Lakhang is an incredibly important small temple, being one of 108 built by the Tibetan King, Songtsen Gampo in AD 659, (like Kyichu Lakhang which you saw near Paro). It is said that three statues flew from here of their own accord to a temple in one of the main valleys of Bumthang. The main protective deity here is a ferocious god named Taxan, who is depicted riding a horse.



From Khaine Lakhang it is a relatively short drive up to Tangmachu, a small village off-the-beaten-track and really quite remote, but nowadays famous as the site of a huge copper/bronze statue of Guru Rinpoche some 173ft high and known as the world's tallest statue of Guru Rinpoche. This statue, consecrated in 2015, was built on the ridge top to keep watch over the village and the surrounding countryside and to bring peace and prosperity to the world and to all sentient beings. The views from the ridge top are tremendous.

From there you will descend back to the main valley and drive to Lhuentse Dzong, 1,409m/4,622ft. The dzong which sits on top of a steep hill commanding an impregnable position was formerly the ancestral home of the kings of Bhutan, with its origins dating back to the seventeenth century when a monastery was founded on the site by Kunga Wangpo. Today Lhuentse Dzong is the administrative and religious centre for the Lhuentse District. The small township which straddles the mountainside below the dzong, with a few shops, bars and a bank, is a pleasant place to explore and to perhaps enjoy a cold soft drink or a beer. Later you will drive up to visit Khoma village. Khoma is said to be the birthplace of the traditional Bhutanese culture of weaving, and is famous for its traditional intricately handwoven silk cloth called Kishuthara. The women of Khoma work in makeshift textile cottages, weaving the delicate designs and patterns. The high prices of their textiles reflect the immense amount of work and the value that the Bhutanese give to such fine weaving. You will return to Autsho for the night.

Overnight: The Phayul Resort or Similar, Autsho (Meals: BLD)

Day 12: Excursion to Dungkar Village (5-6 hours round trip). Visit palace and lunch with local noble family.

Today you will drive north of Lhuentse for about 40 kilometres towards the border with Tibet, to visit the historic village of Dungkhar. In Dungkhar you will visit the impressive 16th century palace, the Jigme Namgyel Naktshang, the ancestral home of the Wangchuk Dynasty, the current royal family of Bhutan. Pema Lingpa's son Kuenga Wangpo settled in Dungkhar and it is through him that the royal family trace their ancestry to this village. Pema Lingpa was a frequent visitor to Dungkhar and built the Goeshog Pang Lhakhang, a temple found a two-hour walk up the valley. Jigme Namgyal, father of the first king, was born here in 1825.

The palace has a scenic backdrop of mountains and is of immense historical significance in the history of Bhutan. A visit here is a glimpse into Bhutan's magical historic past. In time it is hoped to renovate the palace and to turn it into a museum, and that tourism to the area will help to boost the incomes of local people. You will have lunch in the home of a family of the local nobility. Later you will return to Autsho.

Overnight: The Phayul Resort or Similar, Autsho (Meals: BLD)

Day 13: Drive to Tashigang. Visit Dramatse and take local walk en route - 2-3 hours.

Today you will drive to Tashigang. On the way you will take a side trip off the main road and up onto a ridge top at 1,350m/4,429ft, to visit the Monastery of Dramatse. The monastery was founded in 1511 and is one of the largest and most important monasteries of eastern Bhutan. It is particularly famous as being the place where the Nga Cham Drum Dance, which features in tsechus (festivals) all over the country, originates.



There are a couple of options for a day walk near Dramatse. Your guide will advise you which is most suitable for your group.

For the first option, as you drive away from the temple and look down into the main valley, you can see below a series of small villages and hamlets and farmsteads stretching down towards the river far, far below. This first walk starts from a small temple with two prayer poles near Zangkar village and it weaves its way down through the fields, terraces and woodland for 2½ hours to eventually reach the village of Waichure next to the road. However, this path is steep in places and involves a large descent.

Probably the second option is a better choice, taking a trail that starts from near Waichure, ending back at the main road and the village of Thungdari. This walk is very pretty and takes just 1½ hours. You start walking near Waichure, going down steps and across stepping stones to a wall with a night shelter overlooking fields, which is used as a lookout for wild animals. Below is a big house with a double roof painted red and a big mani wall with prayer flags. The path descends, levels out through fir trees and eventually becomes a wide cliff path, offering easy and beautiful walking as it weaves around the mountainside. After an hour you reach a square white chorten and from here you can see down a long way to the road at the very bottom. However your path does not drop steeply - it winds around the mountain, gradually losing height.

Your vehicle will meet you at the bottom, at the village on the main road, and you will continue the drive to Tashigang. As you approach you will spot Tashigang's spectacular dzong set on a ridge high above the river before you ascend to reach the town. Tashigang is an attractive town, the largest in eastern Bhutan, with pretty painted houses, lots of bright bougainvillea and geraniums, and bustling shops and cafes.

Overnight: Druk Deothjung Resort or Lingkhar Lodge, Tashigang (Meals: BLD)

Day 14: Explore Tashigang. Walk out of Tashigang to Kapti Village - about 4 hours. Visit Chador Lhakhang and Mapjung village.

You will have time this morning to explore Tashigang town, visiting the centre of town and the impressive dzong. The centre of Tashigang is clustered round a small central plaza with a large prayer wheel, a bank, a few shops and bars but not much else. Below the plaza is the spectacular Tashigang Dzong, set high above the valley. This dzong was built in the 17th Century to guard against Tibetan invaders and was one of the most strategically important in the country. Today it is the administrative and religious centre of the region.

Later you will take a pleasant walk from Tashigang to the village of Khapti. First you will drive to the high court, a handsome building set a little above the town and from near here take a rocky trail which leads up above the town and then continues through lovely forest with lots of birds and wildlife. After an hour you reach

the top of the ascent from the courthouse at a big pile of rocks (some 800ft of height gain). From here you can see Samkhar village opposite with a prominent stupa. To the left on top of a hill, is the village Mukthang Khar looking a little like a fort on a hilltop. At the pile of stones there is one large stone, the top of which is smooth where demons are said come in the night to sharpen their knives. The path now contours around eventually passing some scattered houses and terraced fields to reach Sangkhar Chorten, 1,430m/4,693ft. You have a choice here, you can drop down and around into a side valley to cross a stream and climb up to Khapti village.

However, this part of the path is well known for wild boar and instead we suggest the vehicle meets you at Sanghar Chorten and you take the new feeder road round to the village. You now drive down into the main valley, climb up the other side to visit Chador Lhakhang and perhaps the village of Bartshen Yangka. Chador Lhakhang is named after the god of power, Chana Dorji. There is a new temple and an old temple. The new one has been funded by the followers of a high ranking Nyingmapa Lama, Dzongkher Khendshi Rinpoche. This lama has followers all over the world and has sponsored the huge work of the new temple. There is a special object in the temple - a small statue in a box with the snake coming out of its mouth. Miraculously, it seems to weigh very heavily in the hand. Take a blessing with the object on your head. Walk around the adjoining village of Mapjung. In the shop look out for a bottle of popular wine called Zumzin - a peach wine and the name means 'happy face, wiggly head!' Actually very drinkable! Return drive to Tashigang.

Overnight: Druk Deothjung Resort or Lingkhar Lodge, Tashigang (Meals: BLD)

Day 15: Drive to Trashiyantse. Visit Gom Kora, Trashiyantse old dzong and Chorten Kora. Visit Bumdeling Wildlife Sanctuary.

Today you drive to Trashiyantse. Firstly you drive down into the valley to cross a bridge and turn north up the valley to Trashiyantse. On the way you visit the charming little temple of Gom Kora. This lovely little pagoda style temple is located by the side of the river and is one of the prettiest and quirkiest temples in Bhutan. A visit here is great fun. After you have looked inside you then go round behind the temple building where there is a huge water eroded boulder which has various historical associations with Guru Rinpoche. You may join pilgrims to make a sacred circuit of the boulder, attempt to climb it up the so called 'stairway to paradise' or 'staircase of the Dakinis', purify yourself by drinking the sacred water which flows down the rock, or squeeze into a tiny holy cave where, when Guru Rinpoche meditated there, he is said to have encountered a demon in the shape of a cobra. Your guide and driver will enjoy a visit here as much as you do!



You then drive further up the valley to Trashiyantse at 1,690m/5,546ft, visiting the old dzong on the way, situated above the road a couple of kilometres before you reach the town, as well as seeing an ancient cantilever bridge spanning the river just below. Reaching the town you visit the Chorten Kora, a white Nepali style stupa built in 1740 and one of the great attractions of eastern Bhutan. It is built in the same style as the great stupa at Boudhnath in Nepal, but it's not really very like Boudhnath! The reason for the discrepancy is said to be that a lama who wanted to build a copy of the stupa in Bhutan, made a model of the Boudhnath one by carving its shape into a radish, but the radish unfortunately shrank and distorted before he got it back home! The area surrounding Trashiyantse still has close contacts with the neighbouring Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh.

While in Trashiyantse you will also have the opportunity to visit the nearby Bomdeling Visitor Centre, in the Bomdeling Wildlife Sanctuary, which has a small wildlife museum and a deer enclosure. Bomdeling Wildlife Sanctuary is important as it is the easternmost range of the wintering grounds of the endangered Black-necked crane and is also home to many other species of animals and birds. You may also take a walk up the pretty valley above Trashiyantse.

Overnight: Hotel Karmaling or Similar, Tashi Yangtse (Meals: BLD)

Day 16: Visit Arts and Crafts Institute of Zorig Chusum. Return drive to Tashigang with a detour to Radhi Temple. Village walk and lunch at farmhouse.

This morning before leaving Trashiyantse you might visit the Arts and Crafts Institute of Zorig Chusum where training is given in various skills such as woodcarving and weaving. Here you can see the student craftsmen at work and there may also be the chance to buy some handicrafts. You then drive back down the valley to Tashigang with a detour on the way to visit Radhi Village. Radhi is famous for its super productive rice fields,

the skill of its weavers and its fine textiles. You will visit Radhi Temple and have lunch at a local farmhouse before walking on down to the road.

Overnight: Druk Deothjung Resort or Lingkhar Lodge, Tashigang (Meals: BLD)

Day 17: Drive from Tashigang to Sandrup Jongkhar.

Remember to keep your passport on you today as you may need to show it as you enter the town of Sandrup Jongkhar.

First, leaving Tashigang, you pass through Sherubtse and the campus of the country's premier University College before you climb to the Yongphula Pass, 2,190m/7,185ft. About two to three hours from Tashigang you reach Khaling, where one of the most famous weaving centres in Bhutan is located, providing cloth for the royal family. If the centre is open you may stop for a short visit. It is a further four to five hours drive from here to Samdrup Jongkhar.

There are wonderful views of forested hills and valleys rolling away to the foothills and the Indian plains of Assam State. You can often see Langur monkeys, kingfishers, eagles and other brightly coloured birds along the roadside. The Indian-like border town of Sandrup Jongkhar is literally at the very foot of the Bhutanese foothills and is quite subtropical.

Overnight: Hotel Tashi Gasel or Hotel Mountain, Samdrup Jongkhar (Meals: BLD)

Day 18: Cross border into India. Drive to Gauhati - 116km, 2 hours. Fly to Delhi, 2hrs 50 mins flight.

After breakfast you will drive to cross the border into India and pick up your Indian transport to drive you to Gauhati. You will immediately be aware of the extreme contrast between these two Himalayan neighbours and will soon find yourself missing the peace and serenity of Bhutan! You drive across the flat plains of Assam through tea plantations, cross the mighty Brahmaputra River and arrive at Gauhati, the largest city in this region of India. From Gauhati you fly to Delhi where you will be met and transferred to your hotel near the airport.

Overnight: Lemon Tree Premier Hotel, Delhi Airport (Meals: B)

Day 19: Fly Delhi to London.

After breakfast there will be a group transfer to the airport to fly home.

Our grading system

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

Gentle

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

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

What the price includes

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

What's included:

- ✓ An English-speaking Bhutanese leader
- ✓ Economy class return air fares from the UK & UK Departure Tax (flight inclusive only).
- ✓ Flights between Kathmandu and Paro with airport transfers
- ✓ The flight from Paro to Jakar in central Bhutan
- ✓ Single, timed, group airport transfers for international flights on arrival and departure
- ✓ 4* hotel in Kathmandu on twin-share, bed and breakfast basis
- ✓ Hotel in Delhi 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 full board, twin-share basis
- ✓ Bhutan visa and departure tax
- ✓ Sightseeing where specified and all entrance fees
- ✓ Comfortable Toyota minibus for all driving
- ✓ All meals in Bhutan, and B&B in Kathmandu and Delhi
- ✓ Carbon offsetting with the Ecoan Tree Planting Project (for clients taking our flight inclusive option)
- ✓ A free Mountain Kingdoms Water-to-go bottle

Airport transfers

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

What's not included:

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

Water-to-Go Reusable Bottle Campaign

We have joined the campaign to help cut down on the use of plastics and, in particular, single-use water bottles. To do this we have teamed up with the revolutionary company, Water-to-Go who have developed a multi-use drinking bottle with a reusable filter that eliminates over 99.9% of all microbiological contaminants. This makes water from virtually any source safe to drink and significantly reduces the need for travellers to buy bottles of water wherever they are in the world. Our clients who are not given a free Mountain Kingdoms kit bag for their holiday (these are required for certain treks), will instead receive a free Mountain Kingdoms Water-to-Go bottle. These unique Water-to-Go bottles can also be purchased from us at a discounted rate.

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

Your accommodation

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.

Difficulties with reserving 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. 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.

Also please be aware that the standard of accommodation in the east is not as high as for hotels in the west of the country.



Hotel Shanker 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.



Ugyenling Hotel or Similar, Jakar

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



Bangpa Heritage Homestay, Ura

Bangpa Heritage Homestay is a large, historic, traditional farmhouse located in the centre of the medieval looking village of Ura. The family of this house are considered one of the "noble religious families" (lam chojé), of the region. The house offers comfortable accommodation and excellent food, including fresh bread, as well as indoor bathrooms with hot water shower and western style toilets.



Hotel Wangchuk or Druk Zhongaro or Druk Zom, Mongar

This is quite a large modern hotel, looking out over the town and surrounding countryside. Rooms are large and comfortable and the restaurant serves very good food. If rooms are not available at the Wangchuk there are two other very pleasant hotels located nearby, the Druk Zonghar and the Druk Zom, both of which have good rooms and all facilities.



The Phayul Resort or similar, Autsho

Accommodation in Lhuntse is rather limited. If accommodation is available in Lhuntse you will stay there, if not you will stay at the Phayul Resort, a small, simple but pleasant lodge located between Lhuntse and Mongar. Rooms are comfortable and have attached facilities.



Druk Deothjung Resort or Lingkhar Lodge, Tashigang

Druk Deothjung is a stunning new lodge situated a few kilometres outside Tashigang in a lovely rural location. It has stylish rooms and a good restaurant. If space is not available here you will stay at the Lingkhar Lodge, a pleasant, small hotel 20 minutes' drive from Tashigang town.



Hotel Karmaling or Similar, Tashi Yangtse

This is a simple lodge situated in the centre of Tashi Yangtse town. Rooms are simple but have en suite facilities and hot water. Food is good and cold beer and soft drinks are available. The hotel has a very handsome prayer room.



Hotel Tashi Gasel or Hotel Mountain, Samdrup Jongkhar

This is quiet hotel situated just out of town. It has comfortable rooms with all facilities and a pleasant restaurant offering good food. If this hotel is unavailable we will use the Hotel Mountain - a business hotel, situated in the centre of town, with a lively bar/restaurant and comfortable rooms



Lemon Tree Premier Hotel, Delhi Airport

The Lemon Tree Premier offers good facilities and a high level of comfort only 4km from Delhi's international airport. Rooms are bright and spacious with tea/coffee makers, mini bars and free Wi-Fi. The hotel has a spa, pool, cafe, pan-Asian restaurant and trendy bar.

Meal arrangements

16 breakfasts, 14 lunches and 14 dinners are included. Bed and breakfast in Kathmandu and Delhi.

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.

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.

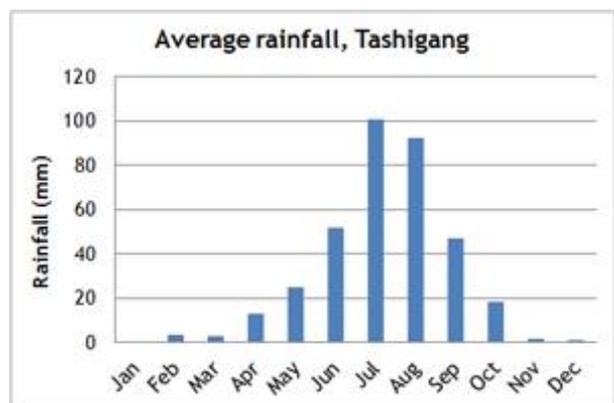
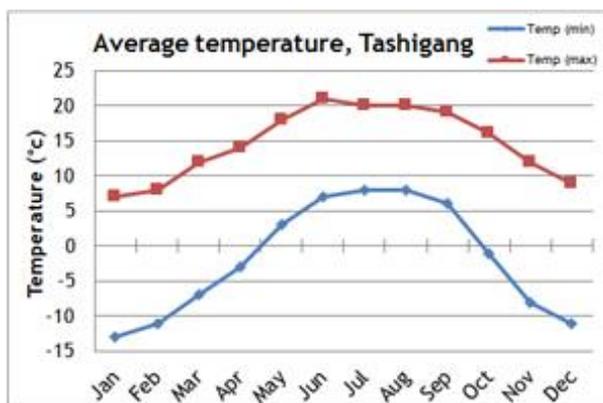
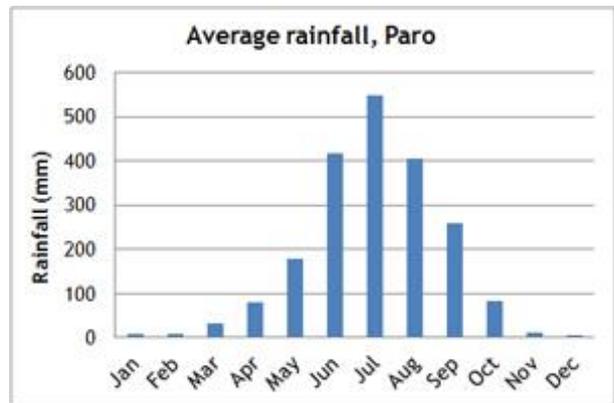
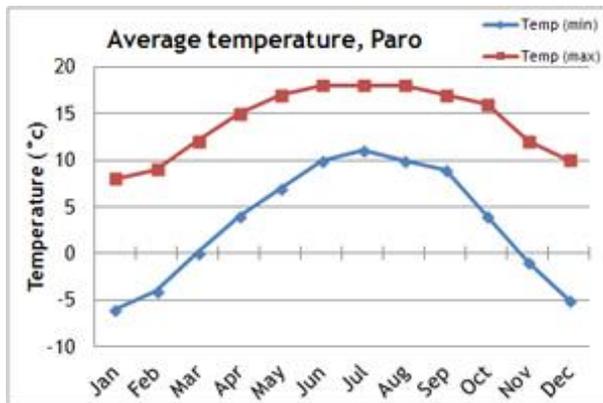
Further information

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



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.

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.



NEPAL

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.

Additional accommodation in Nepal

If you would like to extend your stay in Nepal, 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.



BHUTAN

This itinerary does not spend much time in the west of Bhutan so it would be possible to extend your trip to fly out to Paro early to visit Thimphu, Bhutan's laid back capital or Punakha, Bhutan former winter capital and then join your group when they arrive in Paro.

INDIA



Kaziranga post-trip extension

The Kaziranga National Park is located east of Guahati which you visit at the end of the trip so it is possible to add on a trip to Kaziranga at the end of your Bhutan holiday. Kaziranga is a world heritage site, situated on the edge of the Eastern Himalaya biodiversity hotspot. It offers an amazing diversity of the landscape and wildlife. The large numbers of one-horned rhino are a particular attraction of Kaziranga. You may arrange a visit there after the Bhutan section of this trip before flying to Delhi.

Additional accommodation in Delhi

If you would like to stay longer in Delhi we can arrange additional nights and upgrades from our selection of first rate hotels such as the Oberoi Maidens in the city or Claridges Hotel in New Delhi.



Agra, the Taj Mahal and Jaipur

We offer various extensions to Agra, from a one-day visit to see the majestic Taj Mahal to a six-day trip to visit both the Taj and the Amber Fort at Jaipur. All options travel to Agra on the Shatabdi Express and include the services of an English speaking guide, sightseeing and private transport.



Ranthambore or Corbett National Park

In both Ranthambore and Corbett, northern India has two superb national parks. Both have a diverse range of habitats and are home to a fantastic variety of wildlife including large populations of tigers as well as elephants, leopard, bears and monkeys. Both parks are also renowned for the number and diversity of birds they attract. We can arrange a three night stay at a jungle camp at either Ranthambore or Corbett from where you can enjoy many wildlife watching activities such as nature walks, safaris and bird watching.

Why book this holiday with Mountain Kingdoms?

- This itinerary is unique to Mountain Kingdoms and is an excellent companion trip to our popular Gentle Walking Bhutan holiday which explores the highlights of western Bhutan on foot
- Our itinerary has been carefully designed to give the ideal balance between easy-paced walks, sightseeing, travel and time to simply explore
- The autumn departure will visit a traditional Bhutanese festival
- We include a flight from Paro to Bumthang to reduce the road travel needed to reach the east of the kingdom
- Your trip will be led by a professional, English-speaking guide who will be delighted to share their expert knowledge of the history, culture and nature of their home country.
- 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.
- We research our holidays ourselves and Steve Berry completed this trip in 2018. If you have any questions about this trip please contact Steve on 01453 844400, she will be very happy to help.
- 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.

What our clients say



Bhutan remains a fascinating and unique destination, and it was a privilege to travel to the east as well as revisit some of the western highlights.

-Robin Miller, Lothian

Nice to be back in Bhutan, this time gently discovering beautiful east. Amazing nature, slow-paced life, tradition, nice food. With the favourable weather that we had, just a perfect holiday.

-Milan from Croatia



It was my 6th time in Bhutan, over 33 years, and my third time in East Bhutan. It was fantastic to see how the country has developed, particularly with good roads and hotels, but kept its essential rural charm, social structure and uniqueness. I particularly wanted to have several days in the Lhuentse Valley in East Bhutan, which is another world of charm and remoteness. Also, the 2 hour walk down from the Ura La to Ura Village must be one of the best short walks in the Himalayas.

-Peter, Devon

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, gear and clothing list and lots of useful information. In fact, everything you need to know to 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.

