

Lingshi Laya Trek with Thimphu Tsechu & Royal Highland Festival, Bhutan

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



Group departures

See overleaf for departure dates

Holiday overview

Style	Trek
Accommodation	Hotels, Camping
Grade	Strenuous
Duration	22 days from London to London
Trekking / Walking days	On Trek: 12 days Walks on: 1 day
Min/Max group size	4 / 12. Guaranteed to run for 4
Trip Leader	Local Leader Bhutan
Land only	Joining in Kathmandu, Nepal
Max altitude	5,005m/16,420ft, Shingela Pass, day 13

Private Departures & Tailor Made itineraries available



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Group Departure Dates and Prices

Group departures

2026 Dates:

Sun 27 Apr - Fri 16 May

Fri 09 Oct - Thu 29 Oct With Chomolhari Mountain Festival & Royal Highland Festival

2027 Dates:

Mon 26 Apr - Sat 15 May

Fri 08 Oct - Fri 29 Oct With Chomolhari Mountain Festival, Royal Highland Festival & Thimphu Tsechu

This is the detailed itinerary for our October 2027 departure only. Separate itineraries are available for all other departures and can be requested from our office or downloaded on the Mountain Kingdoms website.

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/lingshi-laya-trek>. 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.

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.

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 highlights

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

At a glance itinerary

Days 1-2	Arrive Kathmandu.
Day 3	Fly to Paro. Sightseeing.
Day 4	Drive to Thimphu and attend the tsechu. Return to Paro.
Day 5	Visit Taktsang Monastery and sightseeing in the Paro Valley.
Day 6	Trek from Olathang to Kyichu. Drive to Gunitsawa. Trek to Shana.
Days 7-8	Trek to Soi Thangthanka and to Chomolhari Base Camp, 4,090m/13,418ft (Jangothang). Visit the Chomolhari Festival en route to Base Camp.
Day 9	Rest day and acclimatisation walks to Tsho Phu lakes or Jitchu Drake Base Camp.
Days 10-11	Trek to Lingshi via the Nyelela Pass, 4,890m/16,043ft. Visit Lingshi Dzong and trek to Chebisa.
Days 12-13	Trek to Shomuthang and to Robulathang via the Jarela Pass, 4,785m/15,699ft.
Days 14-15	Cross the Shingela Pass, 5,005m/16,420ft. Trek to Laya, 3,840m/12,598ft.
Day 16	Attend the Royal Highland Festival in Laya.
Day 17	Trek to Koena. End trek and drive to Punakha.
Day 18	Visit Punakha Dzong and Chimi Lhakhang. Drive to Thimphu.
Day 19	Sightseeing in Thimphu. Drive to Paro.
Days 20-22	Fly to Kathmandu. Fly to London.

Trip summary

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

One of the highlights of this trek is local people that you will meet en route - both the semi-nomadic yak herders that camp in black yak hair tents, often seen now with solar panels stuck outside, and the hospitable inhabitants of the unbelievably remote small stone villages that you will pass. You will also spend time at two annual festivals that celebrate the unique mountain culture and heritage of Bhutan: the Chomolhari Mountain Festival at Base Camp and the Royal Highland Festival at Laya. And for a real Bhutan bonus, you will also spend a day at the Thimphu Tsechu - one of the country's premier celebrations.

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

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

Your trip itinerary

Day 1: Depart London.

Fly overnight London to Kathmandu.

Overnight: In flight

Day 2: Arrive Kathmandu. Group transfer to hotel.

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

Overnight: Hotel Shanker, Kathmandu

Day 3: Fly to Paro in Bhutan.

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



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

Day 4: Drive to Thimphu to attend the Thimphu Tsechu. Return to Paro.

This morning you will make the drive to Thimphu (1½ hours) to attend the Thimphu Tsechu.

The Thimphu Tsechu is one of Bhutan's most important festivals and is massively impressive. It is held in the inner courtyards of the Tashichhoedzong, Thimphu's monastery/fortress. Such festivals in Bhutan are important cultural and religious events. People may attain merit by the mere act of attending the festival but as important, they are an opportunity to socialise and have fun. 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. Beware the very naughty clowns who spend a lot of their time teasing the crowd (and the dancers). Later in the day, you will return to your hotel in Paro.

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

Day 5: Walk to Taktsang Monastery and sightseeing in the Paro Valley.

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

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

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

Day 6: Trek from Olathang to Kyichu - 3 hours. Drive to Gunitsawa. Trek to Shana, 2,890m/9,482ft.

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

Overnight: Camp (Meals: BLD)

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

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

Overnight: Camp (Meals: BLD)

Day 8: Trek to Jangothang (Chomolhari Base Camp), 4,090m/13,418ft - 5-6 hours. Attend the Mount Chomolhari Festival en route.

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

Your camp in Jangothang is a little beyond the festival ground - about 1½ hours walk between the two. Once you arrive at the festival ground (about 4 hrs or so), you'll have lunch, enjoy the festivities, and then continue to the camp. The Mount Chomolhari Festival celebrates the culture of the local communities and the natural wonders of the region.

Please note that the dates for this festival are provisional and may change.

Overnight: Camp (Meals: BLD)

Day 9: Rest day and acclimatisation with walks to glacier, Tsho Phu lakes or Jitchu Drake Base Camp.

It is highly advisable that you do some sort of walk today involving height gain in order to help with acclimatisation. There are several excellent walks to choose from. Highly recommended is to walk a short way up the valley towards Jitchu Drake before turning right to climb steeply uphill towards a hanging valley leading to the beautiful Tsho Phu Lakes, situated at about 4,350m/14,271ft.



Alternatively, you can climb up the grassy ridge just north of the base camp to reach a small peak at 4,760m/15,617ft. Or you can walk up to Jitchu Drake base camp, or to the original Chomolhari base camp along the valley floor.

Overnight: Camp (Meals: BLD)

Day 10: Trek to Lingshi, 4,149m/13,612ft, via the Nyelela Pass, 4,890m/16,043ft - 6-7 hours.

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

Overnight: Camp (Meals: BLD)

Day 11: Visit Lingshi Dzong and trek to Chebisa, 3,849m/12,628ft - 5-6 hours.

Today is an easier day and you will be able to view the outside of the Dzong and small settlement below it before setting off on trek. The school here serves several local villages. Leaving Lingshi behind you contour and climb gently to reach another delightful village, Gang Yul, which is set right below a 304m/1,000ft cliff. There is a very holy llakang here. Another hour's walking high above the valley floor brings you to a lovely little side valley with a huge waterfall at one end and the Shangri-la village of Chebisa, where you camp by the side of the river. The trail leading up and past it leads to Tibet - about 12 miles away. There are plenty of blue sheep in this area and you should be able to get quite close to them. It is a very leisurely walking day today with plenty of reasons and opportunities to linger.

Overnight: Camp (Meals: BLD)

Day 12: Trek to Shomuthang, 4,220m/13,845ft - 6-7 hours.

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

Overnight: Camp (Meals: BLD)

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

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

Overnight: Camp (Meals: BLD)

Day 14: Cross the Shingela Pass, 5,005m/16,420ft. Camp at Limithang, 4,140m/13,583ft - 6-7 hours.

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

Overnight: Camp (Meals: BLD)

Day 15: Trek to Laya, 3,840m/12,598ft - 4-5 hours. Explore village.

You will have a leisurely walk alongside the river through cedar and fir forest before descending to reach the largest village on the trek. The people of Laya are famous for their vertically-striped yak hair clothing and strange conical bamboo hats. The women wear long hair and a great deal of turquoise and jade jewellery. The features of the people are even more Tibetan/Mongolian than the Bhutanese who live in the central valleys.



The rest of the day is spent at leisure, or visiting village houses. There are good views of Masagang, 7,165m/23,507ft, and other peaks. In the evening the local girls may dance for you.

Overnight: Camp (Meals: BLD)

Day 16: Attend the Royal Highland Festival.

You have a whole day to relax and reflex on your trek, whilst enjoying the spectacle that is the annual Royal Highland Festival in Laya.

The Royal Highland Festival is a vibrant celebration that offers a unique glimpse into the lives and traditions of Bhutan's highlanders. Rooted in the vision of promoting a thriving highland economy and showcasing the innovation and cultural heritage of the local communities, the festival brings together people from across the region. It's a dynamic exchange of knowledge, skills, and best practices related to yak farming and sustainable highland livelihoods, as well as a celebration of the local culture. You'll witness cultural performances, unusual sporting contests and bustling stalls with local produce. You may even see the royal family, as the festival was founded in 2016 by the current king and he remains a keen supporter.

This will be the last night you spend with your trek crew and a chance to celebrate your joint achievement.

Overnight: Camp (Meals: BLD)

Day 17: Trek to Koena, 3,240m/10,630ft - 7-8 hours. Drive to Punakha.

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

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

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

Day 18: Sightseeing in Punakha. Drive to Thimphu.

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



You will also pay a visit to Chimi Lhakhang, taking a short walk across the paddy fields visit this delightful small temple built by Drukpa Kunley. Known as the 'The Divine Madman', Drukpa Kunley was a 15th Century Bhutanese lama and is Bhutan's most popular Saint and one of the most important figures in Bhutanese folklore. Despite the apparent conservatism of the Bhutanese people, Drukpa Kunley with his unconventional views on sex is a great favourite throughout the country - the phallus symbols

painted on the outside walls of houses date back to his teachings. Chimi Lhakhang is especially popular with women who come here to pray for children. The temple is characterised by its many phallic symbols.

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

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

Day 19: Sightseeing in Thimphu. Drive to Paro.

Thimphu has been the permanent capital since 1955 and has two cinemas and a radio station. This is the least visited of all the Himalayan capitals. It has a population of around 100,000 and has wide streets and a rather relaxed air.

Its sights include the Late King's Memorial Chorten, the Textile Museum, the Heritage Museum, the silversmiths and pottery workshops, the indigenous hospital specialising in herbal medicine, the thangka painting school, the Bhutanese paper factory, the recently built Changlingmithang Lhakhang temple, and the National Library.

In the afternoon you drive to Paro.

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

Day 20: Fly to Kathmandu.

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

Overnight: Hotel Shanker, Kathmandu (Meals: B)

Day 21: Time at leisure. Group transfer to airport. Depart Kathmandu.

You will have time at leisure today in Kathmandu to do some sightseeing or shopping, or simply relax at your hotel. Later there will be a group transfer to the airport for your overnight flight back to London.

Overnight: In flight (Meals: B)

Day 22: Arrive UK

Our grading system

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

Strenuous

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

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

Trip altitude

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:

- ✓ 18 x breakfasts, 16 x lunches, 16 x dinners
- ✓ 4* hotel accommodation in Kathmandu, on a twin-share, bed and breakfast basis
- ✓ In Bhutan, good standard hotel accommodation in main towns and best available hotels in outlying towns, on twin-share, full board basis
- ✓ Full-service camping on trek (tents on a twin-share basis)
- ✓ An English-speaking Bhutanese leader
- ✓ All flights between Kathmandu and Paro and domestic transfers
- ✓ Bhutan visa and Bhutan departure tax
- ✓ All road transport by private vehicles
- ✓ The use of a good quality down jacket and sleeping bag (when travelling to Bhutan via Kathmandu).
- ✓ Sightseeing where specified
- ✓ Economy class return air fares from the UK & UK Departure Tax (flight inclusive only)
- ✓ Single, timed group airport transfers for international flights on arrival and departure
- ✓ Carbon offsetting with the Ecoan Tree Planting Project (for clients taking our flight inclusive option)
- ✓ A free high-quality Mountain Kingdoms kit bag

Airport transfers

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

What's not included:

- ✗ Travel insurance
- ✗ Visa fees for Nepal
- ✗ Lunch and evening meals in Kathmandu
- ✗ Tips

Water-to-Go Reusable Bottle Campaign

We have joined the campaign to help cut down on the use of plastics and, in particular, single-use water bottles. To do this we have teamed up with the revolutionary company, Water-to-Go who have developed a multi-use drinking bottle with a reusable filter that eliminates over 99.9% of all microbiological contaminants. This makes water from virtually any source safe to drink and significantly reduces the need for travellers to buy bottles of water wherever they are in the world.

Clients who are not given a free Mountain Kingdoms kit bag for their holiday (these are required for certain treks), will instead receive a free Mountain Kingdoms Water-to-Go bottle. These unique Water-to-Go bottles can also be purchased from us at a discounted rate. For further information about our campaign visit

<https://www.mountainkingdoms.com/water-to-go-reusable-bottle-campaign>.

Your accommodation

We will endeavour to secure the hotels named in this itinerary but if our first choice of hotel is unavailable we will book a suitable alternative of a similar standard.

Hotels in Bhutan

Please note that there is generally a shortage of hotel/lodge accommodation in Bhutan, especially outside Paro and Thimphu. Although we pre-book rooms as far in advance as possible, anything can happen and probably will. 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.



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.



Zhingkhram Resort or Damchen Resort or Similar, Punakha

Overlooking Punakha Dzong, and only opened in 2016, the Zhingkhram Resort is one of the best hotels in Punakha. The well-proportioned, stylish rooms come complete with free Wi-Fi, minibars and coffee/tea making facilities as well as balconies giving picture-perfect views of the dzong and the surrounding hills and countryside. Alternatively, the Damchen Resort is a newly renovated hotel sitting on the banks of the Puna Chhu River in the Punakha Valley. Rooms are clean, cosy and bright with good amenities, wooden furniture and nice decorative touches. The hotel is a short, easy walk from the small town of Khuruthang which has a selection of shops and restaurants.



Phuntso Pelri Hotel or Similar, Thimphu

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



Camping

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

Meal arrangements

18 x breakfasts, 16 x lunches, 16 x dinners. Bed and Breakfast in Kathmandu, all meals in hotels and on trek 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.

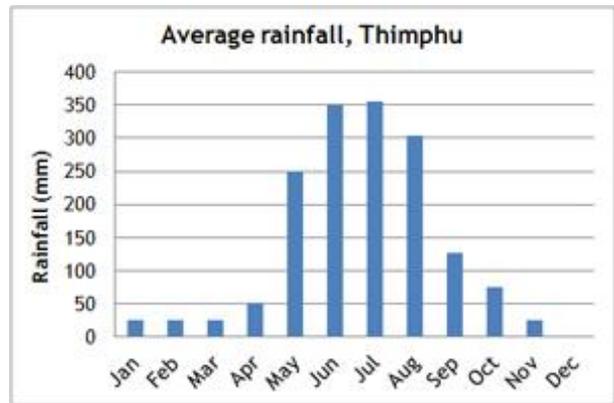
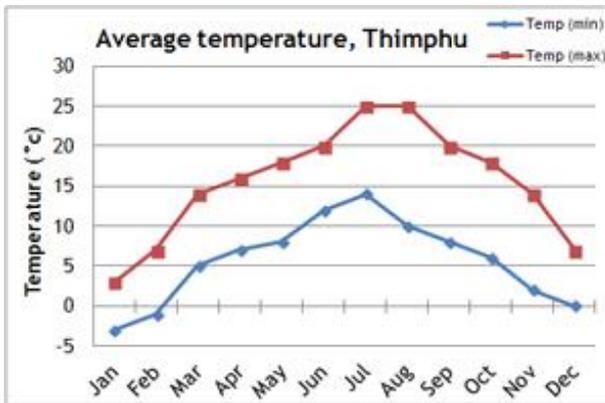
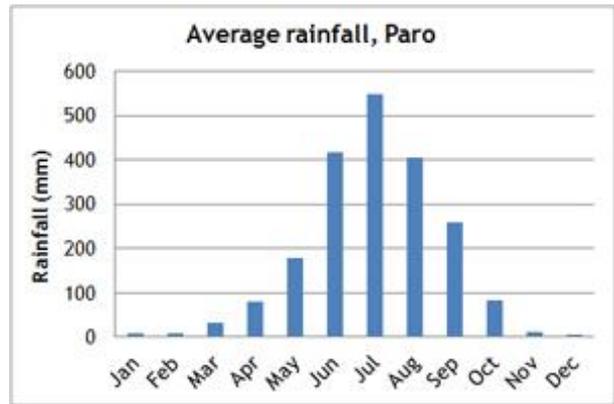
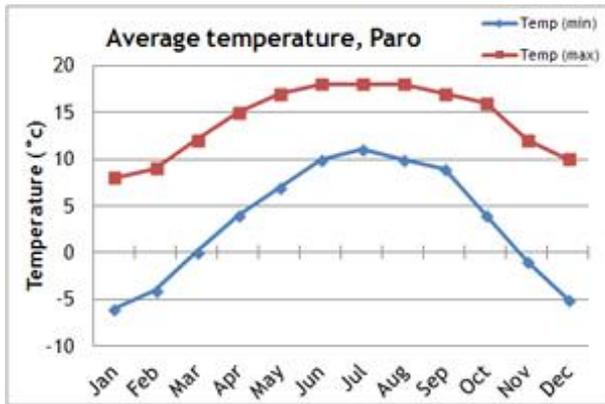
Further information

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.



Bumthang Extension

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



Wildlife extensions in Nepal - Chitwan, Bardia & Koshi Tappu

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

Royal Manas National Park, Bhutan

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

Why book this holiday with Mountain Kingdoms?

- All of our treks are planned with the importance of good acclimatisation in mind. On this trip you will undertake an acclimatisation walk before the start of your trek.
- Your trek will be led by a knowledgeable, well-trained English-speaking guide supported by an experienced trekking crew who will provide an excellent standard of service. Your gear will be portered for you so all you need to carry is a small daypack.
- This departure is timed to coincide with the fabulous Thimphu Tsechu plus two mountain festivals for a unique insight into the culture and heritage of the region.
- We have been pioneering holidays in Bhutan for over 30 years. Our M.D. Steve Berry, is one of the leading authorities on Bhutan in the travel industry and has written two books about his experiences in the Thunder Dragon Kingdom.
- Many members of the Mountain Kingdoms team have first-hand experience of Bhutan. Steve and Seraphina Berry and Niki Morgan have all completed treks in this area and would be happy to answer any questions you may have.
- Our maximum group size is 12 for this trip. This provides for a genuine small group travel experience and helps reduce the negative aspects associated with larger trekking groups.
- We offer a flexible service and can extend your holiday with extra hotel nights, upgrades and exciting activities.
- As part of our commitment to 'Tourism Declares a Climate Emergency', we will be carbon-offsetting all international flights booked through us by donating funds to the Ecoan Tree Planting Project in Peru.
- If you wish to fly with a specific airline, from a regional UK airport or on alternative dates to the main group we would be happy to arrange this for you. Please contact our Flights team for flight options, quotes and further information.

If we've tempted you to take your next holiday with us, we advise you to check availability and you can do this via our website: www.mountainkingdoms.com 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



The whole experience lived up to my expectation in every way, a brilliant trek both in the spectacular scenery, people and the great trekking. Not forgetting the Team guide and his team they were fantastic.

-Dave Taylor



A fantastic trek in a beautiful and fascinating country with a unique culture. It was a tough trek but really well organised and the scenery was breathtaking. Our guide Tschering and the support staff were amazing, always helpful, cheerful and friendly and the quality of food was excellent despite the difficult conditions. The Bhutanese people could not have been warmer and more welcoming. A really wonderful holiday.

-Sean, Hertfordshire



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

-Mr S, Cornwall



Wonderful, we felt it gave a great picture of Bhutanese life, culture, flora and fauna and the people.

-Mr & Mrs H, Bristol

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

-Mr E, Exeter



Terrific location / fantastic scenery / fascinating culture particularly in Laya. Overall trip logistics in Bhutan were excellent. Group size of 10 was perfect.

- Mr P, Canada

An excellent trip - only 2 clients so the guide was able to take us round a number of places in Thimphu and Paro which wouldn't have been possible with a big group. We were fortunate to see some of the mountain festivals at both Jhomolhari and Laya while we were on the trek. A great mixture of altitude trekking and also an opportunity to learn much more about the country and the people.

-Denzil, Lancs

Wonderful scenery. Fabulous Bhutanese guide who had a great sense of humour and really made the trip fun particularly for those facing what was for them a significant physical challenge. Well organised and went very smoothly.

-Susan, Scotland

Mountain Kingdoms - distinctly different

Truly independent

In an age where many so-called 'independent' travel companies have in fact been bought out by multi-national giants, we remain fiercely independent with all the benefits this offers our clients.

Value for money prices with an emphasis on quality

We are not in the business of cutting our itineraries and services to the bone to offer eye-catching cheap prices. We use some of the best airlines, and typically 3 or 4 star hotels in cities. We include the majority of meals and private transport for road travel. We use excellent equipment and appoint well-trained staff and leaders. Last year, over 98% of our clients rated their Mountain Kingdoms holiday as 'excellent' or 'good'. We are members of AITO and bound by their quality charter.

Complete financial security

You can book with us confident that your holiday has full financial protection. Flight inclusive holidays are financially protected by the Civil Aviation Authority under ATOL licence number 2973 and 'Land Only' holidays are covered by a bond secured with ABTOT.

No Surcharge Guarantee

Your peace of mind is important to us so we have a No Surcharge Guarantee on all Land Only and Flight Inclusive bookings. This means that there will be no change to the price of your holiday once we have confirmed your booking, regardless of fluctuations in exchange rates or fuel prices.

Award winning Responsible Tourism

We feel strongly that all our holidays should benefit local communities, protect the environment and respect local traditions, religion and heritage. You can read more about the charities we support and our Responsible Tourism commitments and initiatives on the following page or at www.mountainkingdoms.com.

Genuine small group travel

Almost all of our holidays have a maximum group size of just 12, plus leader. This provides more contact with your leader, readier access to off-the-beaten-path areas, greater interaction with local communities and a reduced environmental impact.

Loyalty Discount

If you have previously travelled with us we recognise your loyalty with a discount on future trips.

Booking your holiday - it couldn't be easier

Once you've chosen your Mountain Kingdoms holiday you can book online, call the office or complete and post a booking form which can be found in our brochure or downloaded from our website. If you would like to hold a place on one of our trips, whilst you make up your mind, please give us a call to make a provisional booking. This is a no-obligation, no-cost booking and we will hold your place until space comes under pressure or we need your decision.

Comprehensive information

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



RESPONSIBLE TOURISM STATEMENT

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.

