

# Tiger's Nest Trek, Bhutan & Kathmandu Valley Trek, Nepal with Paro Tsechu

Discover Nepal and Bhutan's must see sights then step off-the-beaten-track with a short, yet spectacular trek, in each kingdom.



## Group departures

See overleaf for departure dates

## Holiday overview

Style	Trek
Accommodation	Hotels, Camping
Grade	Gentle / Moderate
Duration	15 days from London to London
Trekking / Walking days	On trek: 5 days Walks on: 2 days
Min/Max group size	4 / 12. Guaranteed to run for 4
Trip Leader	Local Leader Nepal And Bhutan
Land only	Joining in Kathmandu, Nepal
Max altitude	3,800m/12,467ft, Bumdra Monastery, Day 11

**Private Departures & Tailor Made itineraries available**



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# Departures

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## Group departures

### 2023 Dates:

Sun 26 Mar - Sun 09 Apr      With Paro Tsechu  
Tue 17 Oct - Wed 01 Nov      With Dechenphu Tsechu

This detailed itinerary is for our March departure only. An itinerary for our October departure can be downloaded from our website or requested from the Mountain Kingdoms office.

### Group prices and optional supplements

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

### No Surcharge Guarantee

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

### Will the trip run?

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

### Insurance

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

### Private Departures

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

### Tailor Made service

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

# Your guide

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## Nepal

Whether it's a cultural tour, gentle walking holiday or strenuous trek, our holidays in Nepal are led by professionally-trained English speaking leaders. They have an intimate and expert knowledge of the history, culture and nature of Nepal and will make your trip a memorable experience.

## Bhutan

You will have an English speaking Bhutanese guide. Mountain Kingdoms have been working with the same partner in Bhutan since 1986. Their guides are some of the best in the Kingdom. They speak fluent English, as this is taught in all Bhutanese schools, and are fully qualified guides. The Tourism Authority of Bhutan insists that a Bhutanese trek or tour leader must pass his/her guiding exams in Thimphu before accompanying groups of foreign visitors. Guides receive regular 'top-up' training and 15 of our regular leaders have completed an extended training course run by Mountain Kingdoms in Bhutan.

### 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

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- A three day trek between villages and temples along the ridgeline of the Kathmandu Valley, enjoying glorious Himalayan views
- Follow in the footsteps of pilgrims on the trail to the sacred temple of Namo Buddha - the Tigress's Den
- Camping beneath remote Bumdra Monastery on an overnight trek which culminates in a little-trodden approach to the iconic Tiger's Nest Temple of Taktsang
- Time to explore the heritage towns of Bhaktapur, Dhulikel and Panauti in Nepal
- Gentle walks in Bhutan and the cultural highlights of Paro, Punakha and Thimphu
- All the colour and celebrations of a traditional Bhutanese festival

## At a glance itinerary

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Days 1-2	Fly to Kathmandu. Transfer to Bhaktapur.
Day 3	Tour of Bhaktapur.
Days 4-5	Drive to Dhulikel. Trek to Namo Buddha and Balthali Village.
Day 6	End trek at Khopasi. Drive to Bhaktapur.
Days 7-8	Fly to Paro in Bhutan. Drive to Thimphu. Walk to Wangditse Monastery and sightseeing in Thimphu.
Day 9	Drive to Punakha. Valley walk. Visit Punakha Dzong
Day 10	Return to Paro. Attend the Paro Tsechu. Sightseeing.
Days 11-12	Trek to Taktsang - the Tiger's Nest Monastery (Bumdra Trek).
Days 13-15	Fly to Kathmandu. Sightseeing. Fly to London.

## Trip summary

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Temples, dzongs, and mythical tiger tales are at the heart of this two week journey into the Buddhist heartlands of Nepal and Bhutan. By taking to the trail on two short treks, you'll not only enjoy the best approach to several key cultural and religious sights, but you'll also get to experience the superb scenery and authentic rural life of these two captivating countries.

You begin in Kathmandu, but immediately leave the hubbub of the city behind and head instead to the quieter medieval towns, terraced fields and traditional villages of the Kathmandu Valley. Here you spend a full day exploring one of the jewels of the valley, Bhaktapur. This once royal city with its red-brick streets, open squares and towering, pagoda-style temples is a showcase for some of the finest, and best preserved, architecture in all of Nepal. From Bhaktapur you drive to Dhulikel, poised on the high ridge above the valley, and the starting point for your scenic trek. Over the course of three days you will enjoy sweeping views of Himalayan mountains, discover villages little-changed by time and visit the sacred Buddhist pilgrimage site of Namo Buddha Stupa. Also known as the 'den of the tigress' it is believed to be the place where the young Buddha prince valiantly sacrificed himself to save a clutch of starving tiger cubs.

Flying on to Bhutan, you will savour some equally impressive sights. Punakha and Paro Dzongs are two of the most magnificent in the kingdom whilst colossal Buddha statues and ancient lhakhangs (temples) reflect the deep, spirituality of the Bhutanese people. You explore on foot, taking easy-paced picturesque walks that give you time to enjoy Bhutan's lush landscapes and to get a sense of its timeless quality. You will also attend a colourful tsechu (festival) for the complete Bhutanese experience.

Your holiday culminates in a two day trek to reach the kingdom's most celebrated sight, Taktsang - the Tiger's Nest Monastery. Perched high on a cliff top its location and name stems from another epic Buddhist legend involving a flying tigress, an heroic saint and several evil demons! Your trek begins in the Paro Valley where you meet your trek crew and step out on the lesser known Bumdra Trail which climbs steeply from the valley floor to reach Bumdra Monastery. From here there are breathtaking views as far as the high Himalayan peaks in the north. You will enjoy a night under canvas in this privileged spot. The following day you trek on to the Tiger's Nest, which is gradually revealed below you, giving a rare perspective of the most iconic sight in the Thunder Dragon Kingdom.



# Your trip itinerary

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## Day 1: Depart London.

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Depart London on your overnight flight to Kathmandu.

**Overnight: In flight**

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

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On arrival in Kathmandu you will be met and transferred to your hotel in Bhaktapur. This ancient city, located just nine kilometres from Kathmandu, is a real cultural gem. Bhaktapur is one of three major cities built in the Kathmandu Valley by the old Malla kings who ruled the valley hundreds of years ago. These cities, Kathmandu, Patan and Bhaktapur, are repositories of traditional Nepalese architecture and local Newari craftsmanship where you will find ancient Hindu temples, Buddhist stupas, crumbling shrines, picturesque Rana palaces and crowded bazaars.

**Overnight: Heritage Hotel, Bhaktapur**

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## Day 3: Tour of Bhaktapur.

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Today you will explore the streets and historic buildings of Bhaktapur.

Many of the buildings in Bhaktapur have their origins in the 15th Century and the side streets, being mostly brick paved, still have a really medieval feel to them. There is still evidence of the damage caused by the devastating 2015 earthquake; restoration has been slow but this hasn't spoiled Bhaktapur's ancient charm. This is very much a lived in city, and, with much of it closed to traffic, walking around is a pleasure and you will get a feeling for how things must have been in medieval times. Bhaktapur is quieter than Kathmandu city and still has quite a rural feel. The local people are predominantly farmers and the town is famous for its home-made yoghurt, as well as for its pottery made from the local red clay - you can see this production going on in the so-called 'pottery square' and other side streets.



On your tour you will see fine palaces and temples with gilded roofs, open courtyards and elaborate windows carved in wood. The main focus for the town is the central Durbar Square where many of the finest buildings are found, including the famous Palace of 55 Windows which shows some of the best examples of elaborately carved windows and doors.

**Overnight: Heritage Hotel, Bhaktapur (Meals: BLD)**

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## Day 4: Drive to Dhulikhel - 1 hour. Start trek at 1,557m/5,108ft, trek along the ridge to Namo Buddha, 1,750m - 3-4 hours.

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You will leave this morning by vehicle climbing out of the Kathmandu Valley passing through the town of Banepa before climbing up to the Newari hilltop town of Dhulikhel where you begin your trek. It is a delightful trail with superb mountain vistas, verdant terraced fields, and picturesque villages where local people live their traditional rural lives.

The path initially winds up from Dhulikhel on the 1,000 steps which pilgrims use to reach the Kali Temple viewpoint, 1,688m. This takes about an hour. A very fine giant statue of Shakyamuni Buddha sits gazing out at the panorama of Himalayan peaks towering above 7,000m including Langtang Lirung, Gauri Shankar and Melungtse. You can also see the 14th highest peak in the world, Mount Shishapangma, 8,027m, which lies inside Tibet. Continuing on, you descend through the village of Kavre to cross a road at the Kavre Bangjang Junction. You then climb again through little hamlets up another set of steps to a shrine. You may see boys playing cricket, cattle in the yards of houses, and general village life. In November 2021 we saw a wedding ceremony, watched children playing on a swing, and listened to the sounds of tropical birds, barking dogs, tinkling of temple bells, and as people passed by the greeting of 'Namaste'.

You come to the very nice stupa Pasthali, next to a football pitch. Descend from here to avoid the hotel built on the col. At a junction take the upper track to arrive at the beautiful Namo Buddha Lodge. Set on a hilltop the property was built in 2006 and is a collection of individual small houses set in forests and gardens. It is very eco friendly and has a sauna, two cats and three buffaloes and serves vegetarian food. There are also grand views of the Himalaya from the lodge.

**Overnight: Namo Buddha Lodge or Similar, Namo Buddha (Meals: BLD)**

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**Day 5: Trek to Balthali Village, 1,562m/5,125ft - 5 hours.**

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Dropping down a short way you come to a forested ridge with big drops on either side until you descend to a rough road. From here you get your first views of Namo Buddha Monastery.

For centuries Namo Buddha has been a famous Buddhist pilgrimage site where, it is said, the reincarnated Buddha selflessly offered his body to a hungry tigress so that she could feed her cubs. Hence the name, the Tigress' Den. The stupa is believed to house the bones of the young Buddha. The stupa is accessible by road and pilgrims visit Namo Buddha from all over the world to accumulate merit by making offerings and circumambulating the site. Sitting above the stupa, is the Thruangu Tashi Yangtse Monastery complex, founded in 1978 and now home to over 250 monks. Here you will find a stone depiction of the legend of the Buddha.

After visiting the impressive stupa you descend on a trail decked out with masses of prayer flags. Continue losing height through forest to reach a road high above a large river below. Turn left down the road to reach a bridge and then climb into a beautiful valley of terraced fields, scattered houses and hamlets.

Entering Lower Balthali Village you come to a village temple with an enormous metal head of a trident spear propped against its wall. Cross fields on narrow paths and don't be surprised if friendly local dogs attach themselves to your party - they may stay with you today and tomorrow! Climb again easily now for quite a long way to Upper Balthali Village. The lodge sits astride a ridge and hilltop with fabulous views. There is an open fire to sit around in the evening to swap stories.

**Overnight: Balthali Resort or Similar, Balthali Village (Meals: BLD)**

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**Day 6: Trek to Panauti, 1,400m/4,594ft and Khopasi, 1,447m/4,747ft - 3-4 hours. Drive to Bhaktapur - 1 hour.**

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Your last day on trek in Nepal is a really nice one. Saying farewell to your hilltop stay, you begin with a 'short cut' down to the dirt road below. Across the other side of the valley are lovely terraced fields and hamlets. Carry on down to a village with a temple then continue down to cross a suspension bridge high above a deep gorge. Up a mostly forested hill on the other side and down to a second suspension bridge. Beyond here signs of 'civilisation' appear and before too long you enter a typical 'out-in-the-sticks', scruffy Nepalese town called Khopasi. Such a change in culture! As you leave town visit the paper factory and silk factory.

Carry on crossing fields to gain houses and Panauti town. As you reach the town proper you come to a 12th century temple with its own small museum. Here you meet your vehicle and drive to your hotel in Bhaktapur.

**Overnight: Heritage Hotel, Bhaktapur (Meals: BLD)**

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**Day 7: Transfer to Kathmandu Airport and fly to Paro in Bhutan. Drive to Thimphu and visit the giant statue of Buddha.**

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This morning you will transfer to the airport for the short flight across to Bhutan. On a clear day the panoramic views of the Himalaya are sensational, and include Everest and Kangchenjunga, but particularly exciting is the approach through the Bhutanese foothills into Paro which includes a few steep turns. Although you are at the mercy of the airline seating allocation, if possible try to sit on the left hand side of the plane for the most spectacular views.

In Paro you will be met by your Bhutanese guide and will drive to Thimphu. On the way you can stop to visit the 14th century Tachogang Lhakhang, a beautiful spot.



Thimphu has an attractive valley location and is relatively small for a capital city but has grown greatly in recent years. There are many places of interest to visit but a good starting point is the giant Buddha figure perched high above the town which offers splendid, orientation views of Thimphu and beyond.

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

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**Day 8: Morning walk to Wangditse Monastery. Afternoon sightseeing in Thimphu.**

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This morning you will drive up to Sangaygang next to the Bhutan Broadcasting Service tower, located in the northwest of Thimphu. The drive up to the tower isn't a long one so if you feel like you would like to burn a bit more energy you can always walk up instead. From the tower you will have great views over Thimphu Dzong and the Thimphu Valley as you start your walk contouring the beautiful hills to visit Wangditse Gumpa. This walk should take around 1½ hours. You will have time to visit the gumpa before the 30 minute descent to Dechen Phodrang Monastery. This monastery houses around 450 student monks enrolled on an eight year course. The monastery is also home to some fantastic UNESCO monitored 12th century paintings. You will then meet your vehicle and be driven back to Thimphu.

You return to Thimphu and in the afternoon there will be time to enjoy some sightseeing. There are many places of interest to visit in Thimphu, including the Tashichhodzong (the main government buildings), the Textile Museum, the Heritage Museum, the late King's Memorial Chorten, the National Library, the School of Painting and the silversmiths and pottery workshops. The Government Handicrafts Emporium is possibly the best place to look for local handicraft. It is interesting to visit the handmade paper workshop to see paper being made and there are some nice items made from handmade paper for sale there.

You could also visit the Post Office to buy some of Bhutan's very attractive stamps. They will even print a valid stamp with your face on it while you wait! They also have good t-shirts on sale.

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

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**Day 9: Drive to Punakha over the Dochu La. Visit Chimi Lakhang. Walk in the Punakha Valley and visit Punakha Dzong.**

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After breakfast you will drive east to Punakha. Leaving Thimphu you climb to cross the Dochu La Pass, 3,048m/10,000ft, a spot marked by 108 chortens. Here, weather permitting you may take in a magnificent mountain vista. On clear days there are fabulous views of the eastern Himalaya including Bhutan's highest mountain, Gangkar Punsum, 7,550m - the highest unclimbed peak in the world. But even on misty days this is a beautiful spot.

You descend from the pass into the lush Punakha valley. Before reaching Punakha you will visit Chimi Lakhang a temple built by Drukpa Kunley. Known as the 'The Divine Madman', Drukpa Kunley was a 15th century Bhutanese lama. He is Bhutan's most popular saint and one of the most important figures in Bhutanese folklore.

Despite the apparent conservatism of the Bhutanese people, Drukpa Kunley with his unconventional views on sex is a great favourite throughout the country - the phallus symbols painted on the outside walls of houses date back to his teachings. Chimi Lakhang is especially popular with women who come here to pray for children. The temple is characterised by its many phallic symbols. The lakhang is reached by a short walk across the paddy fields and this short excursion takes about 45 minutes each way.

In the afternoon you will do a walk in the lovely Punakha Valley. You drive further up the valley and start your walk at a pedestrian suspension bridge that crosses the Mo Chu River and follow up through paddy fields to the base of the hill where Khamsum Yuelley Namgyal Chorten is sited. The climb to the top is then quite steep, but takes only 45 minutes or so. This Chorten was consecrated in December 1999 and contains sacred relics donated from Punakha Dzong. Leaving the grounds of the Chorten via a different gate you descend to join a contouring path which ultimately leads you to the small village of Yabesa and you then follow the Mo Chu downstream past Sonagasha, the King's Palace and on to Punakha Dzong.

The fabulous Punakha Dzong, one of the most spectacular and important in the Kingdom, is situated at the confluence of two rivers - an extremely photogenic spot, particularly in the springtime when the jacaranda trees are in full bloom. Originally built in the 17th century, it was beautifully restored after a major flood in 1994, and is a real showcase for Bhutanese craftsmanship and painting. All of Bhutan's kings have been crowned at the dzong and it remains the official residence of the Dratshang - the body that oversees monastic affairs in



Bhutan. There are a number of beautiful and unusual features to discover in the dzong including three courtyards, the 'hundred pillar assembly hall', and its cantilevered bridge. If there are VIPs visiting the dzong, access may be restricted.

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

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#### **Day 10: Drive to Paro. Visit Paro Tsechu and sightseeing.**

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After breakfast you will drive up out of the Punakha Valley and back over the Dochu La. You return to Paro where you will attend the festivities at the Paro Tsechu. The Tsechu is one of the most important cultural events in the kingdom, a colourful festival of music and ceremonial dance held in the great Paro Dzong. The festival is staged in honour of the great lama, Guru Rinpoche, to commemorate his great deeds. These are all believed to have taken place on the tenth day of the month - the meaning of the word tsechu. Such festivals as well as being religious are also an important opportunity for people to dress up in all their finery and get together to socialise, celebrate and have fun. They believe that they will achieve merit by the act of attending the festival and watching the masked dances, and that any bad karma in the area will be dispelled. People flock to the tsechu from even the most remote villages of the surrounding district.

Later you might have an opportunity for some sightseeing in the Paro Valley, perhaps visiting the Bhutan Museum in the watchtower on the ridge above the dzong, or drive out to visit the ancient temple of Kyichu Lakhang, one of the 108 temples believed to have been built by Songtsen Gampo, an important early Tibetan king, to pin down the demon who was thought to hover over the whole of Tibet.

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

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#### **Day 11: Start the Bumdra Trek. Camp beneath Bumdra Monastery, 3,800m/12,467ft.**

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After breakfast you will take a short drive to the starting point of the two day trek to the Tiger's Nest Monastery, known as the Bumdra trek. You meet your trek crew and ponies, and then begin following a little trodden trail up from Paro Valley. Your initial ascent takes you up through forest to reach a ridge then to a clearing from where you will be able to see back down the Paro Valley. Continuing up, you next reach Chhoe Tse Lhakhang temple, nestled in the side of the mountain, where you can rest and enjoy fine views of Paro beneath, and the snow-capped Himalaya in the distance. Today's final stage is now ahead of you as you ascend through ruins and thick forest to a high, open yak pasture bedecked with chortens and colourful prayer flags. This will be your campsite for the night at around 3,800m/12,467ft.



Above the pasture sits the 17th century Bumdra Monastery, hugging the cliff face. After a chance to rest and enjoy the spectacular views from the campsite you can walk up to the monastery and explore its many caves where legend has it that a thousand angels, or dakinis, once convened. If you have the energy, you could also make the 45 minute climb of Namgo La just behind the monastery. The 4,100m peak provides a natural viewing 'platform' to enjoy the commanding vistas of the surrounding mountains and valleys.

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

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#### **Day 12: Trek to Taktsang Monastery. Return to Paro.**

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After a tough day of ascent yesterday, today is all downhill. Once breakfast is finished at the camp, you will begin your descent. Following the monks' winding path down through larch and silver pine you can take your first welcome breather on the conveniently located deck chairs at the small hermitage of Yoselang at 3,300m. Continuing down the trail you will shortly reach Zangto Pelhri Monastery, from where you can peer over the side for your first fantastic views down to the golden roofs of Taktsang Monastery. From here it's a steep half hour down a rock hewn staircase to Taktsang - an approach that very few people experience to reach the famed Tiger's Nest.

The monastery is perched some 600m/2,000ft up on a cliff overlooking Paro 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.



If open, you will be able to visit the monastery before continuing down to reach the car park where your vehicle will be waiting to take you back to your hotel in Paro, and your last night in Bhutan.

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

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**Day 13: Fly to Kathmandu. Transfer to hotel. Time at leisure.**

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You will transfer to the airport where you will say goodbye to your Bhutanese guide and driver. You will then fly to Kathmandu with a further opportunity to see the peaks of the high Himalaya including Everest and Kangchenjunga (if conditions are clear). On arrival you will be driven to your hotel and the rest of the day is at leisure.

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

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**Day 14: Morning tour of Pashupatinath and Boudhanath Stupa. Transfer to airport. Depart Nepal.**

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After breakfast you drive the short distance from your hotel to the important Hindu temple complex of Pashupatinath. Here there is a large temple to the god Shiva and nearby, on the banks of the sacred Bagmati River, are burning ghats where Hindus bring their dead to be cremated.

You will drive on to Boudhanath where you will visit its important and ancient Buddhist stupa. Pilgrims from all over the Indian subcontinent come to visit Boudhanath where they circle the stupa in a clockwise direction, turning prayer wheels as they pass, or visit one of the many Buddhist temples which have been built around the stupa.



In the late afternoon or early evening there will be a group transfer to the airport for your overnight flight to the UK.

**Overnight: In flight (Meals: B)**

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**Day 15: Arrive London.**

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## Our grading system

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

### **Moderate**

Holidays in this grade typically involve 5 to 10 days of walking or trekking. They will often venture into more remote country and can cross mountain passes. Altitudes though are still relatively low, going no higher than around 4,300m/14,000ft. Accommodation can include simple hotels, tea houses, lodges and camping.

## Trip altitude

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**Important** - please be aware that this trip involves travel at altitude. Whilst all our itineraries are carefully designed to optimise acclimatisation to high altitudes, participants on this trip are likely to experience some symptoms of being at altitude. The Dossier pack we provide when you book your holiday includes comprehensive advice on safe travel at altitude. If you require further information or advice on travel at altitude prior to booking please contact the office to speak to an experienced member of our team. Alternatively we recommend [www.medex.org.uk](http://www.medex.org.uk) as a good source of information.

## What the price includes

**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:

- ✓ Experienced English-speaking guides
- ✓ All flights between Kathmandu and Paro and domestic airport transfers
- ✓ Comfortable hotels on a twin share basis
- ✓ Breakfast in Kathmandu all meals elsewhere (except first night in Bhaktapur)
- ✓ One night camping with all camping facilities (twin share tents) and all meals on trek
- ✓ Camp staff to carry out all camp work
- ✓ All road transport by private vehicles
- ✓ All sightseeing as detailed in the itinerary
- ✓ Bhutan visa fees and departure tax
- ✓ 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
- ✓ A free Mountain Kingdoms kitbag
- ✓ Carbon offsetting with the Ecoan Tree Planting Project (for clients taking our flight inclusive option)
- ✓ The opportunity to attend one of our pre trip meets in the Cotswolds

### Airport transfers

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

### What's not included:

- ✗ Travel insurance
- ✗ Nepal visa fees
- ✗ Lunch and evening meals in Kathmandu. Dinner
- on first night in Bhaktapur
- ✗ Tips

### Water-to-Go Reusable Bottle Campaign

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

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

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

## Your accommodation

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

### Hotels in Bhutan

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



#### **Heritage Hotel, Bhaktapur**

Situated just a few minutes walk from the historic heart of the once royal city of Bhaktapur, the handsome Heritage Hotel reflects the rich artistic traditions of the Kathmandu Valley. Built from reclaimed materials from ancient palaces and residences, and fitted out with antiques and hand-carved furnishings, it offers an authentic taste of Nepali culture, but without sacrificing modern-day comforts. Well-appointed rooms come with big bathrooms, Wi-Fi and lots of homely touches and the hotel has its own bar, fine dining restaurant and al fresco eatery.



#### **Namo Buddha Lodge or Similar, Namo Buddha**

This is a delightful, eco-friendly lodge set in peaceful, woodland surroundings on a hilltop with fine views of the Himalaya. It offers superb hospitality and serves locally sourced, vegetarian food - they even have their own buffaloes! There is also fresh spring water from the lodge's spring, bottled for guests to drink in their rooms. Guest rooms are individual cottages, all unique and with bags of character and charm.



#### **Balthalli Resort or Similar, Balthalli Village**

The Balthalli Village Resort sits atop a hill giving delightful views of the surrounding terraced fields, villages and the distant outline of Himalayan peaks. This cosy retreat has a restaurant, bar and garden and the good-sized rooms come complete with private bathrooms and kettles.



#### **Phuntso Pelri Hotel or Similar, Thimphu**

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



#### **Zhingkhram Resort or Similar, Punakha**

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





#### **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.



#### **Hotel Shanker or Similar, Kathmandu**

The Shanker is a 4\* heritage hotel situated just a 10-15 minute walk from the tourist area of Thamel. It has an outdoor swimming pool, a spa and a lovely garden, plus a choice of restaurants and bars. Rooms are large, elegant and well-equipped. The hotel is a converted royal palace with a fascinating history which in recent years has undergone a thorough and tasteful renovation.

## Meal arrangements

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Bed and breakfast in Kathmandu, all meals elsewhere (except dinner on day 2 in Bhaktapur). 12 x breakfasts, 10 x lunches, 10 x dinners.

## Flight arrangements

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### **Flight inclusive from price**

Our 'Flight inclusive from' price is based on the best fare available at the time of printing. As airfares change on a constant basis, this should be used only as a guide price. Rest assured that, at the time of booking, we will endeavour to get the best possible price for the flights you need. Remember, the earlier you book the greater your chances of securing the best fare.

Flight inclusive packages booked through Mountain Kingdoms are protected through our ATOL bonding scheme.

### **Flight upgrades and regional Airports**

Please call us on +44 (0)1453 844400 for flight options from regional UK airports, Business Class upgrades, alternative airlines and stopovers. Please also check our website for the most up to date flight inclusive 'from' prices.

## Further information

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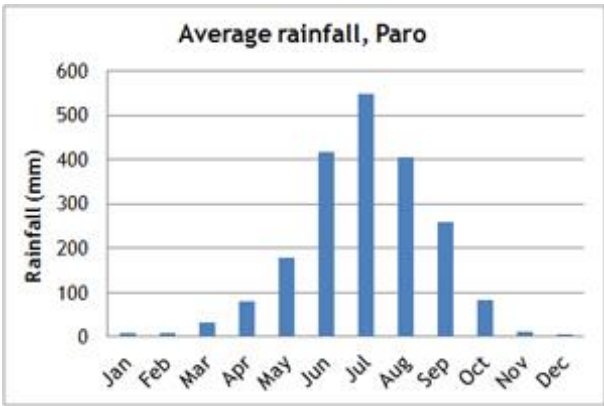
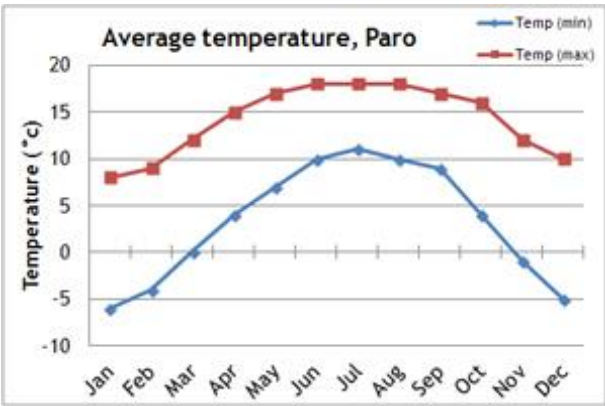
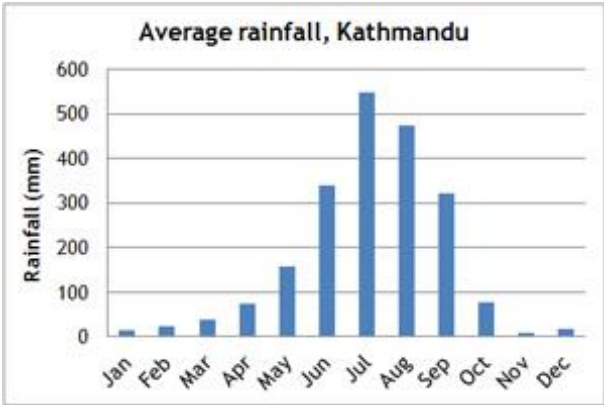
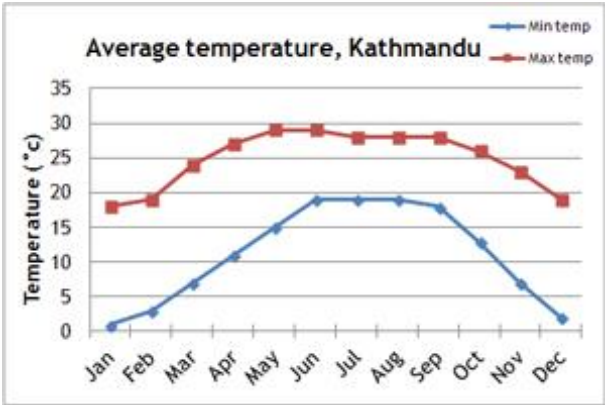
When we receive your booking, we send you a full Trip Dossier which contains details of any visas and vaccinations required, a suggested gear and clothing list and lots of useful information. If you do have queries at this initial stage do call us on 01453 844400 and we will be pleased to offer advice.

## The nature of adventure travel

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Every effort will be made to keep to this itinerary but we cannot guarantee that things may not change, either before you travel or while you are away. By its very nature, adventure travel involves an element of the unexpected, particularly in more remote areas. A variety of factors such as adverse weather conditions, changes to local schedules and difficulties with transportation can all contribute to the need to make changes to the itinerary, often at the very last minute. Our Operations Manager and your Trip Leader will make every effort to maintain the integrity of the original itinerary and minimise the impact of any changes, but an easy-going and flexible nature is a real asset! Please note that all timings and distances given are approximate.

# Climate information



# Extensions

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## Extending your holiday

If you would like additional inspiration on how or where to extend your holiday please call us on 01453 844400. Alternatively, you can download a range of extension information sheets on our website, at [www.mountainkingdoms.com](http://www.mountainkingdoms.com).



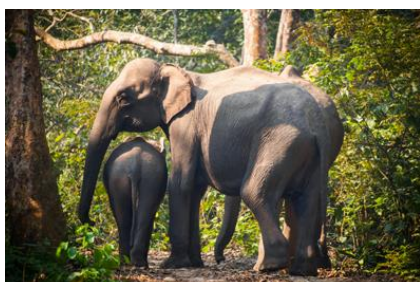
### Hotel upgrades and extra nights in Bhutan

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



### Additional accommodation in Nepal

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



### Wildlife extensions in Nepal - Chitwan, Bardia & Koshi Tappu

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

### Royal Manas National Park, Bhutan

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



## Why book this holiday with Mountain Kingdoms?

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- Based on over 30 years of experience taking clients to the Himalaya, this specially designed trekking holiday takes you to the heart of both Nepal and Bhutan with visits to the must-see cultural key sights.
- We have included the unusual Bumdra Trek in Bhutan with its dramatic approach to the Tiger's Nest Monastery (Taktsang), together with a gentle trek along the ridge of the Kathmandu Valley in Nepal.
- For the overnight trek in Bhutan we provide a full service camping experience. Your baggage will be transported for you so you only have to carry a daypack.
- Your holiday will be led by knowledgeable, well-trained English-speaking guides.
- 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 Nepal and Bhutan.
- If you have any questions about any aspect of this holiday please don't hesitate to give us a call on 01453 844400 or email
- Our maximum group size is 12 for this trip. This provides for a genuine small group travel experience and helps reduce the negative aspects associated with larger groups.
- We offer a flexible service and can extend your holiday with extra hotel nights, upgrades and exciting activities.
- If you wish to fly with a specific airline, from a regional UK airport or on alternative dates to the main group we would be happy to arrange this for you. Please contact our Flights team for flight options, quotes and further information.
- As part of our 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 we've tempted you to take your next holiday with us, we advise you to check availability and you can do this via our website: [www.mountainkingdoms.com](http://www.mountainkingdoms.com) or by calling the team on +44 (0)1453 844400. Bookings can be made online, by phone or by completing a booking form and returning it to us. We can also provisionally hold places if you need time to consider your options.

## What our clients say

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*This is a great trip - it gives you a great opportunity to explore these countries through trekking, walking and sightseeing, with the excellent guides sharing some hidden gems with you, along the way. There are a couple of challenging days but the rewards for your hard work are well worth it. This is a really interesting area of the world to visit and an opportunity to see a way of life that is rare to see, and which seems to take you back in time, which leaves its mark on you.*

*-Susan, W Sussex*



*Trekking over three days along the Kathmandu Valley Rim, I witnessed a wedding ceremony, saw children playing cricket, visited remote monasteries, saw cattle in people's backyards, attended a puja to cleanse a home of bad spirits, met monks, trekked through typical terraced farmland and villages, along prayer flagged ridges, down into gorges, crossed suspension bridges and stopped each night in beautiful lodges with their own panoramas of the Himalaya. As much as anything meeting the genuinely friendly Nepalese countryfolk was such a pleasure.*

*-Steve Berry, MD, Mountain Kingdoms (Kathmandu Valley Rim trek)*

# Mountain Kingdoms - distinctly different

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## **Truly independent**

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

## **Value for money prices with an emphasis on quality**

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

## **Complete financial security**

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

## **No Surcharge Guarantee**

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

## **Award winning Responsible Tourism**

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

## **Genuine small group travel**

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

## **Loyalty Discount**

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

## **Booking your holiday - it couldn't be easier**

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

## **Comprehensive information**

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



## RESPONSIBLE TOURISM STATEMENT CLIMATE EMERGENCY PLAN



For over 33 years, Mountain Kingdoms has been offering people the chance to visit amazing places on this extraordinary planet. We now offer trips to all corners of the world, but we are conscious that inevitably our holidays have a detrimental impact on the world around us, and we want to do all we can to reduce our carbon emissions. We are a signatory to Tourism Declares a Climate Emergency, along with a growing number of like-minded, reputable tour operators. For more information, please visit [www.tourismdeclares.com](http://www.tourismdeclares.com)

From 2020 onwards, we will be focusing on how we can reduce the carbon emissions that our holidays produce, and how to counterbalance this carbon by supporting carbon offset measures. Here are some of our current and future plans to minimise the impact of our business as a whole:

### **Carbon Offsetting**

#### **Already doing:**

- ✓ We have been offsetting carbon since 2007, but will be increasing our donations to the [Ecoan tree planting project](#) in Peru this year. This is with a trusted partner where the funds go directly to a project where the community plants trees on its own land.

#### **Will do:**

- ✓ We are working on making our carbon offsetting more accurate and targeted.
- ✓ In future, we will add to that a further estimate for carbon produced by hotels, local road travel, trains and internal flights to arrive at a carbon offset sum for each trip we operate.
- ✓ Carbon offsetting will be included in our holiday prices. For our Flight Inclusive holidays it will include the international flight and any emissions produced by inland travel and accommodation. Our Land Only prices will include the cost of offsetting emissions caused by inland travel and accommodation.

### **Reducing Carbon Emissions**

#### **Already doing:**

- ✓ We already offer the majority of our customers a free filtered water bottle which means they can instantly cut down on their single-use plastic consumption. This will be an ongoing project.
- ✓ We already predominantly use locally owned hotels, but will continue to ensure that, where possible, we use these rather than multinational chains.
- ✓ We have joined the Tourism Declares a Climate Emergency initiative to stand alongside like-minded travel companies, to work together to initiate best practices to make tourism as sustainable as possible.

#### **Will do:**

- ✓ We will re-evaluate our flights to make sure we are using the most fuel efficient airlines with the youngest fleets and, where possible, direct flights for each trip.
- ✓ We will stop offering unnecessary optional flights – for example our Everest sightseeing trip.
- ✓ We will eliminate unnecessary staff flights wherever possible.
- ✓ We will look at minimising internal flights.
- ✓ We will be asking all our worldwide agents and suppliers to look at their own carbon footprint and encourage them to reduce it.
- ✓ We will promote our more low impact trips to give customers an informed choice.

As part of our wider commitment to Responsible Tourism, we will continue to support a number of charities with whom we have had a long standing relationship over many years. These include: Shiva Charity in Nepal (Ginette Harrison School), Simien Mountains Mobile Medical Service and Porter Welfare, as well as setting aside a sum for emergency disaster relief should the need arise.



