

# Brahmaputra River Cruise & Bhutan, India

The highlights of mystical Bhutan & a luxury cruise on the mighty Brahmaputra River.



## Group departures

See overleaf for departure dates

## Holiday overview

Style	Adventure Cruising
Accommodation	Hotels, luxury cruise boat
Grade	Tour
Duration	18 days from London to London
Min/Max group size	2 / 12. Guaranteed to run for 2
Trip Leader	Local River Cruise & Bhutan Guide
Land only	Joining in Delhi, India
Max altitude	3,140m/10,301ft, Dochu La, Day 5

Private Departures & Tailor Made itineraries available



Watch related videos online: [Brahmaputra River Cruise](#)

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# Departures

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## Group departures

### 2021 Dates:

Fri 26 Feb - Mon 15 Mar

Fri 08 Oct - Mon 25 Oct

This is the detailed itinerary for our 2021 departures only. A separate itinerary for all other departures can be downloaded from the Mountain Kingdoms website or requested from our office.

### Deposit and payments

A higher deposit is required to secure your booking on this holiday and your final balance is due 95 days before departure. For full details please contact the office or refer to our terms and conditions on our website <http://www.mountainkingdoms.com/essential-information>.

### 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.

Single cabins: If you are travelling on your own and are willing to share, we will attempt to pair you up with another solo, same sex traveller. Where this is not possible a resulting single cabin has to be paid for. Please contact us for prices, or visit our website.

Cabin upgrades: Dependent upon availability you can choose to upgrade your cabin on the cruise to a superior cabin with a balcony. Contact us for prices and availability.

### 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 2 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 trip highlights

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- Explore Bhutan's main sights - Paro, Thimphu & Punakha
- Superior cabin in a luxurious cruise boat
- Visit a tea plantation and Majuli Island
- Jeep safari in Kaziranga National Park to see rhinos

## At a glance itinerary

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Days 1-2	Overnight flight to Delhi. Afternoon sightseeing in New Delhi.
Days 3-4	Fly to Paro, drive to Thimphu. Full day sightseeing in and around Thimphu.
Day 5	Drive to Punakha via the Dochu La, 3,140m/10,302ft. Visit Drukpa Kunley's temple and Talo Gompa.
Day 6	Walk to Khamsum Yuelley Namgyal Chorten and Punakha Dzong.
Days 7-8	Drive to Paro. Sightseeing. Walk to Taktsang Monastery and Drukgyel Dzong.
Day 9	Fly from Paro to Guwahati. Sightseeing.
Day 10	Visit the temple of Kamakhya. Board the M.V.Mahabaahu.
Days 11-12	Day to relax onboard. Sail towards Silghat, visit tea estate.
Days 13-14	Jeep safari at Kaziranga. Sail to Bishwanath. On board activities and boat safari.
Days 15-16	Explore Mishing Village. Continue sailing to Majuli and visit the island. Sail to Nimati and drive to Sibsagar.
Days 17-18	Disembark M.V.Mahabaahu. Fly to Kolkata (Calcutta). Fly to London.

## Trip summary

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The source of the timeless Brahmaputra River sits high in the Tibetan Himalaya on the slopes of Mount Kailash. During the spring when the snows of the Himalaya melt, icy waters spill and tumble through gorges, channels and sandbanks then slow upon reaching the tranquil plains of Assam. There, the river becomes the lifeblood of the region. Colourful, tribal communities make their living along its banks, growing rice in flooded paddy fields and tea on the higher ground. The lush green forests and sandy beaches that pepper the Brahmaputra's peaceful landscape are home to countless species of bird and endangered mammals, including Bengal tigers and the one-horned rhinoceros. Our Brahmaputra River Cruise & Bhutan tour offers a fortnight of fantastic experiences.

From Delhi you fly to Bhutan to spend six days exploring the mystical kingdom of the Thunder Dragon. By visiting the three main areas of Bhutan you will get to see the highlights of this fascinating country including a visit to the famous Taktsang Monastery.

After your time in Bhutan, you will fly south east, back into India, for a week-long river cruise along the Brahmaputra River in the shadow of the eastern Himalaya. This cruise featured in The Times and CNN's 'Top Adventure Cruise' list. You'll stay aboard one of the most luxurious and up-to-date cruise boats on the Brahmaputra River - the MV Mahabaahu, and make regular shore visits to the key sights of this culturally rich area including the Kaziranga National Park. Every spring, the national park floods, the waters enriching the habitat for the rare one-horned rhino and attracting many of the birds that migrate to the area. Each visit will be in the company of an experienced guide and naturalist so you'll be able to make the most of every minute in the parks. On Majuli Island, known to be the world's largest river island, you'll spend time ashore to uncover the mysteries and treasures of Assamese culture and meet the people of the Mishing tribe in their local villages. In essence, a wonderful journey - the sights and sounds of the landscape and peoples will stay in your memory for a long time.

## Special notes

### Elephant Safaris

After much careful consideration, and as part of our commitment to Responsible Tourism, we will no longer be offering elephant-back safaris in any of our destinations.

This is because it is not possible to train an elephant to accept a human onto its back without inhumane treatment. Also, elephants' spines are not designed to carry heavy loads, and the houdah (chair) that they are fitted with is uncomfortable and leads to sores.

An elephant-back safari in Kaziranga is part of the cruise package our agent provides on this trip. However, we would discourage any of our clients from taking part in this, and it is at the clients' discretion as to whether or not they do participate. Our agent is aware of our stance on this issue and will offer a jeep safari for Mountain Kingdoms clients instead whilst others (who have not booked with Mountain Kingdoms) join the elephant safari.

We hope that the practice of laundering new elephants and training them for any form of human entertainment will eventually cease, but this will not happen whilst there is still a demand.

We will be actively supporting venues like Tiger Tops in Chitwan National Park in Nepal, who have transitioned away from elephant safaris into more elephant friendly activities. These activities allow people to observe elephants in a sanctuary environment.

## Your guide

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

During the river cruise, a crew of 21 hospitality staff will attend to your every need. An English-speaking guide will accompany your shore excursions.



# Your trip itinerary

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## Day 1: Fly London to Delhi.

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Fly overnight from London to Delhi.

**Overnight: In flight**

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## Day 2: Arrive Delhi. Group transfer to hotel. Afternoon sightseeing in New Delhi.

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On arrival in Delhi you will be met and transferred to your hotel. If time allows there will be sightseeing around New Delhi. You will then head back to your hotel with time to relax and acclimatise to your surroundings.

**Overnight: Taj Palace Hotel, Delhi or Similar**

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## Day 3: Fly to Paro. Drive to Thimphu - 2 hours.

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This morning you will be transferred to Delhi airport for your flight to Paro. This Druk Air flight is incredibly scenic and provides you with excellent views to the Himalayan mountain ranges in the distance. The landing at Paro is an interesting experience as the plane weaves its way to the small runway nestled in Paro Valley.

Upon arrival in Paro you will be met by your guide and transferred to the capital Thimphu. This drive will take approximately 2 hours and provides you with great views of the surrounding country side. On arrival in Thimphu there will be time to take a stroll around the streets and to get a feel for this amazing country.

**Overnight: Namgay Heritage or Similar, Thimphu (Meals: BLD)**

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## Day 4: Full day sightseeing in and around Thimphu.

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This morning after a relaxing breakfast you will be taken out on your first full day of sightseeing. You will have a full day to explore the sights of this least visited of Himalayan capitals. You will see the huge Tashidodzong, part monastery, part administrative centre. Other highlights include the late king's memorial chorten, the textile museum, a visit to the indigenous hospital specialising in herbal medicine, and the school of painting. You may also visit, above the town, the reserve which is home to the Takin, Bhutan's national animal and one of the strangest animals you will ever see! You can also watch paper being made by hand and visit the handicrafts emporium.



**Overnight: Namgay Heritage or Similar, Thimphu (Meals: BLD)**

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## Day 5: Drive to Punakha, 1,280m/4,199ft, via Dochu La, 3,140m/10,302ft, 3hrs drive. Visit Drukpa Kunley's temple and Talo Gompa.

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This morning you'll make the 3-hour drive to Punakha, the old winter capital. Leaving Thimphu the road climbs via a series of zigzags over the Dochu La Pass, 3,140m/10,302ft. On a clear day panoramic views can be had of the eastern Himalaya, including Bhutan's highest mountain, Gangkar Punsum, 7,550m/ 24,770ft. From the pass the road drops down through varied forest finally emerging into the highly-cultivated Punakha valley.

In the afternoon, you'll visit Drukpa Kunley's Temple built in the centre of the Punakha Valley and called Chimi Lhakhang, famous because of the many phallic symbols here. It is just a short walk across the paddy fields to reach this temple built by the Divine Madman - to celebrate his victory over the demoness of the Dochu La. Then you will drive to visit the village and gompa of Talo, situated in the hills above Punakha, to get a taste of rural Bhutanese life before returning to Punakha.

### **The Divine Madman - Drukpa Kunley (1455-1520)**

In Bhutanese mythology, Drukpa Kunley is one of the most beloved and revered sages of Tibetan Buddhism. Many are the legends that surround him, he followed a wandering lifestyle and was both an eccentric and highly regarded saint. He was renowned for his shocking behaviour and his ability to perform miracles. He

taught a form of Tantric Buddhism and advocated that sexual freedom was at the centre of truth. The wooden phalluses that hang from the corners of Bhutanese houses and the paintings of penises that you often see on either side of the front door of houses are a relic of his teachings.

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

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#### **Day 6: Walk to Khamsum Yuelley Namgyal Chorten and Punakha Dzong.**

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Today you drive up the valley and then head out on foot to cross a pedestrian suspension bridge over the Mo Chu river and follow a path up through paddy fields to the base of the hill to the Khamsum Yuelley Namgyal Chorten. The climb to the top is quite steep but only takes 45 minutes or so. The lhakang was consecrated in December 1999 and contains sacred relics donated from Punakha Dzong (monastery/fortress.) A visit inside is usually possible. There is also an attractive garden area around the lhakang where you can relax and enjoy the view of the beautiful valley scenery.

You may either walk back down from the Chorten to your awaiting vehicle which will transfer you to Punakha Dzong or optionally, have a longer walk down the valley in a couple of hours to reach Punakha Dzong on foot. Punakha Dzong was the power base for the old system of re-incarnate rulers. The remains of the original ruler of Bhutan, Nawang Namgyal, are kept in a small room at the top of the highest tower; only the king and the head of the monastic order are allowed to enter this room. Provided the head of the monastic order and his monks have not migrated from Thimphu it should be possible to view the inner courtyards of Punakha Dzong which has been beautifully renovated after being damaged in floods and which is now a showcase for fine Bhutanese craftsmanship.

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

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#### **Day 7: Drive to Paro. Sightseeing in Paro.**

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This morning you will board your air conditioned vehicle for the long drive back to Paro which will take around 5 hours. You will pass back over the Dochu La, with another chance for great views from the top. Upon arrival in Paro you will be taken to your hotel to check in. You then have the option of either resting at the hotel (and perhaps using the Spa facilities), or joining your guide for some sightseeing in the Paro Valley possibly including a visit to Kyichu Lakang, one of the oldest temples in Bhutan.



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

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#### **Day 8: Walk to visit Taktsang Monastery. Afternoon sightseeing in the Paro Valley.**

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This morning you'll take the walk to Taktsang Monastery - the Tiger's Nest. The monastery is perched some 600m/2,000ft up on a cliff overlooking the valley and was said to be where the legendary Indian saint, Guru Padma Sambhava, flew from Tibet on the back of a tiger to defeat five demons, who were opposing the spread of Buddhism in Bhutan. It's a steep uphill walk through woods, of about 1½-2hrs, to reach a tea house (an ascent of 340m /1,125ft). Apart from offering welcome refreshment this tea house is one of the principle viewpoints of the monastery, and those that prefer not to climb any further can relax here whilst others have the option to continue on. If there is a particular religious gathering or VIP visit in progress, you will not be able to enter the monastery but a further half hours ascent is in any case well worth it, as it brings you to another viewpoint directly across from the monastery. If you are able to make a visit, to the temple itself the final section of the walk takes you from here steeply down 100m/330ft into the gorge that separates you from the monastery and then climbs back up again to reach the monastery gate.

Please note if you prefer not to make the walk up to Taktsang it may be possible to hire a pony to ride up as far as the tea house (please speak to your leader about this the day before). Alternatively your driver may be able to take you further along the valley to visit Drukgyel Dzong. Nearby there is also an excellent viewpoint for the summit of Mount Chomolhari, which at 7,313m/23,997ft, is the second highest peak in Bhutan.

In the afternoon you will have sightseeing in the Paro Valley visiting the impressive Paro Dzong and the National Museum which has some wonderful Bhutanese artistic treasures.

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

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**Day 9: Fly from Paro to Guwahati. At leisure.**

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Early this morning you'll transfer to Paro airport and fly to Guwahati. On arrival at the 'Lokpriya Gopinath Bordoloi airport', Guwahati, you will be met and driven through the busy streets to your hotel. The rest of the day is free to explore the town of Guwahati, or at leisure at your hotel.

**Overnight: Radisson Blu, Guwahati (Meals: BLD)**

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**Day 10: Sightseeing. Board river cruise boat.**

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This morning you will visit the temple of Kamakhya on the way to the ship. This Temple is devoted to the eternal feminine, the goddess of desire, whose name is Kama Khya, granter of desires. You will then continue on to the port to board the M.V.Mahabaahu where you will be shown to your cabin.

Once aboard you will have a safety briefing and will raise a traditional toast to Goddess Kamakhya to give you safe passage on the River Brahmaputra that carves the valley of Assam, where you will be spending the next 7 nights and 7 days. You can then relax sipping Assam tea/coffee or Indian 'masala chai', whichever you prefer and enjoy some snacks. You pass by the smallest river island called the Peacock Island where the Umananda temple is located. Peacock Island is famous for the highly endangered Golden Langur. It would be a good idea to have your binoculars and camera at hand.

Soon MV Mahabaahu drops anchor and in the evening there is a 'Kamrup Swaagat Bhoj', or welcome dinner, in the Mungri Mungram Restaurant with the chef's lavish spread of Asian, continental and oriental cuisine. There will also be a talk in the evening on 'Kamakhya and the occult in Assam'.

**Overnight: Cruise Boat (Meals: BLD)**

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**Day 11: Day to relax on board.**

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You can start this morning with yoga on an island or on the deck for an hour. Others can scan the river for a fleeting sight of gangetic dolphins while birders may inspect the skies for winged species. You then move on to breakfast while M.V.Mahabaahu heads on for a full day sail passing by inhabited and deserted islands that may or may not survive the flood season. It is the non-permanency of these islands and the strength of the people to re-establish themselves which catches ones attention.



This is a day for sunbathing on the Donyi Polo Deck, or having a dip in the pool, or indulging in a massage, or sitting in the warm waters of the Jacuzzi or enjoying a steam/sauna to get rid of one's tiredness from the journey. You make yourselves comfortable for the week to follow and observe the beauty of this pristine river. You indulge in a relaxed lunch and then after tea there will be a talk on 'The River Brahmaputra and the tribal life that exists alongside'. The rest of the day is spent relaxing on board with an introduction to the crew in the evening.

**Overnight: Cruise Boat (Meals: BLD)**

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**Day 12: Sail towards Silghat. Visit tea estate.**

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This morning there is another opportunity to indulge in some yoga as the M.V.Mahabaahu sails towards Silghat. You pass by the famous town of Tezpur and under a famous 3 Km long arched bridge called Kolia Bhomora Setu. After breakfast there will be a talk on 'Kaziranga and wild life in India'. You then sail on for the next couple of hours and enjoy a relaxed lunch.

After reaching Silghat you will drop anchor and take a short drive to a tea estate where you can stretch your legs and enjoy a leisurely walk through the tea estate watching the tribal women picking tea leaves. Here you stop for a talk with the manager of the tea estate who familiarises you with the essentials of running a tea-

estate, the lay of the land and the climate. You proceed to the tea factory to see the process of finally producing Assam Tea and coming to terms with all that goes into preparing a cup-of-tea.

By sunset you are ready to drive back to MV Mahabaahu to enjoy a cultural evening on board, dinner and an early night to ready for the for the next morning's jeep safari.

**Overnight: Cruise Boat (Meals: BLD)**

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### Day 13: Kaziranga National Park and Bishwanath.

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Designated as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO, Kaziranga National Park is located in the flood plains on both sides of the Brahmaputra. The most prized inhabitant of Kaziranga is the Greater One-Horned Indian Rhinoceros, but the park is home to as many as 180 different mammals including wild elephants, tiger, deer, bison, and a rich variety of birds. Kaziranga means the "Land of red goats (Deer)", as the word Kazi in the Karbi language means "goat", and Rangai means "red".



After breakfast at a resort in Kaziranga, you drive on to Bagori, the Western Range of Kaziranga and get into the open jeeps that are lined up to take you for some more wildlife adventures and an extensive coverage of this magnificent park dotted with large water bodies called 'beels' in the local language.

You return to the ship for lunch and set sail towards Bishwanath Ghat. You can then snatch a couple of hours of sleep to make up for those that were lost in the wee hours of this morning. On arrival at Bishwanath Ghat (also called 'Gupta Kashi'), you take the smaller boats to visit this charming village. You visit the Shiva Dol in reverence of Lord Shiva and there is no way that you can avoid the women with their weavings and enjoy an excellent bargaining hour for the home-spun fabrics as you watch the ladies busy at their handlooms. (You can carry cash to the village to buy the handicrafts made by the villagers to encourage local craft). You walk through the streets near this ghat and move towards a quaint little pretty rocky inlet of the Brahmaputra. You return to M.V.Mahabaahu and get ready to spend the evening in the Soma Lounge and then to Mungri Mungram for dinner. You can then choose to watch a documentary or retire for the evening.

**Overnight: Cruise Boat (Meals: BLD)**

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### Day 14: Sail towards Majuli. On board activities and boat safari.

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Early morning yoga is again available as M.V.Mahabaahu sails on. Breakfast is followed by a talk on 'Sibsagar and the culture of the Ahoms'. After lunch, you are ready for a boat safari on the eastern range of Kaziranga where the two waters of River Dhansiri and River Brahmaputra meet. Here, the presence of hovering pied kingfishers is an indication of fish life & the fallen branches of trees into the river support roof turtles. Monitor lizards as well as otters are very much a part of this area. Asiatic water buffaloes are known to swim over from the park to the sand banks on the other side of Dhansiri. Endangered vultures and eagles too can be spotted. Several migratory birds depending on the time of the year feature in this area.

In the evening you will return to the boat where the chef awaits your return to involve you in his cooking demonstration. The chef talks of the ingredients while you pour yourselves a cup of tea. You can then enjoy these freshly prepared dishes.

This evening you can enjoy a relaxed quiet walk on a deserted island or a game of cricket or volley ball etc. You can then enjoy a comfortable evening under the stars with cocktails to order on the sandy island and of course a bonfire may be possible - although this is dependent on finding a suitable sandbank and on weather conditions.

**Overnight: Cruise Boat (Meals: BLD)**



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**Day 15: Explore Mishing Village. Continue sailing towards Majuli.**

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This morning you will arrive at a 'Mishing' village and disembark on smaller boats to reach the river banks. The 'Mishing' are an ethnic group inhabiting a number of districts in Assam. It is popularly believed that they were dwellers of the hills of present day Arunachal Pradesh and migrated to the plains of Assam in search of fertile land as well as in search of civilizational progress. Almost all 'Mishing' women are expert weavers on handlooms. A 'Mishing' man will give you a 'Dhoti' tying demonstration and a woman will show you the 'Mekhela Chaddor' tying demonstration. (Dhoti & Chaddor are the traditional dresses of the Mishing).



After climbing up the house platform and exploring Mishing homes, purchasing some of their weaves/fresh vegetables etc, you return to the comfort of MV Mahabaahu for a fine leisurely lunch and a relaxed afternoon while the vessel brings you closer to your destination.

This evening you can get together in the restaurant for a cup of chai and a talk on 'Majuli and Vaishnavism' and get acquainted with one of the largest river island systems of the world. After some time at leisure there will be a fashion show of the beautiful dresses you saw being prepared earlier today. You will then be spoilt rotten with a lavish dinner by the Chef.

**Overnight: Cruise Boat (Meals: BLD)**

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**Day 16: Visit Majuli Island. Sail to Nimati. Drive to Sibsagar.**

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You sail on towards Majuli Island while enjoying an early morning yoga or bird watching session. Majuli which literally means land between water is a microcosm of Assamese culture, where various philosophies co-exist and thrive; ancient monasteries dedicated to preservation and development of culture and art have existed here since the 15th Century. The treasures of Majuli are undoubtedly its monasteries or satras that promulgate a form of Hinduism that is called Vaishnavism. These satras are the hub of culture, art, religion and lifestyle. The satras preserve antiques like weapons, utensils, jewellery and other articles of cultural importance.

After breakfast, you take a short boat ride to the mainland where a drive takes you to a scenic corner of 'Garamur Satra' for an interesting cultural performance by Satriya singers and dancers. The art of relating mythical tales through dramas and masks is an important part of Majuli culture.

After soaking in the untouched beauty of the area and a tête-à-tête with the performers, you move to 'Kamlabari Satra' to witness another performance by the Vaishnavite priests in the temple premise. You walk through the humble dwellings of the monks and talk about their daily chores and experience an insight into their chosen path.

You then take the short boat ride back to M.V.Mahabaahu and sail to Nimati Ghat where you will disembark and drive to Sibsagar, the ancient city of the Ahom Kings; a town that means literally 'the ocean of Lord Shiva'. The district is strewn with the tell-tale ruins of a powerful empire of the Ahoms. Sibsagar was the capital of the Tai-speaking Ahoms who came to the area from Yunan and China in the 13th Century AD. You go on to visit the Talatal or Karen Ghar which was the palace of the Ahom Kings and after a leisurely stroll in and around the monument you continue to Rang Ghar which was a place for hosting wrestling bouts and buffalo fights and other entertainment for the royals and their guests.

You proceed to Sibsagar town that is built around a huge manmade water tank ordered by the queen and dug over 200 years ago. On its banks are located some of the famous temples of Sibsagar. The Shiva Dol, constructed in the year 1734 is believed to be the highest Shiva temple in India. You then drive on to a tea estate for an evening with the tea-estate family to get a peek into the lifestyle of the families that have been involved in the tea business for generations. As you sip your beverages and explore the gardens the cultural performances begin followed by a talk by the professionals on 'Different types of Tea' especially the ones produced in Assam along with a tea-tasting session. Thereafter, return to M.V.Mahabaahu for your farewell dinner where you again raise a traditional toast to the journey completed and the one ahead.

**Overnight: Cruise Boat (Meals: BLD)**

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**Day 17: Disembark. Transfer to airport. Fly to Kolkata (Calcutta).**

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There is time for one last session of on board yoga, or maybe an early morning indulgence in the spa or a hair do before breakfast. You then place your suitcases in the corridor before a relaxed breakfast before disembarking and driving, with a packed lunch, to the Rowrah Airport in Jorhat to board your onward flight to Kolkata. Arrive Kolkata and check-in to your hotel.

**Overnight: Holiday Inn Kolkata Airport (Meals: B L)**

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**Day 18: Group transfer to airport. Fly to London.**

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After breakfast you'll transfer to Kolkata airport for your flight to London. **(Meals: B)**

## Our grading system

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Brahmaputra River Cruise & Bhutan is graded as a Tour, as described below.

### Tours

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

## Trip altitude

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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

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**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:

- ✓ 5\* hotel in Delhi, good standard hotel accommodation in Bhutan, Kolkata and Guwahati (twin share)
- ✓ Superior cabin on board cruise boat (twin share)
- ✓ Special welcome and farewell dinners on-board
- ✓ On board programme of activities plus shore excursions including with a guide and naturalist
- ✓ Sightseeing as specified
- ✓ Internal flights and domestic airport transfers
- ✓ All road transport by private vehicles
- ✓ 16 breakfasts, 15 lunches, 14 dinners
- ✓ Economy class return air fares from the UK & UK Departure Tax (Flight Inclusive option)
- ✓ Single, timed group airport transfer for international flights on arrival and departure
- ✓ Bhutan visa fees
- ✓ Carbon offsetting with the Ecoan Tree Planting Project for clients taking our Flight Inclusive option
- ✓ Opportunity to join one of our pre-trip meets in the Cotswolds
- ✓ A free Mountain Kingdoms Water-to-Go bottle

### Airport transfers

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

### What's not included:

- ✗ Travel insurance
- ✗ Visa fees (except for Bhutan)
- ✗ Tips
- ✗ Use of the on-board spa - treatments paid for
- ✗ in country
- ✗ Beverages except mineral water
- ✗ Lunch and dinner in Delhi and Kolkata

### Water-to-Go Reusable Bottle Campaign

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

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

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

## Your accommodation

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



### **Taj Palace Hotel, Delhi or Similar**

Considered one of Delhi's landmark hotels, the Taj Palace has been impressing with its high standards of service and facilities for over four decades. It has four award winning restaurants, a heated swimming pool, putting green, and revitalising spa for its guests' enjoyment, and with free Wi-Fi, tea/coffee maker, quality toiletries and bathrobe and slippers, you can be sure of a comfortable stay.



### **Namgay Heritage or Similar, Thimphu**

A boutique style hotel of just 35 rooms, the Namgay is situated in a quiet location within walking distance of Thimphu town. It is extravagantly decorated in Bhutanese style with an impressive five-storey central atrium of carved wood. It has an indoor pool, fully equipped gym, shop, bar and restaurant, whilst the generous-sized guest rooms come complete with Wi-Fi, fridges and jetted bathtubs.



### **Zhingkhams Resort or Damchen Resort or Similar, Punakha**

Overlooking Punakha Dzong, and only opened in 2016, the Zhingkhams 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.



### **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.



### **Radisson Blu, Guwahati**

Every comfort is at your disposal when you stay at the Radisson Blu Hotel in Guwahati. Savour beautiful views of Guwahati from your comfortable, plush bed. Stay in touch with family and friends using free high-speed, wireless Internet. The hotel also has a roof top swimming pool, perfect for watching the sun set.



### **Cruise Boat**

Aboard the MV Mahabaahu, accommodation will be in a superior cabin without a balcony and you have the option of upgrading to a superior cabin with a balcony or suite (please contact us for costs and details). Each cabin has satellite TV, personal safe, mini bar and a spacious bathroom. All are air conditioned for your comfort. Facilities on board include a library, swimming pool and spa, and sun deck. There will be no night cruising; most cruising takes place between 6.00am and 7.00pm to take full advantage of the spectacular views the river has to offer. Please note that all single cabins on the river cruises must be paid for.





### **Holiday Inn Kolkata Airport**

Conveniently located, the Holiday Inn is only 5km from Kolkata Airport and offers a good range of facilities. The hotel has a rooftop pool and gym as well as a cafe, bar and restaurant where you can enjoy a good buffet breakfast and other meals. Rooms are well-equipped and free Wi-Fi is available throughout the property.

## **Meal arrangements**

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Bed and Breakfast in Delhi & Kolkata, all meals are included elsewhere.

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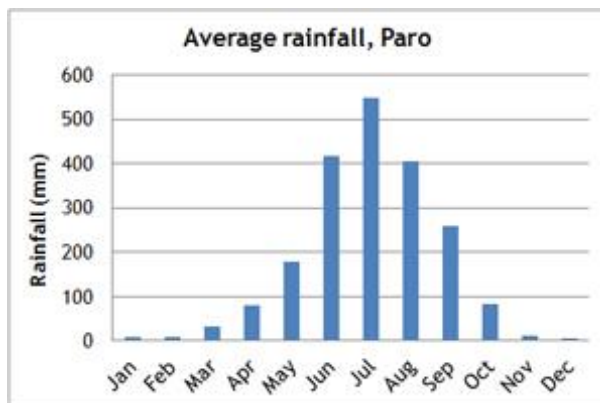
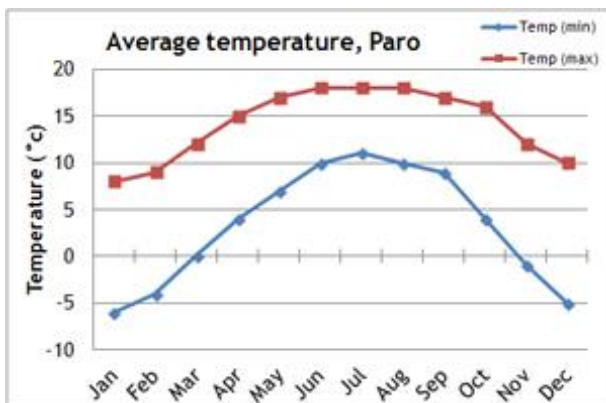
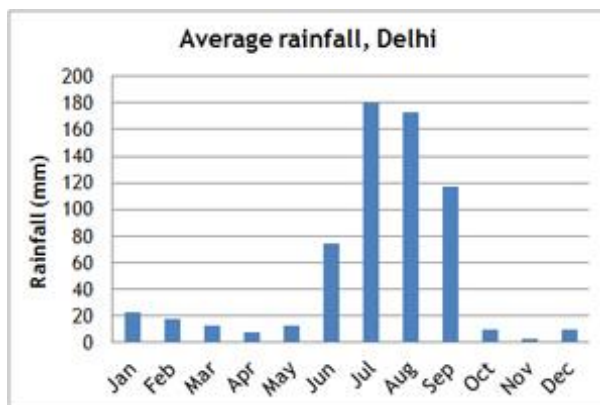
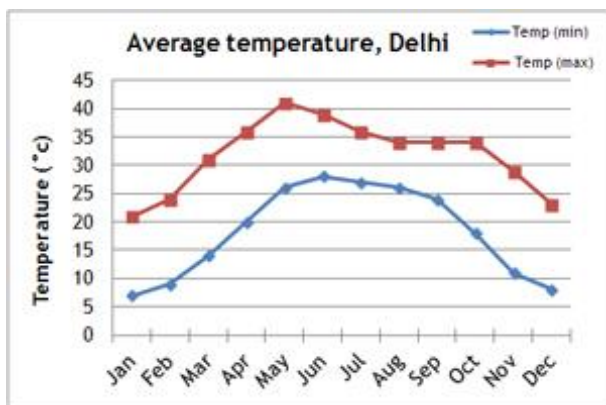
When we receive your booking, we send you a full Trip Dossier which contains details of any visas and vaccinations required, a suggested gear and clothing list and lots of useful information. If you do have queries at this initial stage do call us on 01453 844400 and we will be pleased to offer advice.

## **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).



### **Bhutan hotel upgrades**

We can offer a selection of luxury hotels in Bhutan if you would like to upgrade your accommodation. These include the renowned Uma properties in Paro and Punakha, the Zhiwaling hotel and spa in Paro and the Taj Tashi in Thimphu.

### **Additional accommodation in Delhi**

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



### **Agra, Taj Mahal & Jaipur**

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

## Why book this holiday with Mountain Kingdoms?

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- A superb introductory tour combining the highlights of Bhutan, including Taksang Monastery, with the wonderful natural and cultural sights of the Brahmaputra River such as Kaziranga National Park and Majuli Island
- We use one of the newest and most luxurious river cruise boats on the Brahmaputra River, with excellent recreational facilities and first class service
- We use a high standard of hotel accommodation in Bhutan, Delhi and Kolkata.
- English-speaking tour leader in Bhutan, plus local guides accompanying you on all shore excursions on your cruise.
- As our minimum group size for this holiday is only 2 this trip is extremely likely to get “up and running”.
- We have a wealth of travel experience in the company and several members of the Mountain Kingdoms team have travelled extensively in both Bhutan and India. So if you have any questions about any aspect of this holiday please don't hesitate to give us a call, on 01453 844400.
- We offer a flexible service and can extend your holiday with extra hotel nights, upgrades and other 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.
- We are an IATA accredited agent and work directly with some of the world's major airlines. 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 Manager, April, 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](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 was a wonderful trip and an experience we will never forget. The whole voyage was made especially wonderful because of the staff, their helpfulness, concern, charm and efficiency. We wish you a long future in the tourism industry.*

*-Mr & Mrs M, Australia*



*Beautiful, all of it. We were amazed by the surroundings and people! We would recommend this trip to anyone. The boat, the people, the staff, the naturalist, all of them made it worthwhile. I forgot - THE FOOD - Delicious! Thank you again for everything.*

*-Mr PB, Spain*

*The holiday was lovely, thank you for your organisation. The tour leader and driver in Bhutan were lovely people, couldn't have had better. Boat staff and management on Brahmaputra were all exceptionally lovely, thank you to all.*

*-Mr & Mrs W, Bedfordshire*



*Thank you to all the wonderful people, seen and unseen, who have contributed to this unique experience. We will never forget this week. May MV Mahabaahu achieve the recognition and success it so richly deserves.*

*-Mr & Mrs M, Melbourne*

# 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.



