

Rodang La Trek, Eastern Bhutan

Trek from Bumthang in central Bhutan to the far east using the ancient 'Red Rice' route and crossing the famous Rodang La Pass.



Group departures

See overleaf for departure dates

Holiday overview

Style	Trek
Accommodation	Hotels, Camping
Grade	Vigorous / Strenuous
Duration	20 days from London to London
Trekking / Walking days	On trek: 8 days Walks on: 4 days
Min/Max group size	5 / 12. Guaranteed to run for 5
Trip Leader	Local Leader Bhutan
Land only	Joining in Kathmandu, Nepal Departing from Delhi, India
Max altitude	4,129m/13,545ft, Rodang La, Day 10

Private Departures & Tailor Made itineraries available



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Departures

Group departures

2021 Dates:

Thu 07 Oct - Tue 26 Oct

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 5 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, who will have first-hand experience of the destination/s you want to visit. They will be able to advise on the accommodation best suited to your needs, the sights you should visit (and those to avoid!) and the best walks and activities matched to your ability. In short, we will work together with you to create your perfect holiday.

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

Your guide



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

Your trip highlights

- Trek along an ancient trading route in a remote, beautiful and culturally fascinating area of eastern Bhutan
- Keep watch for yetis near the Rodang La - a traditional haunt of this most elusive of creatures
- See numerous varieties of colourful and exotic birds in one of the world's birding hotspots
- Walk to Tiger's Nest Monastery, the most spectacularly located in all Bhutan
- Visit many of the dzongs, temples and other key cultural attractions of eastern Bhutan
- Attend a colourful Bhutanese festival - one of the great highlights of a visit to the Thunder Dragon Kingdom

At a glance itinerary

Days 1-2	Fly to Kathmandu
Days 3-4	Fly to Paro. Walk to Taktang Monastery and sightseeing in Paro Valley.
Days 5-6	Fly to Bumthang. Visit Temples and attend Jakar Tsechu. Visit Chumey valley and short walk.
Day 7	Start trek. Walk to Ngang Lhakhang (Swan Temple)
Days 8-9	Trek to Ugyen Choling and Phokpe
Day 10	Cross Rodang La and trek to Pimi.
Day 11	Trek to Khaine Lhakhang
Day 12	Drive to Tangmachu and visit giant statue. Drive to Lhuentse and visit dzong. Visit Khoma village and drive to Minje.
Days 13-14	Trek to Pemi and Taupang. Cross the Dong La Pass.
Days 15-16	End trek and drive to Tashiyangtse. Visit Chorten Kora and Bumdeling Black Necked Crane Reserve.
Day 17	Drive to Tashigang with visit to Goma Kora on the way.
Day 18	Drive to Samdrup Jongkhar
Days 19-20	Cross into India. Drive to Gauhati. Fly Delhi. Fly to UK.

Trip summary

We are delighted to offer this exceptional trekking holiday into a region of Bhutan that sees few trekkers and remains largely untouched by tourism or the modern world. The trek traverses the scenic 'Red Rice Route', used in ancient times to transport rice from the fertile valleys of the east to the wealthy families of Bumthang. In those ancient times a great deal of effort and skill was put into constructing stone staircases, wide enough for laden horses, to enable the red rice trade. You will be travelling in the opposite direction though, starting from the religious and cultural heartland of Bumthang, trekking across the Rodang La, 4,109m/13,482ft, and the Dong La, 3,980m/13,056ft, to reach Tashi Yangtse in the far east of the country. In 2020 the Bhutanese government recognised the historic importance of this route and much of the trail has been upgraded.

The 8 day trek passes through varied landscapes from dense forests, to open meadows and from deep verdant valleys to high mountain passes where there are fabulous views of the surrounding countryside and high Himalaya beyond. The area is known as a birding hotspot and you will no doubt enjoy sightings of unusual and colourful birds which your expert local guide will help identify. Alongside the splendid flora and fauna there is much of historic and cultural interest to discover including temples, monasteries, chortens and even a nobleman's palace. You will also trek through traditional villages revealing an authentic way of life and where you will find a warm welcome from the hospitable, local people only too happy to share a cup of their home-brewed ara!

Along with exotic birds and curious locals the other creature you may encounter en route is the mysterious yeti - known locally as the migoi. The area around the Rodang La is renowned in local folklore for sightings of this elusive beast so, as you trek in the footsteps of the red rice traders, listen out for a mysterious whistling on the pass, and if you do find strange footprints remember that the Bhutanese migoi are said to have the unique ability to walk backwards! In 2018, when our Managing Director Steve Berry, crossed the pass he found the footprint you see here.

In addition to trekking along this ancient route you will also attend a vibrant festival and walk up to Taktsang Monastery in Paro - the legendary Tiger's Nest and visit Tashigang Dzong - one of the most strategically important in all the Thunder Dragon Kingdom.

The superb trek, together with the wealth of cultural, historic and natural attractions, make this a hugely rewarding and interesting trip for those looking to experience a different side of Bhutan. On your journey through the east you will see some quite incredible sights. Never to be forgotten is the world's largest bronze statue of Guru Rimpoche at Tangmachu. It stands 173ft tall and cost in excess of \$2 million to build. Inside the statue are three levels of temple. It was built to fulfil a prophesy that it should be built to safeguard peace in Bhutan. What is so strange is that it is situated high on a mountainside miles from anywhere! Very remote. You also visit Lhuntse Dzong the monastery/fortress that is the ancestral power base of the present royal family. The father of Bhutan's first king Dasho Jigme Namgyal started his career here. It is a very impressive castle in a commanding position. You detour to see the beautiful, traditional, wooden cantilevered bridge at Trashi Yangtse, with its masses of streaming prayer flags, there are also the two huge stupas of Chorten Kora and Bom Kora built to suppress demons, and the very large and impressive dzong at Tashigang. These are just a few of the special places that the east of Bhutan is famous for.

Special notes

Domestic flights

The domestic flights to/from Paro/Jakar (Bumthang) are weather dependent so you need to be prepared for changes to the itinerary if your flights are delayed.

Your trip itinerary

Day 1: Depart London.

Depart London on your overnight flight to Kathmandu.

Overnight: In flight

Day 2: Arrive in Kathmandu.

On arrival in Kathmandu you will be met and transferred to the Shangri La Hotel. This is a very comfortable hotel situated to the north of Thamel, the tourist district of Kathmandu. It has a lovely garden with a swimming pool and several excellent restaurants. You may eat at the hotel or find a restaurant in bustling Thamel; a 20 minute walk or 10 minute taxi ride away.

Overnight: Shangri La Hotel, Kathmandu

Day 3: Fly to Paro, 2,250m/7,380ft - 1 hour flight. Sightseeing in Paro.

You will be transferred to Kathmandu airport to take the Druk Air flight through to Bhutan. The flight is only 40-50 minutes but taking off from Kathmandu you very soon see the Himalaya spread out on the left hand side of the plane, and if the weather is clear you may see Everest. Before the plane starts its descent into the Paro valley, you may see the second highest peak in Bhutan, Chomolhari.

On arrival you will be met by your Bhutanese guide and transferred to the Olathang Hotel which sits up on the hillside above Paro valley. The Paro Valley has had a great strategic importance in the history of Bhutan and was in the past an important staging post on the trade routes with Tibet. Paro Dzong, situated on a rocky outcrop above the Paro Chu and with views down both sides of the valley was historically one of Bhutan's strongest and most strategic fortresses. Before the rebuilding of the Tashidodzong in Thimphu it was also the seat of Bhutan's National Assembly. Depending on your flight schedule there may well be time to do some initial sightseeing in the Paro Valley and to have a look round Paro town.

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

Day 4: Walk to Taktsang Monastery, 3,120 m/10,240ft. Sightseeing in Paro Valley.

In the morning you drive half an hour up the Paro Valley to where you start the walk to Taktsang, the most famous of all Bhutanese Temples. Taktsang Monastery is commonly known as the 'Tiger's Nest' because it 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. Taktsang is perched some 600m/2,000ft up on a cliff overlooking the valley and although steep, the walk up is relatively straightforward, taking some 2-3 hours to ascend and a further hour or so to walk back down. You may have lunch at the café built at the main viewing point for Taktsang, or alternatively back at the Olathang Hotel.



In the afternoon you should have a bit of time for more sightseeing in the Paro Valley. You could visit the ancient temple of Kyichu Lakhang or walk up to the Paro Dzong, Paro's historic monastery/fortress. Sitting above the Dzong and housed in the old watchtower to the dzong is the national museum. The museum holds a fantastic collection of Bhutanese national treasures including the King's famous 'dragon hat', a wonderful collection of Bhutanese stamps, highly decorated thangkhas (painted religious hangings), statues and weaponry. The museum was damaged in the earthquake of 2011, and while restoration is ongoing, some of its treasures will be displayed in a building nearby.

If you feel like a bit more walking you could walk back to your hotel from here.

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

Day 5: Fly to Bumthang, 2,800m/9,186ft - 20-25 minutes. Bumthang Valley walk.

You will transfer to Paro airport for the domestic flight to Bumthang in central Bhutan. On arrival you will be met and transferred to your hotel.

The Bumthang region is considered to be the religious heartland of the Bhutanese nation and is home to some of its oldest Buddhist temples and monasteries. It is also a centre for culture and the arts, especially for weaving. Weaving is an integral part of Bhutanese society and traditionally every Bhutanese home is equipped with a loom for weaving with most young girls being proficient in the craft before they reach the age of twenty. Bumthang encompasses four major valleys. Jakar town where you will stay for two nights is in the main valley called Chokhor. The other valleys that make up Bumthang are the Ura Valley which is to the east, Tang valley, slightly more off the beaten track and the Chumey Valley located back towards the west.

Depending on flight timings you should have time this afternoon to explore the Bumthang valley from your hotel in Jakar town. You can make an almost entirely level walk taking in some of the principle sights of the valley. From the hotel you walk to Jambay Lhakhang, one of the country's oldest temples, built in the mid-7th century. One interesting feature to look for here is the set of three steps in the main temple. The first step, now hidden below floor level, is said to represent the time of the past or 'historical' Buddha. The second, very well worn, step represents the present Buddha, whilst the third step above, is said to represent the age of the future Buddha. The point at which the second step is worn down to ground level is held to be the time when the world as we currently know it will end.

From Jambay you take a farm track along the valley floor and walk for 30 minutes to reach Kurjey Lhakhang, a series of three large temples. The oldest of the temples here houses a rock indented with the body shape of Guru Rinpoche, whilst the most recent dates back just 25 years and was built by the Queen Mother - Ashi Kesang Wangchuck. Descending from the temples you cross a suspension bridge and walk downstream for 45 minutes to Tamshing Lhakhang, the most important Nyingma gumpa in the Kingdom, established in 1501 by Pemalingpa, a famous Buddhist saint and teacher more popularly known as the 'Treasure Hunter'. Inside you can see a suit of chain-mail armour, which Buddhists believe will bring good fortune if put on and then while being worn, walked around the inner temple three times.

After your visit here your transport will meet you outside the gumpa to return you to your hotel. You could stop to have a look at Jakar township on the way back and might also have time to visit the picturesque Jakar Dzong, the 'Castle of the White Bird', so called because a white bird was supposed to have indicated the most auspicious place to build.

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

Day 6: Morning visit to Jakar Tsechu. Visit Chumey Valley and short walk.

This morning you will join local people at the first day of the Jakar festival which is held in the spectacular Jakar Dzong. This particular festival celebrates the birthday of the popular saint, Guru Rinpoche. Traditional Bhutanese festivals are great opportunities for the Bhutanese to get together, not only to socialise and have fun, but also because the very act of attending a festival is thought to be a blessing and to confer merit. Village people from the area visit the festival dressed in their finest clothes to enjoy the singing and dancing. The festival features different masked dances, those that are intended to give moral instruction, those designed to drive away evil spirits and those that celebrate the Buddhist faith in its many guises. Watch out for the 'atsaras', clowns who tease both dancers and audience. (The first day is often a rehearsal so dancers may not wear full costume and masks).



In the afternoon you will visit the Chumey valley and have a short warm up walk. You drive to Chumey and visit Nyimalung Monastery, founded in 1938, and home to over 100 monks. You can also visit Prakhar Monastery, a quaint village temple as well as Zugney, a famous centre for weaving. You then drive up to the cluster of temples at Tharpaling, a sacred spot and place of meditation, where several picturesque monasteries dot the hillside above the Chumey Valley with views over Domkhar (Chumey) and Domkhar Summer Palace. From here you walk along an old trail back down towards Chumey. The path starts out beneath craggy cliffs, from where it climbs fairly gently up to the ridge top to reach the Shutre Sae Pass at 3,700m/12,139ft where there is a glass case containing a statue of the founder of Tharpaling. From here the views are phenomenal - looking

south you can see over the Chume/Domkhar Valley with the Black Mountains in the distance. The other way you get fabulous and unexpected views over Jakar town with the airport runway and the dzong clearly seen far below. Beyond and further north, you can see towards the high mountains - on a clear day perhaps even as far as Mount Gangkar Punsum. You descend from the pass in beautiful forest, nearly all downhill. On the higher reaches, you pass through pine, fir and rhododendron forest. Eventually you reach the road again at a huge area of prayer flags where you meet your transport and drive back to your hotel in Jakar.

If you did not have time yesterday there will also be time today to explore the temples of the valley near Jakar township.

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

Day 7: Trek to Ngang Lhakhang 'Swan Temple', 2,817m/9,242ft - 3 hours.

Today you will start your trek with the walk to Ngang Lhakhang, also known as Swan Lhakhang. First you drive the short distance to arrive at a long mani wall in Tangbi. You descend to cross the river by a suspension bridge and then have a pleasant walk of about 3 hours, up the river valley through forest and meadows to reach Ngang Lhakhang, also known as 'Swan Temple'. This temple has an illustrious history. Guru Rimpoche is said to have visited here and the present temple, built in the 15th century is said to be named after swans supposedly seen on a nearby lake by the temple's founder, a Tibetan lama named Namkha Samdrup.

Overnight: Camp (Meals: BLD)

Day 8: Trek over Phephe la, 3,465m/11,368ft to camp below Ugyen Choling, 2,805m/9,200ft - 6 hours.

Listen out for barking-deer early this the morning. Your route today is largely through cool pine forest, climbing steadily through bamboo, fern and then Spanish-moss draped rhododendron, crossing small streams by stepping stones and crossing tree trunks. It is a 2½-3 hours walk to the pass, 3,465m/11,368ft, which is marked by prayer-flags - look out for Musk deer on the open hillside opposite as this is a favourite grazing spot for them.

Half an hour down from the pass you pass through a khonying (doorway) chorten and then descend through a series of summer grazing pastures used by villagers from Tendigang. There are two possible routes from here. One descends directly through the trees and will bring you to Ugyen Choling in 3-4 hours. The alternative route follows the high path across open hillside towards a small Lhakhang and village in the distance. There are lovely views down over the Tang valley, and the compact village of Tendigang is interesting to visit before continuing down a track to re-join the main trail.



The last section of today's trek takes you along the open valley bottom, through the attractive villages of Tahung and Kherab, before reaching camp set below Ogyen Choling Palace which overlooks the picturesque Tang valley.

Overnight: Camp (Meals: BLD)

Day 9: Trek to Phokpe, 2,787m/12,425ft - 6-7 hours.

Ogyen Choling is famous for its important, ancient, nobleman's palace and after breakfast it is a 45 minute walk uphill to visit the palace. It is well worth taking a break here and looking round the museum. The known history of Ogyen Choling Palace dates back to the 14th Century and a visit from the great Tibetan master of Buddhism, Longchen Rabjam, who meditated in a cave above the village. The palace itself is believed to have been built in the 16th century, although all except a single building was destroyed in the 1897 earthquake. The current complex is a reconstruction of the original, rebuilt and extended at the turn of the 20th century. In the year 2000 the heirs of Ogyen Choling established a trust fund devoted to the preservation and maintenance of the palace as a religious and cultural centre. The palace museum is one of most interesting in Bhutan and offers a fascinating insight into the history of the Lama Chorjes (religious nobility) of Bhutan. It houses old photographs, a host of traditional household items as well as dance costumes and printing equipment. If you are lucky you might meet the owner of the palace, Kunzang Choden, who is the author of 'Tales of the Yeti'.

You leave Ogyen Choling, on the often muddy path through the centre of the village and climb gently through

open meadows, with nice views back over the palace. After an hour the trail leads into the pine forest where you walk uphill on narrow paths with a dense canopy of bamboo over your head. Eventually the forest gives way to a series of dwarf-bamboo fringed meadows, and you traverse the ridge, while occasional views down the valley can be glimpsed through the trees. Look out here for Himalayan Monal, a member of the pheasant family - the male is a brilliant blue.

You will camp in the upper reaches of a large meadow. Across the ridge you can see the remote Phokpe Lhakhang. There is sometimes a herd of yaks in this meadow. A wooden hut was built at the campsite some years ago at the top of the meadow. the evening meal may be cooked here.

Overnight: Camp (Meals: BLD)

Day 10: Cross the Rodang La, 4,129m/13,545ft, and trek to Pimi, 3,036m/9,960ft - 7-8 hours.

Today you will cross the Rodang La. The Rodang La has a significant place in Bhutanese folklore because of its importance in successfully navigating this vital trade route across Bhutan. There is a local saying which says of the steepness of the trail, that 'the Rodang La is fair in making us all equal. The master and the servants have to dismount from their horses and walk'.

Your trail leads out from the top corner of the meadow and climbs gently through tall pines and rhododendron, much of it covered in fabulous hanging Spanish moss. There may be fallen trees here, as this stretch of path is not often used. The large traditional knives (patang) which your trekking crew carry may come in handy to make the path passable for the horses. These woods are alive with birdlife - home to the distinctive Rufous-necked Hornbill, and Large-billed crows which like to follow travellers through the woods - especially when you stop for lunch! The trees finally give way to bush-rhododendron, and you climb on a rough stone stairway to the first pass, which is above the tree-line. A small stone chorten and prayer-flags mark the pass which is around 2-3 hours walk from Phokpe. There are good views of the eastern Himalaya, including Gangkar Punsum, in fine weather. The rocky path descends gently through meadow and rhododendron.

In this area be sure to look out for unusual footprints, not just for the elusive migoi (yeti) who has been traditionally sighted in meadows near the pass, but also for big cat pug marks, which were sighted on our reconnaissance trek. In 2018 we found an area with large animal faeces which were of a large predator. An hour on from the first pass a short climb brings you to a narrow gap in the rock face with steep cliffs on both sides and dramatic views. This is the start of a sensational descent.

Be careful on the descent, as the stone stairway, which descends steeply for several hours, is moss-covered in places and can be slippery. The path then finally levels out, bringing respite for tired legs, continuing along a tree-lined path until you arrive at Pimi, an open meadow with an old ruined guesthouse.

Overnight: Camp (Meals: BLD)

Day 11: Trek to Khaine Lhakhang, 2,035m/6,675ft - 6 hours.

From Pemi you continue to descend steeply along a forgotten footpath through dense rhododendron forest, the huge leaves either crunching or squelching underfoot - depending on conditions! After a couple of hours you emerge into a small meadow which gives you your first views of Khaine Lhakhang along the valley and Ungaar village, still a long way below on the valley floor. There are simple stilted herder shelters in the meadows here. You continue your descent through slightly more open terrain until you finally arrive at the suspension bridge, 1,770m/5,806ft, over the Noyurgang Chu and cross to enter the delightful village of Ungaar. The descent to the bridge from Pimi is some 4,150ft and takes around 4 hours.



Leaving Ungaar you cross a second bridge where you will meet your vehicle and make the short drive to Khaine Lhakhang. You pass several small chortens and mani-walls on the outskirts of other settlements before arriving into the village. Khaine Lhakhang itself is beyond the first section of the village and commands pleasant views. Known as the 'sleeping-dog' temple, this simple lhakhang is believed to be one of the 108 geometric temples constructed by King Songtsen Gampo, 7th century founder of the Tibetan empire.

Ara

Be very wary of local hospitality in this valley. The villagers are extremely hospitable and the traditional welcome for any visitors is a minimum of two large bowls of their home-brewed ara (a cloudy spirit distilled from rice, wheat or corn.) The local speciality is to serve the ara warm with shredded fried-egg in the bottom of the bowl. Traditionally you would be expected to drink a further two bowls on departure - something you may find challenging at eight in the morning - but which certainly sends you on your way with a spring in your step! As the people of this valley speak an entirely different dialect, any basic Dzongka you may have learnt will not help you to decline their copious ara refills.

Overnight: Camp (Meals: BLD)

Day 12: Drive to Tangmachu and visit giant statue. Drive to Lhuentse and visit dzong. Visit Khoma weaving village. Drive to Minje, 1,985m/6,505ft.

After breakfast you will drive to Tangmachu. Nowadays the village of Tangmachu is famous for its huge copper statue of Guru Rimpoche, built on the ridge top to keep watch over the village and the surrounding countryside. There are great all round views from the ridge top and you may be able to see the terraced fields of Minje, on the opposite side of the valley, where you will be camping tonight.

The 173ft tall statue was built by the Druk Odiyana Foundation, a non-profit organisation founded by the Venerable Khengo Karpo Rinpoche in 2004. Its purpose is to bring peace and prosperity to the world and benefit all sentient beings. No doubt you will be surprised at how remote this is.



You then drive all the way down into the valley and turn left to continue to the town of Lhuentse. Lhuentse Dzong, situated above the town on a rocky hilltop known as Linglingthang, is quite impressive and is well worth a visit. It was damaged in the earthquake of 2011 but has been restored. The dzong was formerly the ancestral home of the kings of Bhutan, with its origins dating back to the seventeenth century when a monastery was founded on the site by Kunga Wangpo. Today it is the administrative and religious centre for the Lhuentse District. The township below the dzong is known as Gangzur and is a pleasant place to explore and to perhaps enjoy a cold soft drink or a beer after your time on trek.

Later you will drive up to visit Khoma village. Khoma is known throughout the country for its production of Kishuthara, an intricately patterned silk textile. The women of Khoma work in makeshift textile cottages, weaving the delicate designs and patterns. They will be happy to show you their elaborate weaving, and although you may buy textiles here there is no hard sell. Be warned that prices are not cheap, although the high prices reflect the immense amount of work and the value that the Bhutanese give to such fine weaving.

Finally you will drive the 1,000 metres up to Minje Village. There are two possible campsites in Minje - one on some terraced fields close to the village school, the other above the main village in an open meadow alongside the Darchu Pang Lhakhang. This area is renowned for its fragrant herbs, particularly lemon-grass - try crushing a small piece between your fingers to release the fragrance.

Overnight: Camp (Meals: BLD)

Day 13: Trek to Pemi, 3,150m/10,335ft - 4-5 hours.

If you have camped near the school the previous night your day will probably start with the school bell and some very curious small faces peering down on your campsite. If your guide can obtain permission from the school's head teacher it is fascinating to witness the outdoor morning assembly.

From the school campsite it is a 20-minute climb to the lhakhang (also a possible campsite). This is a small and recently built lhakhang. The guardian will be happy to show you around the building and the small well-tended garden with its lovely geraniums. Leaving the lhakhang behind you climb steadily, on what can be muddy paths, through oak and rhododendron forest, until you reach an open meadow, Pawachen, at 3,100m/10,171ft, a meadow used by villages for summer grazing. The trail continues through virgin forest and light bamboo. Continue through a series of meadows containing flag-poles and summer cow-herder shelters until you reach your campsite at Pemi, 3,150m/10,335ft.

Although there are campsites further along the trail, Pemi is the last site with sufficient water supplies for larger groups.

Overnight: Camp (Meals: BLD)

Day 14: Cross the Dong La, 3,980m/13,056ft. Trek to Taupang, 2,508m/8,226ft - 8-9 hours.

This day is long and involves a descent of approximately 1,702m/4,500ft, but is quite an adventure! You continue steadily upward as the trail winds along the ridge, initially through more summer grazing pastures then plunging back into the trees - hemlock, spruce, cypress and rhododendron. From around 3,500m/11,483ft you follow a twisting spiral pathway strewn with mossy boulders beneath swathes of Spanish Moss. In places there are some steep drops to your right and on a clear day you should be rewarded with good views as you continue to climb.

After around three hours you reach an open ridge-top with some old scattered prayer-flags. Stretching below is a sloping grassy meadow - occasionally used as a campsite for very small groups. Be aware that you may encounter green leeches here. They are harmless and can generally be avoided through applying a good Deet-based insect repellent.

A series of prayer-flags along the ridge mark the nine rocky crests (sisters) of the Dong-La, the highest of which is around 4,000m/13,124ft and decorated with a number of tall flag-poles. Your trekking crew will most likely stop here to add their own prayer-flags. Your gradual descent takes you past the ruins of an old house, a group of prayer-flags which mark the border of Lhuntse and Yashe Districts and across an exciting wooden bridge before arriving at Taupang. The meadow here can have high grass which your crew will need to cut or flatten to make your camp for the night.

Overnight: Camp (Meals: BLD)

Day 15: End trek at suspension bridge, 1,895m/6,216ft - 6-7 hours. Drive to Tashi Yangtse, 1,820m/5,946ft - 40 minutes drive.

You leave the campsite and cross another wooden bridge, passing back into dense jungle. The trail descends slowly across stepping-stones, log walk-ways and notched log-bridges. This section can be muddy and slippery - a good day to wear your gaiters! There is a wealth of flora and fauna in the forest - look out for Fire-tailed Sunbirds, Verditer Flycatchers and the Satyr Tragopan amongst the giant ferns and bamboo. After 2½-3 hours you emerge from the trees into the welcome hamlet of Shakshing, 2,385m/7,825ft. The first little farm you come to has an ingenious way of keeping wild animals out of its fields - it has a stuffed fake tiger on a covered wooden platform in full view of the fields below!! From the chorten here it is another couple of hours through forest and inhabited clearings to the end of the trail where, subject to jeep-track conditions, your transport will be waiting to drive you to Tashi Yangtse. Just 15 minutes down the track you see the old Tashi Yangtse Dzong perched on a hilltop ahead, and as you cross the river below the dzong by a modern road bridge you will see over to your right a very lovely ancient traditional covered bridge. The town of Tashi Yangtse occupies seemingly the only bits of level ground in endless mountainous forest-covered Himalayan foothills.

Your accommodation in Tashi Yangtse is in the only guesthouse in town, which was renovated in 2017 and is centrally located. The afternoon is yours to enjoy a shower, perhaps a beer or two and to relax after your trek.

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

Day 16: Explore Tashi Yangtse. Visit Chorten Kora and Black-necked crane reserve at Bumdeling.

Today you have a day to explore Tashi Yangtse and its surroundings. The town of Tashi Yangtse sprawls over an open valley with the modern dzong set on the hillside at the top of town above the archery ground. This dzong is used purely for administrative purposes and also houses the judiciary court.

A short walk through the town centre with its selection of stores, bars and pool halls takes you down to the huge Chorten Kora set by the river. This is a large, white stupa built in about 1740 and one of the great cultural attractions of eastern Bhutan. It is built in the same style as the great stupa at Boudhanath in Nepal, but it's not really very like Boudhanath. The reason is said to be that a



lama who visited Boudhanath and wanted to build a copy in Bhutan made a model of the stupa by carving a radish with the outline, but the radish unfortunately shrank and distorted before he got it back home! It is believed that once Chorten Kora was finally built and blessed, the demon which had previously terrorised the Tashi Yangtse valley was subdued and banished. The area surrounding Tashi Yangtse still has close contacts with the neighbouring Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh, such that one day of Chorten Kora's important festival in April is set aside exclusively for people making the pilgrimage here from Arunachal Pradesh. Above the town is the Arts and Crafts Institute of Zorig Chusum where training is given in various skills such as woodcarving and weaving. Here you may see the student craftsmen at work and perhaps buy some of their wares. There is also a very interesting wildlife centre/museum, and a deer enclosure.

Later you may visit the reserve for Black-necked cranes located at Bumdeling along the valley from Tashi Yangtse - the cranes normally migrate to Bhutan from Tibet between November and early March so they may have already started arriving. It is a very pleasant valley to walk in for a little way along.

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

Day 17: Drive to Tashigang, 1,140m /3,739ft, with visit to Gom Kora en route - 4-4½ hours.

Today you drive down the valley to Tashigang. On the way you visit the charming little temple of Gom Kora, one of the quirkiest places in Bhutan! As well as viewing the pretty little temple which has some very lovely faded old frescoes inside, you may go around behind the temple to undertake a number of challenges - make a sacred circuit, attempt to climb a large rock up the 'stairway to paradise', drink the sacred water which flows down the rock or squeeze into a tiny holy cave where Guru Rimpoche is said to have subdued a demon in the shape of a ferocious serpent which came down the valley from Tibet. You may also test your sin by carrying a very large boulder three times round the central stone. If you find the rock heavy then you have a lot of sin!



You then drive further down the valley and will spot Tashigang's spectacular dzong ahead, set high above the valley, before you cross the river and climb up to the town itself. Tashigang is an attractive town, the largest in eastern Bhutan, with pretty painted houses, lots of bright bougainvillea and geraniums, and bustling shops and cafes. The centre of Tashigang is clustered round a small central plaza with a large prayer wheel, a bank, a few shops and bars but not much else. There is a small souvenir shop here which is not very inspiring! Below the plaza is the dzong, overlooking the valley. This dzong, one of the most strategically important in the country, was built in the 17th Century to guard against Tibetan invaders. The afternoon is yours to explore the town, do a spot of handicraft shopping or just to relax at one of the simple street-side cafes.

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

Day 18: Drive to Samdrup Jongkhar - 181km, 6-7 hours.

Remember to keep your passport on you today as you may need to show it as you enter Samdrup Jongkhar.

First, leaving Tashigang, you pass through Sherubtse and the campus of the country's premier University College before you climb to the Yongphula Pass, 2,190m/7,185ft. About 2-3 hours from Tashigang you reach Khaling, where one of the most famous weaving centres in Bhutan is located, providing cloth for the royal family. If the centre is open you may stop for a short visit. It is a further 4-5 hours drive from here to Samdrup Jongkhar. There are wonderful views of forested hills and valleys rolling away to the foothills and the Indian plains of Assam State. You can often see Langur monkeys, kingfishers, eagles and other brightly coloured birds along the roadside. The Indian-like border town of Sandrup Jongkhar is literally at the very foot of the Bhutanese foothills and is quite subtropical.

Overnight: Hotel Tashi Gasel or Hotel Monjong Lodge or Similar, Samdrup Jongkhar

Day 19: Cross border into India and drive to Gauhati - 116km, 3 hours. Fly to Delhi - 2¼ hours.

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

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

Day 20: Fly Delhi to London.

After breakfast you will be transferred to the airport to fly home. **(Meals: B)**

Our grading system

The Rodang La, Eastern Bhutan trek is graded as a Vigorous/Strenuous trekking holiday, as described below.

Vigorous

Typically these trips involve 8 to 14 days (occasionally more) trekking in relatively remote landscapes. High passes up to 4,900m/16,000ft may be crossed (sometimes snow-covered) and there may also be glacier travel and peak ascents. Walking days can be between 5 and 8 hours with considerable ascents and descents. This grade also covers some European treks of shorter durations. Overnight stops on trek could be in tea houses, mountain huts or camping.

These holidays would suit enthusiastic hill/mountain walkers.

Strenuous

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

Trip altitude

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

What the price includes

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

What's included:

- ✓ An English-speaking Bhutanese leader
- ✓ Bhutan visa
- ✓ Flights between Kathmandu and Paro, internal flight from Paro to Jakar, and airport transfers
- ✓ The flight from Gauhati to Delhi
- ✓ Hotel Shangri La in Kathmandu, bed & breakfast on twin-share basis
- ✓ In Bhutan, good standard hotel accommodation in main towns and best available hotels in outlying towns, on full board, twin-share basis.
- ✓ Economy class return air fares from the UK & UK Departure Tax (flight inclusive only)
- ✓ Single timed group transfers for international flights on arrival and departure
- ✓ Camp staff to carry out all camp work
- ✓ All camping facilities and meals on trek
- ✓ Delhi airport hotel, twin share on B&B basis.
- ✓ Sightseeing where specified
- ✓ Carbon offsetting with the Ecoan Tree Planting Project (for clients taking our flight inclusive option)
- ✓ A free high-quality Mountain Kingdoms kit bag
- ✓ The opportunity to attend one of our pre trip meets in the Cotswold

Airport transfers

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

What's not included:

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

Water-to-Go Reusable Bottle Campaign

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

For our clients who are not given a free Mountain Kingdoms kit bag (these are required for certain treks), there is the choice of receiving either a free Water-to-Go bottle or a free Mountain Kingdoms fleece. If you are not eligible for a free bottle, you will still be able to buy a special Mountain Kingdoms Water-to-Go bottle from us at a discounted rate. For further information about our campaign visit <https://www.mountainkingdoms.com/water-to-go-reusable-bottle-campaign>.

Your accommodation

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

Bhutan hotels

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



Shangri La Hotel, Kathmandu

The Shangri La Hotel is a 4* hotel of character, just a stone's throw from the British Embassy and only a 20 minute walk or short taxi ride into the popular tourist area of Thamel. The hotel has a swimming pool, a lovely, landscaped garden, and a choice of restaurants and bars. Recent entertainment additions include a casino and fitness centre.



Hotel Olathang or Similar, Paro

Originally built for the coronation of the Bhutan's 4th King in 1974, this attractive hotel stands on a hill overlooking Paro town. Rooms in the main building are set around a peaceful courtyard and there are also a number of cottages dotted around the spacious grounds. Decoration is typically Bhutanese with stripped wooden floors and colourfully painted walls. Rooms are well-equipped and the hotel has its own spa, international restaurant and bar.



Ugyenling Hotel or Similar, Jakar

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



Camp

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



Hotel Karmaling or Similar, Tashi Yangtse

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



Druk Deothjung Lodge or Similar, Tashigang

Druk Deothang Hotel. Built in a lovely spot overlooking the dzong. This is a very friendly hotel set in an attractive building built in Bhutanese style, but the rooms are simple and basic.



Hotel Tashi Gasel or Hotel Monjong Lodge or Similar, Samdrup Jongkhar

The Hotel Tashi Gasel is a quiet hotel situated just out of town. It has comfortable rooms with all facilities and a pleasant restaurant offering good food. Alternatively we will use the Hotel Monjong or another property of a similar standard.



Lemon Tree Premier Hotel, Delhi Airport

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

Meal arrangements

Bed and breakfast in Kathmandu and Delhi and all meals elsewhere, with 18 breakfasts, 16 lunches and 16 dinners.

Flight arrangements

Flight inclusive from price

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

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

Flight upgrades and regional Airports

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

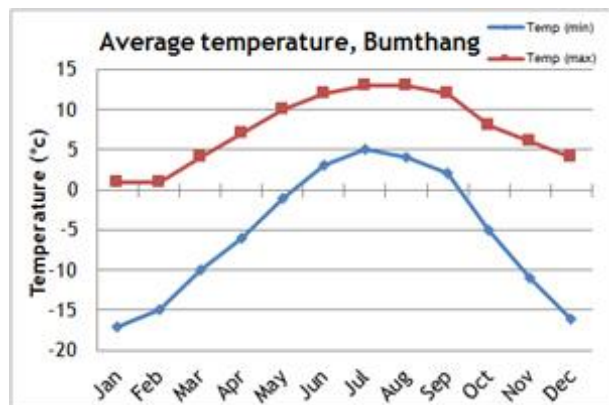
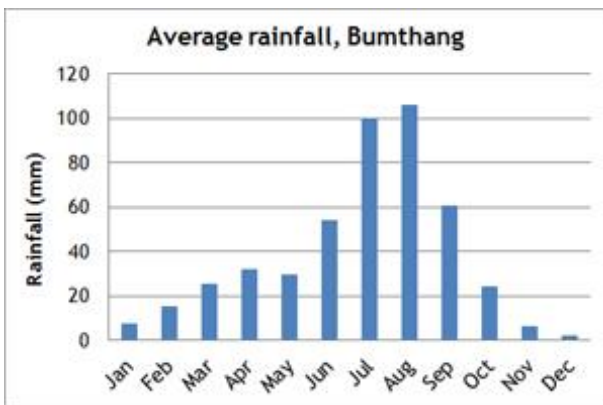
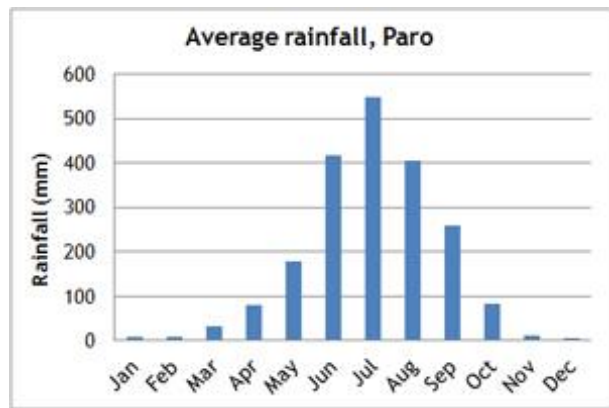
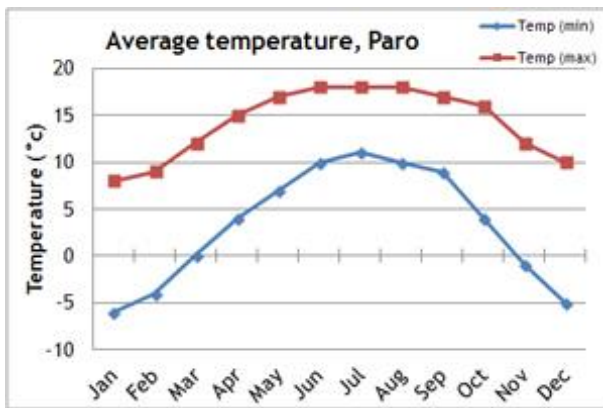
Further information

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

The nature of adventure travel

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

Climate information



Extensions

Extending your holiday

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



NEPAL

Kathmandu Valley Sightseeing Excursions

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

Lumbini

Enjoy a three day extension to the birthplace of Buddha, one of the most important Buddhist pilgrimage sites in the world. Take the short flight from Kathmandu, and spend two nights in a comfortable 3* hotel, just steps from the Lumbini temple complex, with a full day to explore the fascinating UNESCO World Heritage Site in the company of your expert local guide.



BHUTAN

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



INDIA

Kaziranga post-trip extension

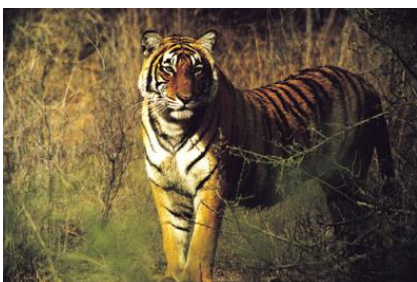
The Kaziranga National Park is located east of Guahati which you visit at the end of the trip. Kaziranga is a world heritage site, situated on the edge of the Eastern Himalaya biodiversity hotspot. It offers an amazing diversity of the landscape and wildlife. The large numbers of one-horned rhino are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



Delhi, Agra & the Taj Mahal

If you would like to stay longer in Delhi we can arrange additional nights and upgrades from our selection of first rate hotels.

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



Ranthambore or Corbett National Park

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

Why book this holiday with Mountain Kingdoms?

- This is an exciting trip which takes you trekking in remote parts of Bhutan, east of Bumthang. We were the first British company to offer this trek over the Rodang La.
- With an excellent mix of natural, cultural and historic attractions, this carefully planned itinerary provides an insight into authentic Bhutanese life in a little-visited area of the country.
- Your trek will be led by a knowledgeable, well-trained English-speaking guide supported by an experienced trekking crew who will provide an excellent standard of service. Your gear will be portered for you so all you need to carry is a small daypack.
- 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.
- Our maximum group size is 12 for this trip. This provides for a genuine small group travel experience and helps reduce the negative aspects associated with larger trekking groups.
- We don't have hidden costs. Your holiday price includes flights between Kathmandu and Paro as well as your Bhutanese visa fees.
- 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 or by calling the team on +44 (0)1453 844400. Bookings can be made online, by phone or by completing a booking form and returning it to us. We can also provisionally hold places if you need time to consider your options.

What our clients say



The way the trekking staff worked as a team and were really helpful and friendly--and adaptable! All in all a great holiday--would thoroughly recommend.

-Mr J M, Highlands

Beautiful trekking and a warm welcome everywhere we went.

-Mr J, Gloucestershire

So lovely to be remote and quiet.

-Mr & Mrs C, Powys



The festival was superb, and as ever the Bhutanese people were a delight.

- Mr L, Lewes

What an amazing insight into Bhutanese culture. The east of Bhutan is like another world.

-Mr T, Gloucestershire



Mountain Kingdoms - distinctly different

Truly independent

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

Value for money prices with an emphasis on quality

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

Complete financial security

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

No Surcharge Guarantee

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

Award winning Responsible Tourism

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

Genuine small group travel

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

Loyalty Discount

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

Booking your holiday - it couldn't be easier

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

Comprehensive information

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



RESPONSIBLE TOURISM STATEMENT CLIMATE EMERGENCY PLAN



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

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

Carbon Offsetting

Already doing:

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

Will do:

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

Reducing Carbon Emissions

Already doing:

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

Will do:

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

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

