

Thunder Dragon Trails in Style with Paro Tsechu, Bhutan

Attend a flamboyant festival on this perfect short holiday to Bhutan mixing easy half-day walks with indulgent accommodation and visits to the best-known cultural highlights.



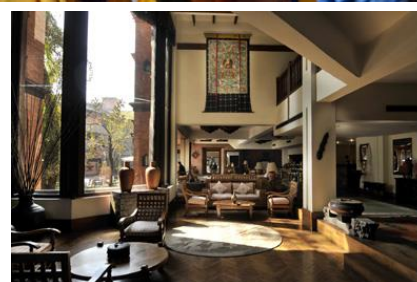
Group departures

See overleaf for departure dates

Holiday overview

Style	Walking
Accommodation	Hotels
Grade	Gentle
Duration	12 days from London to London
Trekking / Walking days	Walks on: 5 days
Min/Max group size	4 / 12. Guaranteed to run for 4
Trip Leader	Local Leader Bhutan
Land only	Joining in Kathmandu, Nepal
Max altitude	3,150m/10,355ft, Dochu La, Days 7 & 9

Private Departures & Tailor Made itineraries available



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Departures

Group departures

2021 Dates:

Wed 24 Mar - Sun 04 Apr With Paro Tsechu
Mon 13 Sep - Fri 24 Sep With Thimphu Tsechu

2022 Dates:

Sun 10 Apr - Thu 21 Apr With Paro Tsechu
Mon 03 Oct - Fri 14 Oct With Thimphu Tsechu

This detailed itinerary is for our spring departures only. A separate itinerary is available for our autumn departures which can be downloaded from our website or requested from the Mountain Kingdoms office.

Will the trip run?

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

Group prices and optional supplements

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

No Surcharge Guarantee

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

Insurance

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

Private Departures

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

Tailor Made service

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

Your guide



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

- Tiger's Nest, Punakha Dzong and the King's Memorial Chorten - Bhutan's foremost sights
- Easy-paced walks on gentle trails
- Join the festivities at the magnificent Paro Festival
- Stay in first class accommodation throughout including fabulous Dwarika's Hotel in Kathmandu

At a glance itinerary

Days 1-3	Arrive Kathmandu. Fly to Paro in Bhutan.
Day 4-5	Visit Paro Tsechu. Visit Museum and Kyichu Lakhang. Drive to Thimphu. Sightseeing.
Day 6	Drive to Punakha, visit the Divine Madman's Temple. Village walk.
Day 7	Walk To Khamsum Yuelley Namgyal Chorten and visit Punakha Dzong.
Day 8	Drive to Dochu La. Walk to Trashigang/Hongtsho. Drive to Paro.
Day 9	Walk to Taktsang Monastery. Sightseeing.
Days 10-12	Fly to Kathmandu. Time at leisure. Fly back to London.

Trip summary

Originally based on our highly popular Gentle Walking holiday in Bhutan this trip offers the same great combination of walking and sightseeing but in a shorter itinerary of just 12 days. Now, as an added enticement, accommodation for this itinerary has been upgraded to offer a more luxurious standard throughout, including a stay at Dwarika's superb heritage hotel in Kathmandu.

A visit to Bhutan is a truly unique experience. Bhutan was never colonised and the Bhutanese are very proud of their independence and their country - of their own unique Buddhist culture and social traditions and of their own distinctive building style, seen in the magnificent fortified dzongs, temples and monasteries and attractive farmhouses.

You start your visit to Bhutan with time in the Paro Valley to attend the flamboyant Paro Tsechu festival - one of the largest and most significant festivals in all of Bhutan. You then travel on to the capital Thimphu where you have time to see some of its many attractions before visiting Punakha with its fabulous dzong. Returning to Paro, your holiday will end on a high with a walk up to iconic Taktsang Monastery, the 'Tigers Nest' of Bhutanese legend, which clings improbably to a cliff high above the valley.

This trip offers the best of all worlds, walks in lovely scenery, some amazing sightseeing and stylish accommodation.

Your trip itinerary

Day 1: Depart London.

Depart London on your overnight flight to Kathmandu.

Overnight: In flight

Day 2: Arrive Kathmandu. Transfer to hotel.

On arrival in Kathmandu you will be met and transferred to Dwarika's Hotel. This is a wonderful hotel and a great favourite with our clients. It is built in Nepalese palace style and features many architectural relics rescued from palaces and temples in the valley as well as Nepalese furniture, carvings and statues. The hotel has a pleasant courtyard garden with swimming pool and bar and also has several good restaurants. The Toran Restaurant serves very good continental, Indian and Nepalese food while the renowned Krishnarpan Restaurant has a reputation for offering the very best of classical Newari cuisine in delightful traditional surroundings. This hotel is a lovely place to relax after your long flight.



Overnight: Dwarika's Hotel, Kathmandu

Day 3: Transfer to fly to Paro in Bhutan, 2,200m/7,218ft.

Transfer to the airport for the short flight to Bhutan. On a clear day the panoramic views of the Himalaya are sensational, including Everest and Kangchenjunga, but particularly exciting is the approach through the Bhutanese foothills and the landing, including a few steep turns to land at the tiny airstrip of Paro. Although you are at the mercy of the airline computer, if possible try to sit on the left hand side of the plane for the most spectacular views.

On arrival in Paro you will be met by your guide and transferred to your hotel. You will stay at the Hotel Zhiwaling, a lovely hotel set in a peaceful location not far from Paro in beautiful gardens. The hotel combines traditional Bhutanese architecture with top of the range facilities, including a spa.

You may have time for a visit to the Paro Tsechu or for some sightseeing in Paro depending on your flight schedule.

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

Day 4: Visit Paro Tsechu. Visit Paro Dzong, Paro Museum and Kyichu Lakhang.

Today you will join the crowds to visit the Paro Festival. This is one of the most important festivals in Bhutan. Tsechus are colourful festivals of music and ceremonial dance staged in honour of Guru Rinpoche. They commemorate his great deeds, all believed to have taken place on the tenth day of the month - the meaning of the word, tsechu. Such festivals are primarily religious but they are also a rare opportunity for the people to come together in all their finery to socialise, celebrate and have fun. The Bhutanese believe that they will achieve merit by attending the festival and by watching the masked dances and the event draws people in from even the remotest villages of the surrounding district.

You will have various choices for sightseeing in the afternoon. You could drive up to visit the ruins of Drukgyel Dzong, visit Kyichu Lakhang, one of the oldest and most picturesque of the valley's temples or visit Paro Dzong. Whilst there, you may also spend time at the fine National Museum which is situated in the Ta Dzong watchtower above the main dzong. This has recently been re-opened after extensive restorations.

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

Day 5: Attend the Thongdrel ceremony at Paro Tsechu. Drive to Thimphu, 2,334m/7,657ft. Sightseeing and walk to Wangditse Monastery.

Today is the last day of the Paro Tsechu and you should have time to return to the Paro Dzong before breakfast for the ceremonial unfurling of the Thongdrel. This is one of the most important events of the festival and brings the festival to its close. The Thongdrel is a huge thangka depicting a seated Guru Padmasambhava surrounded by his consorts and other holy beings. A mere sight of the Thongdrel is believed to cleanse all sins accumulated in one's lifetime. The Thongdrel has to be raised before dawn and will be displayed to the public for a few hours only and has to be rolled down before the rays of the sun touch it. You will return to the hotel for breakfast.



After breakfast you will drive to Thimphu, a journey of around 1½ hours. You will then do some sightseeing in Thimphu. There are many places of interest to visit, including the Tashishoddzong (the main government buildings), the Textile Museum, the Heritage Museum, the late King's Memorial Chorten, the National Library, the School of Painting and the silversmiths and pottery workshops. The Government Handicrafts Emporium is possibly the best place to look for local handicrafts especially if you are looking to buy items of national dress. The handmade paper workshop is a very interesting visit to see the paper being made. Some nice items made from handmade paper are also for sale there. You could also visit the Post Office to buy some of Bhutan's very attractive stamps.

After lunch you will drive up to Sangaygang next to the Bhutan First Broadcasting Service tower, located in the North West of Thimphu. It is only about a mile drive up to the tower so if you feel like you would like to burn a bit more energy you can always walk up instead. From the tower you will have great views over Thimphu Dzong and the Thimphu valley as you start your walk contouring the beautiful hills to visit Wangditse Gumpa. This walk should take around 1½ hours. You will have time to visit the gumpa before you walk down for another 30 minutes to reach Dechen Phodrang Monastery. This monastery houses around 450 student monks enrolled in a 8 year course and is also home to some fantastic UNESCO monitored 12th century paintings. You will then meet your vehicle and be driven back to Thimphu. If time you might also like to visit the 'zoo'. This is in fact a very large enclosure (several acres) just above the town, containing only Takin. This very rare animal is found exclusively in Bhutan, Arunachal Pradesh, Northern Burma and parts of China and is possibly one of the most quirky and strangest looking animals you will ever see.

Overnight: Druk Hotel or Similar, Thimphu (Meals: BLD)

Day 6: Drive to Punakha, 1,242m/4075ft, visit the Divine Madman's Temple. Drive to Talo and Nobgang villages.

Today you drive out of the Thimphu Valley and over the Dochu La pass at 3,109m/10,200ft, marked by 108 chortens. There are fabulous views of the Eastern Himalaya from here on clear days but this is a beautiful spot even on misty days. You then drive down through fine forest into the lush Punakha Valley.

Before driving on to your hotel in Punakha you may visit Chimi Lakhang a temple built by Drukpa Kunley. Known as 'The Divine Madman', Drukpa Kunley was a 15th century Bhutanese lama and is Bhutan's most popular saint and one of the most important figures in Bhutanese folklore. Despite the apparent conservatism of the Bhutanese people, Drukpa Kunley with his unconventional views on sex is a great favourite throughout the country - the phallus symbols painted on the outside walls of houses date back to his teachings. Chimi Lakhang is reached by a short walk across the paddy fields and this temple is especially popular with women who come here to pray for children. The temple is characterised by its many phallic symbols.

Later you drive up to the charming village of Talo (altitude 2,800m). This village is well known for its prettiness and tidiness. First you will drive up to its fine gumpa built above the village and worth a visit for the spectacular views. After visiting the gumpa you may walk down through the village and see traditional village life going on. The beautiful farm houses of the village have their own flower and vegetable gardens where corn and vegetables are grown in abundance. It's all very pretty. You come out back onto the road and may then either walk down through woods and fields, or drive down to the village of Nobgang the birthplace of four girls who in 1979 married King Jigme Singye Wangchuck to become his four queens. After the king's abdication they became Bhutan's Queen Mothers. The Nobgang gompas are sponsored by their family. The two villages of Talo and Nobgang have a longstanding rivalry in archery.

Overnight: Dhensa Boutique Resort or Similar, Punakha

Day 7: Walk to Khamsum Yuelley Namgyal Chorten and continue down the river valley to Punakha Dzong.

Today you will do a lovely walk in the lush almost sub-tropical Punakha Valley. You drive for 20 minutes up the valley and start your walk at a pedestrian suspension bridge that crosses the Mo Chu River. You then follow up through paddy fields to the base of the hill where Khamsum Yuelley Namgyal Chorten is sited. The climb to the top is then quite steep but takes only 45 minutes or so. This Chorten was consecrated in December 1999 and contains sacred relics donated from Punakha Dzong. Leaving the grounds of the Chorten via a different gate you descend to join a contouring path which ultimately leads you to the small village of Yabesa and you then follow the Mo Chu downstream past Sonagasha, the King's Palace and on to Punakha Dzong.



The fabulous Punakha Dzong, one of the most spectacular and important in the kingdom, is situated at the confluence of two rivers. In 1994 there was a major flood in the town which caused a lot of damage to the dzong but it has now been beautifully renovated and is a real showcase for Bhutanese craftsmanship and painting. You are normally allowed into the dzong unless there are VIPs visiting. After your visit you may extend your walk southwards down the valley for a further hour or so to reach the large settlement of Khuruthang and then on to your hotel or meet up with your transport for the drive back to the hotel.

Overnight: Dhensa Boutique Resort or Similar, Punakha

Day 8: Drive to Dochu La. Walk to Trashigang/Hongtsho. Drive to Paro.

From your hotel you drive up through dense forest to reach again the Dochu La Pass, 3,109m/10,200ft. From Dochu La you will take a lovely walk of about 4 hours from the pass to rejoin your transport further down along the road to Thimphu. This is a pleasant trail which takes you up the ridge in rhododendron forest to Lungchezekha Gumpa, from where there are further fantastic mountain views. Your trail then descends in beautiful mixed forest, passing Tashigang Gumpa to emerge at the road at Hongtsho, where you will meet your transport. You then drive to Paro.

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

Day 9: Walk to Taktsang Monastery. Sightseeing.

Today you will make the trip on foot to visit the famous Tiger's Nest, Taktsang monastery, one of the iconic sites of Bhutan and a fitting climax to your trip.

Taktsang monastery is perched some 600m/2,000ft up on a cliff overlooking the valley and was said to be where the legendary Indian saint, Guru Padma Sambhava, flew from Tibet on the back of a tiger to defeat five demons, who were opposing the spread of Buddhism in Bhutan. It's a steep uphill walk through woods, of about 1½-2hrs, to reach a tea house (an ascent of 340m/1,115ft.) Apart from offering welcome refreshment this tea house is one of the principle viewpoints of Taktsang, and those who prefer not to climb any further can relax here whilst others continue on. If there is a particular religious gathering or VIP visit in progress, you will not be able to enter the monastery but the further half an hour's ascent is well worth it in any case, as it brings you to another viewpoint directly across from Taktsang. If you are able to make a visit, 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. You descend the same way. The whole excursion takes about 4 hours.

Later you will have time to explore further the Paro valley. You might drive up the valley to visit the ruined monastery fortress of Drukgyel Dzong. Drukgyel Dzong was built in 1649, during the time that Bhutan was resisting foreign invasion and consolidating its power, and it was an important base for defence of the region right up until 1951 when it was destroyed by fire. Some imposing stone walls and rammed earth ramparts still remain to indicate what an impressive structure it must have been. From here there are good views to the north and if the skies are clear you can see Mount Chomolhari, the second highest peak in Bhutan.

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

Day 10: Fly to Kathmandu. Afternoon at leisure.

After breakfast you will transfer to the airport for your flight back to Kathmandu. Here you will be met and taken to your hotel. This afternoon will be at leisure.

Overnight: Dwarika's Hotel, Kathmandu (Meals: B)

Day 11: Day at leisure. Group transfer to airport. Depart for London.

You will have much of the day at leisure in Kathmandu when you may choose to do some sightseeing or shopping, or just relax by the pool at your hotel. Later, you will be transferred to the airport for your overnight flight to London.

Overnight: In flight (Meals: B)

Day 12: Arrive London.

Our grading system

Thunder Dragon Trails in Style is graded as a Gentle walking holiday, as described below.

Gentle

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

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

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
- ✓ Dwarika's Hotel in Kathmandu on a twin-share, bed and breakfast basis
- ✓ A high standard of accommodation throughout Bhutan on full board, twin-share basis.
- ✓ Bhutan visa and Bhutan departure tax
- ✓ All internal flights and domestic airport transfers
- ✓ All road transport by private vehicles
- ✓ All walks and sightseeing where specified
- ✓ Economy class return air fares from the UK & UK Departure Tax (flight inclusive only)
- ✓ Single, timed, group airport transfers for international flights on arrival and departure
- ✓ Carbon offsetting with the Ecoan Tree Planting Project (for clients taking our flight inclusive option)
- ✓ A free Mountain Kingdoms Water-to-Go bottle
- ✓ The opportunity to attend one of our pre trip meet in the Cotswolds

Airport transfers

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

What's not included:

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

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

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

Your accommodation

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



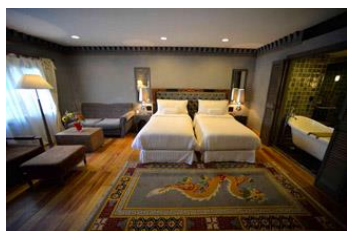
Dwarika's Hotel, Kathmandu

Dwarika's unique 5* hotel is built in Nepalese style and features many architectural relics rescued from palaces and temples in the valley as well as Nepalese furniture, carvings and statues. The building has a palace-like atmosphere and you really feel as if you are stepping back into Nepal's history. Rooms are large and stylish and its elegant restaurant is one of the places to eat in Kathmandu. It also has a pleasant courtyard garden with swimming pool.



Hotel Zhiwaling or Similar, Paro

The 5* Hotel Zhiwaling is situated in a peaceful area not far from Paro town. It was built to resemble a dzong with intricate wood carving and hand-painted decoration. The attractive rooms are located in the main building or in cottages set in beautifully landscaped gardens. They all offer modern amenities and far-reaching views across the Paro Valley. The Zhiwaling has a spa, outdoor hot stone bath, fine restaurant, yoga classes, temple and even a greenhouse showcasing rare Himalayan plants.



Druk Hotel or Similar, Thimphu

This four star property is one of Thimphu's longest established hotels and has recently been renovated to give it a stylish and modern feel as well as good facilities. It is conveniently located in the centre of Thimphu and has well-appointed rooms and a spa.



Dhensa Boutique Resort or Similar, Punakha

The Dhensa is a luxury resort set in woodlands and gardens on a hillside overlooking the river and surrounding farmland in the heart of the lush Punakha Valley. Rooms are generous with light decor and contemporary furnishings giving a modern, airy feel. They have all amenities including Wi-Fi, and each has a large, sit-out balcony for enjoying the views. The hotel has its own restaurant with an emphasis on seasonal, locally grown produce and there is also a spa with a full range of wellness treatments.

Meal arrangements

All meals included in Bhutan. Breakfast only Kathmandu. 9 breakfasts, 7 lunches & 7 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.

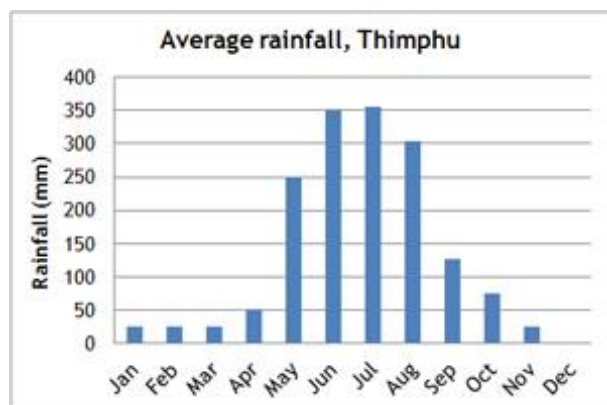
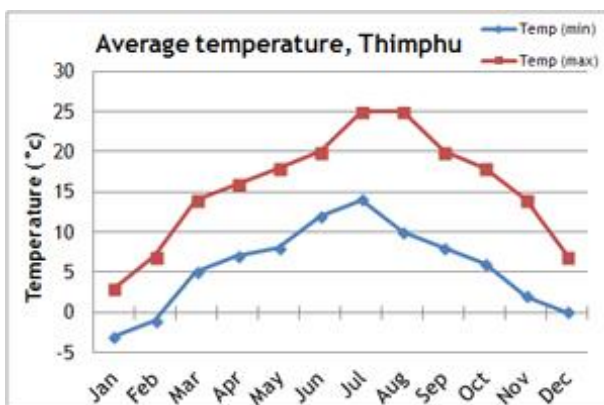
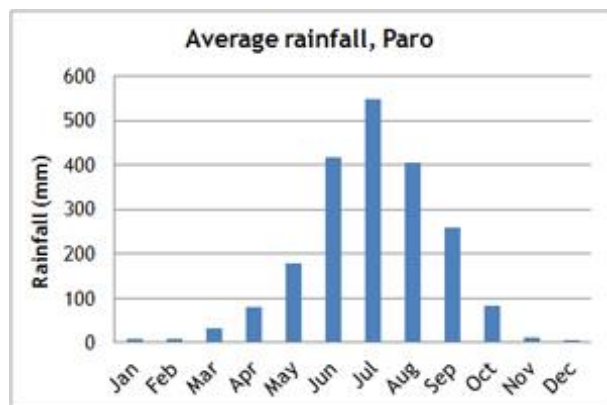
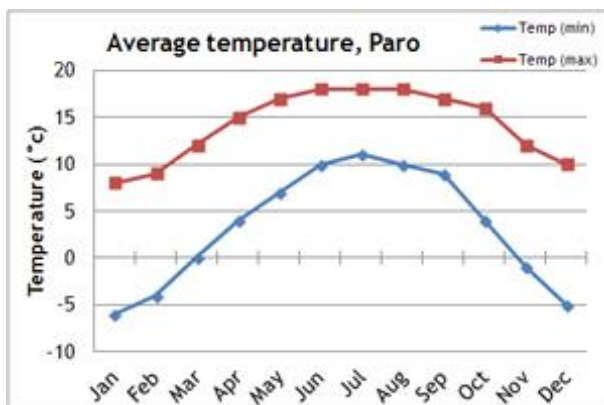
Further information

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.



Hotel upgrades and extra nights in Bhutan

If you would like to extend your stay in Bhutan we are happy to arrange additional nights for you. You can choose properties that are already included in your tour, or we can suggest some fabulous alternatives from homestays to the height of luxury.

Additional accommodation in Nepal

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



Kathmandu Valley sightseeing excursions

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



Wildlife extensions in Nepal - Chitwan, Bardia & Koshi Tappu

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



Royal Manas National Park, Bhutan

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



Bumdra Trek, Bhutan

Add an overnight trek to your Bhutan holiday. Follow a trail from Paro to the Bumdra Monastery, high above the Paro Valley then descend to Taktsang Monastery by a little trekked path. Enjoy high mountain views and spend a night camping below beautiful Bumdra Monastery. The fully supported trek includes a guide, trek crew, all camping equipment.

Why book this holiday with Mountain Kingdoms?

- A shorter version of our very popular Gentle Walking Bhutan trip in just 12 days but still including some delightful, scenic walks and the most important cultural sights.
- We have chosen hotels of a very high standard throughout including award-winning Dwarika's in Kathmandu - a unique hotel that showcases Nepal's architectural and cultural heritage.
- We include a visit to the Paro Tsechu - one of Bhutan's most important and impressive festivals.
- Your holiday will be led by a knowledgeable, well-trained English-speaking guide.
- We have been pioneering holidays in Bhutan for over 30 years. Our M.D. Steve Berry, is one of the leading authorities on Bhutan in the travel industry and has written two books about his experiences in the Thunder Dragon Kingdom.
- We have been working with our partners in Bhutan for many years. Their knowledge, experience and attention to detail means you can be assured of a very high quality holiday.
- Many members of the Mountain Kingdoms team have first-hand experience of Bhutan. Please call or email our office should you have any questions about this trip.
- 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.
- 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 pre-trip information and advice was excellent and very comprehensive. MK staff were very helpful and answered all our queries. The arrangements worked flawlessly and the people who met us for transfers to and from our flights were most helpful and efficient. A very special 'thank you' must be extended to our guide and driver. Our guide was very knowledgeable about the range of aspects and adapted the itinerary to our personal wishes and abilities. His English was excellent and at times we had to remember he was Bhutanese. He certainly went out of his way to show us places that might easily have been missed or not strictly on the itinerary. Altogether, a most remarkable and special holiday.

- Mr G, Devon



Mountain Kingdoms - distinctly different

Truly independent

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

Value for money prices with an emphasis on quality

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

Complete financial security

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

No Surcharge Guarantee

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

Award winning Responsible Tourism

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

Genuine small group travel

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

Loyalty Discount

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

Booking your holiday - it couldn't be easier

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

Comprehensive information

When we receive your booking we send you a full trip dossier which contains details of visas and vaccinations 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.

