



Trip Itinerary

HIGHLIGHTS

- Spectacular mountain trek through unspoilt wilderness from Paro to Thimphu
- Visit the breath-taking Tiger's Nest Monastery
- Be immersed in the ancient culture of Paro and Thimphu

DETAILED ITINERARY:

DAY 1: ARRIVE PARO AIRPORT

On arrival at Paro airport, our representative will meet you and take you to your hotel. In the afternoon, there is the option to take a tour of the city. Bhutan's National Museum is housed in Ta Dzong, a watchtower built to defend Rinpung Dzong in the 17th century. Displayed over several floors, the collection includes religious thangka paintings, relics and Bhutan's beautiful postage stamps. From the museum, we will walk down to Rinpung Dzong. Built in 1646 by the first spiritual leader of Bhutan, the Dzong is now home to the monastic body of Paro, as well as the offices of the Thrimpon (judge) and Dzongda (administrative head) of Paro district. The entrance to the Dzong is across a traditional Butanese covered bridge called Nemi Zam, from where there are great views of the Dzong itself.

Back at the hotel your Lead Guide will hold a pre-trek briefing to make sure you are prepared for your trek.

DAY 2: EXCURSION TO TAKTSHANG LAKHANG

Elevation: 2250m to 3110m to 2250m, Trekking time: 5 hours

This morning you will take a tour to Taktshang Lakhang, more widely known as the Tiger's Nest Monastery, one of the most famous monasteries in the world. The Taktshang monastery nestles on a cliff top, around 3100m above sea level. The main temple, one of the holiest sites for the people of Bhutan, was built in 1692. The name 'Tiger's Nest' originates from the legend that in the 8th century, Guru Rinpoche, an Indian Buddhist master, came to the monastery to meditate on the back of a tigress. The monastery is now recognised as a sacred place of worship for Buddhists, and will be visited by Bhutanese people at least once in their life. The main building was badly damaged by fire in 1998, but restoration work has now been completed.

In the afternoon you will visit Kyichu Lhakhang. This temple marked the introduction of Buddhism to Bhutan in the 7th century and is one of 108 temples built by the Tibetan king Songtsen Gampo in the Himalaya. From here you will be driven to the ruined fortress of Drukgyel Dzong. The Dzong was almost destroyed by fire in the 1950s, but in 2016 the Prime Minister announced a program to rebuild the Dzong and bring it back to its former glory. From the road to the Dzong there is a great view of the 7326m high Chomolhari, 'The Bride of Kangchenjunga'. You will return to your hotel in Paro for the night.



DAY 3: DRIVE FROM PARO TO SHANA, TREK TO THANGTHANGKA

Elevation: 2250m to 2870m to 3610m, Trekking Distance: 22 km, Time: 7-8 hours

You will be driven for around 2 hours through rice terraces, apple orchards and fields of millet to reach Shana Zampa, where you will begin your trek. On a clear day, you can see the summit of Chomolhari at the head of the valley. As the valley widens, you will arrive at the army post of Gunyitsawa at 2810m, the last stop before the Tibetan border. The trail forks, with one path leading to the Tremo La (Forbidden Pass) into Tibet, while your path follows the Pa Chhu river. The trail undulates through oak, pine and spruce forests, entering the Jigme Dorje National Park which is the largest protected area in Bhutan. After crossing the river you will stop for lunch, and then continue along the left bank. The trail climbs higher, where the forests are replaced by bamboo, rhododendron and ferns. You will cross the river once more in order to reach the campsite at Thangthangkha.

DAY 4: THANGTHANGKHA TO JANGOTHANG (CHOMOLHARI BASE CAMP)

Elevation: 3610m to 4040m, Distance: 19 km, Time: 5-6 hours

The trail ascends again from Thangthangkha, passing a small army camp and a chorten. As you continue to follow the river, you will emerge above the treeline and the expansive mountain vistas will open up for you – Chomolhari (7326m) and Jichu Drake (6794m) can be clearly seen from here. You will stop for lunch at a yak herder's camp, and it is then a short afternoon walk into the valley to our next camp. The campsite at Jangothang (Chomolhari Base Camp) sits at 4040m beneath the east face of Chomolhari.

DAY 5: JANGOTHANG TO LINGSHI VIA NYELE LA PASS

Elevation: 4040m to 4850m to 3800m, Distance: 18 km, Time: 7-8 hours

Today begins with a gently trek alongside the stream for half an hour, where you cross to the opposite bank and begin the ascent to the first ridge. From the ridge there are stunning views of Chomolhari, Jichu Drake and Tserim Khang. After crossing the valley floor, you climb again to the Nyele La Pass at 4850m. From the pass it is a gradual descent to our campsite at Lingshi. The trail passes through rhododendron forests but there are still some great views of the mountain peaks and Lingshi Dzong. The dzong dates back to 1668 when it was built to protect local villages from invaders from Tibet, and still remains in use as an administrative centre.

DAY 6: LINGSHI TO SHODU VIA YALE LA PASS

Elevation: 3800m to 4950m to 4080m, Distance: 22 km, Time: 8-9 hours

Today will be a tough day, as you cross the highest pass on your trek. The trek begins with a climb up a ridge behind the campsite, where there is a small chorten, before turning south into the Mo Chhu valley. The trail heads up the valley, climbing steeply to the Yale La pass at 4950m. If the weather is clear, you will see Chomolhari, Gangchhenta, Tserim Khang and Masang Gang from the top of the pass. The descent from the pass follows a stream all the way to Shodu, where your campsite is in a meadow alongside a chorten.

DAY 7: SHODU TO BARSHONG

Elevation: 4080m to 3710m, Distance: 16 km, Time: 6-7 hours

You will now be below the tree line again, and the path takes you through juniper, rhododendron and alpine forests. You will pass stunning waterfalls and rocky cliff faces as you follow the course of the Thimphu Chhu river. A steep stone staircase will bring you down to the river, where you will break for lunch. After lunch, you ascend once again on a gradual incline to your next campsite, by the ruins of Barshong Dzong.



DAY 8: BARSHONG TO DOLAMKENCHO, DRIVE TO THIMPHU

Elevation: 3710m to 3320m to 2350m, Trekking Distance: 15km, Time: 5-6 hours

The day starts with a gentle descent through conifers and rhododendrons, before dropping steeply to the Thimphu Chhu river. The trail follows the river, climbing over ridges and dropping into gullies where tributaries join the river. The final section of your trek will be a climb up to the cliffs above the river and into pastureland at Dolamkencho. This is where the trek ends, and from here you will be driven to Thimphu, which will take around 1 hour. A shower and a comfortable bed await you at your hotel in Thimphu.

DAY 9: DRIVE FROM THIMPHU TO PARO

This morning you will continue with your tour of Thimphu. The National Library houses a collection of ancient Buddhist manuscripts and texts dating back over hundreds of years, as well as modern academic books about Himalayan religion and culture. The Institute for Zorig Chusum is an Arts and Crafts School where students learn the 13 traditional arts and crafts of Bhutan. The Textile Museum is the place to learn about Bhutan's history of weaving, from the techniques used by local people to the wedding clothes worn by the king. Simply Bhutan is a living museum that introduces many aspects of Bhutanese traditional life. The project aims to preserve and promote culture, and provides job opportunities and training to young people. (Please be aware that not all sites may be open on the day you are due to visit Thimphu. The National Library and the Institute for Zorig Chusum are both closed on weekends and government holidays. The Textile Museum is closed on Sundays and government holidays.) You finish with a visit to the Trashichhoe Dzong – The Fortress of the Glorious Religion – the seat of government and religion which is home to the monarch's throne room. Originally built in 1641, the Dzong was rebuilt in the 1960s using traditional Bhutanese methods.

Late in the afternoon you will be driven to Paro, where you will check into your hotel for your final night.

DAY 10: DEPART PARO AIRPORT

You will be met at the hotel and transferred to Paro Airport for your departing flight.



SUMMARY:



Bhutan, often referred to as 'Land of the Thunder Dragon' or 'the last Shangri La on earth', is situated in the lap of the Eastern Himalayas between India and the People's Republic of China. Covering an area of 18000 sq miles, the tiny Himalayan Kingdom is one of the most isolated nations in the world. Spectacular mountain terrain, varied flora and fauna, ancient Bhutan Buddhist monasteries, and the magnificent landscapes of Bhutan have made it an exemplary tourist destination. Bhutan is bestowed with rich biodiversity harboring around 300 medicinal herbs and 165 endangered species. Each part of Bhutan has its own historical, geographical, cultural, traditional and religious significance. With its beautiful and largely unspoiled Himalayan setting, its rich flora and fauna and its vibrant Buddhist culture, Bhutan really is an idyllic place to visit.

The Chomolhari trek is a six day trek, crossing the stunning landscape to Chomolhari Base Camp. It is a journey from the sweeping valleys of Paro and Thimphu to the stunning high mountains of Chomolhari, Jichu Drake and Tshrim Khang, through a natural landscape of rhododendron forests and glacial streams. Along the way you will discover more about the history of Bhutan through unspoilt villages, ancient lakhangs and dzongs. Our itinerary includes city tours of Paro and Thimphu, as well as a visit to the stunning Tiger's Nest Monastery.

The best times to embark on the Chomolhari Trek are between March-June or September-November.