



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, Punakha 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: PARO TO JANGCHULAKHA

Elevation: 2250m to 3780m, Distance: 13 km, Time: 5-7 hours

Your trek will begin this morning with a gradual ascent to Jele Dzong, now mostly in ruins. On a clear day, the Paro valley can be seen from here, surrounded by snow-capped mountains. There is a Lhakhang here, dedicated to the Buddha Sakyamuni. Women who are hoping to be blessed with children come to the monastery where the presiding Lama will hit them on the head with a 10 inch phallus made of wood, bone and ivory.

After lunch you will continue your trek, climbing for around 1½ hours onto a ridge with spectacular views of the Himalaya to the north. Below the ridgeline you will trek through alpine forests and rhododendron forests. If the weather is clear, there will be stunning views of Chomolhari and other snow-capped peaks. There may be yak herders moving along the trails in this area.

DAY 4: JANGCHULAKHA TO LAKE JIMGELANG TSHO

Elevation: 3780m to 3956m, Distance: 20 km, Time: 6-7 hours

Your trek continues along the ridge, with sensational views of the valleys and mountains. Today's trek requires a lot of ascent and descent. First you will climb up to the main ridge, before descending again to cross the valley. From here there are great views of 6989m high Jichu Drake, the peak that represents the protective deity of Paro. Our campsite for the night is close to the Jimgelang Tsho lake, famous for its giant trout. We may also see yak herds using the lake to cool off.

DAY 5: LAKE JIMGELANG TSHO TO SIMKOTA

Elevation: 3880m to 4110m, Distance: 14 km, Time: 4-6 hours

Today the trail follows a series of ridges, taking you through forests of dwarf rhododendron trees as you make your way to the next lake, Janatsho. If there are any yak herder's camps along the trail, you will have the opportunity to see how these people live in the mountains. After a final climb, you will trek down to your campsite at Simkota Lake.

DAY 6: SIMKOTA TO THIMPHU

Elevation: 4110m to 4210m to 2350m, Distance: 14 km, Time: 6-7 hours

Your final day of trekking begins with a gradual ascent to the Phume La Pass. At 4210m, this is the highest point of your trek. From the top of the pass there are spectacular views of Mt. Gangkar Puensum. This 7570m peak is the highest in Bhutan and the highest unclimbed mountain in the world. The trail winds through juniper trees as it descends to the community hall in Phajoding. From here, it is all downhill through forests of blue pine as you make your way to Thimphu.

On arrival in Thimphu there will be time to enjoy a short city tour. The King's Memorial Chorten was planned by Bhutan's third king, His Majesty Jigme Dorji Wangchuk, but was only completed after his death so now serves as his memorial. An important religious site and the focus of daily worship, people will circumambulate the chorten throughout the day, reciting prayers and whirling the red prayer wheels. You may also visit 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. You will stay in a hotel in Thimphu tonight.



DAY 7: THIMPHU TO PUNAKHA

Elevation: 2350m to 3088m to 1310m, Distance: 75km, Drive time: 3-4 hours

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.)

After lunch, you will be driven from Thimphu to Punakha, which takes around 3 hours. The road takes you up to the Dochu-La Pass on a series of switchbacks. The highest point on the road, 3088m, is marked by a chorten, mani wall and many prayer flags. The view from here is magnificent and the panorama includes the towering peaks of Masagang (7,158m), Tsendagang (6,960m), Terigang (7,060m), Jejegangphugang (7,158m), Kangphugang (7,170m), Zongphugang (7,060m), and Gangkar Puensum (7,570m). The road from the pass drops down into the Punakha valley and on to the town of Punakha where you will stay in a hotel.

DAY 10: PUNAKHA TO PARO

Elevation: 1310 metres to 2250 metres, Distance: 125km, Drive time: 4-5 hours

Before you depart for Paro, you will visit the Punakha Dzong, which sits at the junction of the Mo Chhu and Pho Chhu rivers and is now the administrative and religious centre of the region. Built in 1637, the dzong has been damaged by four fires and an earthquake but has now been fully restored. As you drive back to Paro, which takes around 5 hours, you will take a break at the Chimi Lhakhang. The temple is dedicated to Lama Drukpa Kuenley whose outrageous methods of teaching Buddhism earned him the name 'The Divine Madman'. The lakhang is also known as a temple of fertility, where women will pray for children.

Once you arrive in Paro, you will check into your hotel for your final night.

DAY 11: 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 Druk Path trek is a four day trek, crossing the stunning landscape between Paro and Thimphu. It is a journey through a spectacular natural landscape that includes blue pine forests, dwarf rhododendrons, high mountain ridges and crystal clear lakes. Along the way you will discover more about the history of Bhutan through unspoilt villages, ancient lachangs 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 Druk Path Trek are between March-June or September-November.