

## Druk Path Trek, Bhutan

A superb five-day trek through glorious high mountain scenery combined with the many cultural attractions of Paro, Thimphu and Punakha.



### Group departures

See overleaf for departure dates

### Holiday overview

|                         |                                    |
|-------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Style                   | Trek                               |
| Accommodation           | Hotels, Camping                    |
| Grade                   | Moderate                           |
| Duration                | 15 days from London to London      |
| Trekking / Walking days | On trek: 5 days<br>Walks on: 1 day |
| Min/Max group size      | 4 / 12. Guaranteed to run for 4    |
| Trip Leader             | Local Leader Bhutan                |
| Land only               | Joining in Kathmandu, Nepal        |
| Max altitude            | 4,210m/13,812ft, Simkota La, Day 9 |

**Private Departures & Tailor Made itineraries available**



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# Departures

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## Group departures

### 2024 Dates:

Thu 21 Mar - Wed 03 Apr With Paro Tsechu

Sat 06 Apr - Fri 19 Apr

**Wed 02 Oct - Wed 16 Oct**

Sat 02 Nov - Fri 15 Nov

This detailed itinerary is for our October 2024 departure only. There are separate itineraries for all other 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.

### Special notes

#### Flights between Kathmandu and Paro

Please note that there is the small possibility that flight schedules between Kathmandu and Paro could change in the coming months. This may result in alterations to the itinerary and/or the dates of travel.

## Your guide

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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.

## Your trip highlights

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- Trek one of Bhutan's oldest trails with wonderfully varied scenery and superb mountain views
- Walk to the fabled Tiger's Nest Monastery and visit Punakha Dzong
- Explore the key cultural sights of Thimphu and the Paro Valley
- Enjoy first-rate camping and well-appointed hotels

## At a glance itinerary

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|            |   |
|------------|---|
| Days 1-3   | Arrive Kathmandu. Fly to Paro. Visit Dzong Drakha.  |
| Days 4-5   | Sightseeing around the Paro Valley. Walk to Taktsang Monastery.                             |
| Days 6-7   | Trek to Jili Dzong and on to Jangchulhakha.   |
| Days 8-9   | Trek to Jana Tsho via Jimi Langtsho. Trek to Labana across the Simkota La, 4,210m/13,812ft. |
| Day 10     | End trek. Drive to Thimphu. Sightseeing   |
| Day 11     | Sightseeing in Thimphu. Drive to Punakha. Walk to Drukpa Kunley's temple.                   |
| Days 12-13 | Visit Punakha Dzong. Drive to Paro. Fly to Kathmandu.                                       |
| Days 14-15 | Time at leisure. Overnight flight to London.  |

## Trip summary

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The Druk Path trek takes in the most varied and beautiful sections of an ancient high-level mule trail which winds its way through the mountains between Bhutan's two main towns of Paro and Thimphu. Combined with opportunities to experience the fascinating culture and sights of the Thunder Dragon Kingdom, it makes the perfect two-week trekking holiday within this unique Himalayan land.

Before stepping out on the Druk Path trail, you enjoy some sightseeing in Paro and stretch your legs with a walk up to Bhutan's most famous cultural attraction: the soaring Taktsang Monastery, also known as the Tiger's Nest. Perched, seemingly miraculously, on the side of a sheer cliff-face, and decorated with brightly coloured prayer flags, the striking gold, red and white temple represents the unique culture, architecture and spirituality of Bhutan.

Your fully supported, five-day trek along the Druk Path starts in the Paro Valley and follows a tremendously varied route through virgin forest, open yak pastures and along glorious high ridges. There is much cultural interest along the way as you visit sacred mountain lakes, traditional settlements and even a haunted monastery. Each day you'll be trekking at over 3,000 m/9,842ft and have the 4,210m/13,812ft Simkota La to cross before your final descent to Bhutan's capital 'city,' Thimphu. En route you enjoy tremendous, panoramic views of snow-clad Himalayan peaks, and each night you camp in picturesque locations where you will enjoy the attentive services of your friendly, efficient trekking crew.

After your trek, you spend time exploring the principal sights of Thimphu before you drive eastward to visit the lush Punakha Valley where magnificent Punakha Dzong provides a fitting finale to your time in the Thunder Dragon Kingdom.

# Your trip itinerary

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## Day 1: Depart London.

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Depart London on your overnight flight to Kathmandu.

**Overnight: In flight**

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## Day 2: Arrive Kathmandu. Group transfer to hotel.

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You will be met on arrival and transferred to your hotel. You might like to venture out to Thamel for your evening meal, or eat in the restaurant if you are tired from your journey.

**Overnight: Hotel Shanker, Kathmandu**

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## Day 3: Fly to Paro in Bhutan. Visit Dzong Drakha.

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Transfer for the flight to Paro, the country's main airstrip, 2,250m/7,382ft. The flight often gives fantastic views of the Himalaya including Everest, and particularly exciting is the section through the Bhutanese foothills and the thrilling landing. Try to sit on the left hand side of the plane. You will be met on arrival by your Bhutanese guide and then transferred to your hotel.



This afternoon you will take a short drive out from Paro to make a walk up to Dzong Drakha. This is a beautiful cluster of 16th Century cliff temples set above the small village of Bondhey, overlooking the Paro Valley. Although this walk will take little more than a couple of hours it's a good leg stretch and aid to acclimatisation.

Flight schedules permitting, there should also be time to wander along the streets of the small township of Paro; have a peek at the Queen Mother's Winter Palace, then walk up to look at the Dzong.

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

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## Day 4: Sightseeing in the Paro Valley.

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Today you will enjoy some sightseeing in the Paro valley. Firstly you may visit the huge Paro Dzong, one of the most important in the kingdom. Above the dzong is the 17<sup>th</sup> century watchtower or Ta Dzong. This unusual, circular building houses Bhutan's National Museum and has recently been fully restored. The museum has a fantastic collection of Bhutanese national treasures with displays including depictions of a wide range of Bhutan's history and culture and an impressive collection of ancient thangkas featuring Bhutan's important saints and teachers. You will also find some fearsome festival masks, a collection of religious statues, some early stone carvings and the original iron links from the nearby Tamchhog Bridge.

There will also be time today to visit the ancient temple of Kyichu Lhakhang which was one of 108 temples built by Songtsen Gampo, an important early Tibetan king, in an attempt to pin down the Bon demon who was thought to hover over the whole of Tibet.

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

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## Day 5: Walk to Taktsang Monastery, 3,110m/10,200ft - 4-5 hours. Visit Drukgyel Dzong.

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A short drive beyond Paro town takes you to the trail head for the walk up to the famous Tiger's Nest, Taktsang Monastery. The monastery is perched some 600m/2,000ft up on a cliff overlooking the valley and was said to be where the legendary Indian saint, Guru Padma Sambhava, flew from Tibet on the back of a tiger to defeat five demons, who were opposing the spread of Buddhism in Bhutan. It's a steep uphill walk through woods, of about 1½-2hrs, to reach a tea house (an ascent of 340m/1,125ft). Apart from offering welcome refreshment this tea house is one of the principle viewpoints of 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 back to the valley floor by your outward route and then drive back to Paro. The full walk to Taktsang and back involves approximately 740m/2,440ft of ascent.

Afterwards, you may take a drive further the valley to visit Drukgyel Dzong. Nearby there is also an excellent viewpoint for the summit of Mount Chomolhari, which at 7,314m /23,997ft, is the second highest peak in Bhutan.

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

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**Day 6: Trek to Jili Dzong, 3,450m/11,319ft - 4½ hours.**

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Today you set off on your 5 day/4 night trek. The route is part of the original mule track that linked Thimphu Valley with Paro Valley and ultimately connected Bhutan to the Indian border. The walk is always done from Paro to Thimphu, as baggage horses are only available in Paro. It is a much more exciting way of reaching Bhutan's capital and after five days' trekking the sense of anticipation is keenly felt.



The walk starts appropriately behind Paro Dzong itself. Starting from the watchtower, the path winds its way slowly and evenly upward, through the forest towards the ridgeline of the Himalayan foothills above. As the day passes, the views below of the highly cultivated Paro Valley, the Queen Mother's Winter Palace, and the monastery/fortress itself are wonderful. The walk is firstly through pine, then bamboo, followed by birch and finally rhododendron. You may have lunch near a mani wall. The camp site is just a few hundred feet below Jili Dzong in a clearing. You will see plenty of interesting flora and fauna throughout the day and many interesting birds.

**Overnight: Camp (Meals: BLD)**

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**Day 7: Trek to a large yak herders' camp at Jangchulhakha, 3,770m/12,365ft - 5 hours.**

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It is a short twenty minute hike from the camp to the dzong. This is a large monastery and supposedly haunted. It contains a huge statue of Padma Sambhava. There are birds nesting in the arrow slits and old Mongol helmets and shields hanging on the walls. The building was until very recently deserted, but has now undergone some renovation and is in use again. It sits astride a ridge, which affords dramatic views of the valleys on both sides and the Himalaya to the north. On a clear day the second highest mountain in Bhutan can be seen, Mt. Chomolhari, 7,314m/23,997ft.

The path now follows a ridge for a short while before descending into forest. It then follows a snake-like route on rather magical paths, along mountainsides and through many different types of rhododendron. Occasionally you may meet local yak herdsman and take in wonderful views of mountains, including another large peak called Kangcheeta. You will see this mountain has two peaks and is split by a straight, pronounced gully - locals believe that Kangcheeta is the brother of Chomolhari (female mountain goddess) who hit him with a stick because he wanted to marry her. To the south, the Dagala range dominates the skyline. Below Mt. Kangcheeta there is a temple, Tshomphu Monastery, where an idol is supposed to float in the air. In the past our guides have said they had visited the temple and it was possible to pass a string underneath the statue, thus proving it floated. Eventually, you pass through a number of yak herder clearings, stopping for the night at the largest of them.

**Overnight: Camp (Meals: BLD)**

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**Day 8: Trek to Jana Tsho via Jimi Langtsho, 3,956m/12,975ft - 7 hours.**

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From camp the path ascends to gain the ridge and then traverses along it, first one side and then the other, with wonderful mountain views. Eventually you cross a small pass and circle round, until above Jimi Langtsho Lake. This is a large beautiful lake, stocked with trout, with a large chorten (religious obelisk) built at one end. You zigzag down to the lakeside, which is thick with rhododendron and hemmed in by rocky bluffs. The path

then leads up from the lake and along cliff paths with massive drops below. Eventually it leads round a succession of ridges until you arrive at the second lake, Jana Tsho, another magical campsite.

**Overnight: Camp (Meals: BLD)**

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**Day 9: Trek to Labana across the Simkota La, 4,210m/13,812ft - 3½ hours.**

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Again, there is a lovely walk today in glorious high mountain country, crossing the highest pass of your trip, the Simkota La (also known as Phume La) 4,210m/13,812ft. From the lake a wide stone path between rhododendrons leads down to traverse a basin which contains the third lake. Two other lakes are above and out of sight, one male, one female. Collectively they are called Dungkar Tsho. The latter of these has a very strong spirit and if anything 'dirty' is done nearby, a cloud comes down and only goes away with many prayers. The path is a mixture now of small passes and mountain tracks, some of which wander underneath cliffs.

It is here you will reach Labana your campsite for tonight. The rest of the day will be free to explore the area.

**Overnight: Camp (Meals: BLD)**

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**Day 10: Trek to Phadjoding and on to the end of the road, 2,350m/7,710ft - 5-7 hours. Drive to Thimphu. Sightseeing.**

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This morning you may meet monks on their way from Thimphu to visit the sacred lake of Jimi Langtsho, where they meditate for a few days before returning. The rocky mountain next to the highest pass, Thujedraj, used to be used for sky burials in the old days. Lower down there is one smaller pass with a chorten which looks directly down onto Thimphu.

The path zigzags down to Phadjoding (2½ hours). There will be time to see the temples. There is a recent one, constructed with funds donated by the fourth king's secretary, dedicated to Padma Samb Hava, but the 9th and 16th Jey Khempas (head monks of Bhutan) built the two main ones. These are gorgeous buildings with golden roofs, and acolyte monks will show you the inner temples. Phadjoding is a great meditation centre and there are a number of houses dedicated to retreat. A particular type of branch is put outside the front door, showing that the incumbent is not to be disturbed. High up on the cliff behind Phadjoding is a famous hermit temple, built many hundreds of years ago and still used today.

It takes three or four hours to reach the road, descending through the forest, steeply at times, on a well-worn path. It is worth getting up early for the clear views of the Eastern Himalaya. Seen clearly on the horizon behind the temples is the highest mountain in Bhutan, Gangkar Punsum, at 7,550m/24,770ft now the highest unclimbed peak in the world. There are several paths leading down to Thimphu; perhaps the best is the one leading to the Radio Station, which takes about 3 hours. Quite often the valley below may be filled with cloud, with just the mountains poking up into the clear air. Your vehicle will meet you at the roadhead for the short transfer to your hotel in town. Later there should be time for a little sightseeing.

**Overnight: Phuntso Pelri Hotel or Similar, Thimphu (Meals: BLD)**

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**Day 11: Time in Thimphu for sightseeing. Drive to Punakha with visit to Chimi Lhakhang.**

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Thimphu has various sights worth visiting such as 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. However, the main activity this morning will be a visit to the Dechenphu Tsechu.

After lunch you will leave Thimphu. The road climbs via a series of zigzags over the Dochu La Pass, 3,140m/10,302ft. On a clear day, panoramic views can be had of the eastern Himalaya, including Bhutan's highest mountain, Gangkar Punsum, 7,550m/24,770ft. The road drops down through forest finally emerging into the cultivated Punakha Valley. The drive takes around three hours.

Before reaching your hotel there will be time to stop for a short walk, of around an hour, to visit Drupka Kunley's Temple built in the centre of the Punakha Valley and called Chimi Lhakhang. The 'Divine Madman' built this temple to celebrate his victory over the demoness of the Dochu La. It is famous for the fact that infertile women visit here to pray for children.

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

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**Day 12: Visit Punakha Dzong. Drive to Paro - 4½-5 hours.**

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After breakfast you make the short 10 minute drive up through Punakha to visit Punakha Dzong, one of Bhutan's most celebrated sights. The main monastery/fortress in Punakha was the power base for the old system of reincarnate rulers. The remains of the original ruler of Bhutan, Nawang Namgyal, are kept in a small room at the top of the highest tower; only the King and the head of the Monastic Order are allowed to enter this room. Provided the head of the Monastic Order and his monks are in Thimphu it should be possible to view the inner courtyards of Punakha Dzong. In 1994 there was a major flood in the town as a glacial lake burst up in the Himalaya, causing tremendous havoc in the town and damage to the dzong, which has now been beautifully restored.



After visiting the dzong your transport will meet you for the return journey westward to Paro, taking lunch along the way. If you did not visit Drukpa Kunley's temple yesterday there should be time today. En route for Paro you will doubtless stop once more at the Dochu La Pass for another chance, weather permitting, to take in the vista of eastern Himalayan peaks.

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

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**Day 13: Fly to Kathmandu.**

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This is normally an early morning flight which takes you out and over the Bhutanese mountains and past Kangchenjunga, Makalu and Everest, finally dropping down into Kathmandu Valley. You will be met and transferred to your hotel, after which there will be plenty of time to relax or for some shopping or sightseeing.



**Overnight: Hotel Shanker, Kathmandu (Meals: B)**

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**Day 14: Time at leisure. Transfer to airport for flight to London.**

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You have most of the day free to enjoy some final souvenir shopping or sightseeing, or to simply relax and enjoy the facilities at your hotel. Later in the afternoon there will be a group transfer to the airport for your overnight flight back to London.

**Overnight: In flight (Meals: B)**

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**Day 15: Arrive London.**

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## Our grading system

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Druk Path Trek is graded as a Moderate trekking holiday, as described below.

### **Moderate**

Holidays in this grade typically involve 5 to 10 days of walking or trekking. They will often venture into more remote country and can cross mountain passes. Altitudes though are still relatively low, going no higher than around 4,300m/14,000ft. Accommodation can include simple hotels, tea houses, lodges and camping.

## Trip altitude

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

## What the price includes

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

### What's included:

- ✓ An English-speaking Bhutanese leader
- ✓ Flights between Kathmandu and Paro and hotel/airport transfers
- ✓ Good quality hotel in Kathmandu, on a twin share, bed & breakfast basis
- ✓ In Bhutan, good standard hotel accommodation in main towns and best available hotels in outlying towns, on a twin share, full board basis
- ✓ 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
- ✓ Bhutan visa and Bhutan departure tax
- ✓ The use of a good quality down jacket and sleeping bag (when travelling to Bhutan via Kathmandu).
- ✓ All camping facilities (twin share tents) and all meals on trek
- ✓ Camp staff to carry out all camp work
- ✓ All road transport by private vehicles
- ✓ 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

### 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
- ✗ 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.

Our clients who are not given a free Mountain Kingdoms kit bag for their holiday (these are required for certain treks), will instead receive a free Mountain Kingdoms Water-to-Go bottle. These unique Water-to-Go bottles can also be purchased from us at a discounted rate. For further information about our campaign visit <https://www.mountainkingdoms.com/water-to-go-reusable-bottle-campaign>.

## Your accommodation

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Note: 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.



#### Hotel Shanker, Kathmandu

The Shanker is a 4\* heritage hotel situated just a 10-15 minute walk from the tourist area of Thamel. It has an outdoor swimming pool, a spa and a lovely garden, plus a choice of restaurants and bars. Rooms are large, elegant and well-equipped. The hotel is a converted royal palace with a fascinating history which in recent years has undergone a thorough and tasteful renovation.



#### 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.



#### Phuntso Pelri Hotel or Similar, Thimphu

Despite its somewhat dark entrance hall, this new hotel is very well appointed, with custom made Bhutanese wooden furniture and good sized rooms. During busy periods, especially during festivals, we may use the Jomolhari Hotel, the Kisa Hotel, Hotel Gakyil, Hotel Osel or the Amodhara Hotel. These are amongst the best tourist class hotels in Thimphu.



#### Zhingkhram Resort or Damchen Resort or Similar, Punakha

Overlooking Punakha Dzong, and only opened in 2016, the Zhingkhram Resort is one of the best hotels in Punakha. The well-proportioned, stylish rooms come complete with free Wi-Fi, minibars and coffee/tea making facilities as well as balconies giving picture-perfect views of the dzong and the surrounding hills and countryside.

Alternatively, the Damchen Resort is a newly renovated hotel sitting on the banks of the Puna Chhu River in the Punakha Valley. Rooms are clean, cosy and bright with good amenities, wooden furniture and nice decorative touches. The hotel is a short, easy walk from the small town of Khuruthang which has a selection of shops and restaurants.

### Camping

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 kerosene / gas lamp or candles 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 trek with just a light day sack.

## Meal arrangements

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Bed and Breakfast in Kathmandu, all meals included in hotels and on trek in Bhutan.

## Flight arrangements

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### **Flight inclusive from price**

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

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

### **Flight upgrades and regional Airports**

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

## Further information

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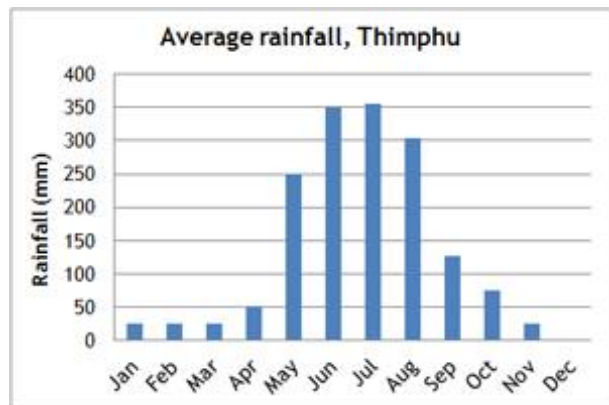
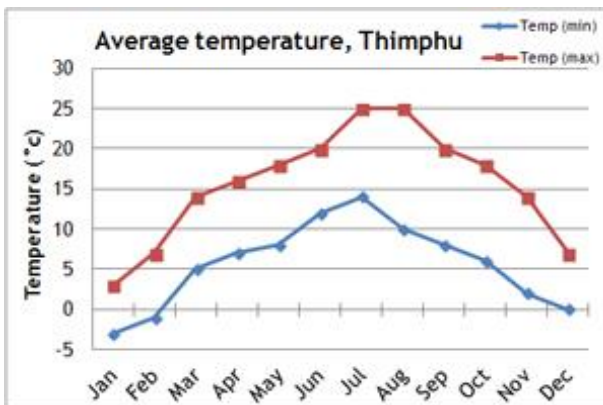
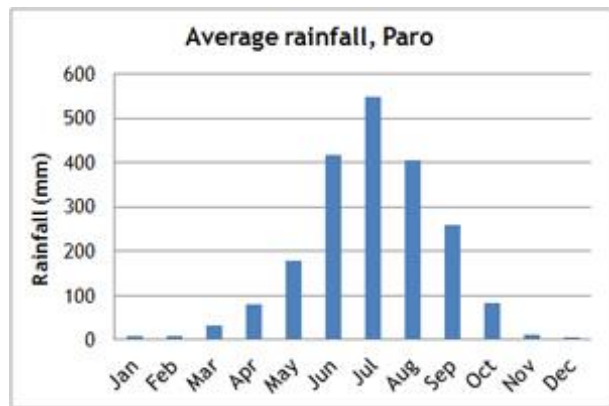
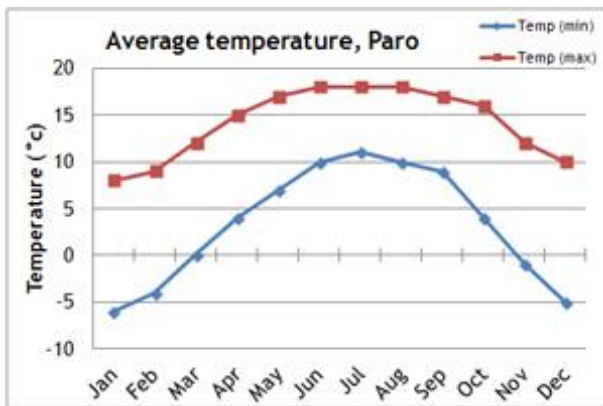
When we receive your booking, we send you a full Trip Dossier which contains details of any visas and vaccinations required, a suggested gear and clothing list and lots of useful information. If you do have queries at this initial stage do call us on 01453 844400 and we will be pleased to offer advice.

## The nature of adventure travel

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

# Climate information



# Extensions

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## Extending your holiday

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



### Hotel upgrades and extra nights in Bhutan

If you would like to upgrade your hotel during your holiday take a look at our selection of luxury properties in Bhutan such as Uma Paro or the Taj Tashi in Thimphu, you can download a leaflet from our website detailing all hotel options. We can also add additional nights in Bhutan at the start or end of your trip.

### 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.



### Bumthang Extension

A five night extension taking in the key sights of the cultural heartland of Bhutan. The Bumthang region is a centre for Bhutanese weaving and is home to some of the country's most spectacular temples and fortresses. It is also very scenic and offers ample opportunities for walks along its four main valleys.



### 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.

## Why book this holiday with Mountain Kingdoms?

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- We have created this trip for those seeking to not only explore the key cultural sights of Bhutan but also to enjoy a 'proper trek' in the mountains - giving an all-round introduction to the delights of the Thunder Dragon Kingdom.
- All of our treks are planned with the importance of good acclimatisation in mind. On this trip you will undertake an acclimatisation walk before the start of your trek.
- We provide a good quality down jacket, sleeping bag and liner to be used, free of charge, on trek. We also give you a high quality Mountain Kingdoms kit bag to use and keep.
- Your trek will be led by a knowledgeable, well-trained English-speaking leader 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
- 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. Steve and Seraphina Berry and Niki Morgan have all completed the Druk Path Trek and know Bhutan very well. They would be happy to answer any questions you may have.
- 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.
- 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 team for flight options, quotes and further information.

If we've tempted you to take your next holiday with us, we advise you to check availability and you can do this via our website: [www.mountainkingdoms.com](http://www.mountainkingdoms.com) or by calling the team on +44 (0)1453 844400. Bookings can be made online, by phone or by completing a booking form and returning it to us. We can also provisionally hold places if you need time to consider your options.



## What our clients say

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*An unforgettable experience on many levels that exceeded already high expectations. The cultural history is fascinating, monasteries and dzongs providing exquisite settings in which to learn about this unique country. The trek was extraordinary, taking us through forests humming with cicadas, up rivers, along ridges with views of the verdant valleys far below, boulders, lakes, a yak. All enhanced by our truly exceptional guide, Ugyen and his crew. So grateful to have made this trip.*  
-Penny, Sussex



*Bhutan only opened post-covid a week before our trip & we had waited over 2 years to be able to go so our expectations were very high & we were not disappointed. Amazing scenery & sights with the most hospitable people you're ever likely to meet. Our guide was superb & all the camp crew were great. The Druk Path trek may be a short trek but the altitude makes it more challenging as most of it is over 3500m, we were well looked after & the food was amazing on the camp.*  
-Ian & Lizzy, Notts



*I loved Bhutan - everything about it. Our guide, Ugyen was really excellent. The hotels were all good quality. The trek was good - the views and food were superb.*  
-Louise, London



*Thank you for allowing me the holiday of a lifetime. The two weeks felt like a month and every day was a treasure. The Druk Path Trek is a wonderful experience and the walks beforehand and sightseeing afterwards were well organised, brilliant experiences. I felt very safe and well cared for throughout this exciting program.*  
-Dr B, Cumbria



*This was the first experience of this kind for us so we were a little uncertain as to what the trek might be like. Our expectations were exceeded. The MK guide and his team took very good care of us. Travelling in an unknown country, we loved having the details arranged for us: travel, accommodation, flights, routing, meals. Our support team were exceptional.*  
-Mr & Mrs F, Canada

*Prior to the trek the MK staff in the UK were always most helpful. The attention to detail was excellent. As a solo traveller I was confident that there would be nothing to worry about. The trek was well planned and well graded. Hotels well chosen and comfortable.*  
-Mrs H, Cambridgeshire



*Bhutan and Druk path trek was fantastic. Bhutan is an incredible country and so lucky to have visited/experienced it before it changes. Once again many thanks for everything. We will be returning to Mountain Kingdoms for another adventure.*  
-Mrs F, Buckinghamshire

*Everything went smoothly on the trip as far as we were concerned. The trip leader dealt very well with different walking abilities and different approaches to trekking - some wanting to race and others wanting to walk slowly to appreciate the fabulous scenery. A delay of several hours to the flight from Paro to Kathmandu was turned into an advantage by the trip leader who organised a visit to a wonderful local Dzong under restoration and a weaving shop. Bhutan is fabulous. We cannot imagine anyone not wanting to return.*  
- S Brown, Cambridgeshire

# Mountain Kingdoms - distinctly different

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## Truly independent

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

## Value for money prices with an emphasis on quality

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

## Complete financial security

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

## No Surcharge Guarantee

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

## Award winning Responsible Tourism

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

## Genuine small group travel

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

## Loyalty Discount

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

## Booking your holiday - it couldn't be easier

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

## Comprehensive information

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



# RESPONSIBLE TOURISM STATEMENT

## CLIMATE EMERGENCY PLAN

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

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

### Carbon Offsetting

#### Already doing:

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

#### Will do:

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

### Reducing Carbon Emissions

#### Already doing:

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

#### Will do:

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

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

