



# DRUK PATH TREK – BHUTAN



high places  
TAILOR-MADE  
ADVENTURES



Fairly Easy

## TOUR INFORMATION

**ACTIVITY:** TREKKING & WALKING

**TOUR DURATION:** 12 DAYS

**MIN AGE FOR TRIPS:** 18+

## INCLUSIONS

- 7 NIGHTS HOTEL , 4 NIGHT CAMP
- DAILY BREAKFAST IN KATHMANDU
- ALL MEALS IN BHUTAN

*This information should answer some of your questions about the trip and give you a better idea of what we do day-to-day. It doesn't hope to answer everything. If you have any questions please get in touch.*

## Trip Highlights

- Fully Supported Trekking
- English Speaking Guide
- Himalayan panoramas
- Meet local village people
- warm-up hike to Taktsang Monastery
- Ancient mountain route between Paro and Thimphu

## India

A classic Bhutan trekking trip. This route follows the Druk Path Trail, the original mountain crossing between Paro and Thimpu. Also included in this classic trek is ridge top walking, high mountain lakes, and visits to high mountain monasteries. In clear weather, good views of snow covered Himalayan peaks can be seen.

The Druk Path Trek runs through rhododendron and pine forests, past high lakes and yak pastures. This trek also offers magnificent views of Chomolhari (7314m), and Gankar Punsum (7541m), Bhutan's highest peaks.

Additionally, we have time to savour the culture and traditions of this 'Land of the Thunder Dragon' taking some classic and some more esoteric sights including a hike up to the cliffhanging Taktsang Monastery.

## Itinerary

### DAY 1: ARRIVE KATHMANDU

Arrive Kathmandu, the capital of Nepal & Transfer to Hotel. The evening is free to relax. If you have time, you may wish to explore the nearby buzzy Thamel district.

**Accommodation:** Hotel

### DAY 2: FLY TO PARO; VISIT PARO DZONG AND MUSEUM

We fly to Paro today. If the weather is clear, we should get a fantastic view (from the left-hand side of the plane) of much of the eastern half of the Himalaya, including Everest, Nuptse, Lhotse, Makalu, Kanchenjunga and Chomolhari (Jhomolhari). After completing visa formalities in Paro, we transfer to our hotel. The Paro Valley is considered one of the most beautiful in Bhutan with blue pine-covered hills and attractive farmhouses among paddy fields – all dominated by the massive dzong (fort).

This afternoon, we aim to visit Paro Dzong and the national museum above it. Paro Dzong is one of the most impressive in Bhutan, and the finest example of Bhutanese architecture you will see. The inward-sloping walls form a massive structure that towers over the town. Built in the 17th century, it was one of the strongest and most important fortresses in Bhutan and was used on several occasions to defend the Paro Valley from invasions by Tibet. Formally the meeting hall for the national assembly, the dzong now houses a monastic school and district government offices. West of the dzong is a covered wooden bridge named Nyamal Zam, a reconstruction of the

original bridge, which was washed away in a flood in 1969. At the top of the hill, above the dzong, is the old watchtower known locally as Ta Dzong. Originally built in 1656, it was renovated in 1968 by King Jigme Dorje Wangchuk to house the National Museum. Damaged by the earthquake in 2011, the museum is now in a new building above the Ta Dzong. Inside the museum, there are collections of masks and thangkas (Tibetan Buddhist paintings).

**Please note, the itinerary above could change subject to flight timings, which are generally unpredictable.**

**Accommodation:** Resort / Hotel

### **DAY 3: WARM-UP HIKE TO TAKTSANG MONASTERY**

Today we have a warm-up hike to Taktsang Monastery. Also known as the Tiger's Nest Monastery, it is perched on the ledge of a cliff high above the Paro Valley. Partly destroyed by fire in 1998, it has now been completely restored to its former magnificence. We drive a short distance from the hotel and then hike up for about 1hr 30min to a viewpoint for classic views of the monastic buildings that cling impossibly to the cliff wall opposite. If you're feeling energetic, walk another 45 minutes to the actual monastery. The walk is good for acclimatisation and we recommend you wear trekking boots. Please note, there about 100 steps up and down. Returning to the hotel, we have time in the afternoon to explore Paro town.

**Accommodation:** Resort / Hotel (or similar)

**Meals included:** Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

**Distance covered:** 12km

**Ascent:** 2,165ft (660m)

**Descent:** 2,165ft (660m)

**Activity hours:** 6



**DAY 4: TREK TO JELE DZONG**

Today we start our trek. After breakfast, we have a short drive to about 8,595ft (2,620m), just above the ancient Ta Dzong watchtower. The first day's trekking is not long in terms of hours but it's uphill all the way and we gain quite a lot of height. From our start point, it is a gentle climb for about 1hr 30min on a jeep track to a prayer wall. The trail then narrows and we continue climbing on a rocky path (a little steeper now) through the forest. We have lunch in a clearing about an hour further on and then it's about an hour's walk in the afternoon to the Jele La (11,645ft/3,550m) and our camp just below the pass and Jele Dzong. If the weather is clear, we can see the Paro Valley below. If you're still keen to walk, trek further up the ridge from the Jele La to a ruined shepherd hut with a small Bon shrine inside.

**Accommodation:** Full-service camping (sleeping altitude: 11,580ft/3,530m)

**Meals included:** Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

**Distance covered:** 7km, **Ascent:** 3,130ft (954m), **Descent:** 230ft (70m), **Activity hours:** 4

**DAY 5: TREK TO JANGCHULAKA**

After breakfast, we walk five minutes back up to the main trail and continue climbing for about 30 minutes to Jele Dzong. If it is open, we can go inside the 14th-century dzong. Continuing up the ridge for a short way, we can see the Paro Valley way below and, if the weather is clear, we may even spot the peak of Chomolhari in the distance. The trail undulates through thick rhododendron forests this morning – keep your eyes peeled for colourful monal and blood pheasants. Lunch is in a forest clearing and we have a short walk in the afternoon to our camp at Rawna.

Please note, if there are other trekking groups around, we may have to camp at Jangchu Lakha (12,140ft/3,700m) or Tsokam (12,300ft/3,750m). All three campsites are close by, each in different forest clearings.

**Accommodation:** Full-service camping (sleeping altitude: 12,665ft/3,860m)

**Meals included:** Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

**Distance covered:** 12km, **Ascent:** 2,231ft (680m), **Descent:** 968ft (295m), **Activity hours:** 4



**DAY 6: FOLLOW THE RIDGE WITH SPECTACULAR VIEWS OF JICHDRAKE TO REACH JIMI LANG TSHO**

It's a long day today and probably the hardest walk of the trek. We climb steeply from camp on a narrow trail for about an hour to rejoin the main trail. We continue climbing through a rocky landscape littered with small rhododendron bushes. We reach a col at 13,367ft (4,073m) marked with prayer flags and then drop down a short way to a cave. The trail then climbs again quite steeply to a ridge at 13,385ft (4,080m), where we get spectacular mountain views on a clear day, including Chomolhari and Jichudrake. We have lunch on the ridge while enjoying the views and then continue a little further up the ridge to 13,520ft (4,120m). From here, we contour round a little and then drop steeply on a rocky trail to the shores of Jimi Lang Tscho, well known for its trout.

**Accommodation:** Full-service camping (sleeping altitude: 12,746ft/3,885m)

**Meals included:** Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

**Distance covered:** 6mi (10km),

**Ascent:** 2,060ft (628m)

**Descent:** 2,041ft (622m)

**Activity hours:** 7

**DAY 7: TREK TO LABANA**

We have another long but great day's walk with good mountain views. The trail climbs from camp along a rocky trail up to Janye Tscho Lake. Climbing even higher to a col at 13,615ft (4,150m), we then have a short descent to Simthokha Lake (13,420ft/4,090m), the highest lake on our trek. From here, the trail undulates all the way to our camp at Labana.

**Accommodation:** Full-service camping (sleeping altitude: 13,450ft/4,100m)

**Meals included:** Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

**Distance covered:** 6mi (9km)

**Ascent:** 2,323ft (708m)

**Descent:** 1,509ft (460m)

**Activity hours:** 7

**DAY 8: CROSS THE LABANA PASS AND DESCEND TO PHAJODING; TRANSFER TO THIMPHU**

The trail climbs gradually up to the Labana Pass, the highest point of this trek at 13,895ft (4,235m). The views get better and better and, on a clear day, we can see Gangar Punsum, Table Mountain and much of the Bhutan Himalaya. Way below is the Thimphu Valley. From the top, we traverse the hillside with great mountain views and descend towards Thimphu. There are a couple of small climbs to cols but the general direction is downhill. From the Phajoding Labsa chorten (shrine), we descend quite steeply to Phajoding Monastery for lunch. There are several temples here and a monastic school and the place is visited by many Bhutanese. We descend even further through forests of blue pine to the end of our trek at Motithang, just above Thimphu, the capital of Bhutan. We should reach our hotel by mid-afternoon. The evening is free to explore Thimphu.

**Accommodation:** Hotel

**Meals included:** Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

**Distance covered:** 7mi (11km)

**Ascent:** 771ft (235m)

**Descent:** 5,102ft (1,555m)

**Activity hours:** 5hr 30min to 6hr



### DAY 9: THIMPHU SIGHTSEEING

We spend the day visiting the most important sites in and around Thimphu, including the Memorial Chorten (built in 1974 to honour the memory of the third king, Jigme Dorji Wangchuk) and Buddha Point (a large Buddha statue on the hillside overlooking Thimphu). There are several museums in Thimphu and an art school, while the post office and market are also interesting. Above the town is a takin preserve. Your leader aims to show you as much as possible in the time available depending on opening times. In the late afternoon, we drive to Paro (one-hour drive). Alternatively for Festival Departure (Thimphu Thechu 2-3 October), we spend the day at Festival ground.

**Accommodation:** Resort / Hotel

**Meals included:** Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

### DAY 10: FLY TO KATHMANDU

Fly back to Kathmandu. The rest of the day is free to explore the temples and markets of the Nepalese capital or go shopping. There are several sightseeing tours available (ask the Exodus representative in Kathmandu) or you may want to explore on your own. You could visit the monkey temple at Swayambhunath, the largest Hindu temple in Nepal at Pashupatinath, or one of the largest Buddhist stupas in Asia at Boudhanath. Once you've had your fill of culture, the colourful markets of Thamel are great for souvenir hunting.

**Accommodation:** Hotel

**Meals included:** Breakfast

**DAY 11: In Kathmandu**

Optional sightseeing (To be paid locally)

**Option 01:** Everest Flight

**Option 02:** Sightseeing Tour

Drive to Bhaktapur and explore Durbar Square. Drive up to Changu Narayan temple and Nagarkot for mountain views. You can do Nagarkot for sunrise.

**Accommodation:** Hotel

**DAY 12: DEPARTURE TRANSFER TO KATHMANDU AIRPORT**

Hope for final Himalayan views from the plane. Depart Kathmandu for onwards journey.

**Meals included:** Breakfast

## On Trek

We are supported by horses and a cooking and camp team. Tents, food and baggage accompany us and we carry only what we need for the day: camera, water bottle, spare clothing, waterproofs etc. A typical day starts early with a steaming mug of tea. Packing is followed by breakfast in the mess tent and we are usually away early in order to catch the best weather. We stop for a picnic lunch and usually arrive in camp by mid afternoon. Dinner is usually about 7pm and 'trekkers bedtime' is seldom later than 9pm.

## Accommodation

Outside of the trek we stay in comfortable, traditional hotels with ensuite rooms. Whilst trekking we camp in 2 person tents.

## Food

Whilst in Bhutan, all meals are included. In towns you will be asked to pay for your own drinks. Note that in Bhutan there are very few 'extras' to pay for.

## Health and Hygiene

We have an excellent record of staying fit and well, and the local food is delicious. The key seems to be

- Avoid drinking any untreated water, even when cleaning your teeth
- Be scrupulous about washing your hands before eating

## Altitude

Above 3000m, the air is thinner, the pressure lower and there is less oxygen available in the atmosphere. Acclimatisation is the process by which the body adapts to these conditions. The key to acclimatisation is a good itinerary with a gradual initial height gain, walking at a slow and steady pace, and increasing fluid intake – drinking at least 4 litres a day is advisable above 3000m. Many people have some minor side effects from altitude, such as headache, nausea or general lassitude. The optional use of 'Diamox' has proved useful for some people, as this drug can reduce these symptoms. You will be given more information on 'Diamox' with your Final Information, between 8 and 10 weeks before departure.

## Transport

Whilst in Bhutan we travel by private bus or jeep

## Climate

In April/May and October/November, the weather is often fine, and when the sun shines it can be very hot. Mornings are often clear, with cloud coming in later in the day. Rain is possible, likely to fall as snow on the high passes. Temperatures may drop below freezing at the high camps.

## Visas

All visitors to Bhutan must have a visa approved prior to arriving in the kingdom, which must be paid for in advance (currently US\$40, not included in trip cost). High Places will make the application on your behalf.

## Tipping *Takstang Monastery*

There is a custom to tip the crew at the end of the trek. Photo Louise Ready Last year approx US\$100-120pp covered all tips. You may also have some outdoor gear that you are willing to donate at the end of the trek – eg woollen socks are difficult for locals to obtain and are always well received.

