

HIGHLIGHTS TOUR OF BHUTAN



Tiger's nest monastery (Taktsang)

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HIGHLIGHTS

-) Our Highlights Tour of Bhutan is a perfect introduction to this fascinating country. You have time to explore Paro, Thimphu and Punakha.
-) We can also arranged private departure to coincide with one of the main festivals (Tsechus). Tsechus are annual religious Bhutanese festivals of Drukpa Buddhism held in each district or dzongkhag of Bhutan.
-) There are superb views of the Himalaya from Druk Air flight to and from Paro and also on a clear day from Dochu La pass between Thimphu and Punakha.
-) Throughout this itinerary you stay at mid-level hotels classified as three star.
-) There is no day to day trekking in this itinerary however there are opportunities for day walks while in Paro, Thimphu and Bumthang.
-) You have the option to join one of our fixed date departures or to have a private tour tailored to dates that suit you.
-) The Mountain Company has been operating in Bhutan for many years. Our groups have successfully completed one of the most challenging treks in Himalaya called Lunana Snowman in Bhutan on ten previous occasions.

“Your organisation was superb & our trip itself exceeded our expectations by miles!” **John Potter (UK)**

“Everything with the organisation was first class; you really run a well oiled machine!” **Gordon and Lynda Blair (UK)**



HIGHLIGHTS TOUR OF BHUTAN

Total number of days	7 days
Grade	Tours
Accommodation	6 nights hotel
Minimum group size	2
2019 price from Paro	£1,295 (US\$1,750 or €1,495) per person
2020 price from Paro	£1,295 (US\$1,750 or €1,495) per person
Dates	October 12 th to 23 rd 2019 November 9 th to 20 th 2019 December 7 th to 18 th 2019 March 14 th to 25 th 2020 April 4 th to 15 th 2020 October 10 th to 21 st 2020 November 7 th to 18 th 2020 December 5 th to 16 th 2020

Private tailored made tours are also available for dates that suit you.



THE FOLLOWING IS INCLUDED IN THE PRICE OF THE TRIP

-) Bhutan visa.
-) All transfers including airport collections in Paro.
-) Twin share or double rooms at all places on the itinerary.
-) All meals and mineral water included while in Bhutan.
-) All tour arrangements including Bhutanese guide (English speaking trained and licensed by the Department of Tourism).
-) Private vehicle and driver.
-) All entry fees to museums and sites where applicable.
-) Full financial protection for all monies paid to us through our membership of Association of Bonded Travel Operators Trust (our ABTOT membership number is 5365) and having an Air Travel Organiser's Licence (our ATOL number is 10921).
-) Pre departure support and advice from The Mountain Company by email, phone or face to face meetings in London. After booking with us we will send our comprehensive "Bhutan Pre Trip Information" notes.

THE FOLLOWING SINGLE SUPPLEMENT IS AVAILABLE:

Single room supplement in Bhutan £TBC (US\$TBC)

THE FOLLOWING IS NOT INCLUDED IN THE PRICE OF THE TRIP

-) International flight to/from Paro.
-) Travel insurance.
-) Use of bar and beverages in hotel, laundry, telephone calls or internet and personal shopping.



-) Tips to your guide and driver.
-) Other items not listed in “What is included”.

DETAILED ITINERARY

Day 1. Fly to Paro, drive to Thimphu- 1 hour driving

On a clear day the flight to Paro is sensational with views of the Himalaya to the north. Upon arrival our guide will receive you at the airport and drive you through the hamlets of Paro along the riverside to Thimphu the capital city of Bhutan. You will immediately notice the unique architecture and Bhutanese lifestyle with many people wearing traditional clothes (men wear the ‘Gho’ and women ‘Kira’).

The drive from Paro to Thimphu takes about one hour, on reaching Thimphu you will check into the hotel. You can discuss with your guide what to do for rest of the day depending on your arrival time. **Overnight at hotel in Thimphu (Meals: L,D).**

Day 2. Sightseeing in Thimphu.

You can discuss with your guide where you would like to visit in and around Thimphu. There are several places to see and the most popular are the Thimphu Dzong, Takin sanctuary (Takin is the national animal of Bhutan with the head of a goat and body of a bull), folk heritage museum, the textile weaving center and the Institute of Arts and Crafts. **Overnight at hotel in Thimphu (Meals: B,L,D).**

Day 3. Drive to Punakha- 3 hours driving.

Today we leave for Punakha which is the old winter capital of Bhutan. En route we drive over the Dochu La pass at an altitude of 3,050m known as one of the finest viewpoints of Eastern Himalaya. On a clear day you can see the peaks Masangang, Tsendagang, Terigang and Gangkar Punsum (the highest unclimbed mountain in the world).

On arrival to Dochu La you can get out of the car to admire the view and walk around the 108 chortens marking the summit of the pass. We then descend through beautiful forest into the Punakha Valley at an altitude of 1,350m.

Before reaching Punakha we visit Chimi Lhakang also known as the fertility temple of Bhutan. Lama Drukpa Kunley, who was a highly unorthodox Buddhist saint,



deeds form the basis of many local legends blesses the monastery. The temple is fondly regarded by local families as a potent fertility shrine. It takes about 20 minutes to walk across rice fields to reach the temple.

On the way to your hotel we drive past Punakha Dzong, this is an impressive building and is located at the confluence of the Pho Chhu (father) and Mo Chhu (mother) rivers in the Punakha valley. If we have time we will visit the Dzong if not we will go tomorrow. This dzong is the second largest in Bhutan and was constructed by Ngawang Namgyal, 1st Zhabdrung Rinpoche, in 1637-38 so it is also the second oldest. **Overnight at hotel in Punakha (Meals: B,L,D).**

Day 4. Sightseeing in Punakha.

There are a number of options for more places to explore in Punakha valley. For a good view of the valley you can walk up to Khamsum Yuelley Namgyal chorten perched on a hill above Mo Chhu river. It takes about 45 minutes to walk up to the chorten after crossing the suspension bridge over the river. **Overnight at hotel in Punakha (Meals: B,L,D).**

Day 5. Drive to Paro- 4 hours driving.

After breakfast there is a long climb to Dochu La where there is superb view of the Himalayas including Gangkar Punsum, from the pass the road descends to Thimphu. We continue our drive for a further hour to Paro. **Overnight at hotel in Paro (Meals: B,L,D).**

Day 6. Morning walk to Taktsang monastery (Tiger's Nest)- 3 to 4 hours walking.

After breakfast we will organise an optional walk up to the Taktsang monastery known as the "Tiger's Nest". It takes about 3 to 4 hours to walk through pine forest and up to the monastery perched on a cliff overlooking the valley. Lunch will be served in the viewpoint cafeteria.

We will also arrange sightseeing where we visit Kichu monastery which is one of the oldest monasteries in Bhutan built in the 7th century by the Tibetan King Songsten Genpo who built 108 monasteries around the region. Also visit the Drugyal Dzong at the end of the valley. **Overnight at hotel in Paro (Meals: B,L,D).**

Day 7. Fly back home.

Transfers to Paro airport for flights back home.



YOUR COMPLETE FINANCIAL PROTECTION

The Mountain Trekking Company Ltd (trading as The Mountain Company) is a fully licensed and bonded tour operator. For flight inclusive packages sold to UK residents these will be covered by our Air Travel Organisers Licence (our ATOL number is 10921). For packages that do not include flights and for packages sold to customers outside of the UK your financial protection is covered by our membership of Association of Bonded Travel Organisers' Trust ("ABTOT"). Our ABTOT membership number is 5365.



Our membership of these organisations means that you can book with us in complete confidence that all monies paid to us for trips are protected.

THE ASSOCIATION OF INDEPENDENT TOUR OPERATORS ("AITO")

The Mountain Company is a member of the Association of Independent Tour Operators (AITO) and we have agreed to abide by the terms of the AITO Quality Charter.

AITO is the Association for independent and specialist holiday companies. Our member companies, usually owner-managed, strive to create overseas holidays with high levels of professionalism and a shared concern for quality and personal

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service. The Association encourages the highest standards in all aspects of tour operating. For more information please take a look at <http://www.aito.com/>

ETHICAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

The Mountain Company is committed to adopting a responsible attitude to the areas we visit. We are guests of the communities visited and with some thought and care we can ensure that everyone benefits from the experience. We have developed a Responsible Tourism policy which aims to ensure that The Mountain Company and its clients act in a way that is socially, environmentally and culturally sound.

In 2017 the Association of Independent Tour Operators (AITO) launched Project PROTECT in recognition of the important role that destinations play in the future of the travel industry. The aim of this project is to encourage sustainable tourism and to nurture the destinations for tomorrow's travellers. The PROTECT acronym stands for People / Resources / Outreach / Tourism / Environment / Conservation / Tomorrow.

This project is led by Professor Xavier Font of the University of Surrey and each AITO member has to publish an annual pledge and report back at the end of the year on how they got along. To see The Mountain Company's Project PROTECT pledge for 2017 please take a look at our blog:

<http://themountaincompany.blogspot.co.uk/2017/06/the-mountain-company-pledge-for-aito.html>



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We work closely with the International Porter Protection Group and abide by their five guidelines for porter protection, their website is at www.ippg.net. We also have partnered with Kathmandu Environmental Education Project in Nepal, their website is at www.keepnepal.org

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

ACCOMMODATION IN BHUTAN

Tourist accommodation in Bhutan is comfortable but can be fairly basic especially as you travel further east. Most hotels in the main tourist destinations have rooms with private bathrooms, hot water (at least at some stage during the day), telephone and electricity. Plumbing is not always up to the standard you may be used to and there are no hotels with central heating although heaters of some sort will generally be provided.

Tourist hotels tend to provide meals buffet-style which gives you the opportunity to try a variety of Bhutanese dishes. In the larger hotels a la carte service is also available, although they do not always have everything on the menu. Thimphu has a pizza restaurant (the Seasons) and there is a good café in the centre of Thimphu (near the Swiss bakery) called the Art Café which serves sandwiches, cake and filter coffee.

Please note that there is currently a shortage of hotel accommodation in Bhutan especially during festivals or the peak trekking season of October. We reserve rooms at all hotels in advance but the bookings are never certain until the group check in on the day. Bearing this in mind we will reserve rooms in the following hotels:

Paro: Olathang



Thimphu: Peaceful Resort, Hotel Pedling or Hotel Wangchuk.

Punakha: Meriphuensum Resort or Damchen Resort

Bumthang: Swiss Guesthouse, Hotel Mipham, Garden Hotel or River Lodge

Phobjikha: Dewachen Hotel.

VISA REQUIREMENTS

Bhutan visa

The Mountain Company team will obtain your Bhutan visa and this cost is included in the package. We will send you a copy of the confirmation from the Bhutanese Department of Tourism showing that your visa has been authorised. Your actual visa will be issued on arrival at Paro.

VACCINATION

You should obtain professional advice from a travel clinic or your local GP about which vaccinations to have before you arrive in Bhutan.

FLIGHTS

The Mountain Company does not book international flights for our holidays. Instead all package prices are Land Only with services starting from arrival to the destination country.

If you would like help arranging flights then we suggest you contact our partner travel agent, StudentUniverse (ATOL registered) a specialist division of the Flight Centre Travel Group ---> [Get an online quote](#)

INSURANCE

Travel insurance for any Mountain Company itinerary is a condition of booking a holiday. At the very least you should have emergency medical and repatriation

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insurance which must include the cost of mountain rescue. Cancellation insurance is strongly recommended as all deposits paid to The Mountain Company are non-refundable.

It is important for you to understand that ultimately the burden of any expense incurred in evacuation and repatriation procedures will be borne by you and that it is your responsibility to pay any costs incurred in respect of any evacuation or for medical treatment. You should be fully aware of the implications involved in arranging your own travel insurance and understand the limitations and exclusions of your policy.

You should be aware that under certain circumstances, The Mountain Company leader (or our local agent, if no western leader) might instigate rescue proceedings via helicopter (or any other means necessary) in situations of medical emergency without first contacting your insurance company for their approval.

The Mountain Company has arranged travel insurance for European Union residents with the specialist insurance broker **Campbell Irvine**. Their insurance policy will cover you for most of the trips in our portfolio.

CAMPBELL IRVINE
DIRECT TRAVEL INSURANCE

To apply for an online quote through [Campbell Irvine's Direct Travel Insurance](#) website. Should you have any questions regarding the terms and conditions of cover please contact Campbell Irvine on 0207 938 1734 or email info@campbellirvine.com

We have [listed on TMC website a comprehensive list of specialist adventure travel insurers](#) that our trekkers from UK, EU and Internationally based have used in the past. Please carefully check their Terms & Conditions prior to purchase. These companies are not necessarily recommended by us so it is your responsibility to ensure you have appropriate coverage.



ETHICS AND ETIQUETTE IN BHUTAN

The Royal Government of Bhutan has a strict policy to preserve its cultural and traditional values.

-) All lakes in Bhutan are believed to be inhabited by spirits therefore no fishing, swimming or throwing stones is permitted.
-) Do not disturb or feed wildlife or do anything to destroy their natural habitat.
-) Do not use detergent in or near rivers, for personal washing use biodegradable soap at least 50m from any watercourse.
-) Do not give sweets, pens or gifts to children or distribute medicine to villagers (there is a network of Basic Health Units operated by Bhutan Government throughout the country).
-) Do not purchase local household items or religious artefacts from villagers, please note that antiques may not be taken out of the country.
-) Please respect the culture and traditions of local people (trek crew, villagers or pack animal owners).

DRESS CODE AND CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR ENTERING DZONGS & MONASTERIES

Depending on whom you talk to the exact dress code for dzongs, monasteries and lhakhangs can differ. Use the details below to assist with your planning and we recommend you discuss each days visits with your guide to reconfirm appropriate attire.

-) Go for smart casual look such as long sleeved shirt with collar i.e no T shirts or short sleeved shirts.
-) Full length trousers or long skirts (ankles must be covered) i.e no shorts, $\frac{3}{4}$ length trousers or short skirts.
-) Shoes with socks covering ankles i.e no sandals or slippers.

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-) No hats and umbrellas allowed.
-) Photographs are only allowed to be taken in the courtyard of most monasteries.
-) Walking around Buddhist temples or stupas is traditionally done clockwise.
-) Turn off your mobile/ cell phone and talk in a quiet tone.
-) It is customary to give a small donation when visiting a monastery.

SUGGESTED READING

-) Pocket Guide to the Birds of Bhutan: Grimmett R, Inskipp C & T.
-) Two and Two Halves to Bhutan: Peter Steele
-) Bhutan – Land of the Peaceful Dragon: G.N. Mehra
-) Bhutan, An Illustrated Guide: Françoise Pommaret, Odyssey Guides
-) Bhutan, Land of the Thunder Dragon: E.T. Owen, London 1998

APPENDIX



SUGGESTED PACKING LIST

Footwear:

-) Comfortable shoes i.e trail shoes or trainers.
-) Flip flops or sandals.

Travel clothes. You will need clothing as follows:

-) Lightweight waterproof jacket.
-) Casual long sleeved shirt with collar (for visits to Dzongs).
-) T shirts.
-) Lightweight trousers.
-) Micro fleece.
-) Socks and underwear etc.
-) Swimwear.

Please carefully read Ethics and Etiquette paragraph for dress code when visiting Dzongs.

Headwear:

-) Sun hat.
-) Bandana or face mask (eg. Buff Headwear check out <http://www.buffwear.com>)
-) Sunglasses.

Personal Equipment:

-) Toiletry bag include toilet paper, soap, towel, toothbrush, etc.
-) Headtorch. Useful during power cuts.
-) Backpack for day trips. Recommended size is 15 to 20 litres.
-) Water bottle.
-) Sunscreen and lipsalve with a high SPF.



-) Insect repellent.
-) Books, ipod and cards etc.
-) Power adapter.
-) Umbrella.
-) Camera with spare batteries and memory cards.
-) Insurance certificate.
-) Hand sanitizer. We suggest you keep this in your day pack.
-) Duffle bag (or backpack) for your personal gear. Bring a small combination padlock to secure the bag.

Personal first aid kit:

Please bring personal medications and other items you might use regularly such as:

-) Any personal medications.
-) Insect repellent.
-) Plasters and blister treatment (Compeed patches are the best).
-) Anti-septic cream.
-) Analgesics (paracetamol, ibuprofen and aspirin).
-) Throat lozenges.
-) Diarrhoea treatment (Immodium) and oral rehydration salts (Dioralyte).
-) Antihistamine cream and tablets (Cetirizine or loratidine)
-) Multi vitamin tablets.