

Druk Path



COUNTRIES VISITED: **BHUTAN**

TRIP TYPE: Trekking
TRIP GRADE: Moderate
TRIP STYLE: Camping

TRIP LEADER: Local Leader
GROUP SIZE: 2 - 10 people
NEXT DEPARTURE: 01 Oct 2021

Druk Path is a wonderful short trek in Bhutan Himalaya starting from Paro and ending in Thimphu. You will experience the unique culture of Bhutan and see incredible mountain views.

The Druk Path trek is only five days of walking as we travel on the high trail from Paro to Thimphu. The Druk Path trek connects these towns by following the old trading route.

We start by hiking along a quiet forest trail and through alpine yak pastures. Once above the tree line we see the spectacular view of the Himalaya along the Bhutan and Tibet border. We see several Himalayan giants from this trek. Mount Chomolhari is at an altitude of 7,326m) and Jitchu Drake is at an elevation of 6,662m. Towards the East we also see the highest unclimbed peak in the world, this is Gangkar Punsum at a height of 7,570m.

This is a camping style trek where you sleep in a tent for every night of the hike. All treks in Bhutan are camping as there are no lodges like in Nepal. Other camping treks in Bhutan include [Kitiphu Ridge](#) and [Laya Gasa](#) known as Half Snowman.

We include several days in this itinerary visiting Bhutan's main cultural sites. Before the trek you will explore Paro Valley with a walk to Taktsang or 'Tiger's Nest' monastery. After the trek we explore Thimphu and Punakha's 17th century Dzong.

REASONS TO CHOOSE US

- We are Himalayan trekking specialists and we have been operating trips in Bhutan for many years. [Roland Hunter](#), owner and founder of The Mountain Company, has modified this itinerary based on his first-hand experience of this region.
- Read our [AITO Traveller Reviews for Druk Path](#). Our approach to organising trips in the Himalayas has helped The Mountain Company win awards such as 2018 Gold Award as AITO Tour Operator of the Year and 2015 Bronze Award as AITO Tour Operator of the Year. Read more about our [Testimonials and Awards](#).
- The Mountain Company will receive bespoke weather forecasts for this region from EverestWeather.com and from our in house forecasting throughout the duration of this trek.
- We send a Thuraya satellite phone on all of our treks in Bhutan. It is essential for your guide to have reliable communications with us for logistics, planning and group safety.
- We bring a comprehensive first aid kit plus high altitude medicine, antibiotics and other medicines.
- Pre trip support will be given by our Operations team with first hand knowledge of Druk Path trek.

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- All internal transport and transfers including airport collections in Paro.
- Twin share rooms at hotels while in Bhutan.
- All meals included while in Bhutan.
- Twin share tents while on trek.
- Trekking arrangements. Including permits and fees, tents, Bhutanese guides, pack animals and cooks.
- Weather forecasts from EverestWeather.com.
- Thuraya satellite phones for organising logistics and medical evacuations. It can also be also used for personal calls at extra cost.
- Rubberised luggage tag posted to you before departure
- Full financial protection. Our Air Travel Organiser's Licence (ATOL) number is 10921. Our Association of Bonded Travel Operators Trust (ABTOT) membership number is 5365).
- Pre departure support and advice from The Mountain Company. We are available by email, phone or face to face meetings.

WHAT'S NOT INCLUDED

- International flight to/from Paro (flying from Bangkok, Singapore, Kathmandu and Delhi).
- Travel & trekking insurance.
- Personal clothing & equipment please see Appendix for suggested kit list.
- Tips.
- Other items not listed in "What is included".

ITINERARY

DAY 1: FLY TO PARO (2,280M)

Arrive in Paro

Lunch and Dinner

Hotel Olathang in Paro

We will meet you on arrival at Paro airport and drive you to the hotel. When the whole group has arrived we will give a full briefing to get you ready for the trek. Later on we will organise a trip into Paro to change money at the bank and to look around the town. Afterwards we arrange sightseeing tour to visit Paro Dzong and the National museum.

Paro is Bhutan's second largest town. The valley also contains significant religious and historic sites in the

country. It also has as well as Bhutan's only international airport.

DAY 2: MORNING WALK TO TAKTSANG MONASTERY (TIGER'S NEST)

Walking for 9km (4 hours)

Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Hotel Olathang in Paro

After breakfast we organise a walk up to the Taktsang monastery known as the "Tiger's Nest". The hike up to the monastery through pine forest takes about 2 to 3 hours. This is a good opportunity to stretch your legs after your travels to Bhutan. In the afternoon we will visit more of the important sites of the Paro valley and have time to explore the town.

DAY 3: TREK TO JELE DZONG (3,400M)

Walking 7km (4 to 5 hours)

Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Camping

We drive to the road head at the Ta-Dzong National Museum which is the old watchtower above Paro Dzong. The trek starts along a jeep track before turning off onto a trail and after 1 ½ hours we pass a mani wall at Damche Gom. We continue the climb through blue pine forest. After a further hour we arrive at a clearing in the forest where we usually have lunch. Afterwards we walk for an hour through rhododendron and yak pastures to Jele La. Our camp for tonight is a short walk way down on the other side of the pass.

DAY 4: TREK TO TSHOKAM (3,950M)

Walking 7.5km (4 hours)

Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Camping

This morning we start with a climb through rhododendron forest back up to Jele La. We walk along the ridge to Jele Dzong and we will visit the monastery. The view down to the Paro Valley is superb and we can see Mount Chomolhari. We follow the ridge through a forest of blue pine and rhododendron. After a while we arrived at the clearing at Jangchu Lakha. We continue further along the trail for ½ hour to our camp at Tshokam.

DAY 5: TREK TO JANA TSHO (3,950M)

Walking 10km (6 to 7 hours)

Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Camping

From camp we take the high trail rather than the alternative trail following the valley up to Jana Tsho. After climbing up to the Jangchu La at 4,180m, there are superb views from the pass of Mount Chomolhari. After following the ridge for an hour we descend to the beautiful lake at Jimi Lang Tsho. After a break to enjoy the area we ascend up through rhododendron for a further 1 ½ hours to our camp at Jana Tsho.

DAY 6: TREK TO PHAJODING GOMPA (3,700M)

Walking 8.5km (5 hours)

Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Camping

After breakfast we ascend on a stone path towards Simkotra La. We then continue along a trail above Simkotra Tsho. Today there are seven minor passes to cross. From the fifth pass, called Thujedraj, we can see Mount Gangkar Puensum. By scrambling up a small rocky hill to the left of the pass we can see a panoramic view of the Bhutan Himalaya. The final pass is Dochu La where you can see down into the Thimphu valley. There is a steep descent to Phajoding monastery where we camp for the night.

DAY 7: TREK TO THIMPU (2,320M)

Walking 4km (3 hours)

Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Gyelsa Boutique Inn in Thimphu

Drive to Thimphu (1/2 hour)

The trail from the camp is downhill all the way to Thimphu. We walk through blue pine forest. At the road head we meet our vehicles and it is not too far to drive into town.

In the afternoon we have time to explore Thimphu with your guide. We visit the Tashichho Dzong and the large Shakyamuni Buddha statue overlooking town. It is also worth taking time to explore the town centre. We can see the Clock Tower square and Changlimithang Stadium. There are lots of shops, restaurants and cafes.

DAY 8: DRIVE TO PUNAKHA OVER DOCHU LA (3,050M)

Drive to Punakha (4 hours)

Sightseeing in Punakha

Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Meri Puensum Resort

Today we drive to Punakha which is the old winter capital of Bhutan. On the way we drive over the Dochu La pass at an altitude of 3,050m. This is one of the finest viewpoints of Eastern Himalaya. On a clear day you can see a panorama of the Bhutan Himalaya. We can see Mount Masangang, Tsendagang, Terigang

and Gangkar Punsum plus many others. On arrival at Dochu La we get out of the car to admire the view. We will walk around the 108 chortens marking the top. From the pass we drive down through beautiful forest into the Punakha Valley at an altitude of 1,350m.

Before reaching Punakha we visit Chimi Lhakang. This is also known as the fertility temple of Bhutan or the Divine Madman's monastery. Lama Drukpa Kunley was an unorthodox Buddhist saint. It takes about 20 minutes to walk across rice fields to reach the temple. Afterwards we drive to our hotel and check in for the night.

DAY 9: DRIVE BACK TO THIMPHU

Sightseeing in Punakha

Drive to Thimphu (4 hours)

Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Gyelsa Boutique Inn in Thimphu

After breakfast we make the short drive to Punakha where we visit the Dzong. This is an impressive building and located at the confluence of the Pho Chhu and Mo Chhu rivers. The Punakha dzong is the second largest in Bhutan. Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal constructed this in the 17th Century.

After your visit to the Dzong and seeing the beautiful Punakha valley we drive back to Thimphu.

DAY 10: FLY BACK HOME

Fly back home

Breakfast

Transfer to Paro airport for flight back home.

DATES & PRICES

2021

Dates	Trip Leader	Price	Single Supplement: Room/Tent	Availability
01 Oct 2021 to 10 Oct 2021	Local Leader	US\$2,850pp	US\$200pp / US\$125pp	2 Left to Guarantee
29 Oct 2021 to 07 Nov 2021	Local Leader	US\$2,850pp	US\$200pp / US\$125pp	2 Left to Guarantee
19 Nov 2021 to 28 Nov 2021	Local Leader	US\$2,850pp	US\$200pp / US\$125pp	2 Left to Guarantee

2022

Dates	Trip Leader	Price	Single Supplement: Room/Tent	Availability
08 Apr 2022 to 17 Apr 2022	Local Leader	US\$2,850pp	US\$200pp / US\$125pp	2 Left to Guarantee
07 Oct 2022 to 16 Oct 2022	Local Leader	US\$2,850pp	US\$200pp / US\$125pp	2 Left to Guarantee
28 Oct 2022 to 06 Nov 2022	Local Leader	US\$2,850pp	US\$200pp / US\$125pp	2 Left to Guarantee
18 Nov 2022 to 27 Nov 2022	Local Leader	US\$2,850pp	US\$200pp / US\$125pp	2 Left to Guarantee

2023

Dates	Trip Leader	Price	Single Supplement: Room/Tent	Availability
07 Apr 2023 to 16 Apr 2023	Local Leader	US\$2,850pp	US\$200pp / US\$125pp	2 Left to Guarantee

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

A Typical Day On Trek

TYPICAL DAY ON CAMPING TREK IN BHUTAN

We provide a comfortable experience on our camping style treks in Bhutan. Our team works hard to support you so that you can relax and enjoy the trek. We provide personal tents, mess tent, kitchen tent and toilet tent(s). The camp will be set up and dismantled by the trek crew. We bring along a cook and kitchen helpers to provide the meals.

The day starts with an early morning mug of tea brought to your tent by one of the trek crew. Before heading for breakfast you pack your overnight gear into your duffel bag. During breakfast the trek crew pack away the tents. The pony men load up the pack animals and set off on the trail. After breakfast, between 7am and 8am, we start walking.

The pace of the trek is moderate as there is plenty of time in the itinerary to reach the camp for tonight. There will be plenty of time to enjoy the scenery, take photos and explore the local villages. Lunch will be around midday at a spot by the side of the trail. After lunch we continue the walk and on most days we arrive to camp by mid afternoon. Some of the trek crew would have gone ahead of the group to set up camp and to put up the tents. On arrival to camp you will get a hot drink and biscuits. In the evening our cook will provide a three course meal in the mess tent around 6pm.

After supper the leaders will discuss the plan for the next day. Afterwards people might stay in the mess tent chatting about the day's events or playing cards. After a tiring day most people head to their tent quite early for the night. Tomorrow is likely to be very similar as today! The only difference is that if we are crossing a high pass or climbing to a summit we leave camp earlier in the morning.

Food provided on Camping Trek

FOOD PROVIDED ON CAMPING TREK IN BHUTAN

While on a camping style trek in Bhutan we provide tasty and nutritional food. We make sure there is more

than enough quantity to go around as trekkers will be hungry after a long day on the trail. Over the years we have worked on increasing the variety of the menus. We have expanded the list of ingredients provided to the cooks so they have more to work with. Also in 2015 we purchased two food dehydrators with a vacuum sealing machine. We dehydrate a large number of different vegetables in Paro before departure. This has transformed the quality of food especially on the longer treks to remote areas.

For breakfast we provide porridge or cereal, toast or chapatis and eggs. There will be hot drinks including tea, herbal teas, hot chocolate and coffee. We provide fresh coffee from our Bialetti Moka coffee machine.

For lunch we stop at a convenient spot with water at the side of the trail. In Bhutan the cooks prepare lunch after breakfast before leaving camp in the morning. One of the ponies carries the insulated "tiffin" containers to the lunch place. After lunch we have time to relax before starting to walk again in the afternoon.

On arrival at camp in the afternoon you have biscuits and a hot drink such as tea or coffee. Around 6pm we serve a three course meal in the mess tent. The starter is often soup with popcorn or poppadums. We have a range of main dishes and carbohydrates including rice, potatoes or pasta.

We cater for a variety of dietary requirements. Our meals are suitable for vegetarians. If there is a meat dish then we also provide vegetarian options as standard. During booking we find out if you have any dietary needs and agree upon meal plans before departure. If you have any questions about the food provided please get in touch with us to discuss further.

Communications

COMMUNICATIONS

We bring a Thuraya satellite phone for logistical, safety and personal use. Personal calls charged at £4 (US\$5 or €4.50) per minute and £2 (US\$3 €4.50) to send and receive SMS text.

Kit List

KIT LIST FOR DRUK PATH TREK

This is the mandatory kit list for the safety of everyone in the group and to ensure a successful trek. You must have the following items tailored for Druk Path trek. The group leader will check your gear in Paro before departure for the trek.

As a reminder, the weather on this trek will vary season to season and day to day as you ascend to higher elevations. At the start of the Autumn trek you are likely to experience rainy and muddy conditions. You will experience the coldest temperatures at Jana Tsho. Overnight lows here will be down to around -10 Celsius.

You should bring a rucksack or backpack for gear required during the day. Your pack should contain items such as warm clothes, jacket, camera, water bottles, personal first aid kit and snacks. **The weight limit is 5kg.** A pack animal will carry the rest of your personal equipment packed in a duffel or kit bag. **The weight limit for your duffel bag is 18kg.** Please mark your bag on the outside for easy identification.

It is not possible to buy trekking gear in Bhutan. You must arrive at the start of the trip with the right kit as per this list. Print the kit list and tick items off as you pack them then weigh your kit bag before you come on trek.

Footwear

- Walking Boots. A pair of water repellent boots with ankle support. Boots must be in good condition, the best approach is to get new boots and break in before the trek. Over the years we have had several boots fall apart so you should also bring trail shoes as a backup.
- Trail shoes. Used around camp and as a replacement if your walking boots fall apart!
- Sandals. Enclosed sandals are best to protect your feet during river crossings. Required for river crossings as well as two trekking poles.
- Walking socks.

Clothing

- Waterproof and Windproof jacket (with hood) and trousers (goretex or similar). For use if it rains or snows during the trek and in windy conditions.
- Trekking trousers. (eg. Mountain Hardwear Mesa V2 or The North Face Paramount Peak).
- Soft Shell Trousers.
- Long sleeve tops or shirts (not cotton).
- Micro fleece.
- Mid to heavyweight fleece or synthetic/ primaloft top.
- Sleeveless/ gilet or body warmer type fleece / synthetic top. This will help keep your core warm while not bulking when layering up. Gilet used in combination with base layers, other fleeces and down jacket. This provides the most warmth and insulation.
- Thermals or base layer for top & bottom (merino wool or synthetic).
- Fleece or synthetic leggings. Worn around the camp or added as a layer when the temperatures start to drop higher up.
- Medium weight down jacket.

Heads and Gloves

- Fleece gloves.
- Wool or fleece hat.
- Sun hat.
- Bandana or scarf. (eg. Buff Headwear)
- Headtorch. Bring extra batteries.
- Sunglasses. The lenses need to be Category 4 rated. They should have side protection or wraparound design.

Personal equipment

- Sleeping bag. Overnight lows down to -10 Celsius.
- Fleece or silk liner for your sleeping bag. A liner protects your sleeping bag from getting dirty. Also helps by adding extra insulation to keep you warm at night.
- Sleeping mat (eg. Thermarest). We do NOT provide mats on our treks in Bhutan.
- Day pack. Recommended size is around 30 litres. You need to have enough space to carry water bottles, camera, snacks and extra clothing. The pack should have a good waist belt. It is also a good idea to bring a rain cover to keep the contents dry.
- Stuff sacks for keeping your gear dry and organised. Or even better are fold dry bags such as from Exped.
- Two water bottles (Nalgene wide mouth bottles are the best). You may use a hydration pack lower down but the tube will freeze in the cold so ensure you still have 2 water bottles.
- Pee bottle. Recommended as means you do not have to get up to find the toilet tent at night! For men you can use an old water bottle. For women take a look at SheWee.
- Sunscreen and lipsalve with a high SPF.
- Water purification tablets (Pristine, Biox Aqua or Aqua Mira).
- Favourite snack food.
- Books and cards etc.
- Camera with spare batteries and memory cards.
- Insurance certificate.
- Earplugs (optional).
- Baby wipes (optional).
- Hand sanitizer. Keep this in your day pack for use after a toilet break during the trek or before eating any snacks. We provide sanitizer for use before meals.

Travelling

- Duffel bag for your personal gear on the trek (carried by a pack animal). Rugged and waterproof made of a plastic material. Size 100-120 litres. Eg. Mountain Equipment 100l or Rab 120l. Bring a small combination padlock to secure the bag.
- Travel clothes. You will need casual clothing for air travel days and time spent before/ after the trek.
- Toiletry bag with soap, travel towel, toothbrush etc. We provide toilet paper while on trek.

Personal first aid kit

We provide a [comprehensive group first aid kit](#). Please bring personal medications and other items you might use such as:

- Any personal medications.
- Blister treatment (Compeed patches are the best)
- Rehydration powder (eg Dioralyte).
- Analgesics (paracetamol, ibuprofen and aspirin).
- Plasters and zinc oxide tape.
- Throat lozenges.
- Diamox (helps with acclimatisation).

Threat and risk assessment

RISK ASSESSMENT FOR DRUK PATH

You should be aware trekking in a developing country involves a risk of personal injury or death. You must accept these risks and be responsible for your own actions and involvement. Adventure travel requires an open and flexible attitude. You may experience extreme conditions and unpredictable weather. There could be last minute changes to the itinerary beyond our control. The ability to work in a team is an important aspect of our trips.

We have performed a threat and risk assessment for our Druk Path trek. Our trips have a degree of risk. This is part of the attraction of adventure travel and why so many people choose to join this type of holiday. By identifying the hazards we assess the level of risk. We have control measures in place to reduce this happening or to reduce the impact.

Our risk assessment is available to clients on request. We have listed below a summary of the significant risks and hazards identified by us:

- Falls and trips resulting in physical injury eg. slipping on ice or falling off the path.
- Altitude illness including but not limited to AMS, HACE and HAPE.
- Getting lost or becoming separated from the group.
- Severe bad weather and conditions when camping.
- Climatic injuries (dehydration, sunburn, heat exhaustion, hypothermia or heat stroke).
- Crossing a river with no bridge resulting in drowning and/ or a fall.
- Rock fall and landslides.
- Snow and ice avalanches.
- Lightning strike.
- Wildlife, pack animals (e.g. donkeys or horses) or stray dogs. Pack animals can knock people off the path. Dogs can attack and bite. Discuss rabies vaccination with your doctor.
- Earthquake.
- Risk of fire in the hotel or lodge.
- Endemic local diseases. Discuss vaccinations with your doctor before departure.
- Physiological injury. Such as heart attack, appendicitis, hernia, toothache etc. in a remote area.
- Road traffic accidents.
- Contaminated food and/ or water.

This trip visits a remote area. You are away from the usual emergency services and medical facilities. Evacuation for a serious injury requiring hospitalisation could take up to several days. This delay could impede your ensuing recovery. Helicopters are the usual means of evacuation. They are not always available or hindered by poor weather and flying conditions.

Weather and conditions

WEATHER AND CONDITIONS FOR DRUK PATH TREK

Druk Path trek has a wide range of temperatures. This depends on the season, altitude and time of day. In the mountains between 2,000m and 3,500m the nights will be cool around 5 Celsius. During the day temperatures sometimes rise to 20 Celsius. At higher altitudes temperatures range from about 15 Celsius to -8 Celsius.

The trekking season in Bhutan is late September to May. October and November is generally recognised as having the best weather. Spring is a popular time of year with warmer weather than in Autumn. Also there is the advantage of seeing spring flowers and rhododendrons in bloom.

Cultural information

DRESS CODE AND CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR ENTERING DZONGS

It is important to follow the dress code for dzongs, monasteries and lhakhangs. Use the details below to assist with your planning for the trip. We understand when on trek you will have fewer smart clothes with you. Your guide will discuss each days visits with you 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.
- No hats and umbrellas allowed.
- Photographs are only allowed in the courtyard of most monasteries.
- Walk around Buddhist temples or stupas in a clockwise direction.
- Turn off your mobile/ cell phone and talk in a quiet tone.
- It is customary to give a small donation when visiting a monastery.

ETHICS AND ETIQUETTE IN BHUTAN

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

- Lakes in Bhutan are holy and inhabited by spirits. No fishing, swimming or throwing stones.
- 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 are Basic Health Units operated by Bhutan Government throughout the country.
- Do not buy local household items or religious artefacts from villagers. Antiques may not be taken out of the country.
- Please respect the culture and traditions of local people. This includes trek crew, villagers and pack animal owners.

ACCOMMODATION

HOTEL OLATHANG IN PARO



Hotel Olathang is set amidst 28 acres of blue pine forest on a hill overlooking Paro valley. This hotel is in traditional Bhutanese style.

There are 28 rooms with attached bathrooms and the cottages have an outdoor deck with chairs. There is a restaurant and bar in the main building. Other facilities include a spa and a traditional hot stone bath.

This was the first hotel built for tourists in Bhutan. Established in 1974 for the guests invited to the coronation of the Fourth King of Bhutan.

HOTEL MERI PUENSUM IN PUNAKHA



Hotel Meri Puensum is above Punakha with good views down to the river and valley below. This property is family owned and was one of the first hotels built in Punakha.

The rooms have attached bathrooms and are simple yet functional. Some of the rooms have balconies overlooking the valley. There is a restaurant serving Bhutanese, Indian and Chinese dishes. Most meals are a buffet style. The blocks of the hotel are set in an attractive garden.

GYELSA BOUTIQUE INN IN THIMPHU



Gyelsa Boutique Inn is a family-run hotel located in the centre of Thimphu city. It is within walking distance of the restaurants, cafes and shops of the largest city in Bhutan.

The hotel has 6 suites and 12 twin rooms. The furniture is made in Bhutan from Himalayan wood. Facilities include a restaurant, bar and café. Every room has wifi.

CAMPING IN BHUTAN



We use A frame tents in Bhutan. These sturdy tents work well with the conditions experienced in Bhutan. They are waterproof plus have ample headroom inside.

Notes downloaded on: 05-03-2021

