



9-DAY ADVENTURE

THE DRUK PATH

Bhutan

Often referred to as the 'Land of the Thunder Dragon', this tiny Himalayan Kingdom, nestled between India and the People's Republic of China in the Eastern Himalayas, is one of the most isolated nations on earth. Each part of Bhutan has its own historical, geographical, cultural and religious significance, and any visit to this beautiful and largely unspoiled setting will combine spectacular mountain terrain, ancient monasteries, rich flora and fauna, and a vibrant Buddhist culture.

The Druk Path trek is a four day trek, crossing the spectacular natural landscape between Paro and Thimphu. Our tour begins with a visit to the stunning Tiger's Nest Monastery, located high on the cliffside of the upper Paro valley. We then start our trek, a journey through rhododendron forests and alongside glacial lakes, against a backdrop of snow-capped mountains and dramatic valleys. Along the way you will discover more about the history of Bhutan through unspoilt villages, ancient lhakhangs and dzongs.

After completing the trek, we will include city tours of Thimphu and Punakha before returning to Paro.

TRIP HIGHLIGHTS

- Visit the breath-taking Tiger's Nest Monastery
- Trek through unspoilt wilderness
- Be immersed in the culture of this ancient Himalayan kingdom



ITINERARY

DAY 1

ARRIVAL

The Kandoo team will meet you at Paro airport and transfer you to your pre-trek hotel. Later in the afternoon there is the option to join a tour of the city. Once a watchtower, built to defend Rinpung Dzong during inter-valley wars of the 17th century, Ta Dzong was inaugurated as Bhutan's National Museum in 1968. It holds a fascinating collection of art, relics, religious thangka paintings and Bhutan's exquisite postage stamps. The museum's circular shape augments its varied collection which is displayed over several floors. Afterwards, we will take a walk down a hillside trail to visit Rinpung Dzong, which has a long and very interesting history. Built in 1646 by Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal, the first spiritual and temporal ruler of Bhutan, the Dzong houses the monastic body of Paro, the office of the Dzongda (district administrative head) and Thrimpon (judge) of Paro district. The approach to the Dzong is through a traditional covered bridge called Nemi Zam, which offers a good view of the architectural wonder of the Dzong as well as life around it. Later you will attend a pre-trek briefing with your Lead Guide to prepare you for the journey ahead.

Accommodation: **Hotel**

Meals included: **Lunch / Dinner**

DAY 2

EXCURSION TO TAKTSHANG LHAKHANG

In the morning we will take an excursion to Taktshang Lhakhang, commonly known as 'The Tiger's Nest Monastery'. Undoubtedly one of the most famous of Bhutan's monasteries, the Taktshang monastery is one of the most breath-taking temples in the world. This Buddhist place of worship is perched on a cliff-top at around 3,100m (10,000ft) above sea level. The main temple complex was built in 1692, and is considered to be one of the holiest for the Bhutanese people. Legend has it that Guru Rinpoche, an 8th-century Indian Buddhist master, arrived here on the back of a tigress and meditated at this monastery, thus the name 'Tiger's Nest'. The site has been recognized as a sacred place and is now visited by all Bhutanese at least once in their lifetime. On 19 April, 1998, a fire severely damaged the main structure of building but now this Bhutanese jewel has been restored to its original splendour.

After lunch we will visit the 7th century Kyichu Lhakhang, one of the 108 temples built in the Himalayas by Tibetan King, Songtsen Gampo. The building of this temple marks the introduction of Buddhism to Bhutan. We will then drive to Drukgyel Dzong, a ruined fortress where Bhutanese warriors fought Tibetan invaders centuries ago. In the early 1950s, Drukgyel Dzong was almost completely destroyed by fire. It is now listed in Bhutan's Tentative List for UNESCO inclusion. In 2016, the Prime Minister Lyonchen Tshering Tobgay, announced that the Dzong will be rebuilt and reinstated to its former glory. The snowy dome of sacred Chomolhari (7326m), 'the Bride of Kangchenjunga', can be seen in all her glory from the approach road to the Dzong. After our tours we will return to our hotel in Paro.

DAY 3

PARO TO JANGCHULAKHA

Today our trek begins with a short climb up to Jele Dzong on a trail that ascends gradually up to the camp. If the weather is clear the Paro valley can be seen, with snow-capped mountains rising behind. Above the camp is the Jele-La Pass (3,540m) and Jele Dzong (mostly in ruins). There is also a lhakhang containing a statue of Buddha Sakyamuni. Women who come to the monastery to seek blessings of children get hit on the head by the presiding Lama with a 10 inch ivory, wood and bone phallus, so be careful! After lunch we continue with a 1½ hour climb onto a ridge which affords dramatic views of the valleys on both sides and the Himalaya to the north. The trail takes us through thick alpine forests and rhododendrons. Weather permitting, we will have beautiful views of Chomolhari and other snow-capped peaks. Monsal pheasants can be heard calling during the day and we may see yak herders moving along the trails.

Hiking time: **5 - 6 hours**

Ascent: **860 m**

Descent: **860 m**

Max. altitude: **3110 m**

Accommodation: **Hotel**

Meals included:

Breakfast / Lunch / Dinner

Hiking time: **6 - 7 hours**

Ascent: **1520 m**

Max. altitude: **3770 m**

Accommodation: **Camping**

Meals included:

Breakfast / Lunch / Dinner

DAY 4

JANGCHULAKHA TO LAKEJINGELANG TSHO

The trail continues to follow the ridge, and on a clear day the views of the mountains and valley are sensational. There will be a lot of ascent and descent today as we climb up the main ridge again before dropping down to cross to the other side of the valley, making our way towards Thimphu. We will enjoy a great view of Jichu Drake (6,989m), the peak representing the protective deity of Paro, before settling for the day at our camp, close to the Jimgelang Tsho lake, famous for its giant trout. If we're lucky we may get to see herds of yaks cooling off.

Hiking time: **6 - 7 hours**
Ascent: **100 m**
Max. altitude: **3870 m**
Accommodation: **Camping**
Meals included:
Breakfast / Lunch / Dinner

DAY 5

LAKE JINGELANG TSHO TO SIMKOTA

We leave the campsite and the trail takes us through dwarf rhododendron trees as we follow a succession of ridges to reach the second lake, Janatsho. We may come across a yak herder's camp and will spend some time seeing how they live. A final climb will bring us to our campsite, close to Simkota Lake, with the possibility of catching a lake trout for dinner!

Hiking time: **5 - 6 hours**
Ascent: **240 m**
Max. altitude: **4110 m**
Accommodation: **Camping**
Meals included:
Breakfast / Lunch / Dinner

DAY 6

SIMKOTA TO THIMPHU

Today begins with a gradual climb up to the Phume La Pass, the highest point of our trek at 4210m. From here we can enjoy majestic views of Mt. Gangkar Puensum (7570m), the highest peak in Bhutan and the highest unclimbed peak in the world. The trail descends, winding through juniper trees to a campsite beside a community hall near Phajoding monastery. From Phajoding it is downhill all the way to Thimphu, passing through a forested area of mostly blue pine. Taking a leisurely pace, we will reach Thimphu with sufficient time to enjoy an afternoon city tour. Our city tour will visit King's Memorial Chorten, continuously circumambulated by people, murmuring mantras and spinning their prayer wheels. Construction of this landmark was the idea of Bhutan's third king, His Majesty Jigme Dorji Wangchuk. Completed in 1974 after his untimely death, it serves both as a memorial to the late King and as a monument to peace. We will also visit Trashichhoe Dzong. This is the centre of government and religion, site of the monarch's throne room and seat of Je Khenpo or Chief Abbot. Built in 1641, it was reconstructed in the 1960s in traditional Bhutanese manner, without nails or architectural plans. We will stay overnight at a hotel in Thimphu.

Hiking time: **6 - 7 hours**
Ascent: **100 m**
Descent: **1860 m**
Max. altitude: **4210 m**
Accommodation: **Hotel**
Meals included:
Breakfast / Lunch / Dinner

DAY 7

THIMPHU TO PUNAKHA

We start this morning in Bhutan's capital city with a visit to the National Library, which holds a vast collection of ancient Buddhist texts and manuscripts. We will also visit the nearby Institute for Zorig Chusum, an Arts & Crafts School where we may see the students being taught the 13 traditional arts and crafts of Bhutan. We will follow on to the Textile Museum, providing a fascinating insight into Bhutanese material culture and way of life, followed by a visit to Simply Bhutan, a living Museum and Studio encapsulating the cultural heritage of the Bhutanese people. (Please note both the National Library and the Institute for Zorig Chusum are closed at weekends and public holidays, and the Textile Museum is closed on Sundays and public holidays). After lunch we will leave Thimphu and drive up a series of zigzags to Dochu-La Pass (3,088m) stopping briefly here to take in the view and admire the chorten, mani wall, and prayer flags which decorate the highest point on the road. Magnificent vistas are all around including the following 7000m peaks: Masagang, Tsendagang, Terigang, Jejegangphugang, Kangphugang, Zongphugang, and finally Gangkar Puensum, the highest peak in Bhutan at 7,570m. After crossing the pass, the road descends into the Punakha Valley, where we will spend the night in a hotel.

Hiking time: **3 - 4 hours**
Ascent: **738 m**
Descent: **1778 m**
Max. altitude: **3088 m**
Accommodation: **Hotel**
Meals included:
Breakfast / Lunch / Dinner

DAY 8

PUNAKHA TO PARO

Before we leave Punakha we will visit the majestic Punakha Dzong. Built strategically at the junction of Pho Chhu and Mo Chhu rivers in 1637, it serves as the religious and administrative centre of the region. Later we will drive back to Paro, taking a short excursion to Chimi Lhakhang, dedicated to the Lama Drukpa Kuenley, also known as the 'Divine Madman' for his humorous and often outrageous methods of teaching Buddhism. The temple is well known as a temple of fertility, and women will come here to pray for children. Upon arrival in Paro, we will check in at the hotel, before taking an evening stroll around the market streets of Paro.

Hiking time: **4 - 5 hours**
Ascent: **940 m**
Max. altitude: **2250 m**
Accommodation: **Hotel**
Meals included:
Breakfast / Lunch / Dinner

DAY 9

DEPARTURE

We will collect you from your hotel and transfer you to Paro Airport for your flight.

Meals included: **Breakfast**

TRIP INFORMATION

DIFFICULTY

Treks in Bhutan present a **substantial physical challenge**, and the fitter you are before you start, the more you will enjoy your trek. However, the number one most important thing to cultivate is mental toughness. Most of the people who trek in Bhutan aren't professional athletes or mountain climbers. They are average people with an unusual degree of determination. You will be walking for five to seven hours each day, every day of your trek. The best way to prepare is to hike, trek or climb any mountains or hills near where you live, and get used to really putting the hours in. With the right attitude, nearly anyone can undertake a trek in the Himalaya.

FOOD & DRINK

On our Bhutan treks meals are provided during your stay at the pre and post trek hotels, and dishes will be prepared for you on your trek. All meals are provided on a fixed menu basis, with enough options for vegetarians. Bhutanese cuisine generally consists of steamed rice (red and white) with a varied choice of spicy curries, both vegetarian and non vegetarian. Most hotels provide meals buffet-style. There are usually continental, Indian, Chinese and Bhutanese dishes. The food in hotels is often the best in town, but restaurants in the main towns are increasingly becoming popular. All tourist hotels have a good selection of international and Bhutanese beverages. We provide healthy and nutritious cooked meals on your trek for every meal which always include fresh vegetables and meat. Everyday a lunch boy will catch you up on the trail in time to serve you a hot picnic lunch. We cater for a variety of special dietary requirements, whether you're vegetarian or gluten-free just let us know when you book.

In addition to the drinking water we provide on the trek, we will also provide drinking water during your cultural tours. To reduce the use of plastic bottles, we would ask that you bring a re-usable drinks bottle that we can fill for you. If you are planning on using a hydration bag for the trek, this may not be comfortable to use around town, so we recommend you bring a smaller drinks bottle as well.

ACCOMMODATION

Hotels in Bhutan are not categorized into stars as in most of the other countries, however, all hotels have to be approved by the **Tourism Council of Bhutan**. Our standard hotels are all clean and comfortable and are chosen because of their great locations, often in quieter parts of town, to help you get a good nights' sleep.

Kandoo use good quality, spacious tents to ensure you stay warm, dry and comfortable on your Bhutanese trek. They are designed to sleep three people, but we only ever sleep 2 to a tent, to ensure you have plenty of space for you and your gear. Keep in mind, these are proper mountain tents, designed to cope with extreme conditions so don't expect to be able to stand up and walk around inside! Your meals will be taken in a separate mess tent where you will be able to sit comfortably, while you relax and chat to your team mates and enjoy some of the delicious food that our cook has freshly prepared for you. Inside, you'll be pleased to find a table (of course) and a proper, comfortable chair with arms. With a full 2 metres of headroom, even the tallest climbers will be able to stretch a bit, and move about without hunching over.

TRANSPORT

We insist on using a **high standard of vehicle and driver** for all of our transfers. In Bhutan it is not a legal requirement to have seatbelts fitted in the back of vehicles, and while we try to use vehicles that do have rear seatbelts fitted, this cannot always be guaranteed. If you are unhappy about any aspect of the vehicle or the standard of driving, please speak to the driver or our local office immediately.

LUGGAGE

We operate a **strict limit of 15kg** for your main equipment bag. This is more than sufficient for your needs on the trek. Your bag will be weighed before you leave the hotel to start the trek and if it is overweight you will have to take items out and leave them at the hotel. On the trek all items must be packed in your main equipment bag. They should not be attached to the outside, as we are not responsible if items fall off when the bags are being carried by the pack animals.

HOW DO I GET THERE?

Currently there are only two airline operators that fly to Bhutan, Drukair and Bhutan Airlines. The main airport is in Paro (2,225m) and currently receives flights from Bangkok, Dhaka, Delhi, Kolkata, Kathmandu, Doha, Kuala Lumpur and Singapore. This means that you need to get to one of these hubs to catch a connecting flight to Paro.

The flight into Paro is pretty exciting as the position of the airport requires the plane to get much closer to the mountain tops than most other flights in the world. If you are lucky enough to fly from Kathmandu to Paro and the weather is clear you will fly over 4 of the 5 highest mountains in the world - Mt. Everest, Lhotse, Makalu and Kangchenjunga.

BUDGET & CHANGE

The **Bhutanese Ngultrum** (Nu) is the local currency of Bhutan and equal in value to the Indian Rupee. It is a closed currency so you will not be able to buy this before you arrive. All major currencies, such as US Dollars, Sterling Pounds and Euros, and traveller's cheques can be exchanged at Paro Airport, banks and hotels. Hotels in the towns will accept foreign currency but we recommend that you take local currency on the actual trek with you for incidentals and souvenirs.

Bhutan is a cash economy and credit cards are not commonly accepted. Mastercard may be accepted in larger shops and hotels, but Amex is rarely accepted. If you are relying on a credit or debit card for emergency funds while you travel, make sure you tell your card issuer that you will be using it abroad, or you may find that it won't work when you really need it.

TIPS

Tipping is not approved by the Bhutanese tourist board. However, it has become **customary practice** to tip the guides, cooks and porters who have assisted you throughout your trek. The decision on how much to tip should be determined by how well the team served you while you were on the trek. Tips are always discretionary and if you are not happy with the service you have received you do not have to pay tips.

FORMALITIES & HEALTH

PASSPORT

Please double check that your passport is valid for 6 months beyond the date of arrival in Bhutan. We recommend that you take a photocopy of your passport and keep it separate from the original, as this will be useful if the original is lost while you are traveling.

VISA

Visa requirements:

Visas can only be arranged by travel companies and are issued on arrival to those on a prepaid all-inclusive tour. In order to process your Bhutan visa we require a clear readable colour copy of your passport containing the passport number and photograph in JPEG or PDF format.

Transit visas:

Your domestic flight into Bhutan is likely to be on a separate ticket to your international flight. As a result, your luggage will not be checked right through to your final destination and you will need to clear immigration at your transit airport in order to collect your bag and check it back in for your international connection. Double check with your airline what the immigration and visa requirements are for the airport you are to transit through, and whether they are able to re-check your bags for you. Otherwise, you may need to arrange transit visas prior to travel. This is especially important if you are planning on travelling via India, as a transit visa is required and it must be arranged in advance.

VACCINATIONS

The following vaccination guide is an information resource only. You should not rely on it for diagnostic or prescriptive purposes. You should always speak with your GP or other health care professional about any vaccinations or other medicines you are considering taking. They will have more information about your specific health needs, and can make much more specific, reliable recommendations for you. In general, we recommend the following vaccinations

- Hepatitis A and B
- Everyone Typhoid
- Everyone Polio - We recommend a booster shot for adult travellers
- Yellow Fever - Necessary for all travellers who will arrive via areas prone to yellow fever
- Rabies - Not necessary unless visiting lowland areas
- Measles, Mumps, Rubella (MMR) - We recommend a double dose for anyone born after 1956, unless they have already been given this vaccination
- Tetanus & Diphtheria - This vaccination should be renewed every 10 years

INSURANCE

Before you can join any Kandoo Adventures trek, you will need to insure yourself against accident, injury, and illness.

Your insurance must cover the cost of helicopter evacuation and repatriation if necessary. Make sure your insurer knows of your travel plans, and verify that your policy fully covers your trek, climb, and any other activities you will participate in. Specifically, treks to Chomolhari and the Druk Path require insurance coverage up to 5000m and the Snowman Trek up to 6000m.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you are fully and adequately insured for the duration of your trip. Please ensure that all activities, excursions and destinations in your itinerary are included in your travel insurance policy, in addition to your regular cover for cancellation and medical expenses.

We ask that you keep a copy of your policy summary (containing policy number and the emergency contact number for your insurer) in your day sack at all times, so that we can access this information should we need to contact the insurer on your behalf.

We recommend the global supplier of travel insurance, World Nomads. Make sure to add 'hiking up to 6,000m' on check out and be sure to read the small print carefully for any policy you are considering. Different policies provide different levels of cover, so make sure you understand what is and isn't included in your policy.

HEALTH

Malaria

There is little risk of malaria on the majority of Bhutanese treks that we operate, due to the altitude, particularly in Bumthang, Gasa, Paro and Thimphu. However, there is a risk of malaria in areas below 1,500m so we recommend you take advice if traveling outside the areas in which we operate.

In addition to any medication, we would recommend you take every precaution to prevent mosquito bites by wearing long-sleeved trousers and shirts at dusk and dawn when the mosquitos are active, and by using a DEET based mosquito repellent.

EQUIPMENT & CLOTHING

CLOTHING TO BRING

HEADGEAR

- Warm beanie style hat - knitted or fleece
- Neck gaiter or scarf. It can get dusty in Bhutan and the air very cold. A scarf or balaclava comes in useful for keeping dust out and can double as a warm layer for your neck / face!
- Sun hat - preferably wide-brimmed for protection
- Sunglasses - high UV protection
- Headlamp (plus extra batteries)

UPPER BODY

- Thermal or fleece base layer (x1)
- Long sleeve shirt/tshirt - light or medium weight, moisture wicking (x1)
- Short sleeved shirt/tshirt - lightweight, moisture wicking (x2)
- Fleece or soft shell jacket (x1)
- Insulated jacket - down or primaloft
- Lightweight water/windproof hard shell outer jacket
- Gloves - lightweight, fleece or quick drying fabric
- Gloves or mittens - heavyweight, insulated, preferably water resistant

LEGS

- Leggings - thermal or fleece base layer (x1)
- Trekking trousers - light or medium weight (x2) - convertible trousers work well
- Waterproof hard shell trousers - ski pants work fine (x1)

FEET

- Trekking boots - mid weight with good ankle support
- Training shoe or similar - to wear around camp
- Mid-weight trekking socks (x3 pairs)
- Breathable, high-wicking liner socks (x2 pairs)
- Thermal trekking socks for upper reaches of your trek (x1 pair)

EQUIPMENT TO BRING

- Small Rucksack or Daypack (30-40 litres) to carry water and personal items
- Waterproof duffle bag (approx 80-100 litres) - max weight when full should be 15kg. This weight restriction includes your sleeping bag. Your duffle will be carried by a porter
- Sleeping bag (4 season or -10 Deg C) and compression sack
- Insulated sleeping mat
- Trekking poles
- Water bottle or hydration bag - must be able to carry 1.5-2L of water

OTHER ACCESSORIES

- Sunscreen high SPF
- Toiletries, including wet wipes and hand sanitiser - please carry all rubbish back off the trail
- Camera and spare batteries
- Plug adapter, for charging devices in hotels
- Personal medication and first aid kit
- Personal snacks and energy bars - dried fruit and nuts are also a good source of energy
- Isotonic drink powder / energy drink powder to mix in with your water. This improves flavour and helps replace electrolytes
- Microfibre towel for wiping hands and face each day
- Ear plugs, if you are a light sleeper
- Pee bottle, useful for late night toilet needs
- Dry bag (only required if your main duffle bag is not waterproof)

HOW TO BOOK THIS TRIP

1 CHOOSE YOUR DATE AND CHECK AVAILABILITY

A full list of available dates can be found on our website.

2 CONTACT US

Contact us by phone, email or through our website. We will answer any questions you may have and send you a personalized itinerary and quote.

3 COMPLETE BOOKING AND PAYMENT

When you are ready to book, we will send you a link to our online booking forms and participation agreements. We accept all major credit and debit cards and require a low 20% deposit to secure your place.

