

Trek Bhutan



Duration: 11 days

The small Buddhist Kingdom of Bhutan, Land of the Thunder Dragon, lies in the soaring peaks and forested valleys of the eastern Himalayas. Isolated from the world for centuries, it is famously protective of its traditional, sacred heritage. Access to much of the country is restricted, though any trekker making the effort to travel to this remote mountainous region will receive a warm welcome.

Our trek follows the classic Druk Path between Paro and Thimpu, taking in dense forest, yak pastures and clear mountain lakes as we trek from the valley floor up to mountain ridges and over high passes – all with an unforgettable backdrop of snow-capped Himalayan peaks. Our highest point is 4210m, and we build in acclimatisation early on, to help our bodies cope with the altitude.

The cultural discovery, rewarding trekking and magnificent landscapes make a winning and unforgettable combination: this is a trekking experience to treasure.

DETAILED ITINERARY

Day 1: Depart London for Kathmandu

Day 2: Kathmandu

We arrive in Kathmandu and transfer to our hotel in the Thamel area. We have time to relax before dinner in a local restaurant and a good night's sleep. Night hotel.

Day 3: Kathmandu – Paro

An afternoon flight takes us to Paro in Bhutan; flying over the Himalayas is an added bonus, and you might even spot Everest! After this short hop we check into our hotel, enjoying our first impressions of magical Bhutan. We have an easy walk around Paro (2200m) and we really start to get a feel for the culture. Although we are unlikely to feel any effects of being at altitude here, walking and sleeping at this elevation will aid our acclimatisation for the trek to come. Night hotel.

Trek approx. 1-2 hours

Day 4: Acclimatisation Walk Paro – Jela Dzong

We transfer to our start-point, passing the historic Ta Dzong (2625m) – a striking round watch-tower which is now the National Museum – and driving a short distance further along a dirt road. Reaching our start point, we set off, passing small farms and orchards, then walking through forests of blue pine. It's uphill all the way, mostly steady, but with some steeper sections. While it's a relatively short distance, we adopt a slow pace and take our time, as it's important to use these first days wisely to

DETAILED ITINERARY (cont.)

acclimatise well to the altitude. We enjoy picturesque views over verdant Paro Valley, the valley floor cultivated to farmland and dotted with tiny villages. Towards the end of the day we cross a mountain pass, then it's downhill to our first night's camp at Jela Dzong, an old fortress-temple, on a ridge above us. Night camp (3480m).

Trek approx. 5-6 hours / 8-10km

Day 5: Acclimatisation Walk Jela Dzong – Jangchulakha

We take it slow and steady again today, giving ourselves the best chance of feeling good when we reach the higher passes. After an initial steep climb to a monastery, the terrain levels off on a plateau and then descends through alpine pastures and forests of fir and rhododendron before climbing again. The atmosphere walking through these ancient forests is a real highlight – with fir trees wrapped in Spanish moss, the vegetation is reminiscent of Jurassic Park or Lord of the Rings! We then traverse the mountain on a narrow path with wonderful views over the Paro Valley below, and we'll start to glimpse the revered Mt Chomolhari, the sacred second-highest mountain in Bhutan; its snow-capped dome (7314m) can be seen throughout much of our trek. After lunch our path levels out and it's an easier route to camp. We may see yak herders in this area, giving us a glimpse of this nomadic way of life. Night camp (3770m).

Trek approx. 6-7 hours / 10km

Day 6: Jangchulakha – Jimilang Tsho

Another climb starts our day, with great views over the rolling valleys below. We follow a rocky trail, which rises above the treeline at times, crossing a number of passes as we tackle the undulating ridgeline through forest and grassy pastures. The going is tough at times, but we are urged on by spectacular views across the valley with its backdrop of snow-capped mountains. We have lunch shortly after crossing our third high pass, and can see camp in the distance. Our final pass comes at 4194m, complete with photogenic prayer-flags against a backdrop of mountains. We finally come to Jimilang Tsho, a beautiful clear lake teeming with giant trout. Night camp (3870m).

Trek approx. 7-8 hours / 13km



CHALLENGE GRADING

Trips are graded Yellow, Orange or Red, in increasing level of challenge. This trek lies within the **Red** range.

The grade is determined by factors such as terrain, distance, climate, altitude, etc. Each colour grade has a **spectrum** which reflects the difficulty of these factors; trip duration, accommodation and living conditions are also taken into account.

The Challenge Factor icon shows the most challenging aspect – the terrain – which is in remote mountains and made tougher by the high altitudes we trek at.

The grade reflects the overall trip; some sections will feel more challenging than others. Unusual weather conditions also have a significant impact, and not all people are tested by the same aspects.

DETAILED ITINERARY (cont.)

Day 7: Jimilang Tsho – Labana La

We set off from camp, walking to the end of the lake and climbing steeply, traversing the mountains through dwarf rhododendrons and junipers. We pass more lakes – crystal-clear and very photogenic! Today's views, reaching far back along the valley ridge, will give you a huge sense of satisfaction as you see how far we have come – and motivate us to keep going! It's another tough day with numerous steep passes. It's an undulating day, with very little flat, and some tough, steep sections, but very beautiful. We camp in a lovely spot dotted with stupas beside a lake. Night camp (4175m).

Trek approx. 7-8 hours / 15km

Day 8: Labana La – Thimpu – Paro

Another morning, another steep climb! This strenuous uphill trek takes us over Phume La Pass, at 4210m our highest point. Adorned with fluttering prayer flags, the Pass offers fabulous views over the Paro and Thimpu valleys, and it's possible to see the snow-capped peak of Gangkar Puensum, Bhutan's highest mountain and the highest unscaled peak in the world. Then it's downhill on rocky steps, with views of Bhutan's capital, Thimpu, lying in its wooded valley far below us. We pass the fascinating temple of Phajoding, receive a blessing from the monks, and continue the long descent through forest to the end of the trail, where our vehicles meet us and whisk us to our nearby lunch-spot above Thimpu. We then drive back to Paro. Night hotel (2200m.)

Trek approx. 5-6 hours / 12km; Drive approx 1 hour

Day 9: Tiger's Nest Monastery

After breakfast we head out on the last part of our hike, to the iconic Taktsang (Tiger's Nest) Monastery, a sacred Bhutanese site. Perched dramatically on a cliff's edge 900m above the valley at 3120m, it is one of the undisputed highlights of the trip. We head steadily uphill surrounded by beautiful views to a stunning viewpoint, then descend some steps and climb again. It is steep at times, but we're fit and acclimatised, and this is a wonderful way to end our trip. After time at the temple, we head back down to Paro, where there should be time to explore, or simply relax before dinner. Night hotel.

Trek approx. 7-8 hours

Day 10: Fly Bhutan – Kathmandu

After breakfast we take a short, scenic flight back to Kathmandu, where we will have free time to explore the city's sights. Depending on flight schedules, we will either take an evening transfer back to the airport for our flight home or transfer to a central hotel for a good night's rest before an early flight departure the next morning.

(Lunch and Dinner not included)

Day 11: Arrive UK

Discover Adventure reserves the right to change the route or itinerary for safety reasons should local conditions dictate.

Copyright DA2016 / Updated 2019