

# Temples & Trails of Bhutan

**Trip style:** Guided Walking Holidays

**Destination:** 📍 Bhutan

**Trip code:** BHU11-WHW10

**Grades:** 1, 4

**Carbon Footprint:** 🌳 3338kg CO2



## HOLIDAY OVERVIEW

Nicknamed the 'Land of the Thunder Dragon', Bhutan is a hidden Himalayan kingdom where walking holidays are every bit as incredible as you'd expect. Discover golden temples, sky-scraping stupas, and epic views over some of the highest peaks on the planet as our expert local guides lead you through the western valleys of Thimphu, Punakha, and Paro. You'll explore Punakha Dzong Fortress, where all of Bhutan's kings are crowned, marvel at the 'Tiger's Nest Monastery' that clings to a 900m-high cliff face, and trek the sky-high Chele La Pass. Uncover Bhutan's enchanting landscapes and rich heritage on this unforgettable journey.

## WHAT YOU'LL LOVE

- Embarking on exhilarating hikes in Bhutan's Himalayas
- Marvelling at the magnificent Punakha Dzong Fortress
- Visiting the remarkable Tiger's Nest Monastery, a symbol of Bhutanese spirituality
- Walking Bhutan's highest road, the Chele La Pass
- A longevity blessing ceremony performed by Buddhist monks
- A tour of India's capital, Delhi, and a visit to Humayun's Tomb

## WHAT'S INCLUDED

- Return flights from London Heathrow including baggage and transfers
- Guided walks with local leaders
- HF Holidays Tour Manager
- 8 nights' touring accommodation across Bhutan
- 2 nights' accommodation in Delhi
- 10 breakfasts, 8 lunches & 10 dinners
- All sightseeing and entrance fees (as per itinerary)
- All in-destination transport and internal flights

## ITINERARY

### Day 1: Depart the UK

Depart the UK on an overnight flight to India.

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### Day 2: Arrival in Delhi

Arrive at Delhi International Airport and transfer to your hotel. A symbol of the country's rich past and thriving present, the city of Delhi is where ancient and modern blend seamlessly together. It was the British that moved the seat of their empire from Kolkata to Delhi and it has been the capital city ever since. Enjoy some leisure time before dinner at the hotel. We'll discover more of Delhi upon our return at the end of the itinerary.

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### Day 3: Delhi – Paro – Thimphu

Today we'll fly to Paro on what is considered one of the world's most amazing mountain flights. Enjoy lunch on arrival (dependent on flight times) before a visit to the National Museum, Ta Dzong, for a fascinating intro to Bhutan's past. Next, we'll visit picturesque Rinpung Dzong to see the painting of the great saint Milarepa, considered the master of meditation by the Bhutanese. Afterwards, we'll drive to Thimphu for dinner and an overnight stay. In the evening, your local guides will give a short presentation on the trip ahead.

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### Day 4: Thimphu

Spend the day exploring Thimphu, with a visit to Zorig Chosum, a school for studying traditional Bhutanese arts and crafts. We'll also visit the post office – Bhutan is known for its unusual stamps, and here you can make your own personalised stamps. Next, we'll visit the Motithang Takin Preserve to look out for Bhutan's national animal, the takin. Later, in a local cafe, we'll get a talk from an expert in Buddhism. We'll then visit the Shakyamuni Buddha bronze statue (51.5 metres tall) in Kuensel Phodrang Nature Park. The day ends with a trip to local art gallery, VAST Studio, and a stroll around the town's craft bazaar or vegetable markets.

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### Day 5: Thimphu to Punakha

Distance: 3.7 miles (6km) Ascent: 1,300 feet (400m) An early morning drive takes us to Dochula Pass, 3,000 metres above sea level. Enjoy breakfast with views of Himalayan peaks and 108 memorial chortens (stupas). Next, we'll visit the Druk Wangyal temple and hike through flower-filled forests and meadows to the 18th century Lungchutse Lhakhang. Soak up 360-degree views of Bhutan's high peaks before we transfer to Lampelri Botanical Garden for a picnic lunch. There's time for a stroll around the park and a presentation on Bhutan's flora and fauna with our local ecologist expert. We continue by bus to the Punakha Valley and participate in a tea ceremony with the locals. We'll spend the night in Punakha.

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### Day 6: Punakha Buddhist Learnings

We visit Chimi Lhakhang, a temple dedicated to a 16th century monk famous for amusing folklore stories. See a Longevity Blessing Ceremony performed by a high-level monk and enjoy a riverside picnic lunch before a visit to magnificent Punakha Dzong. We'll explore the hilltop Sangchhen Dorji Lhuendrup Nunnery in the evening. Originally

established as a Buddhist College for nuns, it now accommodates approximately 120 nuns. Join the nuns during prayers, reflect on your thoughts and enjoy the serenity and calmness you feel as you listen to the melodious chants.

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### **Day 7:** Punakha Temple Hike

Distance: 6.2 miles (10km) Ascent: 985 feet (400m) Drive north of Punakha Dzong for a hike to Yuwo village through rice fields and up to Chorten Nyingpo Temple. Enjoy a picnic lunch in the monastery courtyards, and then serve tea to the resident monks. Optional walk towards Zhoshi village and up to Khamsum Yueling Temple. As part of your optional activity, we'll walk to Yebeesa village for evening tea with the farmers.

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### **Day 8:** Punakha to Paro

Distance: 5 miles (8km) Descent: 656 feet (200m) This morning we'll drive to Sieupang, followed by a hike through pine forests to Toeb Chadhanang. This heritage home holds the relics of Lama Drukpa Kunley, also known as the Divine Madman. We then hike further up to our picnic spot near a stream. Following lunch, our walk will take us steadily back to the highway from where we'll drive back to Paro. We break up the journey with a visit to Tachogang Lhakhang, built by Thangtong Gyalpo, the renowned Iron Bridge Builder. Here, you can see remnants of his famous iron chains.

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### **Day 9:** Chele La Pass Hike

Distance: 3 miles (4.5km) Descent: 1,300 feet (400m) Today, we drive west to Chele La Pass (3,988 metres). At the pass, we'll take the trail southeast to explore greater heights and views. Enjoy a picnic lunch before hiking to Kila Goenpa through highland conifers, rhododendrons, and other flora. This region is home to rare pheasants, especially visible in the spring. The highlight of the hike is reaching the nunnery built on the sheer cliffs, providing a wonderful opportunity to serve tea to the nuns. Later, we return to Paro Valley.

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### **Day 10:** Tigers Nest Monastery and Paro Valley

Distance: 4 miles (6.5km) Ascent: 2,300 feet (700m) Hike to Taktsang. Known as the Tiger's Nest, it's one of the most memorable highlights of Bhutan. We embark on an early morning trip with breakfast at the Taktsang Cafeteria. The magnificent Taktsang Monastery, perched on a sheer cliff-face 900 metres above the valley floor, is a dream for every Buddhist pilgrim. For non-Buddhists, the hike represents a symbolic inner journey, making this a unique Himalayan experience. Any guests who prefer not to hike to the monastery can spend the day exploring the Paro Valley. Lunch can be taken in a local restaurant offering views of the monastery. After lunch, we'll return to the hotel to relax.

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### **Day 11:** Paro to Delhi

We bid goodbye to Bhutan today and head to Delhi for an overnight stay. In the afternoon there's a guided tour of New Delhi, which reflects on the legacy the British left behind. Highlights include a drive past India Gate, the 42-metre-high War Memorial Arch, the Parliament House, the Secretariat buildings and the Vice Regal Palace. Later, we'll visit the 16th century Humayun's Tomb, the first garden-tomb on the Indian subcontinent and a precursor to the Taj Mahal. We'll also stop by Sunder Nagar Nursery - a 16th century heritage park complex, a UNESCO world

heritage site. Final group dinner together in the evening.

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**Day 12:** Depart Delhi for the UK

Transfer to Delhi airport for your return flight to the UK.

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## **The Suryaa, New Delhi**

The Suryaa is a haven of peace and tranquility amidst the hustle and bustle of India's capital city. After a day of exploring, retreat to elegantly designed rooms complete with all mod cons and take advantage of four different dining venues with a wealth of options. Other facilities include a state-of-the-art fitness centre, plus a swimming pool and spa area.

## **Druk Hotel, Thimphu**

You can explore Bhutan's capital with ease from the Druk Hotel. Spend your days discovering the sights before returning to comfortable rooms that come with décor inspired by elements of nature. Relax in the newly renovated Hi Jinks bar and enjoy quality dining in the hotel's contemporary restaurant. Guests can also make use of the free fitness room and spa facilities (payable locally).

## **Lobesa Hotel, Punakha**

This simple-yet-stylish retreat offers an ideal base for discovering Punakha's pleasant walking trails and historical treasures. Rooms command impressive views of the Bhutanese countryside and provide all the comforts required for a relaxing stay. The hotel also houses its own restaurant serving authentic local cuisine.

## **Naksel Boutique Hotel & Spa, Paro**

Immerse yourself in luxury at Naksel Boutique Hotel & Spa in Paro. Sleek, modern rooms combine traditional Bhutanese architecture with modern amenities. Surrounded by Bhutan's beautiful nature, it's the perfect place to enjoy breathtaking views, rejuvenating spa treatments, and a serene escape from the everyday.

### **Safety information -Bhutan**

Once you have made your booking, you will receive a pre-holiday questionnaire where we ask for details of next of kin and insurance details. You must complete and return this to us - we need to have this from you at least 10 weeks before travel. Please also inform us of any medical situation which may affect your enjoyment of the holiday. This is important because our leaders must consider both group and individual safety at all times. Whilst out with the group, we respectfully request that you: Please listen to any safety instructions and other directions from the leader. Keep group members in view, especially if weather or visibility is poor. Please stay where you are if you become separated from the group. The leader will retrace their steps to find you. Each leader carries a first aid kit but is not allowed to supply any medication including aspirin, paracetamol, antihistamines and antiseptic cream. You may wish to bring these items with you in your own kit (see Suggested Kit List). In the unlikely event that your leader is incapacitated, please use any emergency kit in their rucksack and call emergency services on 113. Please then call our emergency number (sent in your final dispatch) and let us know there is a problem.

## **food - Bhutan**

Please contact us as far in advance as possible if you have any specific dietary requirements and we will do our best to meet your needs. If you require a specific meal on the flight, please let us know as soon as possible, and no later than 96 hours before travel.

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## **vaccination - Bhutan**

Before booking, you should check with your doctor to see if any health precautions are needed. The following websites provide a wealth of information on travelling and health: NaTHNaC - Home ([travelhealthpro.org.uk](http://travelhealthpro.org.uk)); [www.redplanet.travel/mdtravelhealth](http://www.redplanet.travel/mdtravelhealth) Vaccines: Diphtheria Hepatitis A, Typhoid, Tetanus & Polio vaccinations are recommended. Cholera, Malaria and Rabies are sometimes recommended too.

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## **Passport & visas - for Bhutan**

Visa clearance documentation: Visa clearance documentation will be sent you prior to your travel date. You must produce the visa approval document and e-tickets at the time of boarding the flight to Bhutan. The actual visa stamping is done at Paro Airport. Please post these documents in your traveling mailbox. In the event you lose the papers you can always download from the mailbox. Please make sure to travel with the same passport on which the Bhutan visa was issued. We will not be held responsible if the passport on which the visa was issued does not match the passport used to travel to Bhutan. In such an event, you will not be allowed to board the flight or enter Bhutan. Other Country Visas: Druk Air and Bhutan Airlines do not have inter airline agreements with most of the international carriers and hence transfer of baggage during transit will not be facilitated. Guests will have to pass through the transiting country's immigration, collect bags and then check in for the Bhutan flight when travelling to Bhutan. After departing Bhutan, guests will have to pass through the transiting country's immigration, collect bags and then check in for the onward international flight. Please ensure that the you obtain the necessary visa for the transiting country (a double entry visa is the min recommended) and ample transit time should be kept between connecting flights. Passport & visa arrangements: Your passport should be valid for at least six months after your planned date of departure from Bhutan.

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## **Packing list - Overseas Guided Walking**

It's best to be prepared for all weather conditions. To make it easier, here is a list of items you should consider packing. Essentials Walking boots Waterproof jacket Waterproof trousers Insulated jacket/top Walking clothing Walking socks (plus spares) Sunhat Gloves/mitts and warm hat Water bottle (minimum 2 litre capacity) Headtorch High-factor sunscreen (minimum SPF 30) Sunglasses with a dark lens Rucksack (15-30 litres) Mobile phone Personal first aid kit (containing your medication, blister plasters, etc.) Passport Visa (if applicable) Copy of your travel insurance policy UK Global Health Insurance Card (formerly known as EHIC) Recommended Collapsible walking poles Swimwear and travel towel Snacks Dry bags Rubbish bags Insect repellent Optional extras Camera Sit mat Flask for hot drinks Durable lunch box Gaiters GPS device (excluding Bhutan, Georgia and India)

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