

## Journey Idea to Bhutan

9 Days



Prayer Wheel

Prepared for  
Steppes Travel Clients

## QUICK REFERENCE ITINERARY

Day 1	Delhi/Paro/Thimphu
Day 2	Thimphu/Gangtey
Day 3	Gangtey/On Trek
Day 4	On Trek
Day 5	On Trek/Punakha
Day 6	Punakha/Paro
Day 7	Paro
Day 8	Paro
Day 9	Paro/Delhi

Steppestravel  
travel beyond the ordinary

## DETAILED TRIP ITINERARY

### Day 1



### Delhi/Paro/Thimphu

Entry into Bhutan can be made either by land or by air. Druk Air, the National Air Carrier of the Kingdom, operates regular flights to / from Paro to Delhi, Kolkata and Kathmandu. By surface, entry into Bhutan is possible through southern border town of Phuentsholing. This frontier town is about 6 hours drive from Thimphu and Paro, 4 hours drive from Bagdogra and 7 hours drive from Darjeeling and Gangtok. This itinerary is based on flying with Druk Air on an early morning flight.

The entry point for all travel to Bhutan is Paro Valley. Bordered by forested mountain peaks, it is surely one of the most scenic settings for arrival to any foreign land. Paro Valley sits on an elevation of 2,250 metres and is a mix of small villages, historic buildings and monuments and wonderfully terraced fields growing crops. Through the valley run the Paro Chhu (River) and nearby is the relatively recent town of Paro. Established in the 1980's, it is a quaint town with just one main street and captures the essence of provincial Bhutanese life.



On arrival in Paro, you will be met and driven to Thimphu and the Taj Tashi, a 1 hour drive.

At an altitude of 2,350 metres, Thimphu lies in a steep valley surrounded by richly forested mountains dotted with ancient monasteries and lhakhangs (temples), and to this day remains the world's only capital without traffic lights. The town is built up from the Thimphu Chhu and is centred around the quaint Clock Tower and its surrounding lanes of shops, vegetable and meat markets, and assorted local restaurants. Just up the valley lies the impressive Trashie Chhoe Dzong and the Kingdom's only official golf course, a rolling nine holes set against the backdrop of chortens, colourfully painted government agencies and the surrounding mountainscape.

This afternoon you will be taken to explore Thimphu with your guide.

*The Taj Tashi reflects Bhutan's rich heritage and architecture. Its balance of traditional Bhutanese design with contemporary elegance, which is subtly brought to life by hand-painted details. With majestic views of the mountains surrounding the Thimphu valley, the Taj Tashi cradles guests with every modern comfort and facility - from the luxurious spa and the indoor heated pool, to elegant meeting facilities and gourmet dining - in a setting that treasures the charm and artistic sensibilities of Bhutan's art and culture, allowing the discerning traveler to experience the magical kingdom anew.*



*The hotel's 66 rooms offer guests a magnificent blend of resplendent grandeur and contemporary luxury. The Taj Tashi offers within its exquisite folds, a medley of gastronomical experiences, along with a contemporary bar, and a Tea Lounge*



that offers the authentic butter tea “Suja”, a local favorite, to counteract the chill outside. The restaurants and bar present a choice of regional delicacies and beverages as well as Continental and Asian specialties in elegant indoor and outdoor settings. The golf course is a 5-minute walk, and all other leisure spots, including the National Library and Textile Museum, are a 10-minute drive from the hotel.

The hotel’s signature Jiva Spa experiences are steeped in the ancient Indian, Royal and healing traditions.

Overnight at Taj Tashi in a deluxe room on a bed & breakfast basis.

## Day 2

### Thimphu/Gangtey



Further exploration of Thimphu this morning with your guide before you are driven east. The road to Gangtey from Thimphu winds and climbs through pine forests and passes streams, waterfalls, chortens and prayer flags, rising to Dochu La Pass, with its wonderful vistas, at an elevation of 3,116 metres. Gradually the road descends during the 90-minute drive to Punakha Valley, one of the lowest lying valleys in Bhutan. You branch off to continue for an hour to the Probijka Valley and the small village of Gangtey. This whole area is stunning and a conservation area with no electrical supply provided at all. This area is known for the rare black necked cranes that nest here each year.

Overnight in local lodge in a standard room on a full board basis.

## Day 3

### Trek

The trail winds through meadows and fields and then climbs through a forest of juniper, bamboo, magnolia and rhododendron to the Tselela pass (3,320m). Overnight in camp. Altitude 3,000 m; Distance 14 km; Time 5 - 6 hours.

Overnight in a tent on a full board basis.

## Day 4

### Trek

A gentle climb leads to Shobjula pass (3,390 m). The descent leads to a wide valley, giving you big sky views of the mountains. Overnight in camp. Distance 16 km; Time 6 - 7 hours.

Overnight in a tent on a full board basis.

## Day 5

### End Trek/Punakha



A short ascent brings us to the Tashila pass (2,788 m). Be sure to fill your water bottle shortly after crossing the pass as the descent is dry. We walk down through an ever-changing landscape into the drainage of the Dhang Chu. You end your trek in the Punakha Valley where you are met and transferred to your local lodge. (Local lodges are basic accommodation).

Time permitting visit Punakha Dzong this afternoon.

At an elevation of 1,300 metres and with its temperate climate,



this valley is the market garden of the country, where produce grows year round and many Bhutanese reside during the cooler winter months. Punakha has an interesting history. It was the winter capital of Bhutan for a period of 300 years until Thimphu was made the official capital in the 1950's. It is the site of one of Bhutan's most historically important dzongs, the magnificent 17th century Punakha Dzong.

One of the highlights of Punakha is a visit to the Punakha Dzong. Straddling the confluence of the Mother (Mo) and Father (Pho) Rivers, like an ancient ship stranded by the tide, the Dzong's first courtyard functions as the administrative headquarters for the Punakha district. Twenty-one temples are contained within the area of the Dzong's third courtyard, the largest of which is the monks' hundred-pillared Great Assembly Hall.

Beyond the dominating dzong, a visit to Chimi Lhakhang is a must to take in the history of the worship house and its ritual phalluses. The Chimi Lhakhang is dedicated to Drukpa Kuenley who in the late 15th century used humour, songs and outrageous behaviour to dramatise his teachings.

Closer to the lodge a beautiful morning hike takes one to the regal Khamsum Yuelley Namgyel Chorten, which was built to remove negative forces and promote peace, stability and harmony in the changing world. The Chorten dominates the upper Punakha Valley with commanding views across the Mo Chhu and up towards the mountainous peaks of Gasa and beyond.

*Overnight in a local lodge in standard room on a full board basis.*

## Day 6

### Punakha/Paro



Further sightseeing of Punakha Valley this morning before you are driven back west to Paro, a 3.5 hour drive.

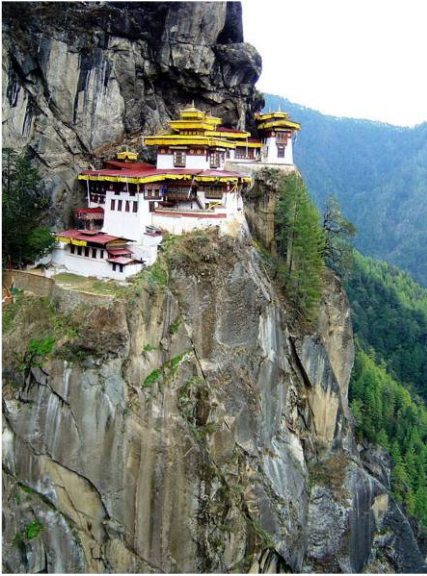
*Uma Paro is located on a 38-acre hilltop site. It is close to the town of Paro, one of the main cultural centres of Bhutan. This is also where the nation's only airport is located with flights to Bangkok, Calcutta, Delhi, Dhaka, Kathmandu and Yangon. There are only 20 rooms and nine villas, surrounded by pines, fashioned by traditionally-trained Bhutanese artisans working alongside Cheong Yew Kwan, architect of Rocky Point at Parrot Cay, and Kathryn Kng whose design house recently completed interiors of the contemporary-styled Metropolitan Bangkok. The fusion of clean-lined modernism with indigenous detailing - including carved wooden windows and intricate doors - makes for a fresh aesthetic that recognises Uma Paro's rich cultural context. At the same time, the design maximises comfort with sleekly efficient amenities including large, oversized bathrooms and separate showers in the nine superior doubles, DVD players, heated towel racks, minibars and in-room yoga mats. In the two suites there are separate sitting, dining and study areas. In the eight one-bedroom villas enjoy a private spa for in-room massages. The headline two-bedroom villa has all this plus an even greater privilege of space and endless views.*



Overnight at Uma Paro in a deluxe room on a bed & breakfast basis. (Lunch and dinner are included in the cost of the tour but only at recommended local restaurants. If you wish to eat at

Uma then meals are payable locally)

## Day 7



### Paro

You will be met by your guide this morning for your tour of the Paro Valley. You will be driven up the winding road beside the Pa Chu (chu means river or water) to Satsam Chorten. From this point begin the challenging walk to Taktsang - The Tiger's Nest, where a vantage point directly across a gorge from the temple can be reached in about 2-3 hours.

This magical monastery clings to a vertical granite cliff 600m above the valley floor. Legend says that Guru Padmasambhava flew to a cave on this cliff riding a tiger - hence the name - to meditate. The tiger was actually his favourite consort, Yeshe Tsogyel, whom he transformed to a flying tiger for the purposes of this journey. They meditated in the cave and when the Guru left he instructed that the monastery should be built. Later continue for further sightseeing including the magnificent ruins of Drukyl Dzong and the imposing site of Paro Dzong itself.

*Overnight at Uma Paro in a deluxe room on a full board basis.*

## Day 8

### Paro

Day at leisure or arrange activities through Uma Paro. Your guide and driver are also on hand if you wish to explore the Haa Valley or other areas around Paro.

*Overnight at Uma Paro in a deluxe room on a full board basis.*

## Day 9

### Paro/Delhi

This morning you are met and driven to Paro Airport where you catch the morning Druk Air flight to Delhi.

This itinerary is purely a suggestion and therefore, you may also wish to consider extending your tour to spend some time exploring Delhi, or travel further afield across India. Bhutan also combines well with a visit to Nepal.

## TRIP PRICE

In each location there is a variety of different category of hotels, lodges and guest houses, therefore the price below is a guide only.

**Price from £2,575 per person, based on two sharing**

The rates quoted are subject to the availability of all services, currency fluctuations, written confirmation and Steppes Travels terms and conditions.

The price includes internal flights, local transport, airport-hotel transfers and tours, accommodation (twin/double) and board. Accommodation is on a full board basis, apart from the stay at Taj Tashi, where accommodation is on a bed & breakfast basis.

The price excludes international flights, lunch and dinner whilst staying at Taj Tashi, extra local excursions and guided tours, travel insurance, visas, single supplements (if applicable) and items of a personal nature, such as laundry, drinks, etc.

**Please note** that the above is only a suggested journey, allowing in-depth visits to the highlights of the country and the chance to explore the wide range of possibilities this fascinating country has to offer. We have a separate list of escorted tours and specialise in tailoring individual itineraries to your particular interests and requirements. This journey idea serves more as a general guide on what there is to see and do, as well as a guide on price.

### Why Travel with Steppes?

Steppes Travel was founded in 1989 with the objective of creating a travel company where service and knowledge are of the highest priority. We aim to design itineraries and include the highlights of any country, whilst taking travellers off the beaten track to see lesser known, interesting places not frequented by large numbers of tourists. We offer individuals the ability to travel safely in remote areas, with the knowledge that we have travelled there before.

### Financial Protection

Steppes Travel is a fully bonded tour operator that complies with the Civil Aviation Authority bonding conditions of the UK. This fully guarantees your money in the unlikely event of us going out of business before you start your holiday. Our ATOL number is 6945 and we have full insurance to cover the financial failure of an airline. In addition, all accommodation-only bookings (such as hotels, lodges and boats) which are not covered by the ATOL regulations are financially protected with all payments being held in a separate trust account until the date of departure. This is in accordance with the Package Travel Regulations Act 1992.

### Specialist Knowledge

We demand and employ only a very high calibre of staff. All of our specialists have a wealth of travel experience and have travelled, and continue to travel, extensively throughout their regions of specialisation. You can therefore rely on their first hand knowledge and expertise. Some have been with us for more than ten years. They will tell you about those intimate, friendly hotels and introduce you to our charismatic guides - those little extra qualities that make your holiday both unique and special.

### A Tailor-made Journey

After an initial discussion with you, one of our specialists will create a unique itinerary for your trip, designed around your own interests, preferred style of accommodation and the pace at which you like to travel. This will be fine tuned until you are completely satisfied with it. Throughout this whole process, you will be dealt with by the same specialist and you are welcome to call them at any time.

#### 24 hour Emergency Service

We have an emergency service so that we can be contacted 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

#### Recognition

More than 65% of our business is achieved through recommendations, referrals and repeat bookings. This, for us, is the highest endorsement we could have. In addition, our 20 years of experience in this specialist travel sector confirms our expertise.

**Please contact the Steppes East team on 01285 651010 or visit our website [www.steppestravel.co.uk](http://www.steppestravel.co.uk) for further information.**

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