

Classic Bhutan



Prepared for
Steppes Travel Clients

QUICK REFERENCE ITINERARY

Day 1	Depart UK
Day 2	Arrive Delhi
Day 3	Delhi/Paro/Thimphu
Day 4	Thimphu
Day 5	Thimphu/Punakha
Day 6	Punakha/Bumthang
Day 7	Bumthang
Day 8	Bumthang
Day 9	Bumthang/Gangtey
Day 10	Gangtey
Day 11	Gangtey/Paro
Day 12	Paro
Day 13	Paro/Delhi
Day 14	Fly Delhi / UK

SteppeoTravel
travel beyond the ordinary

DETAILED TRIP ITINERARY

Day 1

Depart UK

Depart UK on chosen airline.

Day 2

Arrive Delhi

Arrive in Delhi.



Arrival you are met and transferred to the Leela Kempinski Hotel.

The Leela is close to the airport and a convenient place to stay before your onward flight to Bhutan.

Overnight at The Leela Kempinski in a deluxe room on a bed & breakfast basis.

Day 3

Delhi/Paro/Thimphu



This morning you are met and driven to Delhi Airport where you catch the Druk Air flight to Paro, departing Delhi at 06:35 and arriving in Paro at 09:25.

On arrival you are met by your driver and guide for the trip and driven to Thimphu, a 1 hour drive. Arrival check in and rest of day at leisure to acclimatise.

Overnight at Hotel Galingkha in a standard room on a full board basis.

Day 4

Thimphu



Today take a full day sightseeing visiting the Tashichho Dzong on the banks of the Wang Chu, and the largest working monastery in the country, and also where the National Assembly and the King's Throne Room are housed (please note that this visit is only possible when the monks are not in residence).

Further sightseeing of the capital may include the Painting School, which was established in 1975 and where three different arts namely carving, painting and free hand arts are taught.



After lunch visit the National Library where the State Holy Books are preserved. The National Library is constructed like a temple so that there is an altar on every floor of the building. The ground floor has eight Chortens (stupas) representing the eight great deeds of Buddha. The collection of holy books in this floor are namely Kanjurs and Tenjurs (speeches of Buddha), and statues of Shabdrung, Padmasambhava and Amitayus are placed on the altar of the first floor. The holy books are the oldest in the Kingdom, and the script in these books is written in gold. The top floor houses printing blocks and other historical instruments utilised in bygone days.

Finally optional visit to Handicrafts Emporium premises to see the ceramics, paintings and other handicraft products available for purchase in the Kingdom.

Overnight at Hotel Galingkha in a standard room on a full board basis.

Day 5



Thimphu/Punakha

This morning you are met and driven to Punakha, a 3 hour drive over the spectacular Dochula Pass (3100m) where on a clear day there are spectacular views of the Northern Himalaya Range.

This afternoon you are taken to visit Punakha.

The Punakha Dzong, the ancient capital of Bhutan, is set on a split of land just above the confluence of the Pho Chu and the Mo Chu. Built by Ngawang Namgyal in 1637 this sacred Dzong has played a prominent part in the civil and religious life of the country. The remains of the Shabdrung are entombed here in the chapel of Machin Llakhang. The present Je Khenpa or Chief Abbot still uses the Dzong as his winter seat. The road that leads to Punakha from Thimphu crosses the 10,216 feet high Dochu La Pass that heralds the most enchanting view of Bhutan. Soft green herbs and riotous canvas of flowers, make the view breathtaking.

Overnight at Hotel Zangdopelri in a standard room on a full board basis.

Day 6



Punakha/Bumthang

You are driven to Bumthang today, a 7 hour drive, via Trongsa.

After breakfast you will be driven to Bumthang, which is a lovely journey. Continue over the Pelela pass (10,229ft) which is marked by a large prayer flag and tops a forest of rhododendron and magnolia. 26 miles short of Trongsa you will pass the unusual looking Chendebji Chorten which is Nepalese in style and whitewashed with eyes painted at the four cardinal points. Trongsa Dzong is a magnificent sight and well worth a visit.

Continue your journey eastwards - crossing the Yutong La Pass (4450m) from where, on clear days, one can view a few peaks of the Northern Himalayan Range. The journey is approximately 68 kms/2 1/2 hrs. Bumthang is a name given to the region of four valleys namely Chumey, Choekhor, Tang and Ura with an altitude ranging from 2600m to 4000m. Today it is a district with its administrative headquarters at Jakar. Choekhor and Chumey are agricultural valleys whilst Tang and Ura are predominantly yak and sheep breeding areas.

Overnight at Swiss Guest House in a standard room on a full board basis.

Day 7

Bumthang

During your stay in Bumthang there is plenty to see and do. Your guide will advise you accordingly. Take day hikes in the beautiful valleys and come across village communities and market towns.

Overnight at Swiss Guest House in a standard room on a full board basis.

Day 8

Bumthang

Bumthang is the valley where the majestic 'Castle of the White Bird' stands - Jakar Dzong. It is surrounded by an impressive wall that is almost one mile in circumference. In its centre a tower soars 150 feet into the air.



The Bumthang valley is the most spiritual place in Bhutan - tales of Padmasambhava dominate the holy valley. It is home to the sacred Jampa Lhakhang and to the Kurje Monastery. Both temples are believed to have been built in the 8th century by Singhu Raja after Padmasambhava cured the ailing ruler and converted him to the Buddhist faith. Bumthang is also home of the great Buddhist teacher Pema Lingpa to whose descendants the present dynasty traces its ancestry. Pema Lingpa was a blacksmith who was led by mystic forces to discover spiritual treasures at the bottom of a burning lake. Not knowing how to spread the word contained in the treasures, he hid away until one night the Dakinis, or female heavenly spirits, revealed to him the truth of all religions and imparted to him the power to preach. Legends say that as he spoke flowers dropped from the sky and vanished into rays of light.

Overnight at Swiss Guest House in a standard room on a full board basis.

Day 9

Bumthang/Gangtey

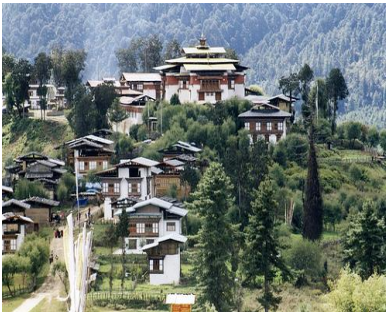
You return west via Trongsa, the only road back to Paro. Stop enroute to visit those places you missed on the way.

You then take a diversion off the road into the Phobjikha Valley where you spend 2 nights.

Overnight at Dewachen in a standard room on a full board basis.

Day 10

Gangtey



The area is famous as the winter home to the very rare Black-Necked Crane. Experts estimate that fewer than 800 cranes exist in the wild. The majestic birds stay in the valley from November through March.

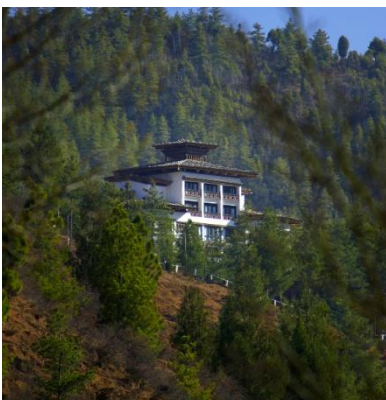
In the afternoon your sightseeing will include the Gangtey Gumpa which is perched atop a small hill that rises from the valley floor. The Gumpa was founded by Pema Trinley in 1613 and his religious traditions are still taught today.

Overnight at Dewachen in a standard room on a full board basis.

Day 11

Gangtey/Paro

Continue west back to Paro today, a 4.5 hour drive. You spend the next 2 nights in Paro. Check into hotel and remainder of day at leisure.



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 King 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 superior room on a bed & breakfast basis.

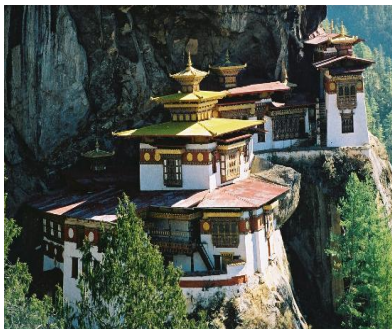
Day 12

Paro

Amid a patchwork of rice paddies, wheat fields, trout streams and scattered settlements lies the historic Paro valley. The Paro Chu flows from the watershed of the Jhumolhair range. On a hillside stands Paro Dzong at an altitude of just over 7,000ft. The Paro Dzong, named Rinpung Dzong - 'Fortress of the heap of Jewels' is the site of the Paro Tshechu, the most important Bhutanese historic religious festival which takes place in March.



Further up the valley is the site of 'The Tiger's Nest' - an allusion to the popular legend that Padma Sambhava flew and landed here from Tibet on his way to cure King Singhu of Bhutan. This monastery and its attached buildings were built on a 3000ft rock face and had become the main symbol of Bhutan - but a fire destroyed most of the buildings in April 1998.



Today you will have a full day excursion to the famous Taktsang (Tigers' Nest) up to the view point with lunch at Taktsang cafeteria. Legend says that Guru Padmasambhava came flying on the back of a tigress and landed on the spot where Taktsang Monastery stands today, to meditate and subdue a demoness. Virtually clinging to the cliff, it is a place of pilgrimage and every Bhutanese tries to visit it at least once in their lifetime. Later return to Paro with time for shopping or a stroll around the town.

Overnight at Uma Paro in a superior room on a bed & breakfast basis.

Day 13

Paro / Delhi

You are met this morning and driven to Paro Airport where you catch the Druk Air flight back to Delhi. Departing Paro at 11:25 and arriving in Delhi at 13:40.



On arrival in Delhi you are met and driven to The Leela Kempinski Hotel. You have access to a room up until your check out late this evening and transfer to Delhi Airport.

Day use room at Leela Kempinski in a deluxe room. Room available between 10:00 and 22:00. Transfer to airport.

Day 14

Depart Delhi

Depart Delhi on chosen carrier.

TRIP NOTES

- Price From:** £2,595 per person sharing a double room
- Includes:** Druk air flights in economy class, accommodation with full board throughout in Bhutan (all meals to be taken at local restaurants only) and with breakfast in India, all transfers and sightseeing with English speaking guides, entrance fees, portage at airports, late check out on last day, visa fee for Bhutan.
- Excludes:** International flights, additional drinks/meals, items of a personal nature, visa charge for India, tips.

Steppestravel
travel beyond the ordinary

Additional Notes:

A Note about Accommodation

With regard to accommodation in Bhutan, it should be noted that whilst the best possible accommodation will be provided for the duration of your stay in Bhutan - the facilities and general standards of accommodation are not by any means of the same level that one would find in perhaps a five star grade hotel in India. Accommodation generally is much more basic - in some cases - more like a guest house than a hotel. Accommodation standards do not detract from the beauty of the country and if taken in the right spirit will not detract from what is essentially a privileged stay in a fascinating kingdom.

A Note About Flight and Sightseeing Schedules

Clients should note that Druk Air flight schedules and sightseeing arrangements can sometimes be amended at short notice. With regard to sightseeing, public museums and national monuments/dzongs can sometimes be closed and you should be prepared that you may not see all that is on the itinerary. The weather also affects the Druk Flights flying in and out of the country so delays should be expected.

The international air fares that we use are special discounted IT (inclusive tour) fares, which, whilst good value for money do carry strict booking conditions (e.g. have to be bought in conjunction with elements on the ground and are subject to certain restrictions, conditions and class availability).

Optional Extras

Here are some suggestions of ways to enhance and therefore make your holiday even more special.

- Upgrade your flight from economy to premium economy or business class
- Upgrade your hotel room
- Organise a personal shopper or expert guide to show you around
- Organise a special celebration meal or unique activity or excursion
- Pre-book valet, airport parking, airport hotels and airport lounges.

If you wish to upgrade or pre-book any of the above options then please do contact us.

YOUR CONSULTANT

Charlotte Lawton

Asia, Country Director

charlotte@steppestravel.co.uk

Emma Lowther

Carole Williams

Asia, Sales Support

emma.lowther@steppestravel.co.uk

carole@steppestravel.co.uk

Tel: 01285 651010

Fax: 01285 885888



Following a childhood in Nepal and extensive travel throughout India, Bhutan and other Himalayan regions, Charlotte specialises in creating tailor made itineraries to the Indian subcontinent. Being so passionate about these regions, she travels 2 or 3 times a year to keep her knowledge fresh and current and has recently returned from an extensive trip to Bhutan.

steppestravel.co.uk
travel beyond the ordinary