

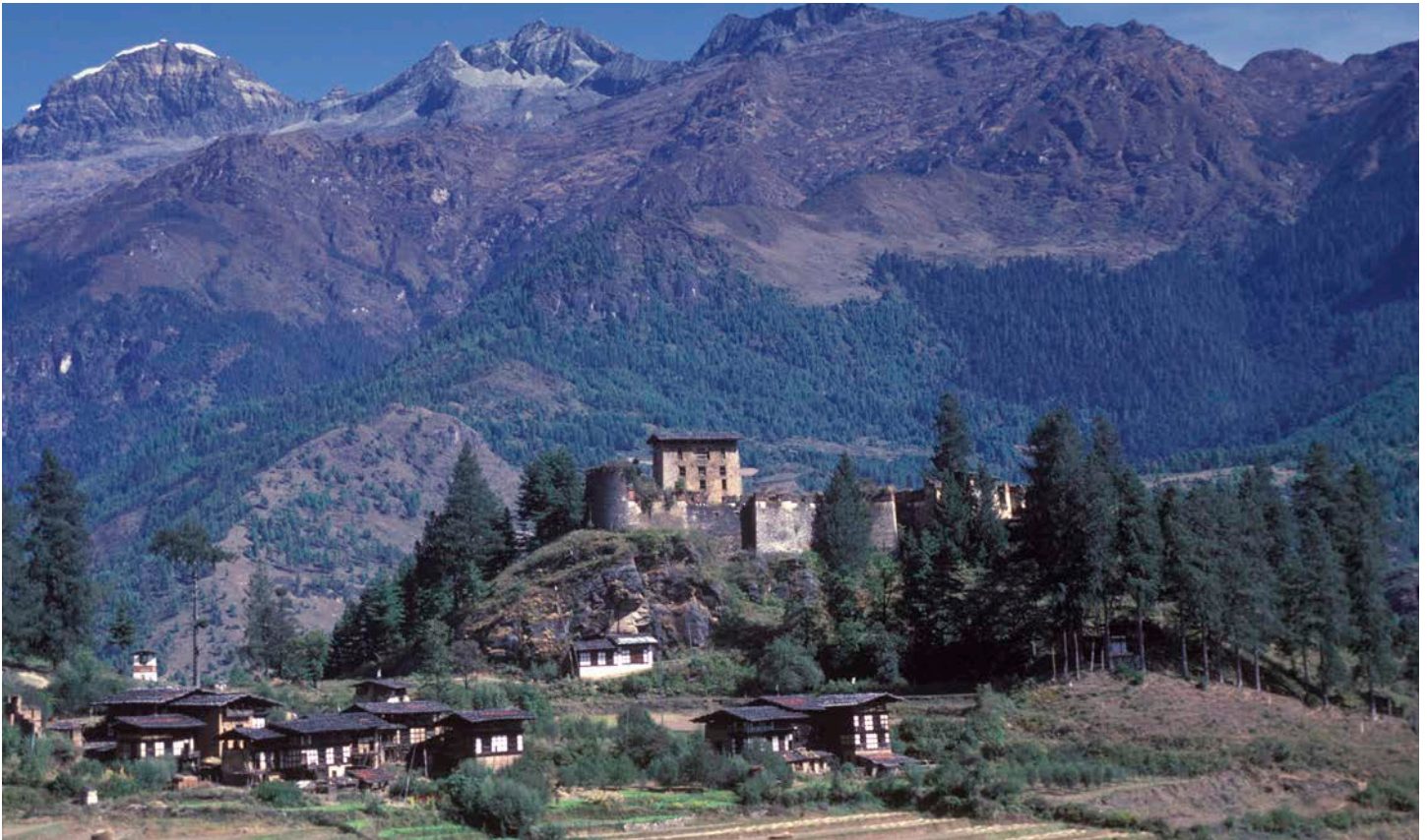
BHUTAN EXPLORER

Seven Days

Season: September – April



NOMADIC EXPEDITIONS



BHUTAN EXPLORER

This is a Private Journey and can be scheduled to fit your preferred travel dates.

Recommended Season: September – April

Nestled in the Himalayas, Bhutan is a small kingdom that boasts pristine natural beauty, with snow-capped peaks and valleys teeming with endangered wildlife such as the snow leopard and golden langur. Despite being the size of Switzerland and having a population of less than 800,000, Bhutan's vibrant and active Buddhist culture, deeply rooted in centuries-old traditions, is one of its greatest attractions.

The country's commitment to preserving its cultural identity is evident in the national policy that it has implemented. For the Bhutanese, their country is more than just a place; it is Druk Yul, or "Land of the Thunder Dragon," and they proudly identify themselves as Drukpa. Bhutan's unique approach to measuring national progress through Gross National Happiness has also brought it worldwide recognition. This approach is complemented by Bhutan's unwavering commitment to environmental conservation, making it a prime destination for travelers interested in sustainable travel. Visitors can experience the country's unparalleled natural beauty and rich cultural heritage through a range of activities, including hiking through lush forests, exploring ancient monasteries, and savoring local cuisine. By embracing sustainable tourism practices during their visit, travelers can play an active role in supporting Bhutan's efforts to protect its environment and cultural identity.

RECOMMENDED SEASON: September – April

ACTIVITY LEVEL:

This cultural trip through Bhutan blends moderate physical activities with cultural experiences. Participants will walk several hours each day, sometimes on uneven terrain, and climb stairs at various locations. Easy to moderate hikes are also included. Cultural visits to monasteries, temples, local markets, and museums offer insights into the country's rich history and traditions. Winding mountain roads connect the destinations, so some travel time in vehicles is required. Flights in and out of Bhutan may be delayed or canceled with little notice due to mountain weather.

HIGHLIGHTS:

Explore Thimphu, the capital of Bhutan

Visit Punakha, Dzong, one of the most beautiful and well preserved dzongs in Bhutan

Take an awe-inspiring hike to the legendary Tiger's Nest
See the black-necked cranes of Phobjikha

ACCOMMODATIONS:

2 nights at Zhiwaling Ascent, Thimphu

2 night at Uma, Punakha

2 nights at Zhiwaling Heritage, Paro

**Day 1
WELCOME TO BHUTAN**

The flight into Bhutan takes you close to the great Himalayas, offering dazzling scenic views of some of the world's highest mountain peaks. As you enter the Paro Valley, you will sweep past forested hills with the silvery Pa Chu (Paro River) meandering down the valley below. Paro Dzong (fortress) and Ta Dzong (watchtower) on the hills above the town will be a fine sight. Our Bhutanese guide - who will be with us for the full trip - will meet us at Paro airport, and after completion of arrival formalities we will be transferred to Bhutan's capital, Thimphu, an exciting blend of tradition and modernity.



After checking into our hotel in Thimphu, we visit the Trashichhodzong. This impressive fortress/monastery houses the Secretariat building, the throne room of His Majesty the King and various government offices. It is also the summer residence of the Chief Abbot and central monk body. Walking back through the bazaar, we return to our hotel.

(Zhiwaling Ascent, L, D)

**Day 2
EXPLORE THIMPU**

Today starts off with a visit to the Institute for Zorig Chusum (commonly known as the Painting School), where students undertake a six-year course on the 13 traditional arts and crafts of Bhutan, and later continue on to the Textile and Folk Heritage Museums. These museums, both of which opened in 2001, provide fascinating insights into Bhutanese material culture and way of life.

From there, we head to the National Memorial Chorten. The construction of this chorten was envisaged by the third king, His Majesty Jigme Dorji Wangchuck, as a monument to world peace and prosperity. Completed in 1974 after his untimely death, it is both a memorial to the Late King (the "Father of Modern Bhutan") and a monument to world peace. The paintings and statues inside the monument provide a deep insight into Buddhist philosophy.

(Zhiwaling Ascent; B, L, D)

**Day 3
TO PUNAKHA**

After an early breakfast, you drive up to Dochu-la pass (3,088m/10,130 ft), stopping briefly here to take in the view and admire the chorten, mani wall and prayer flags that decorate the highest point on the road (see view below).

If skies are clear, the following peaks can be seen from this pass (left to right): Masagang (7,158m), Tsendagang (6,960m), Terigang (7,060m), Jejegangphugang (7,158 m), Kangphugang (7,170 m), Zongphugang (7,060 m), a table mountain that dominates the isolated region of Lunana, and, finally, Gangkar Puensum (7,497m), the highest peak in Bhutan.

You will arrive in Punakha in the afternoon, and will visit Punakha Dzong, a massive structure built at the junction of two rivers. Punakha was the capital of Bhutan until 1955, and still serves as the winter residence of the monk body. The first King, Ugyen Wangchuck, was crowned here in 1907. The fortress has withstood





several damages from fire, earthquake and flood. The latest flood of October 1994 caused great damages to the fortress but miraculously spared the statue of the Buddha.

(Uma Punakha; B, L, D)

Day 4 PUNAKHA VALLEY

We have the day to explore the lovely Punakha Valley. After breakfast embark on a walking excursion to Chimi Lhakhang, situated on a hillock in the centre of the valley. It is dedicated to Lama Drukpa Kuenley, who in the late 15th Century used humor, songs, and outrageous behavior to dramatize his teachings. Due to this, he is also known as the "Divine Madman." This temple is also known as the temple of fertility. It is widely believed that couples who do not have children are usually blessed with a child soon after praying at the temple. It is a 30-minute walk from the road to the temple.

The trail leads across rice fields to the tiny settlement of Pana, which translates as "field." The trail then follows a tiny stream downhill to Yoaka and across more fields before making a short climb to Chimi Lhakhang.

In the afternoon you take a beautiful hike to the regal Khamsum Yuelley Namgel 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 Chu and up towards the mountainous peaks of Gasa and beyond.

(Densa Resort; B, L, D)

Day 5 TO PARO

After breakfast we return over Doucha La Pass and continue to Paro. On arrival visit Ta Dzong, originally built as a watchtower, which now houses the National Museum. The extensive collection includes antique thangka paintings, textiles, weapons and armor, household objects and a rich assortment of natural and historic artifacts. Walking down the trail, we will come to Rinpung Dzong ("Fortress of the Heap of Jewels"), which has a long and fascinating history. Along the wooden galleries lining the inner courtyard are fine wall paintings illustrating Buddhist lore such as four friends, the old man of long life, the wheel of life, scenes from the life of Milarepa, Mount Sumeru and other cosmic mandalas.

(Zhiwa Ling Heritage; B, L, D)




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Day 6
EXPLORE PARO VALLEY

This morning we take an excursion to Taktsang, the most famous of Bhutanese monasteries. It is said that Guru Rinpoche arrived here on the back of a tigress and meditated at this monastery, hence its moniker of the "Tiger's Nest." The hiking excursion to the monastery's viewpoint, a 2,000-ft climb, takes about four hours round trip. We will have ponies to ride if you feel the hike is too strenuous.

During our exploration of this "idyll" valley, we will experience the wonders of the Drukgyel Dzong, a ruined fortress where Bhutanese warriors fought Tibetan invaders centuries ago. The snowy dome of sacred Chomolhari, the "mountain goddess," can be seen in all her glory from the approach road to the Dzong. Along the way we will see the 7th-Century Kyichu Lhakhang, one of the 108 temples built in the Himalayas by the Tibetan King Songtsen Gampo. The building of this temple marked the introduction of Buddhism to Bhutan.

In the late afternoon, meet a Zhiwa Ling Heritage staff and learn about their sustainable initiatives, including conservation of Bhutanese culture and heritage, waste reduction and management, water conservation, local sourcing of food, and community engagement..

(Zhiwa Ling Heritage; B, L, D)

Day 7
DEPART BHUTAN

After an early breakfast you will be transferred to the airport for your outbound flight to Bangkok or Delhi.

B=Breakfast L=Lunch D=Dinner

Nomadic Expeditions reserves the right to change the above itinerary if necessary.



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2023 LAND PRICE

2 Travellers: \$8,445 per person

Govt. of Bhutan (SDF): \$1200 per person
(Sustainable Development Fee)

Internal Asia Airfare: \$1140 per person
(Bangkok-Paro-Bangkok)

NOTE: Land Price is based on double occupancy and Internal Airfare is subject to change by airlines.

WHY TRAVEL WITH NOMADIC EXPEDITIONS?

Unrivaled Expertise

Nomadic Expeditions was founded in 1992. Nothing can compete with the experience we have attained over 25 years of designing luxury adventure travel to Asia. While each trip we design is slightly different than its predecessor, our breadth of knowledge, network of contacts, and experience in the field is unrivaled.

Our People

We hire the best in the business to create and execute memorable journeys for our clients. From our Expedition Specialists in the United States, Ulaanbaatar, Lhasa, and Thimpu who turn wish lists into reality to our English-speaking, professionally trained guides who share their extensive knowledge of the culture and natural history of our destinations, our staff is what makes Nomadic Expeditions successful.

Passion for Travel

While our journeys open your eyes to a whole new world of experiences, we understand that choosing to book a trip with us requires time spent away from friends, family, and work. Your time is precious and we take that to heart. It's why we design journeys that go beyond a checklist of attractions. When you travel with us, we want you to remember drinking tea with a nomadic family or digging for fossils with a renowned paleontologist. We imbue our trips with encounters, whether it's with a local resident, a high-ranking government official, or a renowned wildlife conservationist, so you take home more than a set of photographs to frame on your nightstand.

Our Philosophy

Nomadic Expeditions was founded on the principle of treading lightly long before sustainable travel was a buzz phrase. Every expedition is undertaken with the greatest respect for the lands we explore and the local people we meet. Those who travel with us do so with the assurance that the preservation and protection of the ecosystems and cultures we visit is of the utmost importance to us, both as individuals and as a company. Respect for the places we travel to is at the heart of everything we do, but over our 25+ years we have realized additional opportunities where we can lend a hand. We have gone beyond simply treading lightly and have wholeheartedly partnered with local communities and regions. Read more about our sustainable practices and philanthropic efforts on our website.

LAND PRICE INCLUDES:

- All accommodations as listed in the above itinerary based on double occupancy and inclusive of all taxes
- Ground transportation in Bhutan as described in the itinerary;
- Transfers on arrival and departure;
- All meals in Bhutan as noted in the itinerary;
- All excursions, entrance fees, and visits to monasteries, Dzongs, museums as described in itinerary;
- Extensive pre-departure notes, reading list, and travel tips;
- Bilingual guide throughout your stay in Bhutan.

LAND PRICE DOES NOT INCLUDE:

- International airfare;
- Govt. of Bhutan mandatory Tourism fees (listed above)
- Gratuities to tour guide, drivers, bell boys etc.;
- Comprehensive medical and trip insurance;
- Excess baggage charges;
- Photography and video fees;
- Food and beverages not included in the group meals;
- Items of a personal nature, including alcoholic beverages, laundry and telephone calls;
- Other items not specifically mentioned as included.

We would love to share this exceptional adventure with you!

Our Expedition Specialists are available from 9:00 AM- 5:00 PM EST, Monday thru Friday

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