

Festivals of Bhutan

Trip Code: BDT

Version:



CULTURE



GUIDED GROUP



LEISURELY



HIGHLIGHTS

- Join the festivities at one of Bhutan's colourful festivals or 'tshechu'
- Visit the gravity-defying 'Tiger's Nest' Monastery in the Paro Valley
- The beautiful valleys and spectacular monasteries of Bumthang
- Stay in the Phobjika Valley, winter home of the rare Black Necked Crane
- Visit Bhutan's impressive dzongs and enjoy an archery demonstration

AT A GLANCE

- 10 days touring and sightseeing
- Max altitude - 3600 metres
- Join at Kathmandu

ACCOMMODATIONS & MEALS

[VIEW DATES, PRICES & BOOK YOUR HOLIDAY HERE](#)

Introduction

This is the ultimate cultural journey through the Kingdom of Bhutan, crafted from KE's 30 years' experience travelling in The Land of the Thunder Dragon. The itinerary is designed to make sure you see all of the most iconic sights, from Paro as far east as Jakar and the Bumthang Valley and each departure is timed to coincide with one of Bhutan's colourful festivals or 'tshechu'.

Travelling via Kathmandu, the adventure begins with a flight across the Himalaya to Paro. We'll stretch our legs with a walk up to the incredible cliff-hanging Tigers' Nest monastery, and enjoy an archery display (Bhutan's national sport), before driving eastwards to the quieter, central district of Bumthang. The valleys of Bumthang are famous for their unspoilt beauty and the area contains several important monasteries. Here we will also enjoy an excursion to the remote Tang Valley, where we can witness an elaborate drum ceremony at the Pemachiling Nunnery. Leaving Bumthang we make our way back towards the west on one of the world's most scenic roads. Crossing high passes bedecked with multicoloured prayer flags and in the company of grazing yaks, we can enjoy panoramic views of the snow-capped Himalaya. En route to the capital Thimphu we will stop overnight at Gantey in the Phobjika Valley, the overwinter home of the rare black-necked cranes, and in Punakha where the impressive Dzong was once served as the winter capital. We end with sightseeing in the capital of Thimphu before flying back to Kathmandu.

****Please note that each departure follows a slightly altered itinerary in order to accommodate a festival visit.****

Please note also that the dates of Bhutanese festivals are tentative and can be changed at any time.

BOOK EARLY for BHUTAN! With only two airlines operating flights into Paro from Kathmandu, seats are limited and in high demand. Book early to guarantee your place on your chosen departure. We strongly advise booking a year in advance where possible.

Is this holiday for you?

Though this is principally a cultural touring holiday, some of the most extraordinary sights in Bhutan, like the Tigers' Nest monastery, can only be accessed on foot and therefore you will want to be in reasonable physical shape to get the most out of your holiday - this is the Himalaya after all! As this is a comprehensive tour of Bhutan's special places and iconic sights, there is by necessity some time spent on the road and you should be prepared for this. Our 2024 itineraries drive to and from the central district of Bumthang (and we added a day to allow this). Unpredictable flight schedules meant that we

could no longer include the outward journey to Bumthang by plane. Our drive back to Paro is carefully staged to maximise the time spent in each place we visit. During the road journeys there will be plenty of time to visit the key places of interest along the way, and to make the most of photo opportunities!

Itinerary

Version:

Holiday Information

What's Included

- A professional and qualified tour leader
- Bhutan visa fee
- Flights between Kathmandu and Paro
- All transfers and land transport involved in the itinerary
- All accommodation as described
- All meals
- FREE down jacket hire is available for this holiday on request

What's not Included

- Travel insurance
- Nepalese visa costs
- Tips for drivers and trek staff
- Miscellaneous expenses - beer and souvenirs etc

Joining Arrangements & Transfers

The holiday starts at the group hotel in Kathmandu.

Airport transfers are provided for all clients arriving Kathmandu on Day 1 and departing on the last day of the Land Only itinerary and all clients with additional nights booked through KE.

Hotel contact details and an emergency telephone number will be provided with your booking confirmation.

Meal Plan

All meals are included in the holiday price.

Food & Water

It is not recommended to drink untreated water from the taps. If you are on a trekking or cycling holiday, water is supplied to fill up your individual bottles. This will be boiled, filtered or provided in large jerry cans or 5 litre bottles. Additionally you should take purification tablets or a filter bottle (such as a [Water-To-Go bottle](#)) to treat your water when in towns or where water is not supplied. We do not encourage the purchasing of single use plastic bottles.

Typically the food in Bhutan is not very spicy, though the Bhutanese do themselves eat a lot of chillies both raw and cooked. Hotels throughout Bhutan generally offer a range of dishes including those designed for the western palette. All meals are included in the trip price.

Accommodation

This holiday includes 2 nights in Kathmandu, one en route to Bhutan and one on the return journey. In Kathmandu we use a comfortable, centrally located hotel.

In Bhutan, we use the best available standard of hotel and lodge accommodation at Paro, Thimphu, Jakar, Gantey and Punakha.

All rooms are en suite throughout. Accommodation is twin share. If you are travelling by yourself you will be paired up with another traveller of the same sex. Single rooms are available for a supplementary cost. If you are planning to extend your holiday, additional nights in Kathmandu are available on request.

Group Leader & Support Staff

The group will be met and escorted in Kathmandu by a local KE representative. Once in Bhutan the group will be accompanied throughout by a professional and qualified tour leader.

Altitude

This holiday involves going to moderately high altitude. During the course of your trip you will reach altitudes in excess of 2500 metres. Most people will have no difficulty with this level of altitude but before coming on the holiday, we recommend you read the advice on [trekking at high altitude](#). You can also talk to one of our trekking experts if you have any concerns about altitude.

Spending Money

Approximately £150 - £200 should be allowed for miscellaneous expenses including drinks and the £40 - £50 you can expect to pay in tips to local staff. There are some quite interesting souvenirs to be bought in Kathmandu and in Bhutan. The Nepalese unit of currency is the Rupee and Bhutan's is the ngultrum which is tied to the value of the Indian rupee. It is not necessary to purchase Nepalese or Bhutanese currency before you travel. You will need very little Nepalese currency during your outward transit through Kathmandu and you can change a small amount at the airport or in your hotel for drinks etc.. You will be able to obtain your Bhutanese currency on arrival at the airport in Paro. Sterling and US dollars are readily exchanged in Nepal and in Bhutan. Credit cards can be used to purchase many goods in Kathmandu and larger towns in Bhutan and are particularly useful for expensive souvenirs. It is possible to withdraw cash (rupees only) from cash machines in Kathmandu using credit and debit cards.

Guidance on Tipping

Tipping is discretionary but is an accepted way of saying thank you for good service. The total amount that you can expect to pay in tips for your guides, drivers etc.. is \$110 (in ngultrum equivalent). Around \$20 per person of this should go into a kitty for hotel porters and restaurant staff (you can give this to your tour leader who will make sure it is distributed fairly).

We suggest you then collect the remaining amount into a group kitty, which you can divide between your Bhutanese tour leader, assistant guides and drivers at the end of your time in Bhutan.

Baggage Allowance

For this holiday you should take one piece of luggage and a daypack. It is possible to leave extra baggage at the hotel in Kathmandu and also in Paro. Checked baggage allowance for the flight from Kathmandu to Paro is 30kg and for the domestic flight from Paro to Jakar it is 20kg. For other international flights please check your baggage allowance with your airline.

Group Size & Holiday Status

For each holiday there is a minimum number of participants required to enable it to go ahead. Once the minimum number is reached, the trip status will change from 'Available' to 'Guaranteed to run'. You can check the trip status for each departure in the 'Dates and Prices' table. Other than in exceptional circumstances, we will not cancel a trip once it has achieved this guaranteed to run status so you are free to proceed with your international flight booking and other travel arrangements.

General Information

Passport & Visas

The information that we provide is for UK passport holders. A passport with 6 months remaining validity at the end of your stay is generally required, and you should have at least 2 blank pages for each country that you visit.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you have the correct travel documents and visas for your holiday. Please ensure that you check for the latest advice before travel. For the most up to date information on entry requirements, please visit the [UK Government website](#).

Visa Nepal

All nationalities require a visa. The visa process is partly automated and the fee is \$30 for 15 days, \$50 for 30 days, \$125 for 90 days. The visa is FREE for children under 10 years. The visa allows multiple re-entry. Payment must be made in cash and USD, GBP or Euros are accepted.

Part of this on-arrival visa process involves filling in a 'Tourist Visa Application Form' and you can simplify the procedure at Kathmandu Airport by filling this form in online (**within 15 days of travelling**) at [this link](#). This generates a receipt which you present (hard copy or saved on your phone) on arrival. This should allow you to go straight to the cashier to pay for your visa and has the potential to save you time in the visa queue.

Whilst these are not now needed for the visa process, we recommend that you travel with at least 2 spare passport photographs.

Visa Bhutan

All nationalities require a visa. KE will apply for the visa for you and the visa fee is included in your holiday cost.

Your individual visas will be issued to you in Kathmandu prior to your check-in for the flight to Paro in Bhutan and your passport will be stamped on arrival in Paro.

To make the arrangements for your Bhutan Visa we need:

- 1). A clear and complete colour scan of the information page of your passport.
- 2). A colour scan of a recent passport style photo. Portrait orientation on a white background - with eyes open and forehead and ears clearly visible.

Please email these scans to us at the earliest opportunity.

Health & Vaccinations

If you have a severe allergy please inform the KE office before you travel. We will do all we can to help, but we cannot guarantee an allergy free environment on KE trips. You will need to carry your own treatment for the allergy with you, as 'adrenaline auto-injectors' are not carried as standard by KE leaders and staff. You should inform your leader on arrival of your allergy, and let them know where you keep your adrenaline pen.

Dengue fever is a known risk in places visited. It is a tropical viral disease spread by daytime biting mosquitoes. There is currently no vaccine or prophylaxis available and therefore the best form of prevention is to avoid being bitten. We recommend you [take precautions to avoid mosquito bites](#).

Vaccinations

You should contact your doctor or travel clinic to check whether you require any specific vaccinations or other preventive measures. You should be up to date with routine courses and boosters as recommended in the UK e.g. diphtheria-tetanus-polio and measles-mumps-rubella, along with hepatitis A and typhoid.

Malarial prophylaxis is not usually required for trips in the mountains, however if you are visiting rural and remote low lying areas then they might be necessary.

On holidays to more remote areas you should also have a dentist check up. A good online resource is [Travel Health Pro](#).

Preparing for your Holiday

Getting some additional exercise before coming on an active holiday makes a lot of sense. The fitter you are, after all, the more enjoyable you will find the experience.

Climate

The best time to visit Bhutan is in the period before and after the Indian Monsoon which brings heavy rain to the foothills of Bhutan. The pre-monsoon months of March and April are the best for seeing the colourful blooms at lower altitudes, particularly the rhododendron. The post-monsoon months of October and November usually offer the clearest skies for views of the Himalaya. During both pre- and post- monsoon, the weather in Bhutan is normally bright and clear in the mornings with possible cloud building through the day. Day-time highs of around 20°C can be expected at altitudes around 2000 metres, whilst at the high points of the trip the maximum daytime temperature will be around 15°C. At night it can be quite chilly and in some places the temperature will drop to a few degrees above freezing.

Travel Aware

As a reputable tour operator, KE supports the British Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office's '[Travel Aware](#)' campaign to enable British citizens to prepare for their journeys overseas. The 'Travel Aware' website provides a single, authoritative source of advice for all kinds of travellers and we recommend that before travel, all KE clients visit the official UK Government website at travelaware.campaign.gov.uk and read the FCDO Travel Advice for their chosen destination. North Americans can also check out the U.S. Department of State website: www.travel.state.gov for essential travel advice and tips.

KE treat the safety and security of all clients as the most important aspect of any trip we organise. We would not run any trip that we did not consider reasonably safe. Should the FCDO advise against travel for any reason, we will contact everyone booked to travel to discuss the situation. We receive regular updates directly from the FCDO and are in constant touch with our contacts on the ground. If you have any questions about government travel advice, please call our office.

Single Use Plastic

KE do not encourage the use of single use plastic items. We are ensuring that our agents all over the world are working together to reduce the problem and educate those around them. We are leading by example in our KE office by reducing our plastic use.

Books

- Bhutan. (Odyssey Illustrated Guide). Pommaret.
- Bhutan. (Lonely Planet Guide).
- Bhutan, Land of the Thunder Dragon. Edmunds.

Maps

Bhutan Himalaya. 1:390,000. Nepa Maps (Himalayan Maphouse)

This map gives a general overview of Bhutan. Relief is indicated by shading and selected altitudes of peaks and passes. Highways, main roads, minor roads, and trekking routes are marked. Symbols denote post offices, dzongs, monuments, places of interest etc. The map is indexed for place names, dzongs, passes and peaks. Inside the map cover are printed some geographical notes on the country and driving or walking times between selected locations.

Travel Insurance

It is an essential condition of joining a holiday with KE Adventure Travel that you have a valid travel insurance policy to cover the cost of medical treatment and to protect the value of your holiday in the event of cancellation. When taking out insurance please ensure the policy you choose covers you for the activities and altitude included in your itinerary.

For appropriate insurance cover we recommend Campbell Irvine Direct. Please go to our [Travel Insurance](#) page for further information and to get a quote.

Equipment Information

Equipment List

Please try to keep the weight of your baggage to a minimum. See the 'baggage allowance' section for further details.

You should bring the following items:

- Walk jacket (down)*
- Comfortable walking shoes
- Socks
- Trousers
- Underwear
- Shirts
- Fleece jacket or warm jumper
- Waterproof jacket
- Sunhat
- Sunglasses

- Headlamp or torch
- Sun protection (including total bloc for lips, nose etc.)
- Water bottle (we encourage re-filling water bottles rather than single use plastic)
- Water purification tablets
- Washbag and toiletries
- Antibacterial handwash
- Small daypack 15 - 20 litres
- Basic First Aid Kit including; antiseptic cream, throat lozenges, diarrhoea treatment (Imodium) painkillers, plasters and blister treatment, and re-hydration salts (Dioralite).

THE FOLLOWING ITEMS ARE OPTIONAL:

- Shorts
- Scarf or buff
- Swimwear
- Travel clothes
- Camera
- Repair kit - (eg. needle, thread, duct tape)
- Reusable cloth bag for shopping (to avoid plastic bags)

Notes

*FREE down jacket hire is included in your KE holiday booking upon request.

Please make all requests at least 6 weeks prior to the trip departure date. Note all hire / rental equipment is issues in Bhutan. Please remember to allow room in your luggage for these items.

FESTIVAL DRESS CODE

The Bhutanese always come dressed in their finest clothing for a festival and so you may want to bring a smarter set of clothes with you to use on the days you are attending the festivals. Long sleeves and long trousers are best, women might want to bring a scarf. Dirty boots or open toed sandals should be avoided where possible. Hats and umbrellas should be avoided.

FESTIVAL ETIQUETTE

Bhutan's Tshechus (festivals) are religious events and the festival grounds are purified and consecrated by lamas. The dancers are in a state of meditation, they believe that they transform themselves into the deities they represent on the dance ground, generating a spiritual power, which purifies, enlightens and blesses the spectators. Out of respect, whilst watching the dances, you should not eat, drink, talk or laugh loudly at inappropriate times. You should not use flash photography and please be respectful when photographing dancers or onlookers. The festivals are not tourist attractions, they are manifestations of religious traditions thousands of year's old, which we are fortunate to be able to witness.

Cotswold Outdoor

Many of the equipment items listed above are available from [Cotswold Outdoor](#) - our '**Official Recommended Outdoor Retailer**'. When you book a holiday with KE you will receive a 12.5% discount with Cotswold Outdoor, Snow+Rock and Runners Need. The discount code can be downloaded from your MyKE account and you can use this code at the checkout, either in store or online.

Land Only Information

The LAND ONLY dates and prices are for joining at the hotel in Kathmandu. Transfers from Tribhuvan International (Kathmandu) Airport to/from the group hotel are provided on the first and last day of the holiday.

Flight Inclusive Information

The FLIGHT INCLUSIVE dates and prices are based on UK flights from London to Kathmandu. Outbound flights will usually depart from the UK in the evening, arriving mid afternoon the following day (day 1 of the itinerary). Return flights will depart Kathmandu usually in the morning of the last day of the itinerary, arriving in the UK later the same day.

Why Choose KE

Why KE

Your Bhutan visa fees, all meals, and return flights from Kathmandu to Paro are included, and there's even FREE down jacket hire available too.

Please Note This document was downloaded on 03/12/2024 and the trip is subject to change