BHUTAN

Trek Bhutan

Duration: 11 days

The small Buddhist Kingdom of Bhutan, Land of the Thunder Dragon, lies in the soaring peaks and forested valleys of the eastern Himalayas. Isolated from the world for centuries, it is famously protective of its traditional, sacred heritage. Access to most of the country is restricted, though any trekker making the effort to travel to this remote mountainous region will receive a warm welcome.

Our trek follows the classic Druk Path between Paro and Thimpu, taking in dense forest, yak pastures and clear mountain lakes as we trek from the valley floor up to mountain ridges and over high passes – all with an unforgettable backdrop of snow-capped Himalayan peaks. Our highest point is 4210m, and we build in acclimatisation early on, to help our bodies cope with the altitude.

The cultural discovery, rewarding trekking and magnificent landscapes make a winning and unforgettable combination: this is a trekking experience to treasure.

DETAILED ITINERARY

Day 1: Depart London for Kathmandu

Day 2: Kathmandu

We arrive in Kathmandu and transfer to our hotel in the Thamel area. We have time to relax before dinner in a local restaurant and a good night's sleep. Night hotel.

Day 3: Kathmandu – Paro

An afternoon flight takes us to Paro in Bhutan; flying over the Himalayas is an added bonus, and you might even spot Everest! After this short hop we check into our hotel, enjoying our first impressions of magical Bhutan. We have an easy walk around Paro (2200m) and we really start to get a feel for the culture. Although we are unlikely to feel any effects of being at altitude here, walking and sleeping at this elevation will aid our acclimatisation for the trek to come. Night hotel.

Trek approx. 1-2 hours

Day 4: Acclimatisation Walk Paro – Jela Dzong

We transfer to our start-point, passing the historic Ta Dzong (2625m) – a striking round watch-tower which is now the National Museum - and driving a short distance further along a dirt road. reaching our start point, we set off, passing small farms and orchards, then walking through forests of blue pine. It's uphill all the way, mostly steady, but with some steeper sections. While it's a relatively short distance, we adopt a slow pace and take our time, as it's important to use these first days wisely to acclimatise well to the altitude. We enjoy picturesque views over verdant Paro Valley, the valley floor cultivated to farmland and dotted with tiny villages. Towards the end of the day we cross a mountain pass, then it's downhill to our first night's camp at Jela Dzong, an old fortress-temple, on a ridge above us. Night camp (3480m). **Trek approx. 5-6 hours / 8-10km**

Day 5: Acclimatisation Walk Jela Dzong – Jangchulakha

We take it slow and steady again today, giving ourselves the best chance of feeling good when we reach the higher passes. After an initial steep climb to a monastery, the terrain levels off on a plateau and then descends through alpine pastures and forests of fir and rhododendron before climbing again. The atmosphere walking through these ancient forests is a real highlight – with fir trees wrapped in Spanish moss, the vegetation is reminiscent of Jurassic Park or Lord of the Rings! We then traverse the mountain on a narrow path with wonderful views over the Paro Valley below, and we'll start to glimpse the revered Mt Chomolhari, the sacred second-highest mountain in Bhutan; its snow-capped dome (7314m) can be seen throughout much of our trek. After lunch our path levels out and it's an easier route to camp. We may see yak herders in this area, giving us a glimpse of this nomadic way of life. Night camp (3770m).

Trek approx. 6-7 hours / 10km

Day 6: Jangchulakha – Jimilang Tsho

Another climb starts our day, with great views over the rolling valleys below. We follow a rocky trail, which rises above the treeline at times, crossing a number of passes as we tackle the undulating ridgeline through forest and grassy pastures. The going is tough at times, but we are urged on by spectacular views across the valley with its backdrop of snow-capped mountains. We have lunch shortly after crossing our third high pass, and can see camp in the distance. Our final pass comes at 4194m, complete with photogenic prayer-flags against a backdrop of mountains. We finally come to Jimilang Tsho, a beautiful clear lake teeming with giant trout. Night camp (3870m).

Trek approx. 7-8 hours / 13km

Day 7: Jimilang Tsho – Labana La

We set off from camp, walking to the end of the lake and climbing steeply, traversing the mountains through dwarf rhododendrons and junipers. We pass more lakes – crystal-clear and very photogenic! Today's views, reaching far back along the valley ridge, will give you a huge sense of satisfaction as you see how far we have come – and motivate us to keep going! It's another tough day with numerous steep passes. It's an undulating day, with very little flat, and some tough, steep sections, but very beautiful. We camp in a lovely spot dotted with stupas beside a lake. Night camp (4175m).

Trek approx. 7-8 hours / 15km

Day 8: Labana La – Thimpu - Paro

Another morning, another steep climb! This strenuous uphill trek takes us over Phume La Pass, at 4210m our highest point. Adorned with fluttering prayer flags, the pass offers fabulous views over the Paro and Thimpu valleys, and it's possible to see the snow-capped peak of Gangkar Puensum, Bhutan's highest mountain and the highest unscaled peak in the world. Then it's downhill on rocky steps, with views of Bhutan's capital, Thimpu, lying in its wooded valley far below us. We pass the fascinating temple of Phajoding, receive a blessing from the monks, and continue the long descent through forest to the end of the trail, where our vehicles meet us and whisk us to our nearby lunch-spot above Thimpu. We then drive back to Paro. Night hotel (2200m.)

Trek approx. 5-6 hours / 12km; Drive approx 1 hour

Day 9: Tiger's Nest Monastery

After breakfast we head out on the last part of our hike, to the iconic Taktsang (Tiger's Nest) Monastery, a sacred Bhutanese site. Perched dramatically on a cliff's edge 900m above the valley at 3120m, it is one of the undisputed highlights of the trip. We head steadily uphill surrounded by beautiful views to a stunning viewpoint, then descend some steps and climb again. It is steep at times, but we're fit and acclimatised, and this is a wonderful way to end our trip. After time at the temple, we head back down to Paro, where there should be time to explore, or simply relax before dinner. Night hotel.

Trek approx. 7-8 hours / 15km

Day 10: Fly Bhutan – Kathmandu

After breakfast we take a short, scenic flight back to Kathmandu, where we will have free time to explore the city's sights. Depending on flight schedules, we will either take an evening transfer back to the airport for our flight home or transfer to a central hotel for a good night's rest before an early flight departure the next morning.

(Lunch and Dinner not included)

Day 11: Arrive UK

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- All transport from London to Paro return
- All meals except where specified, accommodation and camping equipment
- Discover Adventure leaders; doctor with a group of 15 or more participants; local guides and drivers
- Local support and back-up equipment
- Visits and permits required for Bhutan
- Entry to any other sites included in itinerary

WHAT'S EXCLUDED

- Any meals specified 'not included' in the itinerary
- Travel insurance
- Personal spending money, souvenirs and drinks
- Sleeping bag and sleeping mat
- Tips for local guides and support crew
- Inbound airport departure tax (no tax applied at time of writing)
- Entry visa for Nepal
- Fees for any optional sites, attractions or activities
- Airline taxes: we cap these so £250.00 is the maximum you will pay
- Any applicable surcharges as per Terms and Conditions

GRADE | RED

Trips are graded Yellow, Orange or Red, in increasing level of challenge. This trip lies within the **RED** range.

The grade is determined by factors such as terrain, distance, climate, altitude, etc. Each colour grade has a **spectrum** which reflects the difficulty of these factors; trip duration, accommodation and living conditions (see icon) are also taken into account.

Trip grading explained

CHALLENGE INFORMATION

DETAILED INFORMATION

Leaders & Trip Support

Your trip will be led by experienced Discover Adventure leaders. Our leaders are selected for their experience in harsh wilderness environments, knowledge of travel in remote areas, friendliness and approachability, sense of humour and ability to safely and effectively deal with any situation that arises. They are also trained in expedition first aid. You are in very safe hands with a Discover Adventure leader. Usually leaders are based in the UK or other English-speaking countries and lead for us regularly throughout the year in many different countries. In some instances, trips are led by in-country guides with a wealth of knowledge about the region; they have been trained by us to provide the level of support expected on a Discover Adventure trip.

Local Support Crew

Our local support crew is made up of local guides, assisted by drivers, porters, cooks and other support staff, depending on the type of trip. Local guides know the area well, and are a great source of knowledge about local customs and lifestyles. Not all support crew will speak English well, but are very friendly and approachable. The Discover Adventure crew work closely with the local crew to ensure your trip runs smoothly and safely.

Your leader will arrange a collection of tips for the local support crew at the end of your trek, and you will be provided with a guideline amount in advance. Tipping is not obligatory, but once you see how hard they work on your behalf you will be happy to donate something! All our local crew are paid wages, but bear in mind that the average wage in many countries may be less than you would spend on an average night out.

Trip Safety

Your safety, and that of the rest of the group, is our highest priority. Our trips are designed and planned with safety in mind. Your crew will be equipped with communication devices (eg phones, radios and/or emergency satellite phones), medical kit and other safety apparatus appropriate to the destination. Our leaders always have access to our 24-hour emergency UK back-up. They are responsible for safety on the trip, and will make any changes to the itinerary they deem necessary, should local conditions dictate. Pre-trip administration - such as medical questionnaires and travel insurance as appropriate - is all done with your safety in mind.

Flight Information

Group flights usually leave from London Heathrow or Gatwick on scheduled airlines and are booked through Discover Adventure Ltd under ATOL licence 5636. By travelling with Discover Adventure you are protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA).

Your journey may involve a transit en route; details of route and flight times will be confirmed several months before departure. We do not always use the same airline for each destination; if you wish to know the probable carrier and flight times, please call for details. You will usually receive confirmed flight details several months before departure. Our itineraries are always based on current flight schedules and are therefore subject to change by the airline. If you prefer to

book your own flights please ask us for a land-only cost.

Accommodation

We camp in two-man tents; these are usually expedition-style (ie sleeping room only). Camps are usually simple, in remote locations with great views! We have communal dining areas (usually with tables and chairs/stools) and toilet tents, and the local crew look after us very well. We stay in hotels (of a 2-3* standard or equivalent) at the start and end of the trip; standards may vary between different hotels, but they are generally clean and comfortable with good facilities.

Roomshare Arrangements

Some accommodation will be twin-share. Please tell us if you know somebody else on the trip that you would like to share with and we will try our best to accommodate your request. If you don't know anyone else in the group don't worry, we always pair you up with someone of the same gender, and a similar age where possible. We do not charge a single supplement if you are a solo traveller in a shared room.

On some nights we are likely to sleep in more communal accommodation such as dormitories/hostels, huts, local homestays or monasteries, depending on the trip, and you may be sharing with a larger number of participants or the whole group; this type of accommodation cannot always be single-sex.

Group Size

Your booking is part of a group challenge, and the tour costs and fundraising targets listed on our website are based on a minimum number of participants which is shown on the challenge Our typical groups run with approximately 15-25 participants; however you may find your group is smaller or larger than this.

We will confirm at least 12 weeks prior to departure that your challenge is guaranteed to run. Occasionally it may be possible to still run the challenge with less than the minimum numbers, subject to a small group supplement. If we think a small group supplement may be necessary, we will discuss this with you as soon as possible, usually 5 months before your departure date.

Minimum numbers and groups sizes may vary on Bespoke Charity challenges. If you are booked onto a bespoke challenge please contact your charity for full details.

Food & Dietary Requirements

The food provided is plentiful, often local in style and freshly-cooked, and will give you plenty of energy. Sometimes we enjoy a buffet-style lunch-stop, other times we might have packed lunches. On some trips we stop at small local restaurants. Dinners are generally eaten at our accommodation each evening. In some regions there may be less variety than you are used to, and in others fresh meat or produce can be harder to come by. Any meals not included are listed in the itinerary and are generally on travel / free days, giving you the opportunity to explore and try other culinary experiences! There is always something to suit different budgets.

Being vegetarian or having other dietary requirements is not usually a problem provided you let us know well in advance. Please do not expect as much variety as you would have access to at home – we may be in very rural or remote

areas, or among people of a different culture who may not understand your requirements, however willing they are to help. If you know there are plenty of foods you cannot eat we strongly recommend you bring extra snacks from home so you can top up your energy supply. Please feel free to ask us for advice.

Luggage

Your luggage, food, water and equipment is transported for you from one night-stop to the next. If there is easy road access this is done by vehicle; if not porters, mules or even camels might carry your bags, depending on the terrain.

Space is limited and hard-sided luggage is not suitable, so it is essential that your kit is packed in a soft bag, rucksack or expedition kitbag. Ask us about our specially-designed low-cost kitbags if you don't have one already. You should also bring a small daypack to carry for items needed during the day as you will not have access to your main luggage until the evening.

PREPARING FOR THE CHALLENGE

Passport & Visa / Vaccinations

Entry requirements vary depending on your destination and nationality. It is your responsibility to ensure your passport is valid, and any visas are obtained in good time. Check the FCO's advice on entry requirements for your destination to be sure. Please ensure you allow plenty of time to apply for your visa; we will provide you will all necessary information 6 weeks prior to depature to assist with your application.

Your routine UK schedule of vaccinations should be up-to-date (especially tetanus). We recommend you check Fit For Travel for further details. You should always check with a GP or travel clinic for up-to-date travel health advice as it does change.

Clothing & Kit

We plan our trips around the optimal weather conditions, but could still be exposed to bad weather at any time. It is vital you are prepared for all conditions. We provide you with a detailed packing kit-list on registration, with plenty of information, and we are always available if you need advice.

Travel Insurance

Travel Insurance is compulsory on all of our challenges outside of the UK; we strongly suggest that you arrange insurance cover as soon as your booking with us is confirmed, or as soon as you're able to purchase some, and at least 8 months prior to travel. Should you need to cancel prior to departure, you will need insurance to cover the costs involved (registration fee and any trip costs depending on cancellation date).

We all hope never to need it, and thankfully most of the time we don't, but on those rare occasions when you do, you want it to cover you as best it can. Whilst it's a fairly boring admin task relating to your trip of a lifetime, it is really important you ensure that you have adequate cover for the type of challenge you are taking part in as well as medical emergencies,

evacuation and repatriation, so make sure you're happy with the level of cover. There are lots of suppliers out there, with a wide range in levels of cover; generally speaking, you get what you pay for! Get and pay for the right level of cover and then you can go on your adventure not having to worry about the what-if's. For more details click here.

Once your travel insurance is arranged, just remember to let us know the policy number and 24-hr medical emergency phone number provided by your insurers.

Cultural Differences

For most people, the main attraction of travelling to a different country is to see new sights and enjoy new experiences. Sometimes those new experiences can make life harder or more inconvenient than you may like, such as toilet hygiene or different food, or simply a different attitude to solving problems. This is all part of the challenge you are signing up for! We are very privileged to live in a country with a high standard of living, and travelling exposes us to different challenges – all of which help broaden our horizons. We can guarantee that coming face-to-face with experiences outside your normal 'comfort zone' will help you bond with your fellow participants and provide you with plenty of things to laugh about! A sense of humour and sense of adventure are two of the most important things to bring with you!

Cancelling your booking

In the unfortunate circumstance that you need to cancel your booking, we would ask that you notify us in writing either by post or email. Your cancellation will be considered effective from the date the notice is received. Registration fees and amendment fees are non refundable and, depending on your payment option and how close it is to your challenge departure date, you may be liable for a cancellation charge.

Full details of all cancellation charges may be found in the Terms and Conditions of booking.

Passenger Portal

We have a Passenger Portal which will give you more details of the challenge itself. It also enables you to see any outstanding information we need, the countdown to your challenge departure, see your outstanding balance, make payments and update your contact details. You can access this via the following link - Passenger Portal Log in.

Independent Reviews 96 %

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Discover Adventure reserves the right to change the route or itinerary for safety reasons should local conditions dictate.

Please note: This document was downloaded on 29 Mar 2024, and the challenge is subject to change.