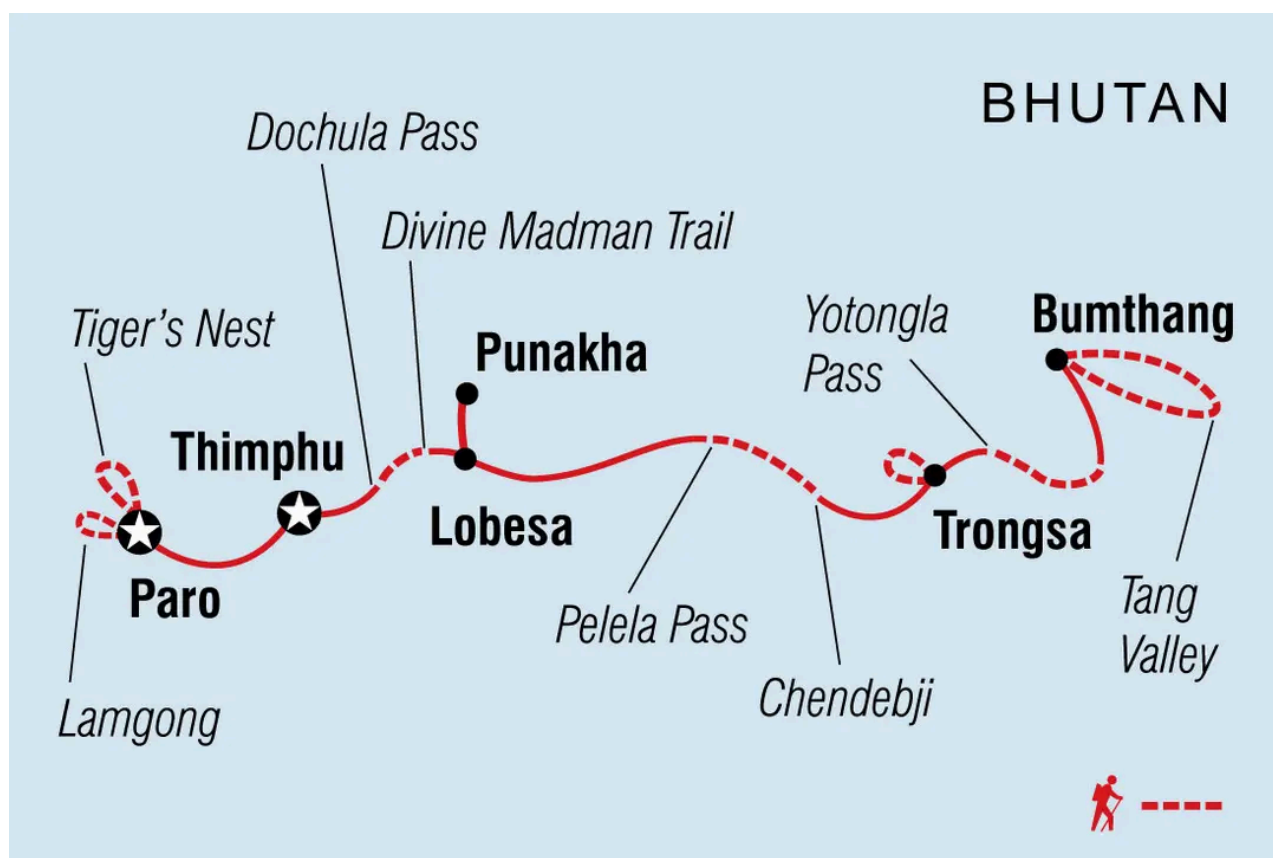


Essential Trip Information

Bhutan Expedition: Hike the Trans Bhutan Trail

★★★★★ 4.7 out of 5 based on 11 reviews submitted.

Overview and itinerary



Start	Thimphu, Bhutan	Style	Original
Finish	Paro, Bhutan	Ages	Min 15
Theme	Expeditions, Walking & trekking	Group size	Min 1 - Max 16
Destinations	Bhutan	Validity	01 Jan 2023 - 31 Dec 2024
Physical rating	■ ■ ■ □ □ ⓘ		
	Trip code	HJXB	

Is this trip right for you?

- Bhutan is a high-altitude destination, so taking it easy for a day or two makes for a much more comfortable trip. Drinking tea and water and avoiding strenuous exercise will help you acclimatise after arriving.
- Hiking on this trip can be strenuous and will take place on high altitude, up to 3500 metres above sea level. Please make sure you are adequately prepared physically.
- Please read packing list available on Essential Trip document carefully and make sure you bring all necessary items.
- Despite Bhutan being a small country, you'll experience long travel days as most roads are single lane. It's all part of the adventure and a great way to get to know your fellow travellers. Please read the itinerary carefully for travel time estimates.
- While it's legal to consume imported meat, the slaughtering of animals for consumption within Bhutan is banned, therefore delicious veggie dishes are varied and bountiful at every meal.
- Please be aware that hot water is limited in some places. Speaking of all things heated, the Bhutanese love chilli and the food can be a touch spicy.
- All meals are included due to the nature of travelling in Bhutan. This means there may be limited choices on some days.

Physical rating



You're in for a hiking trip and a good level of fitness is essential. We don't ask travellers to complete a physical participation form for this trip however we do ask you read through the trip notes carefully to ensure that this trip is the right trip for you. You must be comfortable hiking up to 8-9 hours a day, with many steep uphill sections, uneven, rocky terrain and in unpredictable weather.

If you're already a regular exerciser, it might be an idea to up your game a little. Run those extra laps, or take few longer walks, ideally with a day pack on your back. If you're not exercising so regularly (2-3 times a week), it's important to start in the weeks leading up to your departure (4-6 weeks prior at least). Your best choice would be to start walking regularly 2-3 times a week including at least one longer walk (up to 15 km). It's important to not only walk on flat surface, so if you cannot access a hilly terrain easily, walking up and down the stairs is a good replacement. Top that up with some general fitness exercises and any other cardio related classes and you will see a huge progress in your fitness levels.

BHUTAN:

A reasonable level of fitness is required to enjoy this trip. Many monasteries in Bhutan are reached by long flights of steps. The hike to Tiger Nest Monastery is approx 5 hours return via many uneven steps. You will be at altitudes of over 2500m, which can affect even the fittest traveller, so be prepared to be a little breathless and speak to your doctor prior to travel if you have any health concerns.

Joining point

Hotel Thimphu Tower
SE, Norzin, 209 Norzin Zur Lam 35 Kaa
Thimphu
BHUTAN
Phone: +975 2335367

Problems and emergency contact information

While we always endeavour to provide the best possible holiday experience, due to the nature of travel and the areas we visit sometimes things can and do go wrong. Should any issue occur while you are on your trip, it is imperative that you discuss this with your group leader or local representative straight away so that they can do their best to rectify the problem and save any potential negative impact on the rest of your trip.

We recognise that there may be times when your group leader or local representative may not be able to resolve a situation to your satisfaction - if this is the case, please ask the group leader or local representative to speak to their direct manager.

You may also choose to provide details in your online feedback, which we ask you to complete within 30 days of the end of your trip. Please do be aware that it is very difficult for us to provide any practical help after the trip is completed, so informing us while still travelling will give us the opportunity to resolve the issue in real-time.

For general contact details please use the following page:

<http://www.intrepidtravel.com/ourtrips/contact/>

In case of a genuine crisis or emergency, you can reach our local office on the numbers below:

Available for phone call or WhatsApp call on +977 980 112 3617

Itinerary

Show all 

Day 1: Paro - Thimphu

Welcome to Paro International Airport! You will be greeted by your guide at the arrival gate and transferred by private vehicle to Thimphu, Bhutan's Capital city. Along the way, stop at the Tachogang Lhakhang temple which was founded by Thankthong Gyelpo, a man who is revered in Tibetan and Bhutanese culture, and see some of his belongings inside this sacred place. After visiting the temple, continue to Thimphu and check into your hotel where you'll have time to freshen up before joining your leader for an orientation walk to get acquainted with Thimphu's highlights. Tonight, head off with your leader and group for an included welcome dinner at a local restaurant and learn about the rich history of Bhutanese cuisine as you tuck into a traditional feast, including seasonal vegetables and the country's signature dish – red rice with a tasty chili cheese.

Accommodation

- Hotel (1 night)

Meals

- Lunch
- Dinner

Included activities

- Tachogang Lhakhang temple visit
- Thimphu exploratory evening walk

Special information

In order to confirm your Complimentary Airport Arrival Transfer, please provide your flight details at the time of booking, or at a minimum 14 days prior to travel, as we may not be able to confirm a request made within 14 days of travel.

Travel in Bhutan is strictly controlled and to do any independent travel outside of a group tour is extremely difficult and expensive to arrange. We provide a group visa for travellers on our tours in Bhutan, which stipulates that all travellers must arrive and depart on the same days that our tour program starts and finishes. Travel outside the tour dates on independent visas is not permitted, and additional nights of accommodation cannot be booked.

Today's driving time is approximately 1.5 hours.

Day 2: Thimphu



After breakfast, embark on the Buddha Point Park Hike which will start from Debsi towards Buddha Point (Kuensel Phodrang) home to the country's largest Buddha statue. The Buddha Dordenma is located atop a hill in Kuensel Phodrang Nature Park and overlooks the Southern entrance to Thimphu Valley. Hikers can enjoy the panoramic view of the Thimphu Valley and enjoy the hike amidst fluttering colorful prayer flags and the beautiful sky while heading up the hill.

After visiting Buddha Point, you will continue the hike inside the park to Changangkha. After lunch, visit the Institute for Zorig Chusum, more commonly known as the Arts & Crafts School or Painting School, where you can watch students learning traditional artistic skills. At the National Library, you'll see printing blocks for prayer flags and many beautiful archaic texts.

Accommodation

- Hotel (1 night)

Meals

- Breakfast
- Lunch
- Dinner

Included activities

- Thimphu - Institute for Zorig Chusum
- Thimphu - National Library
- Buddha Point (Kuensel Phodrang) walk

Special information

Today's walking distance is about 9.5 km and may take up to 3 hours.

Ascent: 430m

Descent: 400m

Day 3: Lobesa



After breakfast, travel along the Dochula Pass which sits more than 3000 metres above sea level and is marked by a large Bhutanese Chorten and fluttering prayer flags. If the weather is clear, you'll enjoy panoramic views of the Himalayas as you hike along this scenic trail. This afternoon, you'll visit Druk Wangyal Lhakhang a temple that was built in honour of the fourth King Gyalpo Jigme Singye Wangchuk and celebrates the 100th anniversary of the monarchy in Bhutan. After visiting the temple, you'll travel down to the valley and hike a section of the trail known as the Divine Madman Trail. It is believed that Drukpa Kuenley, who is also known as the Divine Madman, came here from Tibet to overpower evil spirits. After a stop for lunch in the beautiful village of Lumitsawa, you'll continue walking until Thinleygang Lhakhang temple. Visit Thinleygang Lhakhang temple before driving to your hotel in Lobesa.

Accommodation

- Hotel (1 night)

Meals

- Breakfast
- Lunch
- Dinner

Included activities

- Dochula Pass hike
- Druk Wangyal Lhakhang temple visit
- Divine Madman Trail hike

Special information

Today's walking distance is 10.5km and may take up to 5 hours.

Ascent: 190m

Descent: 1420m

Day 4: Trongsa



After a leisurely breakfast, you'll drive to Pelela Pass and re-join the Trans Bhutan Trail at the boundary between western and central Bhutan and begin your hike. Along the way, visit the Rukubji Lhakhang temple and rest a while with your group as you share a delicious hot lunch

prepared by the locals. Afterwards, transfer by vehicle to the beautiful village of Chendebji which is home to the Chendebji Chorten. If you've been to Kathmandu in Nepal, this large white structure might look familiar as it was built to resemble the famous Bouddhanath Stupa of Kathmandu. From Chendebji, you'll continue to Trongsa and visit the Trongsa Dzong which is the largest and most impressive Dzong in Bhutan. Located on a cliff overlooking the Mangde Chu river gorge, this Dzong is a magnificent sight. After you've enjoyed the view, check into your hotel where you may like to enjoy a relaxing evening after a full day of exploring.

Accommodation

- Hotel (1 night)

Meals

- Breakfast
- Lunch
- Dinner

Included activities

- Trans Bhutan trail hike - Pelela pass/Chendebji
- Chendebji Chorten monument visit
- Trongsa Dzong (Buddhist school) visit

Special information

Today's driving time is approximately 4 hours. Today's walking distance is 9.5km and may take up to 4 hours.

Ascent: 70m

Descent: 710m

Day 5: Bumthang



If your group didn't have time to visit Trongsa Dzong yesterday, there's time for a visit this morning before the drive to Yotongla Pass where you'll re-join the Trans Bhutan Trail and immerse yourself in the peaceful beauty of Bhutan. After hiking over the pass, you'll descend through green meadows and open forest until you reach the serene Gyaltsa River. After you've had a rest, follow this pristine river until you reach Gyaltsa Village where your private transfer to Bumthang will be waiting. You won't go hungry on this full day of walking as the group will stop to enjoy a delicious lunch along the trail. On arrival in Bumthang, check into your hotel for the next two nights.

After checking into the hotel, head out for a visit of Bumthang Brewery, producers of Bhutan's celebrated Red Panda Beer. Nearby is Bhutan's only commercial cheese factory. Both the brewery and the cheese factory are legacies of a Swiss-run development project called Swiss Farm, which introduced distinctive European farming and production techniques into the Bumthang area.

Accommodation

- Hotel (1 night)

Meals

- Breakfast
- Lunch
- Dinner

Included activities

- Trans Bhutan Trail hike - Yotongla Pass/Gyaltse village

Special information

Today's driving time is approximately 2.5 hours. Today's walking distance is 9km and may take 3 to 4 hours.

Ascent: 225m

Descent: 770m

Day 6: Bumthang



After breakfast, begin your day with an excursion to the luscious yet secluded Tang Valley. You'll have time to take in the splendor of this tranquil location, which is home to sacred shrines, herds of yaks, and verdant hillsides dotted with grazing sheep.

After reaching Tang village, you start a short hike crossing the suspension bridge towards the century old Ugyensholing Heritage Museum. After visiting the museum, you drive to Pema Choling Nunnery where women and girls who enroll here follow a nine-year course in the Nyingma Peling Buddhist tradition and are known for a particular drum ceremony known as "chod".

After visiting the nunnery, head south along the Trans Bhutan Trail towards the sacred Mebar Tsho (Burning Lake), where, in the 15th century, the great treasure hunter Pema Lingpa is said to have discovered several of Guru Rinpoche's hidden treasures. Take time to appreciate the beauty of your surroundings and consider engaging in some meditation, as many locals do. You will

continue the second half of the hike by climbing gently through the forest and reach another small, beautiful village of Phomrong. Our vehicle will be waiting for us in Phomrong to transfer us back to the hotel.

Accommodation

- Hotel (1 night)

Meals

- Breakfast
- Lunch
- Dinner

Included activities

- Tang Valley walk
- Ugyencholing Heritage Museum visit
- Tang Valley - Farmhouse lunch
- Hike: Nunnery - Mebar Tsho (Burning Lake) – Phomrong village
- Pema Choling Nunnery

Special information

Today's driving time is approximately 1.5 hours. Today's walking distance is about 6 km and will take about 3 hours.

Ascent: 400m

Descent: 300m

Day 7: Punakha



Today you will head back to Punakha via Trongsa to walk along one of the most iconic sections of the Trans Bhutan Trail and recreate what it was like for those arriving in the city of Trongsa on foot many years ago.

Drive to Trongsa. Your hike starts from Trongsa Dzong, you'll descend until the Mangde River. After crossing the old cantilever bridge over the river, stretch your legs for a steep climb through the forest until the Trongsa viewpoint. After some rest and spending some time at the viewpoint, sit back and relax on the drive to Punakha where you will check into your hotel.

Accommodation

- Hotel (1 night)

ཕྱི་ལོ་ Meals

- Breakfast
- Lunch
- Dinner

🚶 Included activities

- Trans Bhutan Trail hike - Trongsa Dzong/Mangde River/Trongsa Viewpoint

Special information

Today's driving time is approximately 6 hours total. Today's walking distance is up to 4km and may take up to 2 hours.

Ascent: 370m

Descent: 415m

Day 8: Paro



After breakfast, drive to Dochulla Pass from where we will start our hike to Simtokha. Throughout the hike, we are treated to a scenic path that runs alongside charming villages and meandering streams, granting us unique glimpses into Bhutanese life and culture. Prepare yourself for one of the longest hours hikes of this trip.

After reaching Simtokha, you'll drive to Paro. Check-in to the hotel and relax for the rest of the evening.

🏠 Accommodation

- Hotel (1 night)

ཕྱི་ལོ་ Meals

- Breakfast
- Lunch
- Dinner

🚶 Included activities

- Dochula Pass to Simtokha Hike

Special information

Today's driving time is approximately 3-4 hours. Today's walking distance is up to 15km and may take up to 5-6 hours.

Ascent: 690m

Descent: 1370m

Day 9: Paro



After breakfast, you'll re-join the Trans Bhutan Trail for a short hike. Drive up to Tsendona. From here, you'll hike through the thin pine forests to the upper reaches of Dopshari and enjoy the spectacular views over the Paro valley. Take time to enjoy the scenery before reaching the traditional village of Dopshari. Enjoy a delicious hot lunch in the village where you might have the opportunity to try Ema Datshi, a traditional Bhutanese dish made with chili peppers, onions, and yak cheese.

After the hike, you'll visit Ta Dzong which was originally built as a watchtower but now houses a National Museum. Join your leader for a tour of the extensive collection of antique thangkha paintings, textiles, weapons, armour, household objects and historic artifacts. After you have visited the museum, stroll around the local market of Paro. Drive back to the hotel and take a rest for tomorrow's another big day.

Accommodation

- Hotel (1 night)

Meals

- Breakfast
- Lunch
- Dinner

Included activities

- Trans Bhutan Trail hike - Paro Valley/Dop-Shari
- Ema Datshi - traditional Bhutanese lunch
- Paro - Tadzong Museum

Special information

Today's walking distance is 4km and may take up to 2 hours.

Ascent: 150m

Descent: 250m

Day 10: Paro



After breakfast, lace up your hiking boots and set off on a 5 hour hike to the Taktshang Monastery, one of Bhutan's most famous monasteries. Perched on the side of a cliff 900m above the Paro valley floor, it's also known as the 'Tiger's Nest'. This site is considered to be a deeply sacred place and is visited by all Bhutanese at least once in their lifetime. On 19 April 1998, a fire severely damaged the main structure of the building but now this Bhutanese jewel has been restored to its original splendour. Along the way, you'll also visit the 7th century Kyichu Lhakhang, one of 108 temples built in the Himalayas by the Tibetan King, Songtsen Gampo. This is one of the country's most famous temples as it marks the introduction of Buddhism to Bhutan. After you've returned to your hotel and had time to freshen up, join your leader for a stroll around the streets and market area of Paro.

Accommodation

- Hotel (1 night)

Meals

- Breakfast
- Lunch
- Dinner

Included activities

- Paro - Taktsang (Tiger's Nest) Monastery hike

Special information

Today's walking distance is 10km and may take up to 5-6 hours.

Ascent: 900m

Descent: 900m

Day 11: Paro



After a leisurely breakfast at your hotel, your adventure will come to an end and your driver will transfer you to Paro International Airport for your flight out of Bhutan.

Meals

- Breakfast

Special information

In order to confirm your Complimentary Airport Departure Transfer, please provide your flight details at the time of booking, or at a minimum 14 days prior to travel, as we may not be able to confirm a request made within 14 days of travel.

Due to group visa requirements, all travellers are required to leave Bhutan on the same day.

Finishing point

Bhutan Mandala Resort
Wangchang, Paro Bhutan
Paro
BHUTAN
Phone: +91 84477 47674

Itinerary disclaimer

ITINERARY CHANGES

Our itineraries are updated regularly throughout the year based on customer feedback and to reflect the current situation in each destination. The information included in this Essential Trip Information may therefore differ from when you first booked your trip. It's important that you review this information prior to travel so that you have the latest updates. Due to weather, local conditions, transport schedules, public holidays, political unrest or other factors, further changes may be necessary to your itinerary once in-country. Your group leader or local representative will keep you up to date with any such changes once your trip is underway.

OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES

A selection of optional activities that have been popular with past travellers are listed in the day-to-day itinerary. This isn't an exhaustive list and should be used as a guide only for some of what might be available. Prices are approximate, are for entrance fees only, and don't include transport to and from the sites or local guides unless indicated. All activities are subject to availability, and maybe on a join-in basis. It may not be possible to do all the activities listed in the time available at each destination, so some pre-planning for what you are most interested in is advised. When it's recommended that travellers pre-book these activities, look for a note in the Special Information section of the day-to-day itinerary. For most, they can either be organised independently on the day, or let your group leader or local representative know you are interested at the Welcome Meeting and they can assist.

Where activities are considered medium or high risk, we work with operators whose safety and credentials we have sighted and assessed. Although it is possible that you may find the same activity cheaper with another operator on the ground, we cannot vouch for the safety or quality of that operator. Medium and high-risk activities not listed above have not been assessed by us and as such our staff and group leader or local representative are unable to assist you with organising these activities. Activities that contravene our Responsible Travel policies are also not listed. Please remember that the decision to partake in any activity not listed is at your own discretion and risk.

Feedback

Can't stop thinking about your adventure? Tell us all about it! We read each piece of feedback carefully and use it to make improvements for travellers like you. Share your experience with us at:

<http://www.intrepidtravel.com/feedback/>

Essential Trip Information

Important notes

1. Complimentary airport arrival and departure transfers are included. You must provide your flight details to your booking agent at least 14 days prior to travel.
2. A single supplement is available if you'd prefer not to share a room on this trip. The single supplement applies to all nights of your trip and is subject to availability. Please speak to your booking agent for further information.
3. Entry to Bhutan is very strict and travellers can only enter Bhutan on a group visa as part of a tour. All travellers must arrive on Day 1 and depart on Day 10 to be eligible for a group visa. At time of booking, please provide your booking agent with a scanned colour copy of your passport, a scanned colour passport photo.
4. The Sustainable Development Fee, charged by the government of Bhutan, is included in your trip price.
5. Please provide your full name exactly as per passport at the time of booking (including any middle names listed on your passport). Fees may apply for adding or amending details within 60 days of departure, and in some cases you will be required to cover the cost of issuing new tickets.
6. Bhutan's airlines are renowned for last minute changes to flight timetables into and out of Bhutan. Please allow a minimum of 24 hours transit time before and after your flights into and out of Bhutan. Timetables are available on the Druk Airlines and Air Bhutan websites.
7. If you have booked additional accommodation and transfers in Kathmandu, please see the 'Passports, visas and entry requirements' section of the Essential Trip Information for details regarding visas and arrival in Nepal.
8. Due to the nature of outdoor travel, please be aware that this trip will operate on an amended itinerary in high risk weather conditions.

Passports, visas and entry requirements

PASSPORT

You'll need a valid passport to travel internationally and most countries require your passport to have a minimum of 6 months validity, so remember to check the expiry date.

We need your passport information to get everything ready for your trip so it's important that the information on your booking matches your passport exactly. Please take care to provide the correct details. We recommend carrying a copy of the photo page of your passport while travelling and leaving a copy at home with family or friends.

VISAS & ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

Many countries require a visa and obtaining the correct visa for your trip and any countries you may transit through is your responsibility. We recommend you check your visa requirements as soon as you have booked your trip. This will ensure you have time to prepare your documents and for your visa application to be processed. You can check the entry requirements for your nationality on your government's foreign travel advisories, consular websites or on our page here:

<http://www.intrepidtravel.com/visa-entry-requirements>

BHUTAN

All nationalities require a visa for Bhutan. Travellers can only enter Bhutan on a group visa as part of a tour. Independent visas are not issued. The cost of the visa is included in your tour.

The following details are required at time of booking in order for us to apply for your group's visa:

- A clear uncut scanned colour copy of the two pages of the personal details section of your passport
- A scanned colour passport photo
- Email address you will access while travelling
- Arrival and departure flight details
- Proof of travel insurance that includes your name on the certificate

Due to the controlled nature of travel in Bhutan the group visa application can only be submitted once we have the above details from ALL travellers in your group. Failure to advise any of the information above can slow the visa issuing process, and delay the visa for the whole group.

The group visa will be issued between 5 days and 48 hours from departure. We will send your visa to your travelling email address. Please print this visa as you must show it at check-in for your flight to Bhutan and on arrival at immigration in Bhutan, where you will have an entry stamp placed in your passport.

If you are traveling through India, you may need a visa, even if you are not staying in the country. Please refer to your government's foreign travel advice for most up to date information.

ADDITIONAL ARRANGEMENTS IN KATHMANDU

If you are flying in and out of Bhutan from Kathmandu, we are able to book accommodation and transfers in Kathmandu. Please speak to your booking agent about this.

You will require a visa to enter Nepal.

This can be obtained on arrival at Kathmandu's international airport. You will need two passport photos and the following fees in USD (subject to change, cash only).

- multi entry visa valid for 15 days - US\$30
- multi entry visa valid for 30 days - US\$50
- multi entry visa valid for 90 days - US\$125

If you have booked an arrival transfer, you must provide your flight details into Kathmandu no later than 14 days prior to arrival.

For your confirmed arrival transfer, you'll be met after exiting customs by a transfer representative holding an Intrepid sign. They generally stand on the lefthand side.

In case of flight cancellations, changes, if you experience severe delays at immigration, baggage collection or customs, or if you are not able to find the driver, please contact the transfer operator directly: +977 9801020375.

Medical and health information

GENERAL HEALTH

All travellers need to be in good physical health in order to participate fully on this trip. For the safety and wellbeing of yourself and others, if you are unwell prior to travelling, please stay at home and contact us to make alternative arrangements.

When selecting your trip please make sure you have read through the itinerary carefully and assess your ability to manage and enjoy our style of travel. Please note that if in the assessment of our group leader or local representative a traveller is unable to complete the itinerary without undue risk to themselves and/or the rest of the group, we reserve the right to exclude them from all or part of a trip without refund.

You should consult your doctor for up-to-date medical travel information or for any necessary vaccinations before departure. We recommend that you carry a first aid kit as well as any personal medical requirements in their original packaging as they may not easily be obtained while travelling. If you are carrying medication, ensure you check your government's foreign travel advice for any local restrictions or requirements.

ALTITUDE SICKNESS

Much of Bhutan is at elevations of over 2,500m and travellers can be affected by altitude sickness. Altitude sickness can be life threatening and can affect anyone, even the physically fit. Those more at risk include people who have had altitude sickness before, who exercise or drink alcohol before

adjusting to the altitude, or who have health problems that affect breathing. See your doctor prior to travelling to Bhutan to get advice specific to you and your situation. Monitor your health and well-being during the trip and report immediately to your leader if you feel unwell. Ensure your travel insurance covers you for altitude sickness and medical evacuation.

MOSQUITO-BORNE ILLNESSES

Outbreaks of dengue fever and malaria have been known to occur in Bhutan. Protect yourself against mosquito-borne illnesses by taking measures to avoid insect bites, including using insect repellent and wearing long, loose-fitting, light-coloured clothing.

Food and dietary requirements

While travelling with us you'll experience the vast array of wonderful food available in the world. Your group leader or local representative will be able to suggest restaurants to try during your trip. To give you the maximum flexibility in deciding where, what and with whom to eat, generally not all meals are included in the trip price. This also gives you more budgeting flexibility. As a rule our groups tend to eat together to enable you to taste a larger variety of dishes and enjoy each other's company. If you have dietary requirements and/or food allergies, please let your booking agent know prior to departure.

BHUTAN FOOD:

All meals are included with the cost of your trip to Bhutan. Generally, meals will be buffet style and taken in your hotel or guesthouse. Lunches and dinners normally include a selection of western, Chinese, or Indian style dishes, with some local specialties on occasion. Don't forget to try *emma datse* (chili and cheese) and red rice. Rice and vegetable dishes are always present for every meal. Vegetarians are well catered for and meat is the exception rather than the rule with most meals. Bottled and alcoholic drinks are not included with meals and are paid for separately.

Restaurants will cook three or four dishes per group to share. Choices are limited and feedback has suggested that the food isn't the main reason to visit Bhutan. Meals may become a little monotonous with similar offerings at most restaurants.

Please don't be offended that your leader and driver do not eat with you. This is the custom in Bhutan and leaders and drivers generally eat together in another section of the restaurant.

Accommodation

Hotel (10 nights)

The style of accommodation indicated in the day-to-day itinerary is a guideline only and may change. On some occasions, alternative arrangements may need to be made due to the lack of availability of rooms in our preferred accommodation. In these cases, we will use a similar standard of accommodation.

Throughout the trip, we request that our properties prepare rooms in time for our arrival, especially if we're arriving prior to normal check-in time. However, this isn't always possible which means we won't be able to check-in immediately on arrival at some hotels. Instead, we can store our luggage and explore our new destination or on some trips, have use of shared day rooms until all rooms are available.

Transport

Private vehicle, walking

BHUTAN:

Whilst there are approx 8000km of roads in Bhutan, the quality varies greatly depending on proximity to the major towns of Thimpu and Paro. As such, even short distances can take longer than expected. Bhutan is currently upgrading a lot of its road network and delays are common. Roads are narrow and speeds are slow. Landslides are common, particularly after rain and occasionally trips are diverted due to debris blocking roads. Thimpu is also famous as the worlds only capital city without a traffic light.

Money matters

SPENDING MONEY

When it comes to spending money on the trip, every traveller is a little different. You know your spending habits better than we do, so please budget an appropriate amount for things like optional meals, drinks, shopping, optional activities, and laundry. Make sure you have read the itinerary and inclusions thoroughly so you know what is included in the trip price and what you may need to pay for while travelling.

CONTINGENCY FUNDS

We try to plan for every eventuality, but there are still some things beyond our control. We reserve the right to change an itinerary after departure due to local circumstances or a Force Majeure Event. In such emergency circumstances, the additional cost of any necessary itinerary alterations will be covered by you. Please note we are not responsible for any incidental expenses that may be incurred as a result of the change of itineraries including but not limited to visas, vaccinations or non-refundable flights. Make sure you have access to an extra US\$500 for emergencies (e.g. severe weather, natural disasters, civil unrest) or other events that result in unavoidable changes to the itinerary (e.g. transport strikes or cancellations, airport closures). Sometimes these things necessitate last-minute changes to enable our trips to continue to run, and as a result, there may be some extra costs involved. The recommended amount is listed in USD for the relatability of universal travellers, however, local currency may be needed once in the country to cover these costs.

BHUTAN

The official currency of Bhutan is the Bhutanese Ngultrum (BTN). The Indian Rupee is also accepted as legal tender in Bhutan, but Indian currency in large denominations may not be accepted. You can

exchange all major currencies at the airport on arrival. Ensure you have new, clean and undamaged notes. Also, note that there are variable rates for bigger foreign currency notes and currency notes of smaller denominations. Higher denominations get you a better exchange rate. ATMs are common in towns. EFTPOS services are available nationwide, including at most hotels. Credit cards are not widely accepted, but can be used at reputable hotels. It is not possible to exchange BTN outside of Bhutan so ensure you keep any exchange receipts in order to convert any remaining currency back before you leave.

BHUTAN:

All meals are included on your Bhutan trip. You will only need extra spending money for souvenirs, drinks and tips. Best to bring cash, as it is easily exchanged into local currency. ATMs are available only in Thimphu and Paro. Credit cards are accepted only in larger tourist shops for large purchases.

Hotels / Restaurants: USD 0.50 - 1 for porters and restaurant staff

Drivers: You may have a range of drivers on your trip. Some may be with you for a short journey while others may be with you for several days. We would suggest a higher tip for those more involved with the group however a base of US\$ 1-2 per person, per day is generally appropriate.

Local transport: For a city tour we suggest US\$ 1 per person, per day.

Your Group Leader: You may also consider tipping your leader for outstanding service throughout your trip. The amount is entirely a personal preference; however as a guideline US\$ 5 per person, per day can be used. Of course you are free to tip more or less as you see fit, depending on your perception of service quality and the length of your trip. Remember, a tip is not compulsory and should only be given when you receive excellent service.

The following amounts are based on local considerations and feedback from our past travellers:

Hotels / Restaurants: USD 0.50 - 1 for porters and restaurant staff

Drivers: You may have a range of drivers on your trip. Some may be with you for a short journey while others may be with you for several days. We would suggest a higher tip for those more involved with the group however a base of US\$ 1-2 per person, per day is generally appropriate.

Local transport: For a city tour we suggest US\$ 1 per person, per day.

Your Group Leader: You may also consider tipping your leader for outstanding service throughout your trip. The amount is entirely a personal preference; however as a guideline US\$ 5 per person, per day can be used. Of course you are free to tip more or less as you see fit, depending on your perception of service quality and the length of your trip. Remember, a tip is not compulsory and should only be given when you receive excellent service.

Packing

As well as your underwear, toothbrush and other items you always need to pack for travel, below are some items that you specifically need for this trip.

MAIN LUGGAGE

You need to bring your main piece of luggage as well as a small to medium backpack for day's walks (20-25 litres). One with waist strap would be most comfortable for all included walks

ESSENTIALS

- Day pack: for carrying essentials during activities
- Trekking clothing: A mixture covering lightweight clothing and some warm layers is recommended. Your activities will take place in the outdoors, where weather may change quickly. Lightweight, comfortable, and quick drying clothes for the activities are best. Laundry facilities may not be available on every day basis, so make sure you have a few cycles of clothes.
- Hiking boots with a good grip, ankle support and waterproof membrane that are comfortable to walk for an entire day
- Walking Poles for support on steep uphill sections and longer descents
- Comfortable shoes for shorter beach walks or evenings spend around accommodation
- Sport sandals
- Light jacket, fleece and base layers
- Wind and waterproof jacket
- Breathable, non-cotton hiking t-shirts
- Long hiking pants or zip-offs
- Nylon hiking shorts
- Water bottle or bladder: you will need water during activities and it's best to avoid buying unnecessary plastic.
- Sun protection: sunscreen, sunglasses, sunhat or bandana
- Torch/flashlight/headtorch
- Toiletries

RECOMMENDED

- Personal medical kit. A larger kit will be on hand with your leader, but we recommend you carry items such as mild pain killers, antihistamine tablets and any personal medication you may need
- Ear plugs & eye mask
- Walking poles for longer walks and uneven terrain
- Camera with spare batteries/power bank: You will have access to power to recharge your electrical items daily
- Travel eco-friendly wipes/hand sanitizer

OPTIONAL

- Swimwear
- A good book, a journal and music player

VALUABLES

Please try to avoid bringing unnecessary valuables. It's also recommended to bring a copy of all important documents e.g. air tickets, passport, vaccination certificate, etc. and keep the copies separate from the originals. While not valid, a photocopy makes it very much easier to obtain replacements if necessary.

If you need some further tips for packing, you can always check out our ultimate packing list.

WATER BOTTLE

Please bring your own water bottle to refill along the way. The sale of bottled water contributes to an enormous environmental problem around the world. In addition to the water in bottles, the production of a 1 litre plastic bottle takes 2 litres of water and 200ml of oil. A large proportion end up in limited landfill or discarded in waterways and natural environments.

Phone and internet access

BHUTAN:

Internet access is generally fast and very good in both Thimpu and Paro. There may be limited internet access in smaller towns and villages. WiFi is generally free in the lobby and restaurant section of a hotel but charges may apply for internet use within your room.

Climate and seasonal information

WEATHER IN BHUTAN

Bhutan can be divided into three areas. In the south, you'll find the lowlands fronting the Indian border, which enjoy a subtropical climate. This region sees monsoonal rains from June to mid-October and mild winters through December, January and February.

Travel north and the climate becomes progressively colder as the Himalaya rise. The central belt of the country, in the lower foothills of the Himalaya, features cold, dry winters and warm summers with monsoonal rains on the southern sides, while the valleys experience less rainfall thanks to the mountains' protection.

In the northern regions, as the Himalaya rise above 2500 metres (8202 feet), the winters are cold and while the summer can be warm, the valleys are generally protected against monsoonal rain.

Group Leader

All group trips are accompanied by one of our group leader or local representative. The aim of the group leader or local representative is to take the hassle out of your travels and to help you have the best trip possible. Intrepid endeavours to provide the services of an experienced group leader or local

representative however, due to the seasonality of travel, rare situations may arise where your group leader or local representative is new to a particular region or training other group leader or local representative.

Your group leader or local representative will provide information on the places you are travelling through, offer suggestions for things to do and see, recommend great local eating venues and introduce you to our local friends. While not being guides in the traditional sense, you can expect them to have a broad general knowledge of the places visited on the trip, including historical, cultural, religious, and social aspects. At Intrepid we aim to support local guides who have specialised knowledge of the regions we visit. If you are interested in delving deeper into the local culture at a specific site or location then your group leader or local representative can recommend a local guide service in most of the main destinations of your trip.

Safety

Most national governments provide regularly updated foreign travel advice on safety issues involved with international travel. We recommend that you check your government's advice for their latest travel information before departure and ensure that your travel insurance covers you for all destinations and activities on your trip. Please refer to our website's safety page for links to major travel advisories and updates on safety issues affecting our trips here: <https://www.intrepidtravel.com/travel-alerts>

We strongly recommend the use of a neck wallet or money belt while travelling, for the safe-keeping of your passport, flight tickets, cash and other valuable items. Leave your jewellery at home - you won't need it while travelling. Many of our hotels have safety deposit boxes, which is the most secure way of storing your valuables. A lock is recommended for securing your luggage.

Your group leader or local representative will accompany you on all included activities, however, during your trip you'll have some free time to pursue your own interests or relax and take it easy. While your group leader or local representative will assist you with the available options in a given location, please note that any optional activities you undertake are not part of your Intrepid itinerary, and Intrepid makes no representations about the safety of the activity or the standard of the operators running them. Please use your own good judgement when selecting an activity in your free time. Please also note that your group leader or local representative has the authority to amend or cancel any part of the trip itinerary if it's deemed necessary due to safety concerns.

Intrepid's operational safety policies can be viewed on our website at the link below. We recommend that you take a moment to read through this information before travelling, and would appreciate any feedback on how safety is being managed on our trips.

<https://www.intrepidtravel.com/safety-guidelines>

PETTY CRIME:

The crime rate in Bhutan is low, but there are occasional thefts and petty crime, such as pick-pocketing and purse snatching in areas frequented by tourists.

A couple of rules

We like to think our Intrepid travellers are all connected by a love of adventure and passion for seeing the world in a different way. We've laid down a few non-negotiable rules to ensure everyone feels connected, comfortable and safe on our trips.

We ask that you respect your fellow travellers, group leader or local representative, and local people and places we visit in all circumstances. We don't tolerate any forms of violence and expect that you follow the local laws, customs and regulations in any destination we travel to. Any behaviour contrary to the above, including any behaviour that prevents our staff from performing their duty of care or continuing the itinerary as planned, may result in travellers being removed from the trip.

If you consume alcohol while travelling, we encourage responsible drinking and expect you to abide by local alcohol laws.

To ensure the well-being of everyone on the trip, all decisions made by group leaders or local representatives and ground staff are final.

Romantic relationships between travellers and group leader or local representative are not permitted while on trip.

By travelling with us, you agree to comply with these rules and the laws and customs of all countries visited.

If something is concerning you during your travels with us, please speak to your group leader or local representative immediately. Alternatively, contact us on the emergency contact number detailed in your Essential Trip Information's Problems and Emergency Contact section.

Travelling on a group trip

As you travel on a group trip you will be exposed to all the pleasures and maybe some of the frustrations of travelling in a group. Your fellow travellers will probably come from all corners of the world and likely a range of age groups too. We ask you to be understanding of the various needs and preferences of your group - patience with your fellow travellers is sometimes required for the benefit of everyone's travel experience. Remember too that you have responsibilities to the group. If you are requested to be at a place at a certain time, ensure that you don't keep the rest of the group waiting. We have found time and time again that the very best trips we operate are those where the dynamics

within the group work well - this takes just a little effort on your part. Due to privacy reasons, we are unable to provide you with contact details and any personal information about your fellow travellers booked on your trip prior to departure.

SOLO TRAVELLERS

The beauty of our style of travel is that it caters to travellers who are travelling solo and who want to meet and share experiences with like-minded people.

On our trips rooming is organised on a twin-share basis. We pair up solo travellers with another traveller of the same gender as per the gender marker on each of their passports.

As a responsible tour operator, we strive to create a safe and inclusive environment for everyone. In the case that your gender identity differs from what is indicated on your passport, please contact us so that we can discuss rooming options with you.

We also have an optional single supplement available on most trips for travellers who prefer to have their own room. Please note that this only applies to accommodation during the tour. Pre-trip and post-trip accommodation booked through us will be on a single room basis.

On a small selection of itineraries some accommodations are booked on an open gender, multi-share basis (for example on a felucca in Egypt or an overnight train in Vietnam). In those instances it will clearly be stated in our Essential Trip Information prior to booking and travelling.

Travel insurance

Travel insurance is compulsory on all our trips for those travelling internationally. We require that at a minimum you are covered for medical expenses including emergency repatriation. If you are travelling within your home country or region please confirm before travel that you are entitled to access the public medical system easily should an accident occur. We strongly recommend all travellers have a policy that also covers personal liability, cancellation, curtailment and loss of luggage or personal effects. For international trips, you will not be permitted to join the group until evidence of travel insurance and the insurance company's 24-hour emergency contact number has been sighted by your group leader or local representative.

If you have credit card insurance your group leader or local representative will require details of the participating insurer/underwriter, the level of coverage, policy number, and emergency contact number rather than the bank's name and your credit card details. Please contact your bank for these details prior to arriving in-country.

For travellers who reside within the European Union, Switzerland or USA the requirement to purchase travel insurance cannot be compulsory. However the purchase of travel insurance is still highly recommended, and travellers from these regions who decline travel insurance when travelling outside of their home region must sign a Travel Insurance Waiver Form at the Group Meeting, recognizing personal responsibility for emergency medical and repatriation costs should they arise.

For assistance with travel insurance or other services, please visit the link below:

<https://www.intrepidtravel.com/booking-resources/our-services>

Responsible travel

Our Responsible Travel Policy outlines our commitment to preserving the environment, supporting local communities, protecting the vulnerable, and giving back to the places we travel. All our trip group leaders or local representatives, suppliers, and staff are trained on these principles and are core to us delivering sustainable, experience-rich travel.

Explore the different parts of our Responsible Travel Policy by visiting:

<https://www.intrepidtravel.com/responsible-travel>

BHUTAN LOCAL DRESS:

Bhutan is a conservative country in standards of dress and behavior. Dress modestly and respectfully when visiting temples or other religious sites. Long trousers are most appropriate for men and longer length skirts or trousers are most appropriate for women.

The Intrepid Foundation

We created our not-for-profit, the Intrepid Foundation because you – our travellers – told us you wanted to make an even greater impact in the communities you visit.

The Foundation works by teaming up with partners around the world so that together we can deliver greater positive impact at scale. Partners are identified by our local staff who live and work in our destinations. They harness their powerful community connections to determine the issues that matter most and select local partners who can deliver real solutions.

Since 2002, the Intrepid Foundation has raised more than \$14million dollars and supported more than 160 communities worldwide. Now, with over 40 partners all over the world, your donations are helping to restore forests in Kenya, empower women in Honduras and promote elephant welfare in Laos, to name just a few.

For more information about the Intrepid Foundation, please ask your group leader or local representative or visit our website: <http://www.theintrepidfoundation.org/>

This trip supports Eden Reforestation Projects, who are tackling climate change by restoring forests across the world; they also hire locally and create job opportunities within communities. Donations support restoration across planting sites in 10 countries, including Kenya and Nepal. Intrepid will double your impact by dollar-matching post-trip donations made to The Intrepid Foundation.

To find out more or make a donation, visit: <http://www.theintrepidfoundation.org/t/eden-reforestation-projects>

Was this page helpful?

Yes

No