

Full Itinerary

ADVENTURE IN THE KINGDOMS OF NEPAL & BHUTAN



TALK TO OUR WELL
TRAVELLED TEAM OF
EXPERTS

0844 3350 197

Monday - Thursday 9:00am -
8:00pm, Friday 9:00am - 5:30pm
(London time)



JOURNEY SNAPSHOT

ACTIVITY LEVEL:

Level 3

DESTINATION:

Adventure in the Kingdoms of Nepal & Bhutan

DURATION:

16 days / 15 nights

FLIGHT INFORMATION:

Please arrange your flights to arrive into
Kathmandu Airport [KTM] on Day 1 and depart
from there on Day 16

PICKUP LOCATION:

Kathmandu Airport [KTM]

OVERVIEW

27 Oct - 11 Nov, 2024

26 Oct - 10 Nov, 2025

An adventure based in the heartlands of the Himalayas, exploring the history and culture of these nations among excellent natural beauty, massive mountains and with breathtaking short treks.

We begin in Nepal, with the chaos of sounds, smells and action that is Kathmandu. Experience the spirituality of Nepal with visits to temples and stupas and gain an understanding of the Nepalese history and culture with museum and city tours. Nepal is a place abundant with wildlife, as you will experience for yourself at the Chitwan National Park World Heritage Site. Where better to experience the contrast of cultural Kathmandu with the peace and serenity of Nepal's countryside? We walk through the lush sub-tropical jungles of Chitwan to experience for ourselves the sights and sounds of life here.

A spiritual, modern country with one foot still rooted in its past, Bhutan has embraced modernisation without losing its soul. This is no ordinary place - Bhutan is the only country in the world that measures gross national happiness as an indicator of its prosperity. The government's 'high quality-low volume' tourism policy ensures a visual and spiritual feast for all visitors. We hike to view one of the most revered pilgrimage sites of the Buddhist world, the Taktshang Lhakhang, popularly known as the "Tiger's Nest" Monastery. Perched precariously on a sheer rock face, the only sounds heard here are the murmurs of wind, water and the chanting of monks. The local cuisine is another must-try experience, but beware - Bhutan is the only country in the world where chilli is not used as a seasoning but a vegetable! Sampling the national dish "ema-datshi" is a spicy experience!

ITINERARY SUMMARY

DAY 1 - Welcome to Kathmandu

DAY 2 - Kathmandu City Tour

DAY 3 - Royal Chitwan National Park

DAY 4 - Wildlife Exploration in Chitwan National Park

DAY 5 - Overland to Pokhara

DAY 6 - Lumle Trek and Tanchok Village

DAY 7 - Nepali Cultural Exchange

DAY 8 - Return to Kathmandu

DAY 9 - Welcome to Bhutan!

DAY 10 - Traditions in Thimphu

DAY 11 - Fortresses & Monasteries on the way to Punakha

DAY 12 - Picturesque Punakha

DAY 13 - The Journey to Paro

DAY 14 - Hike to 'Tiger's Nest' Monastery

DAY 15 - Return to Kathmandu

DAY 16 - Farewell and Home

FULL ITINERARY

DAY 1 - WELCOME TO KATHMANDU

A traditional welcome awaits us at Tribhuvan International Airport Kathmandu.

After negotiating immigration we travel through the heart of Kathmandu to our hotel. The sights and sounds of the cities are sure to grab your attention as you make your way to your hotel.

Enjoy a welcome meal together this evening to meet the rest of the tour group and your Big Journey Company Tour Director.

Included meals: Dinner

Accommodation: Hyatt Regency, Kathmandu

DAY 2 - KATHMANDU CITY TOUR

Today we enjoy a city tour of Kathmandu - Nepal's capital. Also known as Kantipur, the capital Kathmandu is the hub of Nepal's art and culture.

We will walk through the centre of old Kathmandu to experience the city's eclectic mix of cultures.

We visit the Hanumandhoka palace museum, beautiful temples and the Kumari Chowk. The Kumari Chowk is a gilded cage which contains the Raj Kumari, a girl chosen through an ancient and mystical selection process to become the human incarnation of the Hindu goddess, Durga. After the tour of the Kathmandu Durbar Square, we continue towards the local bazaar and its colourful array of stalls selling daily household commodities. We will also enjoy a rickshaw ride to Thamel, the home of Nepal's tourism industry.

Later we will also visit Patan Durbar Square. Built in the 3rd century B.C. and later expanded and enriched by subsequent monarchs, Patan is located about 5 km south of Kathmandu and one of three royal cities in the valley. This is a destination for connoisseurs of fine arts. Patan Durbar Square, like its counterpart in Kathmandu, is an enchanting mélange of palace buildings, artistic courtyards and graceful pagoda temples.

Included meals: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

Accommodation: Hyatt Regency, Kathmandu

Optional extras: MOUNTAIN FLIGHT: Fly deep into the Himalayas, into valleys close to the rock face and as close as five nautical miles from Everest itself. See the stunning beauty of nature; raw, undiluted and truly majestic. This mountain flight offers a panoramic view of the Himalaya in a just one hour. The flight takes you the Eastern Himalayan Ranges of Nepal, some of the highest peaks in the world including Mt. Everest.

DAY 3 - ROYAL CHITWAN NATIONAL PARK

After breakfast at the hotel this morning, we take a short flight to Bharatpur to experience the gigantic plains of Terai. These grasslands stretch across southern part of Nepal and provide a real contrast to the more usual mountainous terrain of the country.

Here we will visit the Royal Chitwan National Park. Established in 1973, and located just 150m above sea level, the park provides a great wildlife experience with its rich flora and fauna. The autumn months are gorgeous, with Himalayan views. We will be accompanied during our time here by a local naturalist.

This afternoon, let your mind wander and relax as we float on a serene trip down the Rapti River in a traditional dugout canoe. Spot for crocodiles and other reptiles sunning themselves on the riverbanks, or admire the graceful lines of Ibises and other waterfowl as we glide silently and peacefully down the river.

Included meals: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

Accommodation: Jungle Villa Resort, Chitwan

DAY 4 - WILDLIFE EXPLORATION IN CHITWAN NATIONAL PARK

Today is filled with more spectacular wildlife in Chitwan National Park.

We visit the Gharial Hatchery to learn how crocodile's eggs are collected, hatched and returned to river as part of a local conservation project.

We will also take an exciting and invigorating walk through the lush sub-tropical jungles of Chitwan. A trained naturalist will take us to prime spots in the area to view deer, rhino, sloth bears and other wildlife. They will also be on hand to provide us with lots of interesting information about the various plants and animals of this environment as we walk.

This evening there will be entertainment provided, where we can enjoy watching a traditional Tharu 'stick dance'. You are more than welcome to join in as the dancers move their hips to the local rhythm!

Included meals: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

Accommodation: Jungle Villa Resort, Chitwan

DAY 5 - OVERLAND TO POKHARA

We check out this morning and bid farewell to the Chitwan National Park as we begin our journey over land to Pokhara today.

Pokhara is a place of remarkable natural beauty. At a lower elevation than that of Kathmandu, it has a much more tropical feel; a fact well appreciated by the beautiful diverse flowers that prosper in this environment. The valleys surrounding Pokhara are home to thick forest, gushing rivers, emerald lakes and of course, views of the world famous Himalayas. The serenity of the lakes and the magnificence of the Himalayas rising behind them create an ambience of peace and magic.

We enjoy dinner together this evening.

Included meals: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

Accommodation: Temple Tree Resort & Spa, Pokhara

DAY 6 - LUMLE TREK AND TANCHOK VILLAGE

After breakfast, we hit the road and head to meet our guides and porters to begin our trek around Lumle. This walk through the beautiful countryside to our accommodation for this evening will take about 1.5-2hrs.

After lunch at our accommodation, we will visit the local village of Tanchok. The houses here illustrate how the local people live, how they work and give a fascinating first hand view into the day to day traditional village life of Nepal.

Included meals: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

Accommodation: Mala Lodge, Tomijong

DAY 7 - NEPALI CULTURAL EXCHANGE

After breakfast, this morning, we embark on a "Day in the Life" of a Nepali village, a day of discovery where we learn firsthand what it's like to live in the shadow of the Annapurna Massif.

We depart for nearby Tomejhung village, where we explore and spend time with the hospitable people who live here. A Gorkha family will join us for lunch to share insight into their traditions and daily life. The Gorkha people arrived in western Nepal from India centuries ago. Known for their military prowess, courage, and loyalty, many Gorkhas were recruited by the British Army during their occupation in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Their culture is a fascinating blend of their Hindu roots and local traditions like shamanism and Tibetan Buddhism, as we'll learn during this exclusive opportunity for real cultural exchange.

We will enjoy some free time in the late afternoon and evening back at the lodge.

Included meals: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

Accommodation: Mala Lodge, Tomijong

DAY 8 - RETURN TO KATHMANDU

After breakfast at the lodge, we trek back to Lumle (1-1.5hrs) and then continue by road to Pokhara. From here we take a flight back to Kathmandu for the next leg of this adventure.

Back in the capital, this afternoon we'll visit the Boudhanath stupa. One of the oldest and largest Buddhist monuments ever built in Nepal, the stupa has an imposing height of 36m with three massive level Mandala style platforms.

We'll also visit Pashupatinath Temple, which dates back to 400 A.D. and is one of the oldest temples dedicated to Lord Shiva - the superior god as per Hindu mythology. Situated a few kilometres east of Kathmandu in a lush green setting on the bank of the sacred Bagmati River, the temple is built in a two storey Pagoda design with gilded roof and richly carved silver doors. It houses the sacred linga or phallic symbol of Lord Shiva. We time our visit to this UNESCO heritage site to coincide with the evening Aarati ceremony.

Included meals: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

Accommodation: Hyatt Regency, Kathmandu

DAY 9 - WELCOME TO BHUTAN!

After breakfast at the hotel, we transfer to Kathmandu airport for our flight to Paro, in Bhutan.

This flight is a befitting introduction to the spectacular beauty of Bhutan. In clear weather, magnificent views of the world's highest peaks give way to the lush green Paro Valley as we land. Your first impression of Bhutan will be the cool, clean fresh air as you step out of the plane. After clearing customs and visa control we head to Thimphu, the capital city of Bhutan.

Thimphu has a population of about 100,000. This capital city is made up of just three lines of shops and is the only capital in the world without traffic lights.

The Takin Reserve, in Mothithang is on our itinerary for this afternoon. Here we take a quick stroll to a viewing area where you can capture sights of the takin, the national animal of Bhutan. The Takin, sometimes called the goat with attitude, is listed by international conservation agencies as a vulnerable species and it is a very rare animal found only in this region of Asia. This animal has been chosen as the national animal of Bhutan for its uniqueness and its association with the country's national religious history and mythology. If we're lucky, we may also see a few sambar and barking deer.

As evening falls we will visit the Trashichhodzong, the beautiful medieval fortress and monastery that is Bhutan's administrative and religious centre. This building houses most of the government's offices and also the King's Throne Room.

We relax into our hotel this evening as we begin our Bhutan adventure.

Included meals: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

Accommodation: Riverview Hotel, Thimphu

DAY 10 - TRADITIONS IN THIMPHU

We begin our day today with a visit to the Memorial Chorten, with its golden spires shining in the sun, tinkling bells and an endless procession of elderly people circling around it. This beautiful monument was erected by the royal grandmother in memory of her son, the third king Jigme Dorje Wangchuck.

Later we will make a stop at the Centenary Park, where the 45m tall Walking Buddha resides and where we can visit the Folk Heritage Museum. This museum is dedicated to connecting visitors to the Bhutanese rural past. The principal exhibit is the museum building itself, a restored three-storey traditional rammed mud and timber house. Here you will have an opportunity to witness people preparing local dishes, giving you an insight to the Bhutanese way of cooking.

We also visit Drupthop Lhakhang Nunnery, one of the few surviving nunneries in Bhutan, before heading to Kuensel Phodrang, where the Buddha Dordena statue resides and you take in a bird's eye view of Thimphu city.

Included meals: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

Accommodation: Riverview Hotel, Thimphu

DAY 11 - FORTRESSES & MONASTERIES ON THE WAY TO PUNAKHA

We make an early start today from Thimphu to begin our drive to Punakha.

Later we will drive towards Wangdiphodrang. En route we will visit the Simthokha Dzong, a historic fortress built in 1629 by Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal, the man who unified Bhutan. The fortress now houses a language school, where scholars study both Dzongkha (the national language) and English.

We continue into the countryside towards the Punakha valley, the winter capital of Bhutan. The drive ascends gradually to the Dochula Pass at

over 10,300ft, with magnificent vistas of the Himalayan range. The Dochula Monastery, also known as the Druk Wangyal Khangzang Chortens, is a tribute to the service and leadership of His Majesty the King. The design inspired by the Queen is a unique cluster of 108 Chortens seen from all directions.

The descent to Punakha is vibrant and colorful, with the fluttering prayer flags adding to a rich topography dotted by terrace farming and rivers flowing through. Our final visit today is to the historic Punakha Dzong, also built by Shabdrung Nawang in 1637, and lies sprawled at the confluence of the Phochu (male) and Mochu (female) rivers.

Included meals: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

Accommodation: Meripuensum Resort, Punakha

DAY 12 - PICTURESQUE PUNAKHA

Today we traverse the Punakha countryside, walking through paddy fields to the Pana Village to see the 'Chimi Lhakhang,' built by the great Lama Drukpa Kinley in 1400 to subdue local demons. The temple is a popular pilgrimage point for all Bhutanese and is specially revered by women for its fertility powers.

The Chimi Lhakhang, situated on a hillock in the centre of the valley, is dedicated to Lama Drukpa Kuenley, who in the late 15th century used humor, songs and outrageous behavior to dramatize his teachings and due to this also known as "Divine Madman".

This temple is also known as the temple of fertility and it is widely believed that couples trying for a child are usually blessed with a child very soon after pray at this temple. The 30min walk trail to the temple leads across rice fields to the tiny settlement of Pana, meaning "field". It then follows a tiny stream downhill to Yoaka and across more fields before making a short climb to Chimi Lhakhang.

Included meals: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

Accommodation: Meripuensum Resort

DAY 13 - THE JOURNEY TO PARO

We depart this morning and make our way overland to Paro.

Our first stop in Paro will be at the National Museum. Originally located in the 17th Century watchtower of the Paro Dzong, earthquakes have caused severe damage to the main building of the museum and so exhibits are now shown in the new wing.

Here we will see a fine collection of old thangka paintings and textiles, ancient weapons, and Bhutanese artifacts. The museum is considered a temple due to the religious objects it houses.

We also visit the Paro Dzong, the "Fortress of a Heap of Jewels" which is without doubt one of the kingdom's finest examples of traditional Bhutanese architecture. Once great catapults here flung stones at invading the Tibetans. Today the dzong houses a monastic school and has two hundred resident monks.

The rest of the day will be spent at your leisure. You may wish to take a walk down Paro's main street, straight and windswept with its occasional idlers leaning against the storefronts. This is another opportunity to interact with the local people at your own pace and to explore the local area.

Included meals: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

Accommodation: Olathang Hotel, Paro

DAY 14 - HIKE TO 'TIGER'S NEST' MONASTERY

After breakfast, we take a short drive to Ramthanka for a hike to view one of the most revered pilgrimage sites of the Buddhist world the Taktshang Lhakhang, popularly known as the Tiger's Nest Monastery.

Today's trek offers spectacular views of this sacred monastery, perched precariously on a sheer rock face 3,000ft above the valley floor.

After around 2hrs walking, the cafeteria serves as our midway point and has wonderful views of the Tiger's Nest. From here it's about another 1-2 hour's trek through stunning landscape scenery to reach the monastery.

The trek to the Tiger's Nest is approx 4 miles round trip in which you ascend to 10,232 feet in elevation - there are many steps up to reach the

monastery. On average, it takes 4-5hrs for the round trip hike, plus an extra hour touring the monastery.

We will stop once more at the cafeteria for lunch during our descent to Ramthanka.

On our way back to Paro, we will visit the nearby Kyichu Lakhang, one of the oldest and most sacred shrines of the Kingdom dating back to 7th century. Composed of two temples, the first temple was built by Tibetan King, Songtsen Gampo in the 7th century and in 1968, H.M. Ashi Kesang, the Queen Mother of Bhutan, built the second temple in same original pattern

Included meals: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

Accommodation: Olathang Hotel, Paro

DAY 15 - RETURN TO KATHMANDU

Today we bid a fond farewell to the majesty of Bhutan and fly back to Nepal on the first leg of our journey home.

On arrival back in Nepal, there will be time to take in one last excursion, to visit Bhaktapur, 'the City of Devotees'. Bhaktapur is located 12km east of Kathmandu and is the smallest city in the valley. Its main square is famous for the 15th century Palace of 55 Carved Windows, as well the Lion Gate and the stone temple of Vatsala Devi and the Bell of Barking Dogs from 1737 whose sounding announced the beginning and end of a daily curfew.

We return to Kathmandu for some time at leisure before our farewell dinner together, to round off this most spectacular of adventures in style.

Included meals: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

Accommodation: Hyatt Regency, Kathmandu

DAY 16 - FAREWELL AND HOME

Today we all say goodbye to our time in the Himalayan Kingdoms with many new, cherished memories of an experience of a lifetime.

We will be transferred to the airport in time for flights for our onward journey home.

Included meals: Breakfast

Accommodation: none

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- Meet & Greet at Kathmandu Airport [KTM] on arrival
- Transport in an air-conditioned deluxe vehicle
- Accommodation as detailed in the itinerary
- Meals as detailed in the itinerary
- One-way economy flights: Kathmandu [KTM] - Bharatpur [BHR]; Pokhara [PKR] - Kathmandu [KTM]
- Return economy flights: Kathmandu [KTM], Nepal - Paro [PBH], Bhutan
- English speaking tour guide
- All activities, visits and excursions as detailed in the itinerary
- Tour Director from The Big Journey Company as well as the local tour guide (subject to minimum group size being reached.)

WHAT'S NOT INCLUDED

- Flights to/from Kathmandu Airport [KTM]
- ATOL protection
- Drinks
- Gratuities
- Travel and medical insurance
- Any personal items and anything not mentioned under included in price above
- Any meals not mentioned in itinerary
- Any optional activities offered
- Any COVID tests or related entry & exit requirements

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

- Please note, flights to/from Nepal are not included in this package. The Big Journey Company would be happy to provide a quotation for your flights - please contact us for further details
- A passport with at least six months validity remaining at the time of entry and a visa are required for entry into Nepal and Bhutan. To obtain a visa upon arrival by air in Nepal you must fill in an application form on arrival and provide a passport photograph. The Nepal visa fee and immigration assistance is included in the cost of the tour.
- Bhutan travel visas are only issued on arrival, but must be applied for in advance so we will receive visa approval before we travel. It is very important that we have your full, up to date passport details as soon as possible to ensure your visa is issued. The visa fee and Tourism Development Fee are included in the price of the tour. You will be issued with a visa clearance letter in Nepal for the flight to Bhutan.
- The altitude of Kathmandu is 1,370m and some guests may be adversely affected by the high altitude - please discuss this with your doctor before departure.
- Please let The Big Journey Company know prior to travelling if you have any medical needs or take any medication that we need to be made aware of to ensure that you have a safe and pleasant tour.
- Please consult your doctor for advice on vaccinations and inoculations before travel.
- Check in is after 2 - 3pm and check out is before 10am unless otherwise specified in the itinerary.
- Cancellation 90 - 0 days prior to departure cancellation fee is 100%. It is your responsibility to ensure the correct travel insurance in place to protect you against the need to cancel your holiday. Deposits are non-refundable.
- Further terms and conditions apply and will be provided upon request or at the time of booking. The Big Journey Company reserves the right to withdraw any offer prior to accepting a reservation request. This does not affect your statutory rights. This offer is subject to availability and space is limited.

BOOK YOUR JOURNEY

Choose from the list of dates below

CASH ONLY OPTION	27 OCT - 11 NOV 2024	FROM £9,599 PER PERSON.
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GOLD, PLATINUM, PREMIER & PREMIER PLUS MEMBERS:

APPLY 9,599 POINTS PER PERSON AT £0.30 PER POINT LEAVING A CASH REMAINDER OF £6,719 PER PERSON	27 OCT - 11 NOV 2024	FROM £6,719 PER PERSON.
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CASH ONLY OPTION	26 OCT - 10 NOV 2025	FROM £9,999 PER PERSON.
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GOLD, PLATINUM, PREMIER & PREMIER PLUS MEMBERS:

APPLY 9,999 POINTS PER PERSON AT £0.30 PER POINT LEAVING A CASH REMAINDER OF £7,999 PER PERSON	26 OCT - 10 NOV 2025	FROM £6,999 PER PERSON.
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Call to Book

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