

The Charm of Bhutan

For an escape less ordinary, head to Bhutan and enter a world of outdoorsy adventure, ancient traditions and incredible culture.

– By Lightfoot Travel

With its misty mountains, turquoise rivers, whispering forests and sweeping plateaus, the Buddhist Kingdom of Bhutan remains one of the world's most mysterious and alluring countries. And nestled within the dramatic landscapes are a wealth of hiking trails that range from the relatively easy to super-challenging. Head to the valley of Gangtey where you can visit monasteries and cycle through local villages. Meet practicing monks in Punakha Valley and trek the hills to witness the iconic Tiger's Nest. Enjoy lunch at a traditional farmhouse and stroll through rice fields on your way to Paro. Whether you're searching for adventure, culture, a spiritual sojourn, or just something a little different, Bhutan provides an antidote to the stresses of modern day life and promises memories to last a lifetime.

SAMPLE ITINERARY

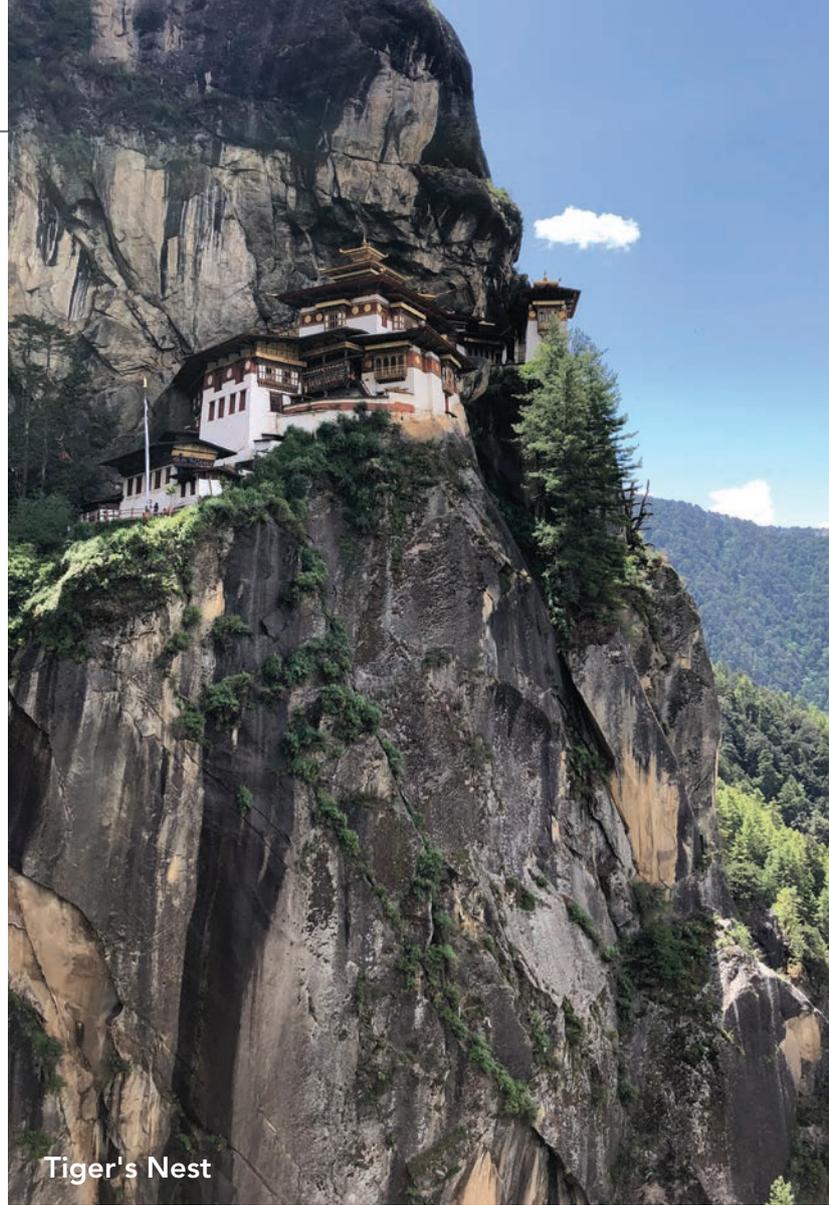
Cost: From US\$7,900 per person based on 2 guests travelling including all hotels, excursions and meals, not including international flights.

The Highlights of Bhutan

Day 1

Arrival Paro

Upon arrival in Bhutan you'll be met at the airport



Tiger's Nest

and taken by private transfer to the capital city of Thimphu, an hours' drive away.

Stay: Six Senses Thimphu

Day 2

Thimphu to Phobjikha via the Dochu La Pass

Today you'll be driven to the Phobjikha Valley (commonly referred to as Gangtey), stopping on the way at Dochula Pass to experience the snowy mountain ranges and the 108 chorten at the top. After settling into your hotel you'll head to Gangtey Monastery and the school for novice monks.

Afterwards you'll have the chance to go cycling or hiking in the valley and, if travelling between October to late February, you can also watch the famous Black-Necked Cranes in the Phobjikha valley.

Stay: Gangtey Lodge

Day 3

Lhongtey Hike

This morning you'll trek up to Kumbu Monastery, a retreat and meditation centre.

Next, you'll take the steep ascent towards the Gyeche Pass where you'll find prayer flags and 'cairn-like' piles of stones.

Eventually you'll reach Lhongtey village and, after passing through bamboo thickets, a chorten and a small wooden bridge, you'll reach Lhongmay where your vehicle will be waiting.

Stay: *Gangtey Lodge*

Day 4

Phobjikha to Punakha

Embark on a hike through the forest, crossing farmland and rivers, passing small villages, and exploring the valley.

You'll then be driven to Punakha, approximately two-and-a-half hours away.

Stay: *COMO Uma Punakha*

Day 5

Explore Punakha Valley

Rise early to enjoy the morning sunshine and a walk to Khamsum Yuelley Namgyal Chorten where you'll find beautiful views of the river valley.

In the afternoon, visit Punakha Dzong, the old capital of Bhutan until the 1950's.



Activities here include witnessing the village and temple at Talo, and visiting a local nunnery and the Nalanda monastic university. You'll also get to meet some practicing monks.

Stay: *COMO Uma Punakha*

Day 6

Punakha to Paro

After a morning of relaxing at your hotel you'll be driven towards Lobesa village for lunch in a traditional farmhouse.

Afterwards, take a stroll through the rice fields and villages to Chimi Lhakhang, commonly known as the

Fertility Monastery, where your guide will reveal more about its history, secret powers and amazing stories from those who have visited.

You'll then continue to Paro.

Stay: *Amankora Paro*

Day 7

Bumdra Trek Day 1

After breakfast you'll begin your trek from Sang Choekor up to the temple. The trail ascends gradually through a forested trail, and the peace and quiet of the forest is magnificent. Lunch

Punakha Valley





Bumdra Trek



Famhouse
lunch,
Punakha



Amankora Gangtey



COMO Uma Punakha

Lightfoot's Bhutan Bucket List

Lightfoot Travel's Nikki Pang counts Bhutan as one of her favourite places to visit. Here she reveals her highlights.

Try the food (constantly!)

Visitors to Bhutan are constantly in awe of the quality of food available, and no-one should miss eating a traditional meal at a farmhouse in the Punakha valley. Not only do you get to meet local farmers and learn about their way of life, but the dishes are created using ingredients from the fields right outside the front door. Each household prepares ema datshi – the national dish of chilli and cheese – differently so make sure you test out your host's family recipe!

Have a hot stone bath

The hot stone baths in Bhutan are out of this world, especially during the colder months. The stones are heated directly on a fire and then transferred to one end of a bathtub which is usually made of wood, and the bath is typically filled with artemisia which adds a lovely aroma. As the stones heat the water, minerals are released from the rock and are believed to cure ailments such as arthritis and hypertension. The hot stone bath at Amankora Gangtey is housed in a wooden farmer's shed in a field with views of the valley and the majestic Gangtey Goenpa.

Go overnight camping

The overnight Bumdra Trek is one of the best. Climbing to altitudes of 3,800 metres, it starts in Paro and descends to the iconic Tiger's Nest on the second day. For me, this is a fantastic way to visit Tiger's Nest in peace and away from the hundreds of tourists that take the route en masse by road. Conditions are basic, but you do get a comfortable bed, hot food, and toilet tents. And you can opt for luxury hotels for the rest of your trip!



will be served to a backdrop of beautiful views, before you continue trekking to the campsite. Time permitting, you'll have the chance to visit the monastery perched right above Bumdra Camp and climb the peak for amazing views, returning to the campsite in time for dinner.

Stay: Bumdra Campsite

Day 8

Bumdra Trek Day 2

Start the day with a descent to the iconic Taktsang Monastery, or Tiger's Nest. This is a highlight of the tour since Taktsang is a pilgrimage site for Buddhists from all over Asia, and particularly Tibet.

Afterwards, you'll continue to the base of the mountain and drive back to Paro.

Spend the rest of the afternoon at leisure in Paro, browsing the local arts and crafts, marveling at the architecture, or simply relaxing and watching the world go by. Don't miss the Brioche Café for pastries, and Champaca Café for a coffee hit.

Stay: Gangtey Lodge

Day 9

Departure

Today you'll be escorted to the airport for your onward journey. 

Lightfoot Travel is a luxury tour operator with offices in Singapore, Hong Kong, Dubai and London, specialising in designer holidays around the world. Tel: Hong Kong +852 2815 0068, Singapore +65 6438 4091. www.lightfoottravel.com


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