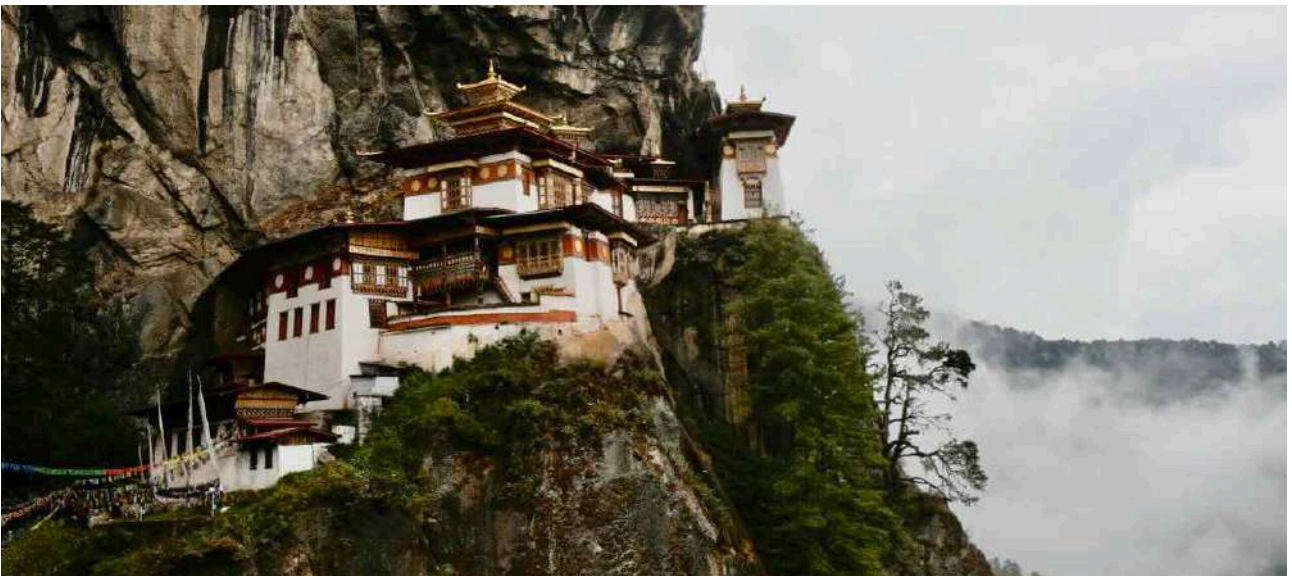


Trip Dossier

14-Day Bhutan - The Last Shangri-La



Small Group Tour - Max 12 Passengers

Bangkok - Bangkok 15 - 28 April 2024

Itinerary Highlights:

- Taktsang Monastery (Tiger's Nest) - A small collection of temples perched on a cliff 900m above the ground. This is one of Bhutan's most iconic monasteries. The walk up will provide beautiful scenic views of the valley below.
- Dochula Pass - A mountain pass overlooking the Himalayas, where 108 shortens (stupas) exist in the memory of fallen Bhutanese soldiers.
- Royal Manas National Park - The oldest national park in Bhutan, also known as the "Conservation showpiece of the kingdom". This national park boasts a wide variety of flora and fauna.
- Tingtibi and the Yonkala Forest area are said to be the best birding regions in Bhutan.
- Punakha Dzong - A riverside fortress located at the confluence of the Mochhu and Pochhu Rivers. This Dzong is the second oldest and largest in Bhutan.
- Gangkar Puensum - Weather permitting, we should get a glimpse of the world's highest unclimbed mountain (7546m).

This comprehensive, 14 day, escorted tour of this relatively isolated country will take you through the prime botanical and wildlife sites in Bhutan. Discover the natural richness of this eastern Himalayan region.

The Land of the Dragon, as Bhutan is known to its inhabitants, has always been the most fiercely independent Himalayan kingdom. It's a hidden kingdom, where it seems time has stood still. Bhutan carefully refrains from allowing mass tourism, in order to preserve its unique environment and heritage.

Taxes and royalties to maintain the country's infrastructure and sustain its progress constitutes a large portion of the cost of visiting Bhutan, making it one of the most expensive destinations in the region. We can assure you that the cost is well worth it! A country that few have visited, Bhutan is one of the last strongholds of Tibetan Buddhism, and its peaceful and fun-loving people are proud and elegant, with a timeless culture and dress.

Vast Dzongs (beautiful medieval buildings that incorporate a monastery, village and fort in one) dot the countryside, along with Chortens (shrines) and lhakhans (temples). A highlight of the tour will be a visit to the magnificent Taksang Monastery (Tiger's Nest) near Paro.

Bhutan has been rated as one of the top ten global hotspots of the world due to its pristine forests that provide habitat for a diverse range of flora and fauna. It is estimated that over 600 bird species inhabit the unspoiled forests. The trees are clothed in beautiful epiphytic orchids, lichens, ferns and mosses. The forests also harbour some of the most exotic plant species of the eastern Himalayas, with over 50 species of Rhododendron, Magnolias and an amazing variety of medicinal plants.

Home to snow leopards, blue sheep, red pandas, Asian elephants and tigers, Bhutan's environment is strictly protected. The result will provide you with a rare encounter with a lost kingdom, a unique land and its wonderful people.

It is a remarkable country that offers the opportunity to see not only the exquisite Himalayan scenery but also rich and ancient traditions in both remote villages and in the capital. Few people have been privileged enough to experience Bhutan, and in this age of superpowers, this small but fragile nation of traditional culture is a slice of the old world that may be denied to us in future.



Itinerary

Day 1 Bangkok to Paro to Thimphu

Fly from Bangkok to Paro (meet Tom Grove for group check-in at Bangkok airport). Upon arrival at Paro, you will be welcomed by our Bhutan representative (guide), who will assist you in boarding your transfer to Thimphu, Bhutan's small capital "city". We will be there by mid-afternoon, and can then visit the giant seated Buddha on the edge of the forest above the town. Later, discover the city's various unique sights, including the magnificent dzong.

Accommodation: Druk Noryang or similar LD

Day 2 Thimphu - Wangdue Phrodrang - Chuzomza

Today we will drive from Thimphu to Wangdue Phrodrang. We will stop at the Dochu La (3400m) to look at the 108 chortens. You can see the entire Bhutan Himalayan range from here on a fine day. Down the other side, we will spend some time in the Royal Botanical Gardens, which are a haven for bird and animal life and have a great display of native plants and trees. We will have lunch at the restaurant before descending to the Punakha Valley to visit the famous and magnificent Punakha Dzong. We will then drive a short way up the Dang Chhu Valley to our idyllic accommodation on the banks of the rushing river. This is an excellent area for birding and animal opportunities.

Accommodation: Kichu Resort, Chuzomza BLD

Day 3 Chuzomza

Using this lovely resort as a base, we will drive up the newly constructed (rough) road above the Mo Chhu River towards Tashigang, inside Jigme Dorji National Park. We will have plenty of time to wander along the road and river, looking at wildlife, trees and plants. This area is well known for its good birding. In the afternoon, we will return to the Kichu Resort.

Accommodation: Kichu Resort, Chuzomza BLD

Day 4 Chuzomza to Trongsa

We will drive up towards the Pele La pass (3400m), looking for wildlife on the way, and then down to the small town of Trongsa, which has the most amazing dzong in Bhutan. There will be many opportunities to look at birds and plants on the way. If we have time, we will visit the dzong and museum (or we can do it on our return.)

Accommodation: Yangkhill Resort, Trongsa BLD

Day 5 Trongsa to Tingtibi

We start our 5-day adventure off the beaten track by driving down a minor road above the left bank of the MangdeChhu River, which lies at the bottom of a deep gorge. We then drive into a sub-tropical region of the country in the Royal Manas National Park. This area is rich in birdlife and home to the endangered golden langur monkeys. Today will be about 5 hours driving in total.

Accommodation: T.Wang Hotel, Tingtibi BLD

Day 6 Tingtibi

Stay a second night in Tingtibi village. Walking, birding, and wildlife opportunities abound in this biodiversity hotspot at the crossroads of the Royal Manas, Black Mountain and Thrumshing La National Parks.

Accommodation: T.Wang Hotel, Tingtibi BLD

Day 7 Tingtibi to Panbang

Today we travel through the Royal Manas National Park, frequently stopping to wander ahead of the bus to look at the birds and vegetation.

Accommodation: Eco Lodge or hotel, Panbang. BLD

Day 8 Panbang to Yonkola

We carry on slowly eastwards until we reach the Mongar region, where we rejoin the only (and very quiet) road across the country, in the gorge of the mighty PuriChhu river. We turn north here towards the small hamlet of Yonkala, where there is a lovely campsite in the heart of the Thrumshing La National Park.

Accommodation: Trogon Villa, Yonkola BLD

Day 9 Yonkola

We stay in the Yonkala region for the entire day, enjoying forest walks as we look for birds and flowers. Along with Tingtibi, the Yonkala Forest area is said to be the best birding region in Bhutan.

Accommodation: Trogon Villa, Yonkola BLD

Day 10 Yonkola to Dakar / Chumey

Early departure today as we make our way northwards on what has been called the most scenic road in Bhutan (it's also a hotspot for red pandas and spectacular birds such as the satyr tragopan and blood pheasant). We cross two more high Passes (La's), including the Thrumshing La leading down to the Ura Valley. From here, we cross the Shertang La on a new road, where we can hopefully get a good view of Gangkar Puensum, the world's highest unclimbed mountain (7546m). Back in the Bumthang region, we make our way to Jakar, the area's main town.

Accommodation: Mountain lodge or Guest house in Chumey BLD

Day 11 Dakar / Chumey to Chuzomsa

We now begin our journey back towards the west side of Bhutan. On the way, we will stop at Chhumney, where there is an excellent textile factory that produces wonderful hand-woven material and souvenirs. We then climb up to the Yotang La, another pass with great views of the surrounding countryside. From here, we drop down to Trongsa (where we stayed 6 days ago) and then back over the Pele La to the lovely lodge by the river at Chuzomsa.

Accommodation: Kichu Resort, Chuzomsa. BLD

Day 12 Chuzomsa to Paro via Thimphu

In the morning, we drive back up and over the Dochu La and down to Thimphu for lunch and sightseeing, before we make the 90-minute drive back to our resort in Paro.

This afternoon, options include visiting the reserve of Bhutan's national animal, the Takin, from where we can take a short walk through the forest above the town (optional). We could also visit the traditional paper-making factory, the school of traditional arts (great for paintings & traditional souvenirs) and many other options. You may also be interested in shopping (e.g. for bird and flower books).

Accommodation: Kichu Resort, Paro BLD

Tour Cost

Cost:	\$ 7,375.00 USD	Per Person Twin Share
	\$435.00 USD	Single Supplement
Departs:	Bangkok	15 April 2024
Finishes:	Bangkok	28 April 2024

Tour Payments

Deposit:	At the time of booking, \$1,500.00 USD per person
Final Payment:	Due on or before 15 January 2024

Note: The \$1,500.00 USD deposit is non-refundable, and the final payment is non-refundable after 15 January 2024.

Travel insurance covering all payments is VERY strongly recommended. Prices are based on all known costs and current rates of exchange. Any significant changes beyond our control will be passed on to passengers.

Included

- All airport transfers and transportation;
- 2 crew members - Coates Wildlife Tours escort and a local English speaking guide;
- Return Bhutan Airlines flights from Bangkok to Paro;
- Bhutan visa fees, taxes and permits;
- Bhutan accommodation with all meals;
- Sightseeing with entrance fees;
- Tips and Gratuities for our Bus Driver and Local Bhutanese Guide.

Not Included

- Tips and gratuities to local staff other than our driver and local guide;
- Alcoholic, carbonated & any other beverages in hotels;
- Travel insurance (very strongly recommended);
- Travel expenses to and from Bangkok;
- Pre and post tour accommodation in Bangkok;
- All other private expenses (e.g. laundry, telephone calls, camera batteries);
- Entrance fees or activity costs other than those included above.

Tour Information

Coates Wildlife Tours Escort: Tom Grove

Bhutan Naturalist Guide: Dhendup

Flights:

The tour starts and ends in Bangkok. The airfare is not included in the tour price. You can book your flights online, or your travel agent will be able to arrange this for you.

Please ensure you are in Bangkok on or before 14th April to meet your guides and fellow passengers the following day at the airport. Our flight to Paro is scheduled to depart Bangkok at 7:30 am on 15th April, so you will need to be at the airport around 5:00 am to check-in.

Once you have made your bookings, please send us a copy of your flight itinerary.

Passport & Visa:

A visa is required for Bhutan. However, this is arranged for the group by our operator in Bhutan. They will send us the visa a couple of weeks before the start date of the trip.

Please note: As the group is travelling on the same visa, the entire group will need to be checked onto the Bangkok to Paro flight at the same time.

Travel Insurance:

We strongly recommend that you have a cancellation, medical and personal accident insurance covering repatriation costs, air ambulance and helicopter rescue services. You should be aware that some policies restrict coverage for Bhutan and activities such as trekking and mountain biking. Please ensure that your policy provides sufficient protection and covers you for your entire trip to Bhutan and the activities involved in the tour.

Vehicles:

Coaster bus or similar.

Accommodation:

Hotels, Resorts and Forest Lodges with private facilities.

NOTE: Please be aware that some forest lodges have been chosen for their location and may not all have western-style toilets.

Meals:

Meals are included, as per the itinerary. Most special dietary requirements can be catered for with plenty of prior notice.

Trek Grading:

Moderate. Most serious walks, such as Takstang (Tiger's Lair), are optional. If you cannot walk, a driver and transport will be on standby to take you around and show you other sites. Other walks are pretty easy, and only a reasonable fitness level is required. All the walks can be avoided if you do not feel like participating. Overall, one must be able to walk about 1-2 hours a day to get maximum enjoyment out of the trip.

Weather:

Spring is the ideal time to explore Bhutan. You can expect clear blue skies and mild temperatures. The days are mainly warm, and the nights cool, with maximum temperatures around 23 degrees Celsius and minimum temperatures around 10 degrees Celsius. Autumn is considered to be the camping and trekking season.

Clothing:

A suggested list of items to bring on tour will be included with our pre-departure information sent to you about one month before departure. However, we generally recommend you bring appropriate clothing for the cold and rain due to the wide range of temperatures and conditions.

Clothing made of natural fibres is more comfortable, allowing the body to breathe. It is considered offensive to the Bhutanese people to wear skimpy or tight-fitting clothes. Although there may be opportunities to wear shorts, we recommend women wear skirts or loose trousers. Men should not wear singlets. Trousers, long-sleeved shirts or jackets should be worn when visiting religious sites and dzongs. Sturdy and comfortable walking shoes or boots are essential.

Health & Vaccinations:

There are no statutory requirements unless you are arriving from an area designated as infected by cholera or yellow fever. We recommend vaccinations against typhoid, tetanus, polio and hepatitis A. Please consult your doctor or vaccination centre for up-to-date information. If you are on any prescribed medication, ensure you bring a sufficient supply. As Bhutan is a remote country, we advise all travellers with pre-existing medical conditions to consult their doctor about their travel plans. You're no longer required to quarantine on arrival, and all COVID-19 vaccination requirements have been lifted. Individuals aged 12 and over may undergo random RT-PCR testing on arrival. If you test positive for COVID-19 during your stay in Bhutan, you must quarantine in your hotel until you test negative.

For detailed Terms and Conditions, please visit the [FAQ page](#) on our website.



To make a booking or further information please contact:
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