

Himalayan Villages & Monasteries

Bhutan Cultural Walking Adventure



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“Classic Journeys provides unbeatable access to experiences around the globe.”

—Travel + Leisure

Inside the Mysterious Kingdom

In all of Bhutan, there is not a single stoplight. Gross National Happiness is an official measure of the country's well-being. And the number of foreign visitors is strictly limited to protect the culture and environment. This is a destination on a higher plane in so many ways! Of course, there's the Himalayan factor, tucked as it is into a niche in the soaring chain. Bhutan is also one of the world's most Buddhist countries, and its historic dzongs (monasteries) perch serenely over sweeping expanses of terrain. Lush valleys are carpeted with rice and mustard fields and criss-crossed by footpaths. For an insider's look at this heavenly land, you'll meet the Bhutanese farmers, wood carvers, yak-herders and mask dancers. To make your Asian adventure even more remarkable, join us for a 5-day/4 night extension to India's dramatic Darjeeling region.

DAY 1

PARO VALLEY / THIMPHU

• Fly in from Bangkok or Delhi and meet your guide • Enjoy a guided stroll in the capital of Thimphu

You undergo a wonderful transition on this morning's included flight. Leaving behind one of the world's biggest cities, you step from your plane into a land of otherworldly calm. Shrines dot the emerald-green Paro Valley. Terraced rice fields defy common sense as they climb the hillsides to forests of rhododendron and pine. Bhutan wears Buddhism on its sleeve, and you'll get early lessons in the vocabulary of its structures. Remember stupa. It's the Sanskrit word for a mound-like structure that shelters relics, and it's sometimes called a chorten. On a single stop, you'll see Tibetan, Nepalese and Bhutanese styles clustered at the confluence of two rivers. Your destination is Thimphu, the nation's capital, but along the way at Tamchog Lhakhang for picturesque photo opportunities. After, you'll stroll through the streets of Thimphu with your local guide to the King's Memorial, circled by an endless string of Bhutanese, murmuring mantras and spinning prayer wheels. Your hotel was built in the dzong style, with a glamorous contemporary interior – a grand setting for your first two nights.

Overnight: Thimphu (Taj Tashi)

Meals: L, D

DAY 2

TANGO GOMPA / INSTITUTE OF ZORIG CHUSUM

• Share a local trail with pilgrims and packponies • Interact with monks against a backdrop of prayer flags • Visit a crafts school to learn about 17th century techniques

This morning's woodland trail is quintessentially Bhutanese. It wends past an enormous gold rock painting of Guru Rinpoche. You share the path with local pilgrims and pack ponies. And then your destination peeks through the trees above. It's Tango Gompa, where Drukpa Kunley (The Divine Madman) erected a monastery in the 15th century. You'll see a gathering of monks, arrayed in their best robes. Strings of multi-colored prayer flags catch the breeze so that their wishes for long life, prosperity and happiness can be caught by the wind and sent out into the world. Later, you return to Thimphu for a fascinating afternoon visit to the Institute of Zorig Chusum – the Arts & Crafts School. Bhutan takes its traditions so seriously that 13 traditional crafts were formally categorized in the late 17th century. These same crafts – including weaving, paper-making, blacksmithing, slate carving and carpentry – are still taught here today, and you'll see how they're kept alive. You'll also visit Tashichho Dzong, the country's formal seat of government, to see the throne room of King Jigme Khesar Mangyel Wangchuck. Note: The elevation gain to the Tango Monastery is 400 meters and the altitude is 2,800 meters.

Overnight: Thimphu (Taj Tashi)

Meals: B, L, D

DAY 3

PANA VILLAGE / PUNAKHA

• Follow a guided footpath through mustard and rice fields • Pause for conversations with friendly local villagers

After an early breakfast, you head to Buddha Dorden, located at the top of a hill in Kuenselphodrang Nature Park. You'll explore the park before driving up into the sky to Dochula Pass for views to some of the country's highest peaks. Back at a lower altitude, you follow a path through mustard and rice fields. Along the way, you pass through the rural villages, pausing at the tiny settlement of Pana where your guide arranges meeting the people who live here. As Bhutan's rivers tumble down from the mountains, they roll and smooth the rocks, creating white cobbled banks of stone. Where the Pho Chhu (Father River) and Mo Chhu (Mother River) meet, you see Punakha Dzong – one of the country's grandest structures – standing guard. Damaged by fires and earthquake over the past four centuries, it has been fully restored by the current king. Later, you visit a Chimi Lhakhang, a monastery renowned throughout Bhutan as a place which induces fertility for all the visitors who come here wishing for a child.

Overnight: Punakha

Meals: B, L, D

DAY 4

KHAMSUM YULLEY NAMGYAL CHORTEN

• Walk amongst rice paddies and emerald green terraces to Khamsum Yulley Namgyal Chorten

This morning your guide leads you on a walk to Khamsum Yulley Namgyal Chorten, a classic example of Bhutanese architecture. Instead of being designed as a place for communal worship, it was built to fight off negative forces, and bring peace and harmony for all living beings. It's no wonder the Paro Valley holds divine sway over Bhutan. Snow Mount Chomolhari

soars over its northern reaches. Intensely blue glacial melt roars down through deep gorges to water the fertile valley, famous for its red rice. It seems like every pine copse and hillock comes with its own myth or legend. To breathe in the beauty, you take a woodland walk that leads you to one of the distinctively arched covered bridges, a stone inlaid path and Rinpung Dzong. As at all of your meals, you'll dine on Bhutanese specialties. The nutty-tasting local rice is a staple. The national dish is ema datshi, a stew of chilis and cheese. Bhutan tradition has it that, when offered food, you cover your mouth and decline...after another invitation or two, you accept!

Overnight: Paro

Meals: B, L, D

DAY 5

TIGER'S NEST MONASTERY

• Approach Tiger's Nest monastery along an incredibly scenic footpath • Attend an archery demonstration to witness Bhutan's national sport

Taktsang (Tiger's Nest) Monastery doesn't look possible. How can it cling to such a slight toehold on the mountain's steep flank? Who could conceive of a place so graceful but commanding? How could it even have been built? Even more remarkable, Bhutan's most famous sight has already stood for more than 10 centuries. You'll approach on a footpath that offers a succession of amazing views. The trail is divided into several stages, so you can relax at a lower-level vantage point or ascend all the way, over a stream, past a waterfall, then up to the monastery and cave where Buddhism in Bhutan is said to have been born. Archery is to Bhutan as soccer is to Brazil. It's the national sport – and you'll be surprised how rowdy it can be, complete with cheerleaders, bulls-eye dances and chanting. Late afternoon, you'll see what it's all about at a demonstration of the locals' longbow skills. Note: The hike to Tiger's Nest Monastery is 4 miles round trip. The elevation gain is 900 meters above Paro Valley and the altitude is 3,100 meters above sea level.

Overnight: Paro

Meals: B, L, D

DAY 6

KYICHU LHA KHANG / CHELE LA PASS

• Participate in a sacred butter lamp lighting ceremony • Accept an invitation to a traditional mask dance ceremony dating to the 8th century

For Buddhists, 108 is a sacred number, and one of the most striking rituals is the morning lighting of 108 butter lamps to dispel the darkness of ignorance. We'll make the pilgrimage to beautiful Kyichu Lhakhang to witness the ceremony – an event you won't soon forget. And you'll feel another form of reverence – this time for the majesty of nature – when we make the drive to Chele La Pass, the highest in Bhutan. From this lookout point, you have an expansive view of the eastern Himalayas, including 22,000-foot Jhomolhari. Later in the afternoon, you may want to arrange a spa treatment or a meditation class at the resort. This evening, you'll enjoy a cultural performance, including the traditional mask dance that's been a part of local life since the 8th century.

Overnight: Paro

Meals: B, L, D

DAY 7

PART COMPANY WITH A TRANSFER TO PARO AIRPORT

• Part company with a transfer to Paro airport

You transfer to Paro airport for your outbound flights. If you're continuing on to our Darjeeling extension, it begins now with our morning flight to Bagdogra, India.

Meals: B



Tour Hotels



Taj Tashi

Set in Thimphu, this hotel is a blend of gold-hued dzong architecture with a serene, contemporary interior. It offers striking views of the mountains and great proximity to the bustling local markets.

OVERNIGHT: Thimphu | **NIGHTS:** 2



Dhensa Boutique Resort

Perched above the Punakha Valley, this hotel is gorgeous modern interpretation of traditional Himalayan design. Suites are set in six cottages, each with a private balcony. The views of the Punakha river and stairstep paddies are truly spectacular.

OVERNIGHT: Punakha | **NIGHTS:** 1



Le Meridien Paro Riverfront

With a compelling location close to Paro International Airport and the riverfront, Le Meridien Paro is the ideal place to stay and explore Bhutan. Unlock this holistic destination with attractions including sacred fortresses and monasteries.

OVERNIGHT: Paro | **NIGHTS:** 3

Tour Dates & Prices

To see the full list of dates and prices for this tour, go to our website by clicking [here](#).

Want to travel with just your group on a date of your choosing? Visit [CLASSICJOURNEYS.COM/PRIVATE](https://www.classicjourneys.com/private) to learn more about Private Journeys.

Trip Essentials

TRIP LENGTH	7 Days, 6 Nights
START	Paro Airport (PBH), Paro, Bhutan
END	Paro Airport (PBH), Paro, Bhutan
TERRAIN	Moderate on good trails. An average of 2 to 4 hours of walking per day, except on the transfer days.

What's Included

- 6 breakfasts, 6 lunches, 6 dinners
- Airport transfers in Paro on Day 1 and Day 7
- Bhutan Visa (issued 3-5 days prior to trip departure)
- Full-time experienced guide(s) who are with you throughout the trip and handle behind-the-scenes logistics
- Admissions to scheduled events as noted in the detailed daily itinerary
- Gratuities for hotels, meals, and baggage
- All land transportation during the trip

Above & Beyond Benefits

- Invisible Check-In
- Privileged Access Events

READY TO BOOK?
CLICK TO MAKE A RESERVATION

Or give us a call

1-800-200-3887

Mon-Fri 8:00AM – 5:00PM PST

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AMBASSADOR CLUB

As a Classic Journeys guest, you are invited to join the Ambassador Club after your first Classic Journeys tour. As a member, you'll have access to [a whole suite of Ambassador benefits](#) you can use immediately and as often as you like.

ENJOY THE UNEXPECTED

When you travel with Classic Journeys, you can expect handcrafted surprises built into every trip, but some things just can't be anticipated. Unusual weather, a once-a-year festival or an unscheduled site closing will inspire us and your local guide to improvise and modify this itinerary. Likewise, the hotels named here are used on the majority of our trips, but occasionally one of them can't accommodate us. If that happens, you can count on us to let you know before departure and make sure you're in a hotel of equal or better quality. It's our goal to make your trip exceptional!

**Any discount offered cannot be combined with other offers, and only applies to published (regularly scheduled public) departure dates in our catalogs or on our website.

THE Classic Journeys Difference



HANDCRAFTING TRIPS OF A LIFETIME.

At the end of the day, we fundamentally believe that every guest on every departure of every trip should have a trip of a lifetime. We're fortunate to play the role of well-connected friend, linking our guests with amazing guides, artisans, winemakers, hoteliers, restaurateurs, naturalists, and too many others to list here.

That's what motivates me and our team — in our La Jolla HQ and around the world — every day. Join Us!

Samuel
President & Founder



You can expect the highest standards:



Luxurious Lodgings:

Ours include coveted properties that appear in "World's Best" and "Gold List" rankings.



Included Activities:

You'll never be surprised with add-on fees on your activities that include snorkeling to cooking lessons.



Local Guides:

Your guides are locals who are always at your side like well-connected friends.



Small Group Travel:

With an average of just 10-12 guests, it's a small footprint that guarantees you access that's off-limits to larger groups.



Amazing Cuisine:

From Michelin-starred restaurants to lunch in a farmhouse kitchen, you'll have a seat for the region's signature dishes.



Unmatched Value:

"Excellent value" and "unbeatable access" are two of the reasons that Travel + Leisure has consistently voted us a World's Best Tour Operator.

You'll enjoy these handcrafted travel experiences in Bhutan...

- Approaching Tiger's Nest Monastery on an incredibly scenic footpath
- Accepting an invitation to a local farmhouse for dinner
- Witnessing a butter-lamp blessing and native dancers
- Interacting with monks against a backdrop of prayer flags
- Visiting a crafts school where you learn about 17th-century techniques

"I never felt like a tourist."

-Elizabeth C., New York, NY