



# DRUK PATH TREK



*This information should answer some of your questions about the trip and give you a better idea of what we do day-to-day. It doesn't hope to answer everything. If you have any questions please get in touch.*



*Chomolhari (7315m) just visible from from above Jele La*

- **Follow the traditional mountain route between Paro and Thimpu**
- **Himalayan panoramas**
- **Good acclimatisation schedule**
- **Vist Punakha, the ancient capital of Bhutan**
- **Enough time to absorb some of the sights, culture & traditions**

## **Bhutan**

Mystery and legend have surrounded the tiny kingdom of Bhutan for centuries. Its steep mountains and remote forested valleys are scattered with holy places of deep mystical importance where the founders of Tibetan Buddhism have left their traces. Since the borders were opened to tourists in 1974, a tightly controlled tourism policy has allowed a very limited number of visitors to enter the country each year at a high cost price – however a proportion of the income goes towards government aid, enabling each visitor to make a personal contribution to Bhutan's expanding health and education programmes.

The Wangchuk monarchy ruled Bhutan from 1907 until March 2008 when King Wangchuk initiated the formation of a two party parliamentary democracy with elections. Both the ruling party the 'Bhutan Harmony Party' and the opposition, the 'People's Democratic Party' support the monarchy, and will continue to try to protect the fragile balance between the nation's spiritual heritage and modern economic development.

### **The trip**

Our route follows the Druk Path Trail, the original mountain crossing between Paro and Thimpu. This classic trek includes ridge top walking, high mountain lakes, visits to high mountain monasteries and in clear weather, good views of snow covered Himalayan peaks.

There is a good acclimatisation schedule on this trip with an extra day in Paro before the trek. Two nights near Punakha at the end of the trek allows enough time without rushing. Although these two additional days increase the price, we feel the extra days offer the trip a finer balance.

### **On trek**

We are supported by ponies and a cooking and camp team. Tents, food and baggage accompany us and we carry only what we need for the day: camera, water bottle, spare clothing, waterproofs etc. A typical day starts early with a steaming mug of tea. Packing is followed by breakfast in the mess tent and we are usually away early in order to catch the best weather. A picnic lunch stop is around 12 noon and arrival in camp is usually by mid afternoon in time for tea and a snack. After sorting camp out, we can relax perhaps join in some of the throwing games which the staff often play before dinner at about 6 -7pm. 'Trekking bedtime' is seldom later than 9pm.

### **Accommodation**

Outside of the trek we stay in comfortable, traditional hotels or guesthouses with ensuite rooms. Whilst trekking we camp in 2 person tents.

### **Food**

Whilst in Bhutan, all meals are included, though in towns you will be asked to pay for your own drinks. Please note that in Bhutan there are almost no 'extras', as all meals are included.

### **Health and hygiene**

We have an excellent record of staying fit and well, and the local food is delicious. The key seems to be

- Avoid drinking any untreated water, even when cleaning your teeth
- Be scrupulous about washing your hands before eating.



*Dolay, one of our guides*

### **Altitude**

Above 3000m, the air is thinner, the pressure lower and there is less oxygen available in the atmosphere. Acclimatisation is the process by which the body adapts to these conditions. The key to acclimatisation is a good itinerary with a gradual initial height gain, walking at a slow and steady pace, and increasing fluid intake – drinking at least 4 litres a day is advisable above 3000m.

Many people have some minor side effects from altitude, such as headache, nausea or general lassitude. The optional use of 'Diamox' has proved useful for some people, as this drug can reduce these symptoms. You will be given more information on 'Diamox' with your Final Information, between 8 and 10 weeks before departure.

**Climate**

On trek in April we hope for clear skies but any weather is possible and there could be fresh snow on the trail.

In December, expect clear skies, warm days and cold nights – dropping to -10°C or lower at night, good mountain views and few others on the trail.

**Tipping**

There is a custom to tip the crew at the end of the trek. Last year approx US\$80 per person covered all tips. You may have some outdoor gear that you are willing to donate at the end of the trek – eg woollen socks are difficult for locals to obtain and are always well received.

**Trip Grade**

This trip is graded steady, though the effects of bad weather or the cold temperatures expected in December could increase the grade for some people.

**Transport**

Whilst in Bhutan we travel by private bus or jeep.

**Visas**

All visitors to Bhutan must have a visa approved prior to arriving in the kingdom, which must be paid for in advance (US\$20). High Places make the application on your behalf and we will send you more information before departure.

**What our clients say.....**

*“I thoroughly enjoyed every minute I was in Bhutan. The combination of trekking and sightseeing was just right to get a taste of this extraordinary country.”*

Sylvia Chong Tai, Druk Path Trek



*Mask dancers*

## DAY BY DAY ITINERARY

*This itinerary is flexible and should be seen as a guide only. Local conditions, weather, fitness or acclimatisation could lead to changes in our daily plans. All times and distances are approximate. 'B,L,D' refers to meals included in the trip cost, i.e. Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner.*

This trip is 14 days ex Kolkata. Depending on schedules, it may be possible to join this trip via Bangkok, Kathmandu or Delhi. Flights to/from Paro can be delayed due to bad weather, so you should avoid arranging direct connections between flights.

DAY 1 Arrive Kolkata. Hotel.

DAY 2 Paro. A flight to Paro - try to get a seat on the left side of the plain for views of Everest and Kanchenjunga. From the moment of arrival in Paro (2280m) it is clear that Bhutan is different to anywhere else - local people resplendent in national dress welcome us outside an airport building with intricately carved woodwork in the traditional style. There will be time to settle in and absorb the new sights and sounds. Hotel. (B,L,D)

DAY 3 Paro. An hour's drive above the Paro Valley leads to Cheli La Pass. From below the pass we follow a track through juniper and pine forest to a nunnery nestled high on a craggy hillside at approx 3400m, where the nuns spend their days in religious studies, prayer and meditation. 2 ½ hours return. After lunch we will visit Ta Dzong, an ancient watch tower, which now houses the National Museum and contains art relics, thangka paintings and natural history. (B,L,D)



*Meeting some of the nuns*

DAY 4 Paro. Towering above the Paro Valley at 2900m on precarious rock ledges lies Taktsang Monastery: the Tiger's Lair. A 2-3 hour hike through shady forest will bring us to within a stone's throw, and acts as great acclimatisation for the trek. We may be allowed to have a look inside the monastery.

In the afternoon we will drive a little further up the valley to the ruins of Drukgyal Dzong. Built in 1647 by Shabdrung – a name any visitor to this area will become familiar with - the dzong (a combination of fortress and monastery) was destroyed by accidental fire in 1951. Its ruins have been left as an evocative reminder of the great victories over Tibetan invaders it was built to commemorate. With luck, Chomolhari (7351m) will be visible. Hotel Paro. (B,L,D)

DAY 5 Jele Dzong Camp (3400m)  
Today the trek begins! Our route starts near Ta Dzong with a steady climb through pine forest and past fields to reach Jele La (3560), and Jele Dzong at 3570m. We camp below the Dzong at approx 3400m. A tough day due to the altitude. 4-5 hours. (B,L,D)

DAY 6 Jangchu Lakha (3770m). From camp we climb up to Jele Dzong, situated high on a ridge and surrounded by prayer flags. We may be allowed inside the chapel. Following the ridge, there are clear views of the Paro Valley and Chomolhari before

the path enters thick alpine rhododendron forest. Our route leads in and out of rhododendron & cedar forest to emerge at Jangchu Lakha (3770m). 5½ hours.

DAY 7 Janatsho (3950m). From Jangchu Lakha there is a choice of route to reach Jimilang Tsho (3870m), a large sacred lake stocked with golden trout. We climb from the lake to a ridge reaching a crest with a good view of our route ahead and Janatsho, our next camp. Approx 6-8 hours depending on route. (B,L,D)

DAY 8 Phajoding Campsite (3750m). From our lakeside camp, the trail climbs to a ridge at 4150m overlooking Simkotra Tsho, then a series of ups and downs leads to a long rising traverse and Labana La (4210m). Above us is a ridge where sky burials used to be performed. On the route today there are seven small passes, the final at Phume La (4080m) from which we descend to our camp site at Phajoding. 5-6 hours. (B,L,D)

DAY 9 Just below the campsite is Phajoding Monastery which we will visit before a final descent through juniper, rhododendron and pine forest leads to the road end above Thimpu, where our transport will be waiting. Approx 3-4 hours descent. Hotel. (B,L,D)

DAYS 10-11 There will be time in Thimpu in the morning. After lunch a drive over Dochu La (3050m) reveals a magnificent Himalayan panorama in clear weather. From here we continue on to Punakha Dzong the ancient capital of Bhutan and one of the most impressive sights in the country. We spend time in Punakha Dzong, and also visit Khamsum Yuelly Namgyal Chorten and walk to Chimi Lhakhang temple. The drive between Thimpu and Punakha is 3 hours. Hotel near Punakha. (B,L,D)



*Punakha Dzong*

DAY 12 We return over Dochu La to Paro. (4-5 hour drive). Hotel. (B,L,D)

DAY 13 Depart Paro, hoping for final Himalayan views from the plane – try to get a seat on the right hand side. Overnight Kolkata. (B)

DAY 14 Depart Kolkata. (B)

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