



Rediscover the
meaning of travel

Tour Notes

Best of Nepal and Bhutan

Tour Duration – 26 Days



Tour Rating

Fitness ●●●○○ | Off the Beaten Track ●●●○○ | Culture ●●●●○ | History ●●●○○ | Wildlife ●●●●○

Tour Pace

Busy

Tour Highlights

- ✓ Explore the extraordinary UNESCO world heritage monuments of Kathmandu
- ✓ Search for unique flora and fauna in the jungles of Chitwan National Park
- ✓ Stroll the timeless streets of Bhaktapur
- ✓ Explore medieval monasteries and get to grips with Bhutan's fascinating living traditions and complex religious heritage
- ✓ Trek to the sacred Tiger's Nest Monastery with its spectacular cliff edge location
- ✓ Attend a traditional Bhutanese festival, such as the annual Black Necked Crane Festival, which is held to encourage conservation of the birds among local people



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Tour Map



Tour Essentials

- Accommodation:** Mix of comfortable small hotels
Included Meals: Daily breakfast (B), plus lunches (L) and dinners (D), as shown in the itinerary
Group Size: Maximum 12
Start Point: Kathmandu, Nepal – you can arrive any time on day 1
End Point: Paro, Bhutan – you can depart any time on day 26
Transport: Minibus or similar vehicle, flight from Kathmandu to Paro
Countries: Nepal and Bhutan





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Best of Nepal and Bhutan

Nepal and Bhutan are some of the most undiscovered places on Earth, but this unique tour combining the two mountain kingdoms will reveal their cultural treasures, exotic wildlife, and incredible beauty.

Our adventure begins in Nepal where we discover the UNESCO World Heritage Sites in Kathmandu and stroll the atmospheric and sometimes chaotic streets. This is followed by a rich wildlife experience in the sub-tropical jungles of Chitwan National Park, home of the Bengal Tiger and One Horned Rhinoceros. We continue to Lumbini and visit the Mayadevi temple which is built on the exact place where the Buddha was born. The journey then takes us to Tansen, a picturesque hill station located on an ancient trade route. Our next stop is Pokhara, popularly known as Lake City. Here we take some easy walks and admire the spectacular mountainous landscape before we continue to Bandipur, an old trading town that is perched on a hill overlooking the magnificent Marshyangdi Valley and the Himalayan range. After returning to Kathmandu, we finish our travels in Nepal with a visit to Nagarkot, renowned for incredible sunset and sunrise views.

We continue to Bhutan by taking a short, but often spectacular flight, from Kathmandu to Paro. You might be lucky and even get a glimpse of Mountain Everest. Our tour to this beautiful nation takes in some of its most remarkable sights, from the amazing Taktsang (Tiger's Nest) Monastery in its dramatic cliff face location, to the imposing Punakha Dzong, an incredible fortress with a turbulent past. We travel through stunning Himalayan scenery and will have the opportunity to visit traditional Buddhist temples. Undoubtedly the highlight of this trip is the chance to celebrate at one of the many festivals held throughout the year in Bhutan. The tours in February/March include the Punakha Festival (Tsechu). The tours in April/May include the small and local Ura Festival in the Bumthang region. The tours in September include the Tangbi Mani Festival in the Bumthang region. The tours in November and featured in this itinerary, include the Black Necked Crane Festival in the stunning Phobjikha Valley.

Tour Itinerary Notes

While our intention is to adhere to the day-by-day itinerary as printed below, a degree of flexibility is built in. Overnight stops may vary from those suggested and on occasions alternative accommodation, of a similar standard to that named below, will be used.

Tour Guide

Our guides are a key strength, chosen for their knowledge of and passion for the areas in which they work. All of our guides are carefully hand-picked, and are not merely passing through these countries, but are usually locally born. Unlike some companies, it should be noted we do not send a guide or tour leader from Undiscovered Destinations in the UK: we have every confidence in our locally appointed representative who is responsible for operating the tour on our behalf. Where possible you will have the same guide throughout your trip; however, at times it may be advantageous to change the guide during your tour for logistical reasons – for example, if you are taking a specific type of trek or other activity.

Itinerary

Day 1: Arrive Kathmandu

Arrive in Kathmandu and transfer to your hotel. The rest of the day will be at leisure. Overnight at Hotel Kantipur Temple House or similar. No meals or activities included.



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Day 2: Kathmandu

Today enjoy a guided tour to four of the UNESCO World Heritage Sites in Kathmandu. Kathmandu Durbar Square holds the palaces of the ancient kings who ruled over the then Kathmandu Kingdom. Pashupatinath Temple is one of the most sacred pilgrimage sites for Hindus all over the world. We also visit popular Buddhist stupas in Kathmandu. Swayambhunath, is located in the heart of the city and is also called Monkey Temple by the tourists owing to the large number of monkeys in the temple area. Bouddhanath is one of the largest stupas in the world, and one of the holiest Buddhist pilgrimage and tourist destinations in Kathmandu. The area of Bouddhanath is also famous for over 50 Tibetan gompas or monasteries. Overnight at Hotel Kantipur Temple House or similar. (B)

Day 3: Kathmandu to Chitwan – Drive time approximately 4-5 hours

After breakfast, drive to Chitwan located 175 kilometres from Kathmandu. We descend along a winding road flanking the Trishuli River. After checking in to the hotel, there will be a briefing on the activities we will be engaged in during our stay in Chitwan. We then take a walk on the banks of the Rapti or Narayani River to enjoy the sunset in the sub-tropical jungles of Chitwan. This evening, enjoy dinner along with a brief cultural program showcasing the tribal dances unique to the Chitwan region of Nepal. Overnight Jungle Vila Resort or similar. (BLD)

Day 4: Chitwan National Park

Start early for our first incursion in the park for a jungle safari to witness wildlife in their natural habitat. After breakfast, we visit the elephant stables and even enjoy bathing the elephants. This afternoon drive through the park looking for wildlife followed by a canoe ride down the Rapti/ Narayani River. Whilst canoeing, look out for Gharial and Mugger crocodiles along with freshwater dolphins, otters, and varieties of water birds. For those that do not wish to canoe there are options for a birding walk or general nature walk. Overnight Jungle Villa Resort or similar. (BLD)

Day 5: Chitwan to Lumbini - Drive time approximately 2 hours

An early start today for a drive to Lumbini, a legendary place where one of history's greatest and most revered figures, Siddhartha Gautam (Buddha) was born. The holy site of Lumbini, also enlisted within the list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites, holds immense archaeological and religious importance. From early morning to early evening, pilgrims from various countries perform chanting and meditation at the site. Visit the museum, peace pagoda and spend the day exploring the area and its temples, monuments and ancient sites soaking up the serene ambience. Overnight at Hotel Lumbini or similar. (B)

Day 6: Lumbini to Tansen – Drive time approximately 3 hours

This morning continue to Tansen, a popular summer resort in western Nepal on account of its position and climate. It has perhaps Nepal's most far stretching views of the country's chief attractions, the Himalayas from Dhaulagiri in the west to Gaurishanker in the north-east. This afternoon visit Old Tansen bazaar and walk around Sreenagar hill to catch a bird's eye view of Srinagar Bazaar and on a clear day, a sweeping mountain panorama. Overnight at Hotel Srinagar or similar. (B)

Day 7: Drive to Pokhara – Driving time approximately 5-6 hours

This morning after breakfast, depart for Pokhara, also known as The Lake City owing to the large number of lakes in the city. En route we travel through a landscape of rolling hills, small settlements, and terraced farms. On arrival in Pokhara, if conditions are clear we should be rewarded with magnificent views of the Himalayas including Dhaulagiri (8,167m), Manaslu (8,156m), and Machhapuchhre (6,993m), the five peaks of Annapurna and others. Late this afternoon after some rest time, we take a leisurely stroll in the atmospheric streets of Pokhara and just enjoy being in one of the most beautiful cities of Nepal. Overnight at Fishtail Lodge or similar. (B)



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Day 8: Walk to Sarangkot – Walking time is 3 – 4 hours.

Early this morning depart for Sarangkot, a hill town in the north-west region of Pokhara that overlooks the Annapurna and Dhaulagiri ranges in the north and the main city in the south. We start our hike from Naudanda and walk to Sarangkot. We stop at a tea-house in Sarangkot and enjoy amazing views of the sun as it sets against the mighty Himalayas. From here, we also get a view of Pokhara city below and the abundant Fewa Lake. Overnight in Sarangkot. (B)

The walk to Sarangkot is graded as easy - 200m up and 200m down with no steep climbing.

Day 9: Pokhara

Enjoy the sunrise from Sarangkot before heading back to Pokhara and touring the city's many landmarks including Davis Falls and Shiva Cave. Enjoy some boating on Phewa Lake, the largest lake in Pokhara and visit Bindyabasini Temple located at the centre of the lake. Later, visit the famous International Mountain Museum (IMM) that records, documents and chronicles the past and present development of mountaineering activities in the world and the Himalayas in particular. Finally, today visit the Tibetan refugee camp and witness how the refugees keep themselves busy by producing and trading woolen carpets and other handicraft items. Overnight in Mount Kailash Resort or similar. (B)

Day 10: Pokhara – Bandipur – Approximate driving time 3 hours

Depart after breakfast for a morning scenic drive to Bandipur. Bandipur is an old Newari town that lies at an altitude of 1030m perched on a hilltop overlooking the magnificent Marshyangdi Valley and boasts a breathtaking view of the Himalayan range. Later this afternoon, enjoy a cultural walk around Bandipur town. Of particular interest are the stone carved waterspouts called "Tindhara" where locals through the ages have come to collect water, bathe, and wash. The walk continues around "Tudhikhel", a former parade ground for the army at the time when Bandipur was one of the district headquarters. Tudhikhel, now a scenic vista is also a junction point for people to come and socialise. Overnight at Heritage Hotel Guan Ghar or similar. (B)

Day 11: Bandipur to Nagarkot – Approximate driving time – 6 hours

After breakfast, we say goodbye to the beautiful hill resort of Bandipur and drive towards Nagarkot stopping at points of interest and to stretch our legs along the way. The village of Bhaktapur sits at an altitude of just over 2000 metres and the highest point on our journey through Nepal, boasting stunning Himalayan vistas. From Nagarkot, we enjoy excellent sunset views amidst the outstanding peaks of the Himalayas. Overnight at the Fort Resort or similar. (B)

Day 12: Nagarkot – Patan – Bhaktapur

Rise early if you wish to enjoy amazing views of the sunrise amidst the Himalayas. After breakfast, drive downhill to Bhaktapur and finally to Patan. Bhaktapur is an irresistible city with an authentic local lifestyle preserved over centuries of isolation from the hustle and bustle of Kathmandu. While in the city square, admire the Nyata-Pola Temple, the Golden Gate, water spouts and the 55 Window Palace which merge together to provide an ambiance of a magical outdoor theatre to its visitors. We also immerse ourselves in the authentic delicacy of the locals in Bhaktapur. Later, drive to Patan. Listed in the UNESCO World Heritage Sites, Patan Durbar Square is rich in ancient arts and architecture. Overnight at Hotel Kantipur Temple House or similar. (B)

Day 13: Kathmandu

Spend your final full day in Nepal at leisure the day at leisure where you may wish to do some final sightseeing or take in the markets or just relax in the garden of the hotel with a good book. This evening enjoy a farewell dinner of Nepalese cuisine and a cultural dance show. Overnight at Hotel Kantipur Temple House or similar. (BD)



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Day 14: Kathmandu to Paro, Bhutan

At a convenient time, transfer to the airport for a scheduled flight to Paro. Widely accepted as being the most scenic flight in the world, depending on weather conditions, you can expect stunning Himalayan scenery including the possibility of getting a glimpse of Mount Everest. Arrive at Paro International Airport which is situated in a beautiful valley at 2,280 metres and is a fitting introduction to this charming kingdom. Meet the guide and drive along the Paro and Thimphu river valleys to Thimphu, Bhutan's capital. Stop en route to take in the magnificent Tamchhog Lhakhang, the hereditary place of worship for Thangtong Gyalpo, who organised the building of Bhutan's iron bridges. Take a late afternoon walk around town and soak in the atmosphere of this magical capital with its busy shops and bazaars and photogenic citizens in national dress. If you would like to view or buy Bhutanese handicrafts you may like to walk through the Craft Bazaar which has an array of stalls run by local handicraft shops selling purely homemade articles with no imports. Overnight at Gakyil Hotel or similar. (D)

Thimphu

Although Bhutan's capital has developed over recent years and now exhibits many of the recognisable features of other cities, it still retains many of its traditional sites and attractions. While there are now vehicles, bars, and restaurants, you will still mingle with local people in traditional dress and crimson clad monks, lending an enduring charm.

Day 15: Thimphu

This morning after breakfast, visit the huge statue of Buddha Dordenma, which commands a tremendous view of Thimphu valley. The huge 3-storey throne holds several chapels and the body itself is filled with 125,000 smaller statues of Buddha. From here take a walk from Kuensel Phodrang Nature Park to Changangkha Temple, perched on the hilltop. The walk takes us through beautiful blue pine and rhododendron forest, which also gives a fantastic view of Thimphu valley. Devotees flock throughout the day to circumambulate and turn the prayer wheels. The temple also contains beautiful wall paintings and hundreds of religious scriptures written in gold. In the afternoon we will visit the weekend market, the revered Memorial Chorten and you may like to visit the National Textile Museum with its striking collection of intricate textiles. Later we may have time to visit the Takin Reserve showcasing the unique national animal of Bhutan. Your guide will discuss sightseeing options with you. Overnight at Gakyil Hotel or similar. (BLD)

Note – The walk today along the side of the valley should take around 1.5 hours maximum and is an easy stroll along a good trail.

Day 16: Thimphu – Punakha via Dochu La – Driving time 3 hours

Today enjoy a scenic drive of approximately 3 hours to the old capital, Punakha, via the Dochu La pass at 3050 metres, where on a clear day you can enjoy spectacular panoramic views of the Eastern Himalaya ranges including peaks well over 7000m. Then descend through cool forest. You will notice the change of climate and vegetation as we approach low lying Punakha at 1250 metres situated in a fertile valley. Take a pleasant walk of an hour or so across terraced fields to Chimi Lhakhang (Temple of Fertility) built in the 15th century by the "Divine Madman" (Lama Drukpa Kuenley). This afternoon visit the impressive Punakha Dzong, 'Palace of Great Happiness', built in 1637 and strategically placed at the confluence of two rivers, The Po Chu and the Mo Chu. Close to the Dzong there is a spectacular suspension footbridge that crosses the Po Chu and it is well worth taking the short detour to cross it. Overnight at Hotel Lobesa or similar. (BLD)

Note – The walk today to the Temple of Fertility should take around an hour and it is an easy walk.



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Day 17: Punakha Valley

After breakfast visit Chorten Ningpo, dating from the 17th century. The Chorten is a little-known spot with a magnificent statue of Maitreya (the future Buddha) and images of the great lamas of the Drukpa lineage. This magical spot was once a dense forest inhabited by evil spirits. The magnificent great oak tree outside the monastery is said to have grown out of the blazing log that the 'Divine Madman' threw (the tree's bark is still black from where it was burnt). In 2005 the monastery began to house orphans from the nearby village, and founding a small Buddhist educational institution where the children can study traditional Buddhist scriptures and texts as well as Western subjects. We will arrange a picnic lunch for today – your guide will choose the best spot for the picnic depending on timings. Then you can take a hike to Khamsum Yuelley Namgyel Chorten via the village of Yebisa. The walk starts from the suspension bridge below Khamsum Yuelley Namgyel Chorten. Hike at a gentle pace for around 10 minutes from the bridge through the paddy rice fields of Yebisa village. Then continue the hike for around 40 to 50 minutes up to the temple. The walk is still fairly gentle but there are some steeper parts. From the top you will see a beautiful view of the valley and surrounding villages. The temple is 30 metres tall and is dedicated to the fifth King. After visiting the temple descend for around 30 minutes until you reach the suspension bridge where you will be picked up by the vehicle. Overnight Hotel Lobesa or similar. (BLD)

Note – The walk today to the Khamsum Yuelley Namgyel Chorten should take around 1.5 hours there and back and is an easy walk but the last approach to the temple is uphill with steps (not steep).

Day 18: Punakha – Trongsa – Bumthang – Driving time approximately 8 hours

An early start today around 8am with a full morning drive of around 5 hours to Trongsa, the gateway to central Bhutan (2180 metres). Set amidst spectacular scenery, visit Trongsa Dzong, the ancestral home of Bhutan's royal family, commands the eye from miles away. You can also visit Ta Dzong, the museum in the watchtower dedicated to the Wangchuck dynasty, which tells the stories of the Dzong and the valley it has watched over for centuries and features personal belongings of the king and queens of Bhutan. Continue this afternoon for around 2.5 hours through some of Bhutan's most beautiful scenery to Bumthang. The spiritual heartland of Bhutan with its many legendary monasteries, temples, and palaces, Bumthang is the collective name for an area of 4 valleys - Chokhor, Tang, Ura and Chhume. Overnight at Ugyenling Hotel or similar. (BLD)

Day 19: Bumthang

Today enjoy exploring Bumthang, the spiritual heartland of Bhutan, with its many legendary monasteries, temples, and palaces. We take a fascinating tour of a variety of sacred sites in the valley including Jamba Lhakhang, Kurjey Lhakhang and Tamshing Lhakhang. Later visit Bhutan's largest Dzong (Jakar), with its picturesque location overlooking the Chokhor valley. You may be interested to see Bumthang's famous Red Panda brewery and Swiss cheese factory and dairy farm. Overnight at Ugyenling Hotel or similar. (BLD)

Day 20: Tang Valley- Bumthang – Driving time 3 hours

Drive to Tang valley, the most remote of Bumthang's valleys, where the people raise sheep and yaks, stopping on the way at Membar Tsho ("Burning Lake"), which is one of Bhutan's most important pilgrimage sites. The on to Drangchel, Pema Lingpa's birthplace. You will also see picturesque villages and temples and can walk up to visit Ugyenchholing Palace, which is now a museum and gives an interesting insight into the life of an aristocratic family in the last century. Return to Bumthang for the night. Overnight at Ugyenling Hotel or similar. (BLD)

Note – the walk to the palace should take around 30 minutes.



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Day 21: Bumthang – Gangtey – Driving time 6 hours

An early start today around 8am. Drive approximately 5-6 hours to reach Gangtey situated at 2900 metres. Stop on the way to the village of Zungney where you can watch the women weaving traditional “yathras” by hand- woollen strips used in the making of blankets, bedcovers, and winter jackets. On the approach to Gangtey there are wonderful views of the immense and remote Phobjikha valley and the black mountain ranges. On arrival in Gangtey, visit Gangtey Gompa, one of Bhutan’s oldest monasteries which has recently been restored, and explore the valley where the villagers live a traditional Bhutanese rural lifestyle. Enjoy a lovely nature walk starting from near the monastery taking you first downhill and then a nice flat walk through the forest to the valley floor. This is the area where Black-Necked Cranes visit in their hundreds in November each year after spending the summer in Tibet. Overnight Dewachen Hotel or similar. (BLD)

Note – the nature walk should take around 1.5 hours and is an easy stroll along a good trail.

Day 22: Phobjikha Valley and the Black Necked Crane Festival

Today (which is also the birthday of the Fourth King) you will visit the annual Black Necked Crane Festival in Gangtey. The festival takes place in the courtyard of the monastery and provides the opportunity to share a local cultural experience; it is held to promote conservation among the local people. There will be some official rituals, such as flag raising and welcome ceremonies, followed by folk culture displays, including dances performed by schoolchildren. There will be stalls offering local food. You will also visit the Black Necked Crane Information Centre, to learn more about these amazing migrating birds, with the opportunity to spot some of them through the high-quality lenses for use at the centre. Overnight Dewachen Hotel or similar (BLD)

Day 23: Gangtey to Paro – Driving time approximately 7 hours

This morning we depart the Phobjikha Valley and travel to Wangdi (also known as Wangdue Phodrang), originally considered Bhutan’s secondary capital. Sadly, Wangdi Dzong was gutted by fire in June 2012, destroying in a few hours not only a magnificent building that had stood proudly for hundreds of years, but also the painstaking work that had been in progress for many months to repair recent earthquake damage using traditional construction methods. 10 years of renovation work is finally complete, and it should be open to visit. After visiting the Dzong and after a brief stop for lunch you will return to Paro, a drive of approximately 5 hours. You will have some free time to visit the local handicraft shops to look for souvenirs. Overnight at Olathang Hotel or similar. (BLD)

Day 24: Paro

This morning visit the National Museum housed in the Ta Dzong (watch tower) which was built on top of the hill above Rinpung Dzong to defend Rinpung Dzong and the Paro valley during times of war, in an unusual circular construction resembling a conch shell. The Ta Dzong was badly damaged by an earthquake in September 2011 but has now been renovated and you can see a magnificent collection of Bhutanese artefacts – costumes, religious paintings, arms, textiles, and a fascinating collection of Bhutan stamps. From the National Museum, take a leisurely 1-hour hike along the forested hillside to Zuri Dzong and then down to the Uma resort. The walk passes Gonsaka Lhakhang and then Zuri Dzong providing wonderful views down over the valley and Dzong. Zuri Dzong dates from 1352 and is home to the valley’s local protector gods. Continue your walk down the Uma Resort junction where you turn right towards Paro Dzong and here again you should have a good view of Paro Dzong and town. Your driver will be waiting at the Paro bridge to pick you up. After lunch you can also visit the impressive Paro Rinpung Dzong, one of the finest examples of Bhutanese architecture. Later, visit the 7th century Kyichu Lhakhang, a temple of historical significance and one of the most sacred shrines in Bhutan. Afterwards, if there is time, you may like to visit Dumtse Lhakhang, a temple built by Thangtong Gyalpo, the iron bridge builder. Overnight at Olathang Hotel or similar. (BLD)



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Day 25: The Tiger's Nest Monastery

This morning embark on the amazing hike to the 'Tiger's Nest', the sacred Taktshang monastery which clings impossibly to the rock face 900 metres above the valley floor. It is the birthplace of Buddhism in Bhutan and Guru Rinpoche is said to have flown to the site riding on a tigress and He subsequently meditated here for three months. It is one of Bhutan's most holy sites and draws pilgrims not only from Bhutan but also from neighbouring Buddhist countries. You can have lunch at the Taktshang cafeteria from where there is a spectacular view of the monastery. Overnight at Olathang Hotel or similar. (BLD)

The ascent to the Tiger's Nest Monastery is very steep and you should be sure that your level of fitness will allow you to make the hike. It is possible to rent a stick at the start of the hike. Expect the entire hike with stops including at the cafeteria to last 6 hours. Speak to our team for personal experience account of the hike.

Day 26: Depart Bhutan

Early in the morning your guide will accompany you to the airport and wish you Tashi Delek (Goodbye and Good Luck). (B)

Tour Inclusions/Exclusions

Inclusions:

Arrival and departure transfers
Accommodation
Transport
Services of English-speaking guide/ tour leader
Meals as listed (B – Breakfast, L – Lunch, D – Dinner)
Entrance fees for sites listed as part of the itinerary
Safari activities in Chitwan National Park
Boating in Pokhara
One-way flight from Kathmandu to Paro
Bhutan Entry Visa

Excluded:

International flights
Travel Insurance
Meals not included in the itinerary
Nepal visa – when required
Drinks
Items of a personal nature
Tips (discretionary)



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Important Information

Foreign Government Travel Warnings

We constantly monitor the advice posted by the British Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO). In particular we will always advise clients of any travel warnings. At present there are no warnings against travel to the areas of Nepal that we visit. Please feel free to contact us should you have any specific concerns or would like to know in detail what measures are being taken to ensure visits remain trouble free and without incident.

It should be noted that this information applies to British citizens. Other nationals are asked to check the current position of their respective government.

Accommodation and Meals

Hotel Check-in Times

As a general rule most hotels will allow guests to check-in from 2pm. Please note that the price of your tour does not include guaranteed early check-in. Therefore, please advise us if you would like to ensure that your room is available for an earlier arrival. This is particularly relevant on the first day of the tour and for early morning arrivals. One option is to pre-book and pay for an extra night at the beginning of your tour which will guarantee your accommodation is available irrespective of what time you arrive. Please contact us for information and costs.

It should also be noted that on many of our tours we have set-aside Day 1 of the itinerary as an 'arrival day'. For this reason and because tour participants are likely to be arriving at different times, and often from different countries, guided sightseeing or other activities are not included. If you are arriving early or before the start date of the tour and would like to organise some extra arrangements on a private basis, please contact us.

Accommodation Rating

On this tour we stay in mid-range comfortable accommodation consisting of small hotels and guesthouses. All accommodation has private bathrooms.

We welcome solo travellers and single rooms will be allocated subject to the applicable tour supplement. Please note that on occasions you may not always be allocated a double or twin room, as some hotels have designated single rooms. These may be smaller in size. However, the supplement payable takes this into consideration.

Food & Drink

The daily meal basis is shown in the tour itinerary; breakfast (B), lunch (L) and dinner (D). Please note that lunch may be a picnic. Drinks are not included and will be payable locally in cash.

Dietary Requirements

If you have any special dietary requirements, you must notify us at the time of booking. While we will make every effort to cater for you, we cannot guarantee that this will be possible.



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Budgeting for your Tour

You will need some extra money to cover meals and drinks not included in the tour price, any optional sightseeing, souvenirs, and items of a personal nature such as laundry.

Tipping – Guide and Drivers

Tipping is common practise in Nepal. If your local guide has been helpful, then you could think about tipping. This amount can obviously be left to you. When tipping a driver, a guide or hotel staff a few dollars will always be gratefully received.

Foreign Exchange

ATM Availability: In both Nepal and Bhutan most sizeable towns have ATMs, although limits apply to how much can be withdrawn. It is advisable to bring all the cash that you may wish to use for spending money beyond Kathmandu and Thimphu in case ATMs in remoter areas are not working.

Credit and Debit Card Acceptance: Cards are generally only accepted in the more expensive shops and restaurants.

Local Currency: Nepalese Rupee and Bhutanese Ngultrum.

Recommended Currency for Exchange Euros or US Dollars.

Where to Exchange: Your local guide will advise you.

Joining your Tour

Flight Information

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will receive an airport transfer, both on arrival and departure include in the tour price. In order that the transfer can be arranged please ensure that you advise us of your flight information once available. Please advise the date, time, and flight number for your arrival/departure. If we have not been advised of this information at least 2 weeks before travel, then you will be required to make your own way to the hotel on Day 1 of your tour.

Travel Insurance

It is a condition of booking with Undiscovered Destinations that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country and be valid for the entire duration of your holiday.

Visa Information

At the time of writing British, US and Australian nationals require a visa for a tourist visit to Nepal. A visa will also be required for a tourist to Bhutan although this will generally be obtained on your behalf by Undiscovered Destinations and will be sent to you ahead of your departure in the form of a single page document which you must print and take with you.



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For further details please visit the applicable website shown below.

British Nationals - www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice

US Nationals - <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel.html>

Australian Nationals - www.smartraveller.gov.au/

Other nationals should check the latest requirements with the authorities in their home country, or with the destinations nearest embassy or consulate.

Should you require any documentation to support a visa application, such as a letter of invitation, upon request this will be provided by Undiscovered Destinations after receipt of your balance payment.

As it is the travellers' responsibility to ensure that they meet all entry requirements it is essential that you check the rules and any other conditions at the time of booking and again when making your balance payment. In addition, we would strongly advise that you make a final check around two weeks before your arrival. This is important as requirements can change at short notice. Undiscovered Destinations, when possible, will provide guidance about entry rules, but in the first instance please contact the relevant authorities, including the applicable embassy or consulate for assistance.

Passports

It is your responsibility to ensure that you are in possession of a full passport, valid for at least six months after the date of return to the UK.

Your passport must be machine readable. It is advised that you have 2 blank pages in your passport for each country that you will visit.

For specific information about the requirements for your destination please check with the country's embassy or consulate. Alternatively, UK citizens can visit www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice

Vaccinations & Protection

As with travel to most parts of Asia, we strongly recommend that you contact your doctor's surgery or a specialist travel clinic for up-to-date information, advice, and the necessary vaccinations. For a visit of less than one month, almost certainly you will be advised to have immunisations against the following: Diphtheria and Tetanus, Hepatitis A, Typhoid, Meningitis. The use of a DEET-containing insect repellent is highly recommended.

Please follow this link for some guidelines - [http://www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk/destinations/asia-\(east\)/nepal.aspx](http://www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk/destinations/asia-(east)/nepal.aspx)

Preparing for your tour

Climate

The climate of much of the Subcontinent - which includes Sri Lanka, India, Bhutan, Nepal & Pakistan - is dominated by heat, monsoons, and the Himalayas. Nepal enjoys largely clear conditions between October and March providing the best time to visit. It is best to avoid the monsoon months of June – September. Temperatures vary of course depending on altitude, but the Kathmandu Valley is generally warm by day but can be cool at night especially in the winter months; January and February are generally the coldest months in the mountains.



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Clothing

When it comes to clothing it is usually recommended that lighter clothes are worn through the day, and warmer ones at night. Night times and early mornings can be chilly in the winter months so between November and March it is a good idea to take a warm fleece or jacket. The sun is strong year round so a hat is also advised to be worn through the day. Take at least one piece of waterproof clothing for any days that the weather may be wet or windy.

Nepal tends to have a conservative attitude towards dress. Women, and also to a certain extent men, will find that the way they dress will often determine the degree of respect they receive from both men and women.

Equipment

The first thing on your list should be a first aid kit. Whilst there is no undue cause for alarm, travellers are best advised to travel well-prepared: adequately immunized, with sufficient supplies of prescription drugs, along with a medical kit. Suncream/sunblock is a must. Insect repellent, including a bite spray will also be useful to have. Please also bring a torch/flashlight or a head-torch for any unexpected electricity outages or for dimly lit areas.

Footwear

Footwear is a main priority on this tour. Comfortable walking shoes/boots are recommended.

Luggage on tour

Your luggage should not exceed 20kgs (44lbs). One large suitcase/rucksack, and one small hand luggage rucksack is acceptable.

Bhutan - Road Conditions and Driving Times

Road conditions have been gradually improving year by year in Bhutan after an extensive road improvement programme. Most of the roads we travel on now are in a good or reasonable condition but there may be the odd section where the condition of the road is still quite poor so, please be prepared for some bumps. Kindly note that we do not use internal flights within Bhutan due to frequent cancellations which can then cause problems with onward connections and tour logistics. This is why the tour is an overland journey only. Approximate driving times per day are given in the best faith but may be impacted on circumstances beyond our control such as weather or road maintenance.

Bhutan - Other

Many hotels in Bhutan have no television, so you may want to bring plenty of reading material for the evenings.

Bhutan - Cultural and Environmental Guidelines

The Bhutanese are generally tolerant of Westerners and do not expect that they will necessarily follow, or understand, local customs, so they are not quick to take offence, but it is worth bearing in mind the following:

It is polite to take any items offered to you (or to hold something out to another person) with two hands. This is also often done when shaking hands. If you only use one hand to take something from someone, make sure it is the right hand.

Follow your guide's lead - it is customary to remove your shoes on entering the important rooms of temples and private houses.



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It is customary to leave a small amount of money on the altar and you will see people touching the note to their forehead first. If a monk is present, he will then pour some holy water from a small jug into your hand – if you wish you could make the gesture of taking a sip and then spreading the rest over your head

Don't touch people on the head or feet (although this rule does not apply to small children), and don't point your feet at anyone. If you are sitting on the floor, try to sit cross-legged or kneel with your feet behind you.

Don't point at people or religious objects or pictures. If you are indicating something in a painting, use your whole hand, palm upwards, pointing the tips of your fingers in the relevant direction. If you are waving someone towards you use your hand palm downwards

Remember that you should always turn prayer wheels or navigate round a chorten, religious monument or temple in a clockwise direction.

Do not give money or candy to local children. It will encourage them to beg whenever they see foreigners. Instead, you could leave small donations to schools or the village development fund so that the money can be used to benefit the whole community.

Please make sure that you take any rubbish back to the hotels with you where it can be properly disposed of – this includes cigarette butts as well. Please do not buy any products made from endangered species – this is not sustainable and hastens the species' decline.

Except in a few districts in the east of the country where there is a total ban on tobacco, smoking is still allowed in Bhutan, but the sale of tobacco is prohibited. So, if you need to smoke, bring your own and be prepared to be taxed on your supplies on entry to the country. There is also a recent law prohibiting smoking in offices and some public places.

It is not advisable to drink untreated water in Bhutan. Mineral water is freely available. We always carry bottles during the day for you to use on the journey. Water in the hotels and restaurants needs to be purchased separately.

Overseas mobiles often do not work in Bhutan. If you want to you can purchase a SIM card for the B-mobile or Tashi-cell network and use this in your phone - you need to ensure you have unlocked your phone from your home network first. The mobile networks in Bhutan are available across the country, although there are still some black spots. Internet and Wi-Fi is also available in most of western Bhutan and in some other towns (including Bumthang), but it is patchy and intermittent with slow speeds, so be prepared for frustrations and delay with connecting this way.

Photography and filming inside temples is not allowed. You should always ask permission before taking anyone's photograph and respect their decision if they say no. Taking photos of state buildings and airports can lead to problems with local authorities. If you are unsure about whether it is acceptable to take a photo, please ask your tour leader or guide.

Electric Supply & Plugs

230-240 volts (similar to the UK). Plugs are usually of the European two round pin variety, although some follow the Indian three pin version. As such, a universal travel adaptor with surge protector is advisable, as this covers both eventualities and will additionally protect your electronics from the voltage spikes which are quite regular in Nepal.



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Tour Itinerary Versions

Please ensure that you have an up-to-date copy of these tour notes immediately before you travel, as from time to time our itineraries may be amended, either for operational reasons or in response to feedback from customers. You will be informed of any major changes to your tour, but small changes may just be added to these tour notes. These notes were updated 9 January 2024.

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