

# Druk Path Trek with Cultural Tour\*



[View Map](#)



## Your Itinerary

### Kingdom of Bhutan

As recently as 1961 all entry into Bhutan was still on horse back. Druk-yul, the land of the thunder dragon is only just emerging from the mists of its self-imposed isolation. The last Shangrila is an exotic land of high mountains and lush valleys, snow clad peaks with clear running springs, a pristine ecology and an incredible wealth of wildlife. A most striking feature of Bhutan is its architecture. The style and color which characterize every building and house in the kingdom is a distinct source of aesthetic pleasure. The Dzongs themselves – imposing 17th-century structures built on a grand scale without drawing and without a single nail, are outstanding examples of the best in Bhutanese architecture. Patterns of rich colors adorn every wall, beam, pillar and door in traditional splendor. Nestled deep in the eastern Himalayas between India and Tibet, the simple pleasure that this country offers gives a sense of kinship with the people and their love for the land. Essentially a rural country with 90 per

cent of the people engaged in agriculture or raising livestock, Bhutan is predominantly Buddhist, practicing the Tantric form of Mahayana Buddhism.

## **Druk Path Trek**

The trek is the most popular trek in the country as it passes through a gorgeous natural landscape of blue pine forests, high ridges and pristine lakes while at the same time offering the opportunity to visit some ancient lhakhangs, dzongs and villages. The trail takes you through forests of fir, blue pine and dwarf rhododendrons at altitudes ranging between 2400-4200 m. The Jimilangtsho Lake, whose crystal clear waters are home to gigantic trout. This trek also offers hikers stunning views of Mt. Gangkar Puensum, the highest unscaled peak in the world.

## **Brief Itinerary**

<b>Day</b>	<b>Highlights</b>
Day 1	Arrival in Paro and local sightseeing.
Day 2	Cheila Pass and Hike to Kila Goemba (65 Kms- 1/2hrs)
Day 3	Druk Path Trek (Damchena to Jangchulakha Distance 18 km)
Day 4	Druk Path Trek (Jangchulakha to Jimilangtsho )
Day 5	Druk Path Trek (Jimilangtso to Labana )
Day 6	Druk Path Trek (Labana – Thimphu )
Day 7	Thimphu Sightseeing
Day 8	Thimphu Sightseeing
Day 9	Thimphu to Gangtey (135 Kms, 6/7hours)
Day 10	Gangtey Sightseeing
Day 11	Gangtey to Punakha ( 78 Kms, 03/4 hours)
Day 12	Punakha Sightseeing and Drive to Paro (126 Kms - Approx 3/4 Hours)
Day 13	Hike to Taksang Monastery.
Day 14	Depart

## **Detailed Itinerary**



## Day 1: Arrival in Paro and local sightseeing.

Landing in Paro valley is a perfect entry into this other world, with its transparent purity of the air and its absorbing serenity. Paro retains its bucolic nature in spite of the existence of development projects. Fields of brown or green depending on the season cover most of the valley floor while hamlets and isolated farms dot the landscape.

On arrival, our visa is processed and we then pass through customs. Our Bhutanese guide meets us outside the customs enclosure and escort you to the hotel.

After Lunch, We will visit the **Paro Dzong, also called Rinpung Dzong**, the Fortress of a Heap of Jewels. Constructed in the early 15th century as a diminutive fort, it was presented to the religious and political authority of Shabdrung Ngawang, who developed it into a much more commanding fortress in 1646. This is without doubt one of the kingdom's finest examples of traditional Bhutanese architecture. Once, great catapults here flung stones at invading Tibetans. Today the dzong houses a monastic school. Two hundred resident monks take meals in a communal room. Several interesting paintings here include an unusual Bhutanese interpretation of a mandala, a diagram of the cosmos. We return to our transport crossing the traditional wooden covered bridge called NYAMAI-ZAM which spans the Paro River. Earlier, in times of war, the bridge was removed each time to protect the Dzong!

Perched above Paro Dzong is its **Ta Dzong** (watchtower), built in 1649 to protect the undefended dzong and renovated in 1968 to house the National Museum. The unusual round building is said to be in the shape of a conch shell, with 2.5m-thick walls. Displays include an impressive collection of thangkas, both ancient and modern, depicting Bhutan's important saints and teachers, as well as fearsome festival masks

grouped according to their tsechu dances. There's a natural-history gallery with a 3D map of Bhutan. An underground tunnel is said to lead from the watchtower to the water supply below.

Later on visit the **Kyichu Lhakhang**. Kyichu Lhakhang is a Buddhist temple in Paro. It is one of the oldest monasteries in the country built in the 7th century by the Tibetan King Songsten Gampo. The story goes that a giant demoness lay across the whole area of Tibet and the Himalayas and was preventing the spread of Buddhism. Offering Butter Lamps is the most powerful offering because their light symbolizes wisdom. Just as a lamp dispels darkness, offering light from a Butter Lamp represents removing the darkness of ignorance in order to attain Buddha's luminous clear wisdom. Enroute visit the **Drugyel Dzong** ruins. The rest of the day is at leisure, we can take a walk down Paro's main street, straight and windswept, its occasional idlers leaning against the storefronts. It's another opportunity to interact with the local people.

**Over night in Paro ( Hotel)**

**Meals included: Lunch, Dinner**



2

## Day 2: Cheila Pass and Hike to Kila Goemba (65 Kms- 1/2hrs)

Start early for the drive to Chele La Pass which, at 3,988m is the highest road pass in Bhutan, snaking upwards through blue pine and rhododendron forests for 35 km. On a clear day, the view sweeps away to the snow-dome of Bhutan's second highest peak, Mt Jhomolhari (7314m), and down to the Haa Valley, which only opened to foreigners in 2002 due to its

proximity to the border with Sikkim and Tibet.

This unspoiled valley harks back to a simpler, more traditional time. Striding out along the Edelweiss covered ridge, we pass a sky burial site. We then descend for the two-hour hike through dense rhododendron forest, possibly sighting shaggy yaks, to Kila Goemba, an ancient nunnery nestled in a craggy patch on the mountainside below.

Kila Goemba is a serene retreat for 32 Anim (Buddhist nuns) who lead an undisturbed life of religious studies, prayer, and meditation. The nunnery is one of the seven oldest nunneries in the Kingdom. Dupthob Chhoeje Norbu and Dupthob Temba established it in the early ninth century as a place for meditation. This sacred place has a timeless quality which is ample reward for the effort of the hike. Having made our offerings and perhaps been blessed, it is time to descend further. Post drive to Paro Valley.

Chelela to Khela Nunnery hike:

Distance: 2/3 hours

Altitude: 4400 meters

Elevation Gain: 500 meters

Difficulty: Medium

**Overnight at Paro ( Hotel)**

**Meals included:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner



## Day 3: Druk Path Trek (Damchena to Jangchulakha Distance 18 km)

**Start of Trek Day 1: Distance 18km and walking time 6-7 hours.**

Starting at **Demchena** and crossing the **Jele Dzong** (3450m). The trek trail is rather gradual climb till the camp and if the weather is clear the Paro valley can be seen with the Mt. Jumolhari(7314m) and snowcapped mountains behind the valley. The trail takes you through thick alpine forest and rhododendrons trees and most of the walking is up and down on a ridge. You may see Yak herders around your camp site. Jangchulakha camp side - Altitude 3780m.

### **Over night at Camp**

**Meals included:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner



## Day 4: Druk Path Trek (Jangchulakha to Jimilangtsho )

**Distance 12 Kms and walking time 4-5 hrs.**

Starting at Jangchulakha (3780m) and camp at Jimilangtsho(3880mtrs). The trail follows the ridge and on clear day the views of the mountains and valley are beautiful, in particular the Jichu Drake (6989m). Camp is close to Lake of Jimilangtso. These lakes are known for their giant sized trout's.

**Over night at Camp**

**Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner**



## Day 5: Druk Path Trek (Jimilangtso to Labana )

**Distance 15 Kms and walking time 5-6 hrs.**

Starting at Jimilangtsho (3880m) and camp at Labana (4130m). The trail takes you through dwarf Rhododendrons trees and then you pass by the lake of Janye Tsho. Today you may come across some Yak herder's camp and you can really experience how these people live. We have to cross the Simkota Lake to reach labana camp. The trail is up and down and the route is most rocky. labana camp side: Altitude 4130m.

**Over night at camp**

**Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner**



6

## Day 6: Druk Path Trek (Labana – Thimphu )

**Distance 12 Kms and walking time 4-5 hrs.**

Starting at Labana camp(4130m) and from camp side after breakfast You begin with a gradual climb upto labana pass (4210m) the highest elevation for this trek. From camp side if weather permits you will see the same view of Mt. Gangkhar Punsum (7541m) the highest mountain in Bhutan, Mt. Kanchan jangkha third highest pic in the world (of Darjeeling) and other Himalayan peaks. Below, you can see the entire Thimphu valley and you can see the same view from labana pass. Crossing from Phajoding Monastery (3870m) trek end to Thimphu(2300m). In Phajoding there is 3,4 Monastery you can visit if you like to,The trek to Thimphu is all the way down hill through a forested area of mostly Blue pine. By taking leisurely pace you can reach Thimphu in about 3 hours for a nice hot shower and lunch .

**Over night in Thimphu ( Hotel)**

**Meals included:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner



7

## Day 7: Thimphu Sightseeing

After breakfast, Our sites for Thimphu will, begins with visit to the Memorial Chorten, with its golden spires shining in the sun, its tinkling bells and an endless procession of elderly people circling around it. Erected by the royal grandmother Ashi Phutsho Chodoen in memory of her son the third king Jigme Dorje, it contains a fine collection of Buddhist

statues and is a centre of tantric Buddhism in all its complexity.

Later, We will visit Kuensel Phodrang, where the Buddha Dordenma resides, it is said to be one of the largest Buddha in the world, standing at 169 feet / 51.5 meters. You will see Thimphu city from a bird's eye view.

Post the visit the Folk Heritage museum, and Royal Textile museum. The Royal Textile Academy is the place to learn about Bhutan's living national art of thagzo (weaving). The ground floor focuses on royal ghos, including the wedding clothes worn by the fourth king and his four wives. The upper floor introduces the major weaving techniques, styles of local dress and type of textiles made by women and men. The museum shop offers some interesting books and fine textiles.

The folk heritage museum gives you a glimpse of the traditional Bhutanese lifestyle, in addition to artifacts from rural households; it also displays an impressive collection of typical household objects, tools and equipment. The museum also organizes regular demonstrations of rural traditions, skills, habits and customs as well as hosting educational programs for children.

NOTE: Activities with RENEW to be Included.

### **Overnight at Thimphu ( hotel)**

**Meals included:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner



## Day 8: Thimphu Sightseeing

After breakfast, we begin our day with a visit to the Changangkha Lhakhang- It is a fortress-like temple perched on a ridge above Thimphu, south of Motithang. The temple was established in 12th century on a site chosen by Lama Phajo Drugom Zhigpo, who came from Tibet. The central statue here is Chenrezig in a manifestation with 11 heads. From the courtyard of the temple, there is a fascinating view of the Thimphu valley.

Post visit the Institute of 13 arts and crafts of Bhutan, School of Astrology. Pangri Zampa Lhakhang is one of the gems that you should certainly explore. .

Bhutanese parents also visit this lhakhang for getting auspicious names and blessings for their newborns.

Built in 16th century, Lhakhang consists of two temples which will be visible to you as soon as you enter the compound. Huge stone walls painted with white will make you look to the top. As you raise your eyes from the prayer wheels at the entrance to the heights of huge temple walls, you will be stunned seeing the beautiful combination of sheer scale with simplicity.

Institute for Zorig Chusum or the institute of 13 arts and crafts was opened in June 1997, and it reflects Bhutan's effort to provide opportunities for vocational training and especially for this region, which has always been popular with bamboo and wood crafts.

Later visit the Post office. Hard-core philatelists might be interested in this new museum, attached to the post office. Five galleries trace the development of the Bhutanese postal system, from the earliest mail runners to Bhutan's idiosyncratic and highly collectable modern stamps. Most importantly. You can get your photo printed in a Bhutanese Stamp.

In the evening , drive towards the Tashichho-Dzong- Also known as the 'fortress of the glorious religion', it

was initially built in 1641 and later rebuilt in its present form by King Jigme Dorji Wangchuk in 1965. The Dzong houses the main secretariat building with the Throne Room of His Majesty the King of Bhutan. The National Assembly Hall is housed in a modern building on the other side of the river from the Dzong. During the warmer summer months, the monk body headed by His Holiness the Je Khenpo resides in the Dzong.

You can also visit the newly opened Craft Bazaar, the Royal Government of Bhutan's initiative to open stalls for local craftsmen to display products that are only made in Bhutan. Promoting local craftsmanship.

### **Overnight at Thimphu( Hotel)**

**Meals included:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner



9

## **Day 9: Thimphu to Gangtey (135 Kms, 6/7hours)**

Leaving Thimphu, we start our journey into the countryside towards the Gangtey valley, home of the rare blacked necked cranes. The drive ascends gradually to the Dochula pass over 10300 ft, with magnificent vistas of the Himalayan range.

The Dochula Monastery also known as the Druk Wangyal Khangzang Chortens is a tribute to the service and leadership of His Majesty the king. The design inspired by the Queen is a unique cluster of 108 Chortens seen from all directions. The descent to Wangduephodrang is vibrant and colorful, with the fluttering prayer flags adding to a rich topography dotted by terrace farming and rivers flowing through.

Wangduephodrang is the last town on the highway

before entering central Bhutan. Bhutan lost its national heritage the Wangdue Dzong to a devastating fire, currently, it's being rebuilt. You can choose to stop at a viewpoint where you can see the Ruins of the Wangdue Dzong. Like all other Dzongs in Bhutan, this Dzong also housed the administrative offices of the district.

As we drive further away, we make our way towards, Phobjikha Valley. The valley is a wide glacial valley with a central stream meandering through the open grassland and thickets of dwarf bamboo. Farmlands occupy the slopes where potatoes and turnips are grown. The forest beyond the farms is mostly coniferous. The general vegetation is composed of mainly blue pine, birch, maple and several species of rhododendrons. The Repeated grazing of bamboos by the local cattle and horses in summer prepares the ground for the Wintering Cranes.

Evening leisure at the hotel or take a stroll in the valley with your guide.

### **Overnight at Gangtey ( Hotel)**

**Meals included:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner



10

## **Day 10: Gangtey Sightseeing**

After an early breakfast, we will begin our sightseeing in Phobjikha valley.

### **Gangtey Nature Trail**

This pleasurable walk will give you a nice feeling for

Phobjikha Valley. From the small hilltop overlooking Gangtey Goemba, you head downhill through flower meadows to Simchubara Village and from here through beautiful forest and into the open valley. After passing a Chorten and Khewa Lhakhang, the trail ends at the Tabiding football ground. If you wish to start your hike from the lodge this involves a thirty minutes walk upto the Gangtey Monastery. The nature trail can be combined with a visit to Gantey Goemba.

Gangtay Nature Trail:

Distance: 2 hour approximately .

Altitudes: 2700meters(Descent)

Elevation Gain: 200 meters

### **Gangtey-Goemba**

Perched on a small hill that rises from the valley floor, the Gangtey Monastery is the only Nyingmapa monastery on the western side of the Black Mountain's Gangtey Valley, Bhutan and also the biggest Nyingmapa monastery in Bhutan. The Monastery is surrounded by a large village inhabited mainly by the families of the 140 Gomchens who take care of the Monastery.

Gangtey goemba was founded by Pema Trinley, the grand son of Pema Lingpa, the famous Nyingmapa saint of Bhutan. In 1613, Pema Trinley established the monastery and became the first Gangtey Tulku. The religious traditions of Pema Lingpa still taught there. The second Tulku, Tenzin Legpa Dondrup (1645 to 1726), enhanced the size of Gangtey while keeping up good relations with Drukpas, and rebuilt the monastery in the form of a Dzong.

**Black-necked Crane:** 'Thrung Trung Karmo' as this bird is passionately called in Bhutan is subject of many Bhutanese songs and folklore. They are seen among the painting on the walls of temples and Thankga. These endangered species of cranes migrate from Tibet in late autumn and typically stay till the mid march. About 3-400 cranes reside in the wetland in the

center of the valley. The Observation & Education Centre (open 7-7pm – Mon-Fri) has informative display about the cranes and conservation effort in the valley.

### **Overnight at Gangtey ( Hotel)**

**Meals included:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner



## Day 11: Gangtey to Punakha ( 78 Kms, 03/4 hours)

After early breakfast, leaving Gangtey, we start our journey into the countryside towards the Punakha valley, the winter capital of Bhutan.

Enroute, we traverse the Punakha countryside walking through paddy fields to the Pana Village to see the 'Chimi Lhakhang' built by the great Lama Drukpa Kinley in 1400 to subdue local demons. The temple is a popular pilgrimage point for all Bhutanese and is especially revered by women for its fertility powers.

Option B: After lunch, we see the historic Punakha Dzong sprawled at the confluence of the Phochu (male) and Mochu (female) rivers. It was built by Shabdrung Nawang in 1637 and serves as the winter residence of the head abbot, Je Khenpo and headquarters of the district administration.

### Overnight at Punakha ( Hotel)

**Meals included:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner



## Day 12: Punakha Sightseeing and Drive to Paro (126 Kms - Approx 3/4 Hours)

After early breakfast, set out on a beautiful day hike to Khamsum Yulley Namgyal monastery. A 30-minute drive from the Punakha Dzong will bring you to the base of the hill on which this temple is built. From the car park, you have to cross a suspension bridge and walk through rice fields before you start climbing a moderately inclined trail surrounded by pine trees. It takes about 1 hour from the car park to hike up to the temple, and 30 minutes to hike down.

Khamsum chorten hike:

Distance: 1 or 2 hour approximately .

Soak into the serene natural beauty of the area and participate in the rite of lighting butter lamps in the temple. Offering Butter Lamps is the most powerful offering because their light symbolizes wisdom. Just as a lamp dispels darkness, offering light from a Butter Lamp represents removing the darkness of ignorance in order to attain Buddha's luminous clear wisdom.

After the hike proceeds towards the beautiful valley of Paro via a four-hour drive, stopping at the Dochula pass for photographs and hoisting of prayer flags at Dochula.

**Overnight in Paro ( Hotel)**

**Meals included:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner



## Day 13: Hike to Taksang Monastery.

After breakfast, we drive around 25 minutes to Ramthanka base for a hike to view one of Bhutan's most revered pilgrimage sites in the Buddhist world, the **Taktshang Lhakhang, popularly known as the "Tiger's Nest" Monastery**. The trek offers spectacular views of this sacred monastery perched precariously on a sheer rock face 3000 ft above the valley floor. Legend has it that Guru Rimpoche, father of Bhutan's stream of Mahayana Buddhism arrived in the Paro valley more than a millennium ago on a back of a tigress. He meditated for 3 months in a cave which was converted into this monastery.

The only sounds heard here are the murmurs of the wind, water and the chanting of monks. We begin our hike from the base to the cafeteria which will take us at least an hour and a half. From here it's about an hour's trek through some stunning landscape to reach the monastery.

On our return, we stop by once more at the Cafeteria for lunch. Later, we begin our descent to Ramthanka base. The temple clinging at 3120 meters above the sea level on a vertical rocky cliff, Taktsang Monastery is a wonderful and impressive sight for visitors.

***Hiking Time:* Approximately 2-3hours walk one way uphill and return 2 hours**

***Route:* paths well maintain trails**

***Difficulty:* Easy to moderate**

***Recommended:* Sport shoes, Sun hat, camera, walking stick, sun glass, Umbrella if rain.**

Post hike, try the hot stone bath, which is widely practiced in Bhutan and is also a method to overcome various complications and illnesses. Traditional Bhutan hot stone bath uses river rocks that therapists place in water where they crack and steam, releasing key minerals and relieving deep-set aches.

## Over night in Paro (Hotel)

**Meals included:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner



14

## Day 14: Depart

In the morning our representatives from Trophel Tours & Travels will escort you to Paro International Airport and bid Goodbye and pleasant flight back home.

Tashi Delek!

Hope you will visit us again!

**Meals included:** Breakfast



Map



Trophel Tours & Treks is inclusive, Bhutan based travel agency focused on curating authentic tailor-made holidays to Bhutan. Authenticity and sustainability are key to our travel programs. We work on the belief that the best advice is born out of authentic personal destination experience. Our philosophy is a simple one. To offer you the best possible tour experience and contribute to the development of local Bhutanese communities.

