



Temples, Dzongs & Taj

Country(ies): Bhutan, India, Nepal

Tour type: Small Group

Transport: A/C minibus/people-carrier

Group size: Min: 2 | Max: 12

Days: 15 days

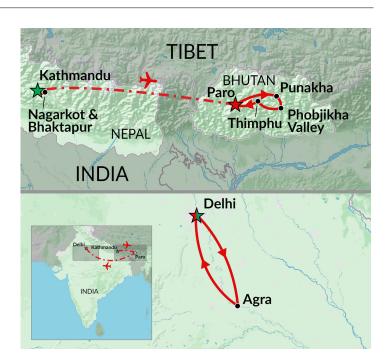
Start Location: Kathmandu, Nepal

End Location: Delhi, India

Meals: Breakfasts - 14, Lunches - 7, Dinners - 7

Highlights:

Kathmandu's temples & stupas, Paro Dzong & National Museum, Thimphu market, Dochu La Pass, Punakha Dzong, Phobjika Valley, Taktshang monastery, Local food & culture, Himalayan scenery, easy hikes, Delhi, Agra & Taj Mahal



Itinerary

Day 1: Arrive in Kathmandu, transfer to your hotel

You arrive in Kathmandu today where we meet you at the airport and transfer you to your hotel. Our rep will help you settle in and give you an introduction to the surrounding area. The rest of the day is free to relax after your flight, and perhaps head to one of the many cafes and bars in the touristic district of Thamel near your hotel.

OVERNIGHT: Kathmandu hotel

MEALS: None

EXTRAS: Extra day in Kathmandu - pre-tour Single room supplement (NPSGTD)

Day 2: Visits to ancient Bhaktapur, Pashupatinath & Boudhanath

This morning we'll firstly head to Bhaktapur; formerly a capital of the Kathmandu Valley, the pedestrianised centre of Bhaktapur is a World Heritage Centre and is full of squares and temples with some stunning wooden architecture. You have a guided tour here, as well as time to explore the narrow winding streets which bustle with life.

Next we'll tour the important Hindu and Buddhist pilgrimage sites of Pashupatinath temple and Boudhanath stupa. These are both very important to their respective religions, but have a completely contrasting atmosphere and ambience which is fascinating to see.

OVERNIGHT: Kathmandu hotel

MEALS: Breakfast

EXTRAS:

Day 3: Kathmandu tour to Durbar Square & Swayambunath

This morning we start with a walking tour from the tourist centre of Thamel, through Kathmandu's busy winding streets passing numerous tiny shops, workships and street corner temples to Durbar Square with its splendid array of Hindu temples and the old Royal Palace. We'll then drive up to the 'monkey temple' of Swayambhunath Stupa and see great views over the city and surrounding valley.

An option is available early this morning to take a spectacular flight up to view Everest. If the weather is clear you will also be able to see Everest and many other Himalayan peaks on your flight to Bhutan, but from much further away.

OVERNIGHT: Kathmandu hotel

MEALS: Breakfast

EXTRAS: Everest Mountain Flight

Day 4: Fly to Bhutan. Kuzuzangpo La! and welcome to Bhutan. Afternoon sightseeing to Ta Dzong, Paro Dzong and learn the art of incense making

We pick you up from the hotel this morning and transfer to the airport for the spectacular flight over the Himalaya to Bhutan (try and sit on the left side of the plane for the best views). While en route, complete immigration and custom form formalities for later declaration and keep your custom forms safe, as you will need to produce them again on departure. (Note - the Kathmandu-Paro-Kathmandu flights are not included in the tour price but may be purchased separately or added as an extra option. Please see the Options section and Tour Notes for more details).

After settling in, your adventure begins with a journey back in time to the Ta Dzong, a captivating 17th-century watchtower perched on a hilltop overlooking the Paro valley. Now home to the National Museum of Bhutan, this unique circular building invites you to explore a treasure trove of ancient artifacts, exquisite thangkas (religious scroll paintings), and intricate bronze statues. Unravel the mysteries of Bhutan's rich history and cultural heritage within these ancient walls.

Next, we'll walk to Paro Dzong, a majestic fortress-monastery that rises dramatically from the valley floor. This architectural masterpiece, a symbol of Bhutan's harmonious blend of spiritual and secular authority, has witnessed centuries of history unfold within its courtyards. Wander through its labyrinthine corridors, discover hidden temples, and learn how these imposing dzongs have shaped the destiny of Bhutan.

But the cultural immersion doesn't stop there! Venture into the heart of Bhutanese tradition with a visit to the Nado Poizokhang Incense Factory. Inhale the intoxicating aromas of juniper, sandalwood, and other sacred herbs as you witness the ancient art of incense making. Observe skilled artisans meticulously blending ingredients and hand-rolling incense sticks, an integral part of Bhutanese life and Buddhist rituals.

You'll spend your first night in Bhutan at a hotel in Paro.

OVERNIGHT: Paro hotel **MEALS:** Breakfast, Dinner

EXTRAS: Kathmandu-Paro-Kathmandu flights

Day 5: Journey over the scenic Dochu La Pass, visit the fertility-blessing Chimi Lhakhang Temple.

Today, buckle up for an exhilarating adventure as we ascend the legendary Dochu La Pass, a winding mountain road that climbs through a tapestry of emerald forests to an elevation of 3,050 meters (10,007 feet). Feast your eyes on breathtaking vistas of snow-capped Himalayan peaks and verdant valleys that unfold with every twist and turn.

As you reach the summit, be mesmerized by the 108 chortens (stupas) that adorn the pass, a poignant memorial to Bhutanese soldiers who lost their lives in a 2003 battle against insurgents. The serenity of this sacred site, combined with the panoramic views, creates an unforgettable experience.

Descending into the fertile Punakha Valley, we embark on a short but rewarding hike to the Chimi Lhakhang Temple, a pilgrimage site renowned for its association with Lama Drukpa Kuenley, the revered and somewhat eccentric "Divine Madman." Known for his unconventional teaching methods and affinity for wine and women, this 15th-century Buddhist master is believed to bless women with fertility. Embrace the vibrant atmosphere of this sacred site, adorned with colorful phalluses and imbued with a playful spirit.

OVERNIGHT: Punakha hotel

MEALS: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

EXTRAS:

Day 6: Walk to Khamsum Yuelley Namgyel Chorten, visit Punakha Dzong and settle in to your Phobjikha Valley homestay

Lace up your boots and get ready for an invigorating morning walk. Our destination: the magnificent Khamsum Yuelley Namgyel Chorten. But the journey is just as rewarding as the destination itself. We'll follow a scenic trail that winds along the gushing Mo Chhu River, passing through a kaleidoscope of terraced fields bursting with colorful chilies and vegetables. Keep your eyes peeled for playful monkeys swinging through the trees and vibrant birds flitting amongst the blossoms. Reaching the hilltop chorten, you'll be rewarded with breathtaking panoramas of the Punakha Valley – the perfect spot to snap some Instagram-worthy photos!

Next, prepare to be dazzled by the architectural marvel that is Punakha Dzong. This majestic fortress, nestled dramatically at the confluence of the Phochu and Mochu rivers, is like something out of a fairytale. Legend has it that these two rivers, representing the father and mother, symbolize the harmonious balance of masculine and feminine energies. Explore the dzong's labyrinthine corridors, marvel at its intricate artwork and towering walls, and uncover the secrets hidden within its sacred temples.

After lunch, we'll hit the road for a scenic drive to the enchanting Phobjikha Valley. The journey is an adventure in itself, winding through lush landscapes and offering glimpses of traditional villages perched on hillsides. As we approach Gangtey, get ready to trade your boots for a taste of authentic Bhutanese life. A warm welcome awaits you at your traditional village homestay, where you'll be immersed in the heart of this captivating community. Share stories with your local hosts, savour and learn how to prepare delicious home-cooked meals, and discover the unique customs and traditions that make this valley so special. Get ready for an unforgettable cultural exchange!

OVERNIGHT: Gangtey Village homestay

MEALS: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

EXTRAS:

Day 7: Explore Phobjikha Valley on a nature walk, visit the revered Gangtey Monastery, and experience authentic Bhutanese life with your host family.

Today, immerse yourself in the natural wonders and cultural riches of the Phobjikha Valley. Embark on a leisurely nature walk through this breathtaking landscape, a haven for a remarkable variety of flora and fauna. Keep your eyes peeled for the majestic black-necked cranes, which grace the valley with their presence from October to March after an epic migration over the Himalayas. These elegant birds hold a special place in Bhutanese hearts, and if you're lucky enough to visit in November, you might even witness the vibrant Crane Festival, a celebration of their arrival.

As you wander through the valley, soak in the serenity of the surroundings – rolling hills, pristine streams, and charming farmhouses dotting the landscape. Breathe in the crisp mountain air and listen to the symphony of birdsong. This is a true escape into nature's embrace.

Next, we'll venture to the spiritual heart of the valley, the revered Gangtey Monastery. Perched on a hilltop overlooking the valley, this 17th-century monastery exudes an aura of tranquility and grandeur. Explore its intricate architecture, vibrant murals, and sacred relics, and perhaps even witness the monks engaged in their daily rituals.

But the cultural immersion doesn't end there! Spend some time with your warm and welcoming host family, delving deeper into the rhythms of village life. Learn about their traditional Bhutanese lifestyle, their agricultural practices, and their unique customs. Share stories, laughter, and perhaps even a cup of traditional butter tea. This is your chance to forge genuine connections and gain a deeper understanding of Bhutanese culture at a grassroots level.

OVERNIGHT: Gangtey Village homestay

MEALS: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

EXTRAS:

Day 8: Head to Bhutan's modern Capital Thimphu, via Wangdue Phodrang Dzong

Today, retrace your way back across Dochu La Pass towards the modern capital, Thimphu. En route, stop at the Rinchengang Village. This village is a small bunched village in front of the Wangdue Dzong and is famous for its proficiency in traditional means of stonework. It is believed to be one of the oldest villages in Bhutan is worth a visit. Rinchengang village is located opposite to the Wangdue Phodrang Dzong and Punatsangchhu runs along the highway. The topography of the village attributes to the attraction. The array of traditional houses clustered neatly on a tiny hillock overlooks the imposing Wangdue Phodrang Dzong. Continue your journey through lush forests and scenic valleys before arriving in Thimphu, where tradition meets modernity.

After soaking in the atmosphere of this ancient dzong, we'll continue our journey to Thimphu, where the vibrant energy of Bhutan's modern capital awaits. Get ready to explore bustling markets, encounter impressive monuments, and delve into the heart of this captivating city.

OVERNIGHT: Thimphu hotel **MEALS:** Breakfast,Lunch,Dinner

EXTRAS:

Day 9: Exploring Thimphu, visit the Memorial Chorten, Folk Heritage Museum, School of Arts & Crafts & Takin Research Centre

Today promises a captivating exploration of Thimphu's cultural treasures. We begin our journey at the Memorial Chorten, a revered monument that embodies Bhutanese spirituality and architectural grandeur.

Next, we delve into the rich tapestry of Bhutanese life at the Folk Heritage Museum, where captivating exhibits showcase traditional lifestyles, artifacts, and customs.

Our journey continues to the School of Arts & Crafts (also known as the National Institute for Zorig Chusum), where we'll witness the meticulous dedication of students mastering the 13 traditional arts and crafts of Bhutan.

Prepare to be enchanted as we immerse ourselves in the world of local artisans. Our guide will lead us to a workshop where we can observe the intricate skills involved in creating exquisite Thangka paintings, vibrant woven textiles, or perhaps the delicate art of basket weaving. The specific craft we encounter will depend on the day's opportunities and the interests of our group, ensuring a unique and personalized experience.

In the afternoon, we'll venture to the Takin research centre, home to Bhutan's unique national animal. Here, we'll learn about the fascinating biology and conservation efforts surrounding this unusual creature.

To offer a different perspective, we'll also visit the Thangthong Dewachen Dupthop Nunnery. Unlike the dzongs we've seen so far, which primarily house monks, this nunnery provides insight into the lives of female practitioners and their role in Bhutanese Buddhism.

To end the day, we'll visit the vibrant weekend market, a bustling hub of local life where you can discover authentic Bhutanese handicrafts and perhaps find a special memento to treasure.

And if the timing is right, we'll make a stop at the national stadium to witness the thrilling spectacle of an archery tournament, a sport deeply ingrained in Bhutanese culture.

OVERNIGHT: Thimphu hotel **MEALS:** Breakfast,Lunch,Dinner

EXTRAS:

Day 10: Hike to Taktsang Monastery (Tiger's Nest). Drukgyel Dzong and Kyichu Lhakhang. Optional Hot Stone bath

Rise early, as today we embark on a pilgrimage to Bhutan's most iconic landmark – the breathtaking Taktsang Monastery, also known as the Tiger's Nest. Prepare your legs and your spirit for an invigorating 2-3 hour hike that winds its way through pine forests and up a steep mountain path. But trust us, every step is worth it! As you ascend, the legendary monastery will slowly reveal itself, perched dramatically on a sheer cliff face 800 meters above the valley floor. This sacred site, steeped in history and legend, attracts pilgrims from all corners of Bhutan and beyond, all drawn to its spiritual aura and unparalleled beauty.

Once you arrive, take a moment to catch your breath and soak in the awe-inspiring views. Explore the intricate temples and shrines that cling to the cliffside, each one adorned with vibrant colors and intricate details. Listen closely, and you might hear the whispers of ancient prayers carried on the mountain breeze.

In the afternoon, we'll journey to the ruins of Drukgyel Dzong, a historic fortress that once protected the valley from invaders. Imagine the battles fought and the victories won within these crumbling walls as you wander through the remnants of this once-mighty stronghold.

Our final stop will be the serene Kyichu Lhakhang, one of Bhutan's oldest and most sacred temples. Dating back to the 7th century, this spiritual haven exudes a sense of tranquility and timeless devotion. Step inside and feel the weight of history as you admire the ancient murals and flickering butter lamps.

As the day draws to a close, why not reward your tired muscles with a truly authentic Bhutanese experience? Immerse yourself in a traditional hot stone bath, where the soothing heat of the stones will melt away any aches and leave you feeling refreshed and rejuvenated. It's the perfect way to end a week of adventure.

For our last evening together, we've arranged a delightful farewell dinner at a nearby farmhouse. You can expect authentic Bhutanese cuisine and a chance to experience the warm hospitality of a local family.

OVERNIGHT: Paro hotel

MEALS: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

EXTRAS:

Day 11: Fly to India, free time to begin exploring Delhi

Your time is free today until we transfer you to the airport in time for your flight to Delhi, India (flight cost not included). Once you arrive in Delhi, you'll be met by one of our local staff, who will transfer your hotel. Once you're settled in, we'll run through the tour itinerary for the next few days, brief you on the local area and arrange

a time to collect you tomorrow.

OVERNIGHT: Delhi hotel

MEALS: Breakfast

EXTRAS:

Day 12: Exploring Delhi, Rickshaw Ride & Street Food Tasting

Your day starts with a morning tour of India's capital, New Delhi. Built on the banks of the Yamuna river, New Delhi is a beautiful blend of a historical past and a vibrant present.

We start at India Gate in the centre of New Delhi, a 42-metre high "Arc-de-Triomphe" like archway, a war memorial built to commemorate the 82,000 soldiers who partook in the undivided Indian Army. We'll drive past various government buildings such as the President's Palace and the Parliament of India, before passing Humayun's Tomb - a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and the Bangla Sahab Gurudwara Sikh Temple.

We'll stop at Connaught Place Station and join the locals on the metro to Old Delhi where we'll walk through one of the oldest and busiest markets in Old Delhi, Chandni Chowk, before exploring the narrow streets of Chawri Bazar which specialises in selling brass, copper and paper products. Throughout the afternoon our guide will also introduce you to the wide range of street food snacks and delicacies so you can get your first authentic taste of the delicious and varied Indian cuisine. Our walking tour will also take in a rickshaw ride and the Jama Masjid mosque, one of the largest in India.

OVERNIGHT: Delhi hotel

MEALS: Breakfast

EXTRAS:

Day 13: Head to Agra. Sheroes Hangout, Mughal Heritage Walk. First glimpse of the Taj Mahal

We head to Agra this morning, home of the famous Taj Mahal. After arriving in Agra we'll make a stop for lunch at the Sheroes Hangout Cafe The cafe was set up by the Chhanv Foundation and is run by victirms of acid attacks. The cafe works to raise awareness of acid attacks in India and to empower those who have sadly been the victims of these heinous crimes. Prior to gaining employment in the cafe, many of the 'Sheroes' led solitary lives, rarely going outside due to shame associated with their scars. At Encounters Travel we're proud to support such an organisation, which has the sole aim of helping these women find acceptance, a supportive community and a means of income. Lunch will be included whilst at the cafe.

Once you've checked in into your hotel, we'll spend the afternoon on a Mughal Heritage Walk through the ancient village of Kachhpura and surrounding farmland on the banks of the Yamuna River across from the Taj Mahal and Red Fort. This walk has been designed by a local NGO and helps support the local community through employment and new infrastructure. During the walk one of the villagers will give a guide to their village life, the layout of their homes, with living, cooking & religious areas, the farming done, and the local cottage industry for leather shoe making which helps Agra export shoes all over the world. You'll also see some lesser known but important Mughal era monuments. Finally today we'll stroll around the park at Mehtab Bagh - originally built by Emperor Babur as the last in a series of 11 parks on the Yamuna River's east bank, before taking in the magnificent sight of the Taj Mahal at sunset.

A special evening option is available today, where you can join a Hindu family for a Vegetarian Thali cooking lesson and meal.

OVERNIGHT: Agra hotel

MEALS: Breakfast, Lunch

EXTRAS: Cook with a Hindu family in Agra

Day 14: Sunrise at the Taj Mahal. Agra Fort visit before returning to Delhi

We start today early for our tour of the Taj Mahal. Truly one of the wonders of the world this elaborate monument to love was built by the Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan and took over twenty-two years to complete. Sunrise is a great time to visit as the light changes gradually with the colours of the Taj changing too. Next we'll head to the UNESCO world heritage site at Agra Fort where we'll have time for a visit before returning to Delhi where we'll spend our final night.

OVERNIGHT: Delhi hotel

MEALS: Breakfast

EXTRAS:

Day 15: Delhi, free time, optional tours. Airport transfer

Your time is free today with various optional tours available before we transfer you to the airport to catch your flight home. You could also choose to extend your stay in India by going on safari looking for tigers at Ranthambore National Park, or heading south to the beaches at Goa or Kerala. If you would like assistance with a tour extension, please contact us to discuss your plans.

OVERNIGHT: N/A **MEALS:** Breakfast

EXTRAS: Extra day in Delhi - post-tour

Included:

- All accommodation in comfortable mid-range hotels
- All transport in private AC vehicles with a local driver
- All transfers, including 24-hour airport arrival & departure transfer service
- Services of a local guide throughout your time in Bhutan
- Services of a tour leader in Nepal and specialist city guide for Kathmandu tours
- · Services of local guides whilst in India
- Entrance Fees to sites visited in Nepal
- All meals as indicated in the itinerary
- Bhutan visa fee (worth US\$40)
- Bhutan government Sustainable Development Fee (worth US\$100/ night)
- A wealth of local experiences

Excluded:

- International Flights in to Kathmandu, departing from Delhi
- Flights between Kathmandu/Paro/Delhi (see Tour Notes)
- Nepal and India Entry Visas
- Bhutan Entrance fees to sites visited (budget approx. US\$75 p/p)
- India Entrance fees to sites visited (budget approx. US\$74p/p)
- Travel Insurance (compulsory, available on request)

- Meals not indicated in the itinerary
- Drinks, snacks, tips and other personal expenses (e.g. laundry)
- Any other items not mentioned above

Notes

Several of our departures on this tour take place during festivals in Bhutan. These festivals, or Tsechus, are a fantastic time to visit the country, with parades and masked dances taking place in and around the Dzongs. On these dates we may adjust the itinerary slightly to make the most of being there during the festival. We also encourage you to book early on these dates as flights in and out of Bhutan can sell out well in advance at these times.

Options

Our tours are designed to include all that you need to enjoy a really special time in the destination you're visiting. However, we do also offer some extra options to complement the tour and add some additional sightseeing or activities, or some extra time at either end of the tour.

All accommodation based options (e.g. Single supplements, extra nights, cruise upgrades) should be booked and paid for in advance so that we can make the appropriate arrangements. Other options may either be booked and paid for in advance or while you are on the tour, though we recommend booking in advance to ensure there are no issues with availability.

Many options are priced the same throughout the year, but some may incur single or high season supplements - full details are given on the tour reservation form or on request.

Everest Mountain Flight

Min numbers: 1

This short but spectacular flight takes you from Kathmandu up towards and around Everest and the surrounding high peaks and Tibetan plateau. The planes have good sized clear windows, and window seats are guaranteed. The flight takes around 1 hour and we aim to book one of the first flights of the morning when the views tend to be better and the flights are less liable to delays or cancellations. Transfers to and from your hotel are included. If the flight does not run due to poor weather, we will aim to reschedule it for later in your tour. If that is not possible then you will be refunded.

Extra day in Delhi - post-tour

Min numbers: 1

This option adds an extra day to the end of your tour, staying in the same hotel as the main tour itself (subject to availability). Your airport departure transfer is still included. Prices shown are per person and based on two people sharing.

Note: Single room and peak season supplements apply.

Extra day in Kathmandu - pre-tour

Min numbers: 1

This option adds an extra day to the start of your tour, staying in the same hotel as the main tour itself (subject to availability). Your airport arrival transfer is still included. Prices shown are per person and based on two people sharing.

Note: Single room and peak season supplements apply.

Single room supplement (NPSGTD)

Min numbers: 1

The tour price is based on 2 people sharing twin/double rooms. This option books a single room in all the accommodation throughout the tour. If you are a single traveller and would be happy to share a room, let us know and we will see if we can pair you up with another single traveller of the same sex. If a room share is not available when you book then we will add the single room supplement to your booking and it will be payable with your balance payment unless we have arranged a room share for you by then. If a room share is arranged after you

have paid the supplement then we will refund it to you. Room shares are arranged in order of booking.

Note: Single supplement prices may vary seasonally.

Hot Stone Bath - Paro

Min numbers: 1

After a long day of trekking to the breathtaking Tiger's Nest Monastery, your legs might be feeling a bit weary. What better way to soothe those tired muscles and embrace the local culture than with a traditional Bhutanese hot stone bath?

Imagine sinking into a steaming wooden tub filled with mineral-rich water, heated to perfection by glowing river stones. As you soak, the warmth penetrates deep into your body, easing away any aches and pains. The addition of fragrant herbs like artemisia adds a therapeutic touch, promoting relaxation and rejuvenation.

This ancient practice, known as Dotsho, is more than just a bath – it's a holistic experience that connects you to the Bhutanese way of life. It's the perfect way to unwind after a day of adventure

Thangka Painting Workshop

Min numbers: 1

Immerse yourself in the vibrant world of Bhutanese art with a Thangka painting workshop.

Under the guidance of a master artist, learn the intricate techniques and symbolism behind these sacred works of art. Create your own unique Thangka, a beautiful and meaningful souvenir to treasure long after your journey through Bhutan.

Workshops typically take place in Thimphu, the capital city, but may be held in other picturesque locations throughout your tour, depending on the artist's availability.

1. Accommodation

The accommodation on this tour is in comfortable mid-range tourist class hotels, mainly boutique style, and at the high end of the Nepalese/Indian 3-star level, and the Bhutanese 4-star level.

Like all aspects of tourism in Bhutan, hotels used for tourists are strictly regulated and inspected and all must reach a good standard to obtain their license to cater for tourists. So, you should expect good clean rooms, ensuite bathrooms, and some traditional Bhutanese styling in the building's architecture and design.

Please check the Accommodation section on the tour page on our website for the hotels that we currently use most on this tour. These are given as a guide only and may be exchanged some dates for alternative properties of a similar standard. We will advise you of your first hotel in Kathmandu a few weeks before departure when we send out your final confirmation voucher and arrival instructions. We do not normally advise details of all the other hotels used throughout the tour. If you have specific requirements for individual hotels, please request a private/tailor-made tour.

Please check the Single Room Supplement option for details on room sharing options and charges for solo travellers on this tour.

2. Transport

Our trips feature a mix of different transport options. We want you to feel like you're really experiencing the country you're travelling through, but at the same time finish journeys refreshed enough to enjoy the next stage of the tour.

We use modern people-carriers or minibuses for this tour, based on the final number of people in the group or in your party.

3. Transfers

Your airport transfers are only included on the first and last day of the set tour itinerary, plus on any additional days if you book your hotel room with us. If you make your own arrangements for additional accommodation at either the beginning or the end of the tour then you will need to arrange your own airport transfers on these days.

As this tour features multiple countries, airport transfers are also included when travelling from Nepal to Bhutan and Bhutan to India.

4. Group Size/Tour Leaders/Guides

We are committed to running small groups, as we feel this gives everyone in the group the best chance to get to know their fellow travellers and to hear and make the most of their guide. It also allows us to be more creative with the itinerary and do things which would not be possible with larger groups. So, we set our maximum group size on this tour to 12 travellers.

Nepal and India:

We provide a fully trained English-speaking guide for any sightseeing tours. A driver will also be provided for your included sightseeing tours.

Bhutan

Fully trained English-speaking Bhutanese guides are provided to escort you throughout this tour and many of our travellers consider them a highlight of their tour. Some tours (such as bird watching or trekking tours) will have specialist guides chosen based on the itinerary and activities included on the tour.

At Encounters Travel we only use local guides and drivers. We feel this gives you the best experience of the country and the sites you are seeing.

5. Entrance Fees

Nepal:

All your entry fees and permits are included (to cover entry into the trekking conservation areas, and sites on the city tour).

Bhutan:

From September 2022, new Bhutanese government rules apply to both the pricing charged for tourisit visitors to Bhutan, and also to entrance fees. Formerly, entrance fees to Dzongs an dother sites were included in the government royalty charged to all tourists. This is no longer the case and the new USD 200 per night Sustainable Development Fee no longer covers entrance to sites visited. Instead, tourists will now need to pay new entrance fees for various sites visited during their tours. An approximate budget to allow for entrance fees visited on your tour is given in the 'Not Included' section of the tour page.

For your convenience, your tour guide will be happy to collect the entrance fees amount in US Dollars or local currency at the start of the tour and purchase the tickets on your behalf as you go along. However, as many of our tours are designed to be somewhat flexible, the budget given may change slightly depending on the sites visited during your trip. A more detailed list is given below.

USD 1 = approx. NU 80 (so NU 1,000 = approx. USD 12.50)

Commonly visited sites:

- Taktshang (Tigers Nest monastery, Paro Valley) NU 2,000
- Kyichu Lhakhang (Paro Valley) NU 1,000
- Rinpung Dzong (Paro) NU 1,000
- Tashichho Dzong (Thimphu) NU 1,000
- Buddha Dordenma (Thimphu) NU 1,000
- Thimphu Memorial Chorten (Thimphu) NU 1,000
- Punakha Dzong (Punakha) NU 1,000
- Chimmi Lhakhang (Punakha Valley) NU 1,000

Less visited sites:

- Dobji Dzong (Paro) NU 1,000
- Jangtsa Dungtseg Lhakhang (Paro Valley) NU 1,000
- Simtokha Dzong (Thimphu) NU 1,000
- Trongsa Dzong (Trongsa) NU 1,000
- Jampa Lhakhang (Bumthang) NU 1,000
- Rinchending Goenpa (Phuntsholing) NU 1,000
- Palden Tashi Choling Shedra (Phuntsholing) NU 1,000

Note: Children aged 0-5 are exempt from these entrance fees. Children aged 6-17 will pay 50%.

Note: Entrance fees may be imposed at additional sites over time.

India:

The tour price does not include entrance fees to the tourist sites mentioned in the itinerary. This allows for fluctuations in the prices set by the local authorities, which do change from time to time.

You should currently allow approx. US\$80 per person to cover these entrance fees (this includes one visit to the Taj Mahal). You will also need to cover the cost of entrance to any other extra sites that you may wish to visit that are not listed in the main tour itinerary. Your guide will offer to collect the entrance fee cost from everyone at the start of the tour and pay on your behalf, or you can arrange them yourself as you go along.

Printed on: Monday 17th of November 2025

Note: Please $\underline{\text{download an up-to-date copy}}$ of these tour notes shortly before you travel as itineraries and information does change from time to time.