

adventurewomen

THE DESTINATION IS JUST THE BEGINNING

## BHUTAN

# Bhutan: Buddhist Temples & Himalayan Vistas



December 6 - 17, 2022



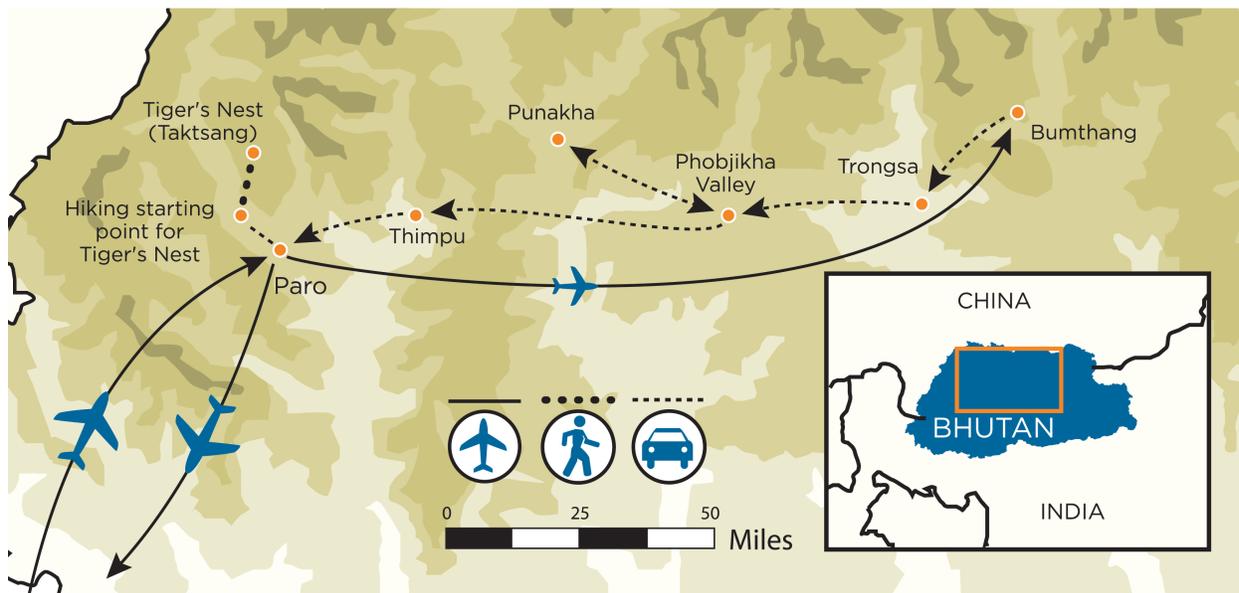
## BHUTAN

# Bhutan: Buddhist Temples & Himalayan Vistas

### TRIP HIGHLIGHTS

- ▶ Journey through diverse mountain and valley landscapes, from high passes to river-laced farmlands
- ▶ Explore ancient fortresses, monasteries, and temples
- ▶ Participate in a moving drum ceremony for peace with the nuns at the remote Pema Choeling Nunnery
- ▶ Camp under the stars for one night, near the historic valley town of Punakha
- ▶ Hike the pilgrimage trail to the viewpoint of exquisite Taktsang Lhakhang, “Tiger’s Nest” monastery.

### TRIP ROUTE



## BHUTAN

# Bhutan: Buddhist Temples & Himalayan Vistas

### QUICK VIEW ITINERARY

- Day 1 meet in Bangkok, fly to Bhutan, welcome dinner
- Day 2 hike to a nunnery, visit Drukgyel Dzong
- Day 3 fly to Bumthang, visit Jambay Lhakhang and a Swiss farm
- Day 4 participate in a drum ceremony and have lunch with local nuns
- Day 5 drive to Trongsa, visit Ta-Dzong, explore the town
- Day 6 stop at a monastery, nature hike
- Day 7 visit the Punakha Dzong, spend the night at a tented camp
- Day 8 visit the 108 stupas, Druk Wangyel Tshechu festival (to be confirmed)
- Day 9 walk to a monastery, dinner with local dignitaries
- Day 10 drive to Paro, hike to Zuri Dzong, archery and darts
- Day 11 hike to the Tiger's Nest, farewell dinner
- Day 12 fly to Bangkok, connect with onward flights

### ACTIVITY LEVEL

High Energy

### TRIP PRICE

Main Trip: \$6,695  
Optional Single Accommodations: \$1,200  
Internal Air: \$1,400

# BHUTAN

## Bhutan: Buddhist Temples & Himalayan Vistas



your adventure  
in depth

DAY 1  
Tuesday  
12/6/22

### *meet in Bangkok, fly to Bhutan, welcome dinner*

Bhutan, a jewel between India and China, is about the size of Switzerland. Within its small boundaries the ecological diversity is amazing. Through centuries of self-imposed isolation, Bhutan has been able to preserve its spectacular environment and nurture its unique culture. Drawing inspiration from its neighbor, Tibet, Tantric Buddhism has flourished and influenced art, crafts, and architecture for hundreds of years, and has shaped the Bhutanese way of life.

During your adventure, you'll get to know your expert Bhutanese guide who offers insight into the country's long history and spiritual focus. You are also accompanied by an AdventureWomen Ambassador, committed to helping make your experience a fun and personally rewarding adventure, and cheering you on as you reach beyond your comfort zone to take on new challenges in your own unique way!

#### Arrival Information

Arrive in Bangkok, Thailand (BKK) on December 5, 2021. Your flight to Bhutan (arranged by AdventureWomen) will be booked closer to departure).

#### Flight to Paro

Meet your group at the Bangkok Airport for your flight to Paro, Bhutan. Morning flight, time TBD.

#### Pick-up and Transfer

Your guide will meet you at the Paro Airport and transfer you to your hotel.

#### Kyichu Monastery

Explore the Kyichu monastery, one of the oldest and most sacred temples in Bhutan. The Royal Grand Mother conducts all her religious ceremonies at this temple. Learn its legends and mysteries from your guide.

#### Check-in to Your Hotel

You'll have time to check in to your hotel and unwind this afternoon.

#### Welcome Dinner

Enjoy a lively welcome dinner as you get to know your fellow travelers this evening. Share stories and learn about why each woman on your trip is excited to explore Bhutan!

Accommodations  
Zhiwa Ling Hotel

Meals Included  
dinner

# BHUTAN

## Bhutan: Buddhist Temples & Himalayan Vistas



your adventure  
in depth

DAY 2  
Wednesday  
12/7/22

### Paro

Haa is the ancestral home of the Queen Grandmother and the illustrious Dorji family. This valley remains one of the least visited areas in the country and retains the air of an unspoiled, primeval forest. The wooded hills of Haa provides an ideal location for hiking.

#### Explore the Chele La Pass

Drive to Chele La Pass at 13,000 feet, stopping to take in the spectacular views along the way. Enjoy panoramic views of the Paro and Haa valleys as well as the Himalayas and the Kachenjunga.

#### Hike to Kila Gonpa Nunnery

Hike to Kila Gonpa Nunnery, which was established as a meditation site in the 9th century and is said to be the oldest nunnery in Bhutan. Approximately 50 nuns pursue higher Buddhist college studies in a series of nunnery buildings that are pressed dramatically against the cliffs. Combine a visit here with a scenic one and a half hours of hiking to Chele La, passing delightful stretch of forest, chortens, and pray flags en route. Enjoy a picnic lunch during your hike. Your car will pick you up from the base of the nunnery to head back to Paro. (1.5 hours hiking)

#### Drukgyel Dzong

Visit the newly renovated Drukgyel Dzong. The Dzong was instrumental in Bhutan's line of defense against the Tibetan invasion.

#### Relax at Your Hotel

Relax at your hotel late this afternoon.

Accommodations  
Zhiwa Ling Hotel

Meals Included  
breakfast, lunch,  
dinner

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## Bhutan: Buddhist Temples & Himalayan Vistas



your adventure  
in depth

DAY 3  
Thursday  
12/8/22

### Paro to Bumthang

The name Bumthang has two probable origins; the first is that it is named after a Bumpa, a vessel for holy water which the valley resembles in shape. The second origin implies that it is the Valley of Beautiful Girls. These fertile valleys are covered in fields of buckwheat, rice, and potatoes. Apple orchards and dairy farms are also common sights here. This serene region is one of the most peaceful places in the kingdom.

#### Fly to Bumthang

Take a short flight from Paro to Bumthang this morning.

#### Jambey Lhakhang

Visit Jambey Lhakhang in Bumthang. This temple, along with Kyichu Lhakhang in the Paro Valley, is one of the two oldest temples in Bhutan. It was built around 750 by King Songtsen Gampo of Tibet as part of his pledge to build 108 temples to the Buddha during his lifetime. One of the most holy of Bhutan's religious sites, you will have special permission required to visit the sacred temple.

#### Kurjey Monastery

Continue to Kurjey, a 17th century temple next to which a spectacular monastery has been completed. It was built to resemble the heavenly abode of the Guru Rimpoche. The funeral rites of the senior members of the Royal Family are sometimes conducted here.

#### Walk to a Swiss Farm

From Kurjey, begin your walk through the countryside, crossing a bridge over the rushing Chamkhar Chu (river) and walk through paddy fields. End your hike at a farm founded in the 1980s by a Swiss cheesemaker. Your group has special permission to visit the farm and taste the Bhutanese version of Swiss cheese. You'll also visit the brewery where Red Panda is produced.

#### Afternoon Activities

Enjoy lunch at a restaurant along the way today. You can spend a little bit of time in Bumthang exploring before heading back to your hotel.

Accommodations  
Yu-Gharling Resort  
and Spa  
Meals Included  
breakfast, lunch,  
dinner

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## Bhutan: Buddhist Temples & Himalayan Vistas



your adventure  
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DAY 4  
Friday  
12/9/22

### Bumthang

Pema Lingpa was a Tibetan saint and siddha of the Nyingma school of Tibetan Buddhism. He is considered to be a discoverer of spiritual treasures. In the history of the Nyingma school in Bhutan, Pema Lingpa is second only in importance to Padmasambhava. Padmasambhava appeared before Pema Lingpa at the holy site of Yigé Drukma, blessed him, and placed in his hands an inventory of 108 major termas, or hidden teachings to be revealed. During his lifetime Pema Lingpa revealed only about half of the prophesied treasures.

#### Explore the Tang Valley

Drive to Tang Valley, one of the most remote valleys of Bumthang. As it is higher than Chokhor and the soil is not as fertile, there is not much agriculture here, although the valley turns bright pink with buckwheat flowers in fall. The people of this valley raise sheep and, at higher elevations, Yak.

#### Drum Ceremony with Nuns

Arrive at the Pema Choeling Nunnery, a large nunnery where about 100 nuns complete 12 years of study. This is one of the few places for women to be educated as nuns. Once in the Lhakhang, participate in an impressive spiritual drum ceremony with the nuns for the well-being of all sentient beings and world peace. Share stories and learn from a few of the nuns over lunch.

#### Jakar Lhakhang

On the way back to your hotel, visit Jakar Lhakhang, the temple manifested as the celestial abode of Guru Rinpoche.

Accommodations  
Yu-Gharling Resort  
and Spa  
Meals Included  
breakfast, lunch,  
dinner

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your adventure  
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DAY 5  
Saturday  
12/10/22

### Bumthang to Trongsa

Trongsa is situated on a steep ridge and offers spectacular views of the deep valleys surrounding it. Trongsa Dzong is easily visible from anywhere in the town and is always an impressive sight as it is situated atop a steep ridge that drops off into the clouds on its south side.

#### Drive to Trongsa

Leave Bumthang this morning for Trongsa. Stop in the Chumey Valley at a traditional Yahtra sheep wool weaving center. Pick up some souvenirs here if you want! Drive over Yotongla Pass at 12,000 feet and descend down to Trongsa.

#### Ta-Dzong

This watchtower, which once guarded Trongsa Dzong from internal rebellion, stands on a promontory above the town. It was built by Chogyal Minjur Tempa, the 1st Governor of Trongsa in 1652. It has four observation points resembling Tiger, Lion, Garuda, and Dragon. Climb up the path to visit Ta Dzong which now houses a shrine dedicated to the epic hero, King Gesar of Ling. A visit to this former watchtower provides visitors with an insight into the significance of Trongsa in Bhutan's history. As of date the Ta Dzong of Trongsa is the most fascinating museum of the nation.

#### Explore the Town

Explore this narrow town on your own late this afternoon and evening.

Accommodations  
Yangkhil Resort

Meals Included  
breakfast, lunch,  
dinner

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DAY 6  
Sunday  
12/11/22

### Trongsa to Gangtey

Black-necked cranes in Bhutan are winter visitors, arriving in late October and staying until mid-February in the Phobjikha Valley as well as Ladakh, India, and Arunachal Pradesh, India. They arrive from the Tibetan Plateau, where they breed in the summer. They visit the Phobjikha valley in large numbers, which is a declared protected area for the cranes, and also to other valleys in smaller numbers in central and eastern Bhutan. On arrival in Phobjikha they are seen to circle Gangtey Monastery three times as if practicing kora (“circumambulation”) and repeat this act as they begin their return to Tibet in early spring.

#### Gangtey Monastery

After breakfast leave Trongsa and drive to the Phobjikha valley where you'll visit one of the oldest and wealthiest private monasteries in Bhutan - Gangtey Goenpa. The head lama of Gangtey Goenpa is the ninth incarnation of Pema Lingpa, a famous 14th century blacksmith from Bumthang who is one of Bhutan's most famous Buddhist saints and teachers. The journey will take approximately three hours over relatively rough roads.

#### Nature Hike

Take a beautiful nature hike through the valley, overlooking the plains created by the glacier that some claim is like the setting of a Shangri-La. The forests surrounding the valley are full of birds and mammals alike, and the nature hike is a wonderful way to experience this pristine ecosystem.

#### Visit the Crane Center

This area is famous as the winter home for the very rare black-necked crane. Experts estimate that fewer than 6,000 cranes exist in the wild. Every year, approximately 800-1,000 birds arrive in Phobjikha Valley late October and stay through mid-February. Learn about the cranes at the Crane Center.

Accommodations  
Dewachen Hotel

Meals Included  
breakfast, lunch,  
dinner

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DAY 7  
Monday  
12/12/22

### Gangtey to Punakha

Punakha has been inextricably linked with momentous occasions in Bhutanese history. It served as the capital of the country from 1637 to 1907 and the first national assembly was hosted here in 1953. Punakha valley has a pleasant climate with warm winters and hot summers. It is located at an average elevation of 3,900 feet above sea level. Owing to the favorable climate, rice grows very well in this region and is the main cash crop cultivated here.

**Punakha Dzong** The Punakha Dzong was built in 1637 by Zhabdrung. It is situated at the confluence of the “Pho” and “Mo” Chus (Male and Female rivers), guarding the Southern end of the Punakha valley. This huge fortress was the capital of Bhutan until 1966. The “Je Khenpo” (head religious abbot) of Bhutan and most of the monks in Thimphu live in this Dzong throughout the winter, as the lower elevation of the Punakha valley is warmer than higher elevations. In 1651, Zhabdrung went into retreat and passed away soon after. For fear of civil unrest his death was kept a secret for over 50 years.

### Enjoy Your Camp

Settle into your camp. This is an AdventureWomen favorite! You'll get to meet some of the local people today and spend some time learning about their lives.

Accommodations  
Tented Camp

Meals Included  
breakfast, lunch,  
dinner

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your adventure  
in depth

DAY 8  
Tuesday  
12/13/22

### Punakha to Thimphu

Thimphu is the most modern city in Bhutan with an abundance of restaurants, internet cafes, nightclubs, and shopping centers, however it still retains its cultural identity and values amidst the signs of modernization.

#### Breakfast

Enjoy breakfast at your camp this morning.

#### 108 Stupas/Druk Wangyel Chortens

Visit the 108 stupas built by the Eldest Queen Mother at the Dochu La Pass (10,300 feet).

#### Druk Wangyel Tshechu Festival

Spend a couple of hours at the top of the pass at the Druk Wangyel Tshechu festival. This is a unique festival performed by the Royal Bhutan Army rather than monks or lay people. It is a tribute to the wise leadership of the fourth King of Bhutan as well as to the continuous efforts of the Royal Bhutan Army in protecting Bhutan. This is a one-of-a-kind festival is performed against the backdrop of the magnificent Jigme Singye Wangchuck mountain range. You will likely get to meet members of the royal family. Lunch will be served outdoors during the festival.

Note: the pass is at about 10,000 feet - plan on wearing a warm jacket, hat, and gloves or mittens. Date to be confirmed.

#### Kuensel Phodrang

This afternoon, visit the World's largest seated Buddha statue at 169 feet, the Buddha Dordenma. This Buddha is seated amidst the ruins of Kuensel Phodrang. If you are interested, there is an excellent nature trail here.

Accommodations  
Zhiwa Ling Ascent

Meals Included  
breakfast, lunch,  
dinner

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DAY 9  
Wednesday  
12/14/22

### Thimphu

One of the most curious features of Thimphu is that it is the only capital city in the world that does not use traffic lights. Instead a few major intersections have policemen standing in elaborately decorated booths (small pavilions), directing traffic with exaggerated hand motions. The juxtaposition of ancient tradition and modernity make Thimphu the ideal location to immerse yourself in the lifestyle of contemporary Bhutanese.

#### Walk to Cheri Monastery

Take a moderate hike over a typical cantilevered bridge spanning over the Wangchu river and ascend through pine forests to Cheri Monastery, with history dating back to 1620s. The monastery is now a major teaching and retreat center for the Drukpa Kagyud sect of Buddhism, which is the state religion. The Monastery serves as the monastic school for study of Buddhist Philosophy, metaphysics, mathematics, poetry, and many other Buddhist topics. The serene setting and the sanctity of the place here invites meditation. Enjoy a picnic lunch along the bank of a stream. (2 hours hiking)

#### Paper Factory

See a small-scale paper factory. Paper here is made out of the Daphne plant.

#### Craft Bazaar

Take some time to shop for traditional wares at the local craft bazaar.

#### Dinner

You'll be joined by local dignitaries for dinner this evening.

Accommodations  
Zhiwa Ling Ascent

Meals Included  
breakfast, lunch,  
dinner

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## Bhutan: Buddhist Temples & Himalayan Vistas



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DAY 10  
Thursday  
12/15/22

### Thimphu to Paro

Paro is a small town and is the site of the mystical Taktsang monastery or the Tiger's Nest.

#### Drive to Paro

Depart Thimphu and drive to Paro this morning.

#### National Museum

Visit the National Museum in Paro. An earthquake destroyed the old circular tower, which is being rebuilt. The artifacts have been moved to the outer buildings of the museum.

#### Hike to Zuri Dzong

Hike towards Zuri Dzong, which starts above the National Museum. Enjoy an easy descent, passing an old temple along the way and then ascend to Zuri Dzong. This structure dates to the 14th century and contains temples to the local protective deities. From there it's all a gentle climb downhill to Paro Rinpung Dzong's ceremonial ground where every year the Paro Festival is held, attracting thousands of people from all over the country to witness this sacred festival. (2 hours leisurely hiking)

#### Lunch

Enjoy lunch at a local restaurant.

#### Archery and Darts

Enjoy an archery and dart demonstration this afternoon. Try your hand and see if you are any good at hitting your mark!

#### Early Dinner

Enjoy an early dinner this evening at your hotel.

Accommodations  
Zhiwa Ling Hotel

Meals Included  
breakfast, lunch,  
dinner

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DAY 11  
Friday  
12/16/22

### Paro

Taktsang Lhakhang is Bhutan's most iconic landmark and religious site. The name Taktsang translates to "The Tiger's Nest." This temple is one of the most holy sites in the kingdom and clings impossibly to a sheer cliff face 900 hundred meters above the Paro Valley. It was first built in 1692 at a cave where Guru Rimpoche meditated in the 7th century. Legend states that Guru Rimpoche flew to the site atop the back of a tigress and meditated in the cave for three years, three months, three days, and three hours in order to subdue evil demons residing within it. The cave has been considered a sacred site ever since and many famous saints have traveled to meditate in it.

#### Hike to Taktsang Lhakhang

Some pilgrims walk for a month to reach this temple. The surrounding area has many temples, monasteries and, cells where many monks, nuns, and lay-people can meditate, some even for a lifetime. Hike up to the viewpoint for a spectacular and breathtaking view of Taktsang and tour the monastery. The hike is 4-5 hours round trip.

#### Lunch

Enjoy a slightly late lunch after your hike at a local restaurant.

#### Afternoon at Leisure

Return to the hotel this afternoon. Relax or take advantage of the spa.

#### Farewell Dinner

Have a farewell dinner with your new AdventureWomen friends. Reminisce over all of the memories you have made and celebrate the end of an incredible trip!

Accommodations  
Zhiwa Ling Hotel

Meals Included  
breakfast, lunch,  
dinner

# BHUTAN

## Bhutan: Buddhist Temples & Himalayan Vistas



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DAY 12  
Saturday  
12/17/22

### Paro and Depart

Enjoy one last morning in Paro before departing for Bangkok.

#### Flight to Bangkok

Transfer to the airport this morning for your flight as a group from Bhutan to Bangkok. Time TBD (likely early evening arrival in Bangkok).

#### Depart Bangkok

Say goodbye to your new AdventureWomen friends as you connect with your flights home from Bangkok.

#### Departure Information

Depart Bangkok, Thailand (BKK) after 8:00pm.

*Please note: AdventureWomen will attempt to adhere to the itinerary as much as possible. However, certain conditions (political, climatic, environmental, and cultural) may necessitate changes in the itinerary. AdventureWomen reserves the right to alter any itinerary at any time, if necessary. We will attempt to notify participants of changes as far in advance as possible. Costs incurred by such changes will be the responsibility of the participants.*

Meals Included  
breakfast

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### Accommodation Details

#### Zhiwa Ling Hotel

The Zhiwa Ling hotel combines the sensibilities of a fine Bhutanese guesthouse with the best of 21st century technology. The hotel's elaborate hand-carved wooden cornices and masterful stonework coexist beautifully with modern amenities.

Amenities: Soap, shampoo, conditioner, hair dryer; electricity; Wifi

#### Yu-Gharling Resort and Spa

The perfect retreat for mind, body, and soul, Yu-Gharling Resort offers ultimate rejuvenation and relaxation. All rooms offer spectacular views of Chokhor Valley.

Amenities: Soap, shampoo, hair dryer; electricity; limited Wifi

#### Yangkhil Resort

Within walking distance from Trongsa town, Yangkhil Resort is the most elegant resort in town. The lush green gardens and breathtaking panoramic views of Trongsa Dzong, Taa Dzong, Mangde Chhu, and the view of mountains soaring over 10,000 feet create an unforgettable setting at Yangkhil Resort.

Amenities: Soap, shampoo, hair dryer; electricity; Wifi

#### Dewachen Hotel

The Dewachen Hotel is designed and decorated in modern traditional Bhutanese style and is perfectly blended with the natural garden and apple orchard surroundings. The resort is a perfect hideaway relaxation. Take advantage of individual balconies to enjoy the breathtaking view of the valley.

Amenities: Soap, shampoo, hair dryer; electricity; Wifi

#### Tented Camp

Enjoy your stay at this remote tented camp. Basic amenities include cots, an open dining area with a fire pit, and separate toilet and shower facilities.

Amenities: Soap, shampoo; electricity in the dining and salon tents

#### Zhiwa Ling Ascent

Zhiwa Ling Ascent welcomes you to relax in a park-like setting with panoramic views. The rooms are designed to capture as much sunlight as possible and take in superb views of the surrounding countryside.

Amenities: Soap, shampoo, conditioner, hair dryer; electricity; Wifi

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### Accommodation Details

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### Included:

- ▶ Accommodations as per itinerary based on double occupancy
- ▶ All meals as listed in the itinerary
- ▶ All ground transportation
- ▶ Round-trip flights from Bangkok to Bhutan and flights within Bhutan (priced separately from the main trip)
- ▶ Guided sightseeing and activities as indicated in the itinerary
- ▶ Entrance fees
- ▶ English-speaking guide(s) throughout the trip
- ▶ Drinking water available in large jugs to refill personal bottles
- ▶ Gratuities for baggage handlers, drivers, and hotel/lodge staff
- ▶ Visa fee for Bhutan

### Not Included:

- ▶ International airfare to and from Thailand
- ▶ Optional activities
- ▶ Meals not specified in the itinerary
- ▶ Alcoholic beverages (unless otherwise specified)
- ▶ Fees for passport, visas, immunizations, or travel insurance
- ▶ Cost of hospitalization or evacuation
- ▶ Items of a personal nature
- ▶ Gratuities for the main guide

# BHUTAN

## Bhutan: Buddhist Temples & Himalayan Vistas

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### Cancellations and Refunds

Notification of cancellations must be received in writing. Full payment is due 90 days prior to departure date, and the registration deposit is non-refundable.

For cancellations received 61-90 days prior to the trip departure date: 50% of the total trip cost is non-refundable. For cancellations received 1-60 days prior to the trip departure date: 100% of the total trip cost is non-refundable.

You are highly encouraged to purchase trip cancellation insurance to cover emergency situations. Travel insurance information will be sent to you once you have registered for your trip.

### Switching Trips

Our deposits are nonrefundable and nontransferable. If for some reason you need to switch to a different trip, please call us and we will do our best to accommodate you, but switching is not guaranteed.

### No Smoking Policy

Beginning in 1995, our trips became smoke free. Please note that there will be no smoking by any participants on AdventureWomen vacations.

### Health Insurance

You must have your own health insurance to participate in an AdventureWomen trip.

### Adventure Travel Today

At AdventureWomen, we want everyone to understand that our excursions are adventure travel vacations and not "tours." We define "adventure travel" as travel in which one **actively participates**, as opposed to a "tour," in which one is more or less a passive observer. AdventureWomen designs and organizes vacations all over the world for women who want to **experience an active, out of the ordinary vacation, and meet new friends**. Most of all, we want our trips to be **fun!**

**good-natured realist and have a sense of humor!** Adventure vacations, by nature, require that participants be self-sufficient, flexible, and able to accept situations as they exist, and not just as they would have preferred or expected them to exist. The constraints of scheduled group traveling also necessitate that each of us be understanding of and sensitive to others. **Being on time** is important, and contributes to the congeniality, success and well-being of both individuals and the group!

In this spirit, the successful adventure traveler should be a