



Highlights of Nepal & Bhutan

WITH

PANORAMIC JOURNEYS

BHUTAN & NEPAL

BHUTAN, The land of the Thunder Dragon, is an extraordinary place. Vast and impressive fortresses, known as Dzongs, dominate Bhutan's landscape - from the wide subtropical valleys in the south to the Himalayan mountain ranges of the north. One of the world's biodiversity hotspots, Bhutan's national animal is the Takin - legend says it is half goat, half cow. This is a country where selling cigarettes or plastic bags is illegal, where giant protective penises are painted on the walls, where chillies and cheese with red rice is the national dish, and where Gross National Happiness is deemed more important than Gross National Product.

NEPAL, is of course synonymous with the greatest mountain range in the world, the Himalayas and its highest mountains, awe inspiring treks, and rich religious cultures, but this breath taking country offers even more. The warmth of the subtropical south is home to an abundance of exotic wildlife in stark contrast to frozen peaks of the north. A diverse people farm terraces clinging on to hillsides and the country is shaped by the ancient trade routes between India and Tibet. New wonders are around every corner and open arms will welcome you as the country rebuilds itself after the devastating earthquake in 2015.

BHUTAN & NEPAL WITH PANORAMIC JOURNEYS

As our name suggests, we like big panoramic vistas and encounters that give one a new perspective on life – These countries boast a few of these of Himalayan proportions. We have made a name designing journeys that allow our clients to get "under the surface" of a country - to meet the people and get off the tourist route. In designing this itinerary, we have allowed time to meet local people, to walk in rural valleys, and really get to know these beautiful countries, as well as taking in the most important historical, natural and religious sights and highlights that define Bhutan & Nepal.



HIGHLIGHTS OF NEPAL & BHUTAN 2018



This tour takes in the twin delights of these Himalayan nations; in Nepal you'll experience the very best that this diverse country has to offer and once in Bhutan you'll see the classic highlights of Thimphu, Punakha and Paro. The countries are near neighbours but different in culture, religion and society and we'll help you get under the skin a little with time to meet locals and explore the towns. We'll even try and squeeze in a great Bhutanese festival for you.

Start in Kathmandu for an insight into the city and maybe a scenic flight to Everest then move on to chilled-out lakeside Pokhara. Drive south to Chitwan National Park for an exotic safari before returning to the capital. You'll then fly into Bhutan to visit the quirky capital, Thimphu, before heading over the fabulous Dochu Laa pass, to the subtropical valley of Punakha with its fantastic Dzong, arguably the most beautiful in Bhutan. Join pilgrims at the quirky and colourful Dochu La Festival before returning to calm Paro valley where you will have the opportunity to visit unusual monasteries or even try your hand at archery. Your journey in Bhutan culminates with a hike up to the iconic Tiger's Nest Monastery perched high above the valley.

MAP OF BHUTAN



DAY	ITINERARY	ACCOMMODATION	TRAVEL DETAILS
1	<p>Arrive Kathmandu Arrive and allow your senses to take in the sights, colours, sounds, and smells of this fascinating city. Relax after your journey and then take an early evening walk to Thamel House Restaurant with your guide for dinner.</p>	Kantipur Temple House, Kathmandu	Airport to Hotel – 40 mins
2	<p>Kathmandu city tour with optional Everest flight Enjoy a day touring the city taking in the highlights such as Swoyambhunath Stupa, Durbar Square, Pashupatinath Temple, and Boudhanath Stupa. You also have the option to take an early morning hour-long scenic flight to Everest. What better way to start your Himalayan adventure.</p>	Kantipur Temple House, Kathmandu	
3	<p>Fly to Pokhara and explore Take a 25-minute internal flight from Kathmandu to Pokhara, situated on the southern edge of the Annapurna Massif. Nepal's second city has a laid-back atmosphere, the tranquil Lake Pewa, adventurous activities on tap, and spectacular views all round. You'll have time to explore this beautiful area, enjoy boating on the lake, and visit Davis Falls and the International Mountain Museum.</p>	Temple Tree Resort, Pokhara	Transfer to airport and 25 min flight.
4	<p>Sunrise at Sarangkot and on to Bandipur After an early breakfast head up to Sarangkot for (weather permitting) the awesome sunrise vista on a huge sweep of the Himalayas, from Dhaulagiri (8167m) to Machhapuchhare (6997m) - unclimbed out of religious respect - and Annapurna II (7937m). Drive on to the Newari settlement of Bandipur where you will stay the night. The village has beautifully preserved 18th century architecture from its time as a key trading route stop-over. Set high on a ridge with views of snow-capped peaks and terraced fields there is plenty to explore.</p>	The Old Inn, Bandipur	Pokhara to Bandipur 80km; 2.5 hours

Chitwan National Park

5	<p>Get up early (if you wish) to catch the sunrise over mighty Manasalu. After breakfast take the drive south toward the sub-tropical Chitwan National Park.</p> <p>Upon arrival at the lodge, you will be met by one of their representatives to plan various activities for this afternoon and tomorrow, including jeep safari, river safari, bird watching, jungle walks and a visit to the local Tharu village.</p>	Barahi Jungle Lodge, Chitwan	Bandipur to Chitwan 102km; 3.5 hours
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Wildlife Safaris in Chitwan

6	<p>Rise early for a game drive in Nepal's most famous reserves. Home to tigers, rhinos, wild elephants, bison, antelopes, sloth bears, and the Gharial crocodile.</p> <p>Your morning and afternoon game drives will take you out into the park to the areas of most recent wildlife sightings and activity. When not on a game drive you'll have the opportunity to do a river safari.</p>	Barahi Jungle Lodge, Chitwan	
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Return to Kathmandu and medieval Patan

7	<p>Early morning bird watching before breakfast then you will fly back to Kathmandu and transfer to Patan. Once an independent city-state Patan is now part of the greater Kathmandu area but has its own very distinct feel.</p> <p>The ancient medieval streets wind in and out of squares and courtyard. The rightly famous Durbar Square is home to numerous beautiful temples and place of tranquillity and the many Fairtrade shops give the opportunity to buy gifts and souvenirs knowing that the proceeds are properly distributed.</p>	The Inn, Patan	Transfer and 25min flight
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Fly to Paro

8	<p>The flight from Kathmandu to Paro is spectacular. On arrival in Paro, you will be met by your guide and driver and taken along willow-lined roads to your hotel.</p> <p>Depending on your flight time, today will be a relaxed day to explore the peaceful Paro valley and town, with a walk through the valley to the Dzong and National Museum. There are lots of interesting temples in Paro valley, but we particularly like Kyichu Lhakhang with its magic orange tree, and the unusually shaped Dungtse Lhakhang with its ancient murals. There should be time today for a bit of leisure time - perhaps take a hotstone bath, or learn how to play archery.</p>	Gangtey Palace, Paro	Transfer to airport, 1.5hr flight
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Thimphu

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Stop by the small Sunday market in Paro town before being taken along the national 'highway' to the capital of Thimphu, stopping off at Thamchu Lhakhang on the way. The view over Thimphu from the big Buddha statue helps get our bearings before heading into Thimphu town.

A stop at the weekend market is a must. Lunch at one of the capital's relaxed cafes. Later this afternoon head up to Mothitang to see Bhutan's national animal, the rare and elusive Takin. If there is time, for those who wish to stretch their legs, there are great views of the town and Dzong on a lateral hike through the forests (1hr-1.5hr) to Wanguetse and Dechenphodrang monasteries.

Namgay Heritage
Hotel, Thimphu

Paro to
Thimphu; 1.5
hours

Explore Thimphu

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After breakfast, a sightseeing tour of Thimphu. Visit the memorial Chorten, which is so important to Thimphu's inhabitants and the Folk Heritage Museum which will give you an insight into how many rural Bhutanese live.

This afternoon, a walk to Cheri or Tango Goempas on the outskirts of town.

Alternatively you can stay in town and have time to explore the town further, head back to the market, or rest. Discuss within the group and with your guide. This evening dine at one of Thimphu's international restaurants.

Namgay Heritage
Hotel, Thimphu

Over Dochu Laa to Punakha

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This morning you will really get a sense of being in the mountains as you ascend to the colourful Dochu Laa pass where you will hopefully see clear views of the snow-capped mountains to the north. Generally the views from the pass are clearer first thing in the morning - so it is best to start as early as possible.

Take time to visit the ornate Druk Wangyal Lhakhang (temple) and perhaps enjoy a tea break before descending into Punakha Valley. As you descend into the subtropical valley of Punakha, you will notice the forest changing in character from pine and evergreen to huge leaved tropical trees. After lunch walk through a small hamlet and paddy fields to a temple on a hill. Round off the day with a riverside walk with views of the Dzong.

Meripuensum
Resort, Punakha

Thimphu to
Punakha;
80km, 3
hours

Punakha Dzong and Chorten Walk

This morning you drive up to the other side of Punakha valley to visit the Khamsum Yuelley Namgyal chorten. It's a 45 minute hike up to the chorten over a suspension bridge.

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Afterwards head back down into the valley for a picnic lunch and visit the spectacular Punakha Dzong - arguably the most beautiful Dzong in Bhutan, where you will take time to explore some of the magnificent temples.

Later this afternoon, time permitting, drive around Punakha valley to the villages of Talo and Nobding.

Meripuensum
Resort, Punakha

Return to Paro Valley (Possible Bhutanese Festival)

After breakfast drive back west to Paro Valley. Visit the magical Kyichu Lhakang, the unique cone shaped Duntse Lhakhang (take a torch) and the atmospheric ruins of Drugyal Dzong. You may also have time to visit Dzongdrakha, a tranquil village of about eight farmhouses built around four temples in the cliffs. It is about an hour's walk. Tonight, dine in a local farmhouse.

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Bhutan is famed for its colourful festivals so, if you travel at the right time of the year, we can incorporate one into your journey - Such as the spectacular Dochu Laa festival held atop the pass.

Gangtey Palace,
Paro

Punakha to
Paro; 129km,
4.5 hours

Taktsang (Tigers Nest) Monastery

One of the most sacred of pilgrimages in the Himalayas, this hike is quite tough - but most abilities will be able to cope with it if it is taken at a steady pace. Although those accustomed to the altitude might take 2 hours to climb to the temple, we allow the full day for the excursion and stop regularly, including: for coffee on the way up, and for lunch on the return leg.

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You will be able to go at your own pace (or hire a pony - ask your guide) and if you prefer to stop at the cafe or view point a little higher up, that is fine. Walking through oak, rhododendrons and trees draped in lichen, it is a rewarding and photogenic hike. If there is time (and you have the energy!) you may like to visit Drukgyal Dzong on the way back to the hotel.

Gangtey Palace,
Paro

Depart Paro to Kathmandu

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Transfer to the airport for your flight from Paro to Kathmandu and enjoy Dwarika's Hotel at leisure. If you don't get good views of the Himalayas on your flight into Bhutan, you might like to take a scenic flight today.

This evening you will have a 6-course farewell dinner at the traditional Nepalese Krishnapan restaurant in Dwarika's Hotel. It is a great experience, and will round off your trip in style before your flight home tomorrow.

Dwarika's Hotel,
KathmanduTransfer to
airport and
1.5hr flight**Depart Kathmandu**

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Transfer to the airport to catch your flight home, 3 hrs before departure.

If you want to take the optional Everest scenic flight today, this is also possible, time and weather permitting.

Transfer to
airport and
flight home

Highlights of Nepal & Bhutan

HOW TO BOOK

1. GET IN TOUCH

This itinerary is just a suggestion, a starting point, something to build upon. Everyone of our itineraries is unique to you – we can add or lose days, tweak the activities, change the accommodation or hire a private jet until it's perfect for you. So, let's have a chat. Call one of our experts to discuss creating your private journey to Bhutan.

2. BOOK YOUR HOLIDAY

Once we've crafted the perfect journey for you we can sign you ready to go. We accept bank transfers, Visa, Mastercard or American Express, and UK cheques. Full payment methods are detailed in our booking conditions. We shall then send you a booking confirmation together with an invoice for the full payment of your holiday which is due 90 days before your departure date.

ANY QUESTIONS?

Call one of our experts on +44 (0)1608 676821 or email us at info@panoramicjourneys.com.

Some quick travel facts can be found in the Essentials section on the Bhutan page of our website

<https://www.panoramicjourneys.com/Destinations/Bhutan>. We will also send you a comprehensive Bhutan Practicalities document once you have booked.

