

Earthbound Expeditions

Bhutan Druk Path Trek

12 days, from US$4,167 per person

Duration	Group size	Country
12 days	**8 people**	**Bhutan**

Bhutan Druk Path Trek Overview

Trekking in Bhutan is possible, although it costs more than in some other countries.

Trekking and hiking are possible in Bhutan, although they cost more than in some other countries.

Druk Path trek in Bhutan

The Druk Path trek is a short five-day trek between Paro and Thimphu, in either direction, crossing the mountain range that separates the two valleys. The route is sparsely inhabited, but it has lakes full of fish and is known for its rhododendron forests, which bloom in April and May. In the clear weather of late autumn and winter, there are good views of the Bhutanese Himalayas.

The trip begins with a hike to Taktsang Monastery (Tiger's Nest). This helps you acclimatise for the trek to Drukgyal Dzong, Shana, Soi Thangthangkha, Jangothang, Dumzo, Thombu Shong, Shana Zam and back to Drukgyal Dzong.

The trek has views of high peaks such as Chomolhari (7,320 metres), Jichu Drake (6,900 metres) and Tsherim Kang, as well as ruined forts, traditional villages, rivers, lakes, forests of oak, pine, rhododendron and spruce, and plenty of wildlife.
This 12-day tour and trek covers some of the most interesting areas of Bhutan and Nepal.

Itinerary

Day 1

Arrive in Kathmandu

Our Earthbound Expeditions representative meets you at Tribhuvan International Airport, Kathmandu, holding an Earthbound Expeditions sign. You are transferred to your hotel, and the rest of the day is free for rest. Overnight at the hotel.

Altitude: 1,400 m On foot: None, arrival day Night: Hotel, Kathmandu Meals: None

Day 2

Kathmandu sightseeing and drive to Nagarkot

After breakfast, we begin a sightseeing tour of the UNESCO cultural heritage sites of Kathmandu. It includes: Swayambhunath, the oldest Buddhist stupa in the Kathmandu Valley. It is home to many monkeys, so it is also known as the Monkey Temple, and it is a good viewpoint over the Kathmandu Valley. Pashupatinath, a Hindu pilgrimage site and cremation ground, where you can observe Hindu cremation rites. You may see Hindu holy men, known as sadhus, with ash-covered bodies and matted hair. Boudhanath, one of the largest Buddhist stupas in the world and a centre of Tibetan Buddhism, where you can visit monasteries and watch monks chanting as they walk around the stupa. Patan Durbar Square, a medieval royal palace area, also known as the city of fine arts, with metal and stone carving dating back to the 14th century and traditional Nepali architecture. Later, we drive about 1.5 hours to Nagarkot and stay overnight there. Nagarkot is a hill station 32 kilometres east of Kathmandu, known for its sunrise and mountain views. On a clear day you can see the Langtang range and other mountains, including Shishapangma, Dorje Lakpa and Gaurishankar, and a small glimpse of Mt. Everest. The weather there is cool. We check out the next day. Overnight at a hotel.

Altitude: 2,175 m On foot: Easy walking, 2–3 hrs Night: Hotel, Nagarkot Meals: Breakfast

Day 3

Nagarkot to Bhaktapur and Kathmandu

Wake early for the sunrise. After breakfast, check out of the hotel and drive about 40 minutes to Bhaktapur for a sightseeing tour of this World Heritage town. After about 2 hours in Bhaktapur, return to Kathmandu, check in to the hotel, and have free time. Prepare for the Bhutan trip, which starts tomorrow.

Altitude: 1,400 m On foot: Easy walking, 2–3 hrs Night: Hotel, Kathmandu Meals: Breakfast

Day 4

Fly from Kathmandu to Paro

Fly to Paro. On a clear day the flight gives panoramic views of the Himalayas, including Everest. The approach through the Bhutanese foothills is notable, with a few steep turns before landing at the small airstrip of Paro International Airport. After immigration formalities, your guide meets you at the exit gate. We drive to the hotel. In the afternoon, visit the National Museum, housed in an old watchtower above Paro Dzong (a dzong is a fortress-monastery). The museum's collections include fine thangkas (religious scroll paintings). Visit Paro Dzong, built in 1644.

Altitude: 2,200 m On foot: Easy walking, 1–2 hrs Night: Hotel, Paro Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 5

Paro Valley sightseeing

You can hike to Taktsang Monastery, one of the most sacred places for Buddhists. The 3 to 4 hour walk through oak and pine forest gives views of the valley 1,000 metres below and of the temple built into the side of the cliff. Overnight at the hotel.

Altitude: 2,200 m On foot: 3–4 hrs Night: Hotel, Paro Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 6

Trek from Paro to Jele Dzong

Trek day 1. Distance: 8 km. Walking time: 4 to 5 hours. The trek starts at Ta Dzong (2,300m) and ends at camp at Jele Dzong (3,436m, 11,270 ft). The trail climbs gradually all the way to camp. In clear weather you can see the Paro valley with Mt. Jumolhari (7,314m) and other snow-capped mountains behind it.

Altitude: 3,440 m On foot: 8 km, 4–5 hrs Night: Tented camp, Jele Dzong Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 7

Trek from Jele Dzong to Tshokam

Distance: 9 km. Walking time: 4 to 5 hours. The trek starts at Jele Dzong (3,436m) and ends at camp at Tshokam (3,962m, 12,995 ft). The trail passes through thick alpine forest and rhododendron, and most of the walking is up and down along a ridge. Mt. Jumolhari is visible if the weather permits. You pass Jangchulakha, the site of the old campsite; because of a lack of water, the campsite has moved to Tshokam. You may see yak herders around Jangchulakha, and if you are interested you can visit their tents before reaching camp.

Altitude: 3,960 m On foot: 9 km, 4–5 hrs Night: Tented camp, Tshokam Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 8

Trek from Jangchulakha to Simkota

Distance: 14 km. Walking time: 4 to 5 hours. The trail from Jangchulakha to Simkota (4,040m) passes through dwarf rhododendron and then by Janye Tsho lake. You may pass yak herders' camps today and see how the herders live. The camp is close to Simkota Lake. Overnight in a tent.

Altitude: 4,040 m On foot: 14 km, 4–5 hrs Night: Tented camp, Simkota Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 9

Trek from Simkota via Phajoding to Thimphu

Distance: 14 km. Walking time: 6 to 7 hours. Today's trail runs from Simkota (4,040m) to Thimphu, passing Phajoding (3,870m). You begin with a gradual climb to Phume La (4,210m), the highest point of the trek. Weather permitting, there are views of Mt. Gangkhar Puensum (7,541m), the highest mountain in Bhutan, and other Himalayan peaks. The pass also gives a view of the whole Thimphu valley. The trail then descends all the way to Thimphu through forest of mostly blue pine. This is the end of the trek. Drive to the hotel for a hot shower.

Altitude: 2,320 m On foot: 14 km, 6–7 hrs Night: Hotel, Thimphu Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 10

Thimphu sightseeing and drive to Punakha

In the morning, visit the National Memorial Chorten, built in honour of the late King Jigme Dorji Wangchuck, and Kuensel Phodrang, where the tallest statue of the Buddha has been built. Visit the School of Arts and Crafts, where students are taught the traditional arts of thangka painting and sculpture. Lunch at a local restaurant. After lunch, drive to Punakha (about 3 hours). The road climbs a series of zigzags over the Dochula Pass (3,050 metres), which, weather permitting, has views of the snow-capped eastern Himalayas. It then descends gradually through varied forest into the cultivated Punakha Valley.

Altitude: 1,200 m On foot: None, 3 hr drive Night: Hotel, Punakha Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 11

Punakha to Paro

In the morning, visit Chimi Lhakhang, a temple dedicated to Drukpa Kuenley, known in the West as the Divine Madman. The walk to the temple takes about 20 minutes through paddy fields and past a few local farmhouses. Visit Punakha Dzong, one of the most impressive dzongs in the country, at the confluence of the Pho Chu and Mo Chu rivers (meaning the male and female rivers). Punakha was also the former capital of Bhutan. In the afternoon, drive back over the Dochula Pass to Paro, which takes about 4 to 5 hours.

Altitude: 2,200 m On foot: None, 4–5 hr drive Night: Hotel, Paro Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 12

Departure

An early breakfast is served at your hotel, and your guide and driver then take you to Paro International Airport for your flight home.

Altitude: 2,200 m On foot: None, departure day Night: No overnight Meals: Breakfast

What's included

- Accommodation in 3-star hotels in the cities. During the trek, only camping or simple lodges and homestays are available.
- Ground transport.
- Sightseeing in Kathmandu with an Earthbound Expeditions city tour guide.
- Full-board meals throughout the trek.
- Government-trained guides and the necessary number of porters, including their insurance, salary and meals.
- Farewell dinner with a cultural show.
- Entry fees and trekking permits.
- Bhutan visa fee.

- Domestic flights, booked according to the itinerary.
- Sleeping bags and down jackets for the trek.
- Car, bus and domestic flights.

Not included

- International flights.
- Museum entrance fees.
- All personal expenses such as bar bills, drinks and snacks.
- Airport taxes.
- Extra charges for hot showers, battery charging, laundry and similar.
- Personal clothing and equipment.
- Tips for guides and porters.
- Costs arising from cancellations, landslides, weather, political unrest or illness, as these are outside our control.
- Nepal visa fee, paid on arrival.

Photos, videos and reviews of this trip: earthbound.rajansimkhada.com/bhutan-druk-path-trek