

Kathmandu Valley & Bhutan Adventure ★ 4.35 11 Reviews

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USD \$7999/pp

12 Days

14 People Max

 Activity Level 2



Our Kathmandu Valley & Bhutan Adventure is thoughtfully crafted to highlight the unique cultures and breathtaking views of the Himalayas.

Wander the Kingdoms of Kathmandu, learn about the ancient cultures of Nepal and experience the intimate spirit of Buddhism in Bhutan on our 12-day Kathmandu Valley & Bhutan Adventure. Starting in Kathmandu, you'll visit a children's home, explore Shivapuri Nagarjun National Park in the foothills of Kathmandu, get to know the beautiful and generous Tamang people of rural Nepal and hike amongst terraced fields from Mystic Mountain Resort. After taking one of the most scenic flights in the world, from Kathmandu to Paro in the Kingdom of Bhutan, you'll immediately notice a change in scenery and culture. Your Kiwi and local guide work in parallel to bring you on an incredible journey through Bhutan's most fascinating landscapes and temples. You'll take the stunning hike to Tiger's Nest monastery, perched high on the cliffside some 900m (almost 3000ft) off the valley floor, and explore numerous other sacred sites of significance to the Buddhist religion. This trip exploring Nepal and Bhutan sees culture and incredible scenery unlike anywhere else on earth.

Trip Highlights

Hiking - Village to village

Hiking - Gangte Nature Trail

Hiking - Tiger's Nest

Plus ... - Kingdoms of Patan & Bhaktapur

Plus ... - Sights of the Himalayas

Plus ... - Changangkha & Chimi Lhakhang

Plus ... - National Museum & Rinpung Dzong

Plus ... - Tamang culture

Plus ... - Bhutan Flight

Our Active Adventures Assurance

We value loyalty, and appreciate that it goes both ways. So when you book with us we'll make a few assurances to you so you can book with complete confidence, no matter what's happening in your life (or the world).



COVID-Ready Certified: Safe Travel for our Guests Travelling Overseas

Active Adventures has received the World Travel and Tourism Council's Safe Travels stamp, which guarantees you that we'll follow all ATTA and WTTC health and safety guidelines on all our trips. See how our small group, off-the-beaten-track adventures are perfect to start exploring again.

Kathmandu Valley & Bhutan Adventure ~ Itinerary

DAY 1

Arrive Kathmandu

Your trip starts in the lively and bustling city of Kathmandu. You'll be met at Kathmandu Airport by a friendly face from Active Adventures Himalayas who will accompany you to our hotel. If you arrive early, you can head out to explore the city's labyrinth of back street courtyards, colorful market stalls and ancient temples on your own for your first taste of Nepal's culture and friendly people. This afternoon, your guide will meet you at our hotel and run through what to expect from the days ahead. Tonight, we'll take you out for dinner at a local restaurant, for your first experience of Nepalese dining - a culinary crossroad between the influences of China, India and Europe which makes for some really delicious flavor combinations. Elevation: Kathmandu - 1400 meters (4,600 feet)

Hotel Thamel Eco Resort, Kathmandu (Dinner)

DAY 2

Shivapuri Nagarjun National Park

Today you'll see Kathmandu from a new perspective as we wind our way up out of the valley that defines the capital city. After a tea break, we'll enter the Shivapuri Nagarjun National Park, in the foothills on the northern fringe of the Kathmandu Valley - at this altitude the vegetation transitions from subtropical to temperate and the park is home to a diverse range of wildlife. After our hike, we'll journey onto Boudhanath Stupa, a UNESCO World Heritage Site which sits on the ancient trade route from Tibet. For many centuries Tibetan merchants have rested here and offered prayers. After exploring the Boudhanath Stupa, we'll dine at a local restaurant with views looking down upon the Stupa. Elevation: Kathmandu - 1400 meters (4,600 feet)

Hotel Thamel Eco Resort, Kathmandu (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)

Hiking: 7 kilometers (4.3 miles), 2-3 hours, elevation + 115 meters (380 feet) / - 310 meters (1,020 feet)

DAY 3

Journey to Patan Kingdom and onto Nagarkot

Patan (or Lalitpur, 'city of beauty'), now a part of greater Kathmandu, was once the capital of a powerful independent kingdom. You'll notice as we explore this area, a calmer vibe - the craftspeople here, many of whom are Buddhist, have created exquisite temples and other works of art which give the area a distinct artisan feel. After lunch, we'll ascend on a classic Nepali road northeast to Nagarkot. It's refreshing to once again leave the bustling Kathmandu Valley behind on our way to Mystic Mountain Resort. We'll have plenty of time this afternoon to check into our rooms and relax next to the pool, with views of the Himalayas. Elevation: Nagarkot - 2195 meters (7,200 feet)

Mystic Mt Resort, Nagarkot (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)

Hiking: 5 kilometers (3 miles), 1 hour, elevation + 24 meters (80 feet) / - 45 meters (150 feet)

DAY 4

Hike to Nala, explore Bhaktapur

By now you'll be nicely adjusted to Nepal time, making an early wake-up for an epic mountain sunrise all the more appealing. Add coffee and an excellent breakfast and it doesn't get any better! Full of energy, we'll hike a stunning ridgeline and jungle path to Nala. Mostly descending, we'll pass typical Tamang villages learning about subsistence living and the challenges these people face - you wouldn't know it though, as we're greeted with beaming smiles around every corner. We'll stop and visit the Human Welfare Society home, for children

rescued off the streets. It's a short drive onwards to Bhaktapur for lunch, and a chance to explore another of the medieval city-states of the Kathmandu Valley. You'll see here in the 'City of Culture' some of the devastating damage caused by the 2015 earthquake. But there's plenty still standing including many pagodas, shrines, carved wood columns and temples. After dinner, your trip leader will brief you on the Bhutan adventure to come. Elevation: Kathmandu - 1400 meters (4,600 feet)

Hotel Thamel Eco Resort, Kathmandu (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)

Hiking: 7 kilometers (4.3 miles), 2-3 hours, elevation + 115 meters (380 feet) / - 310 meters (1020 feet)

DAY 5

Fly to Paro, Bhutan, Visit Tashichho Dzong

Prepare to shift gears as we leave the hustle and bustle of Kathmandu and fly east to the Kingdom of Bhutan. This is a country, situated on the silk road, that has endured independence for centuries and has never been colonized! Bhutan is the least populous nation in South Asia, ranking first in economic freedom, ease of doing business and peace. After driving from Paro to Thimphu, we'll visit Tashichho Dzong, a Buddhist monastery and fortress on the northern edge of the city. Next, it's onto the Tarkin wildlife reserve, and we'll have lunch at Simply Bhutan, an interactive living Museum where we'll experience an introduction into traditional life in Bhutan. Dinner this evening is at the hotel, and you'll have a chance to soak in your first culturally-immersive day in Bhutan. Elevation: Thimphu - 2334 meters (7,657 feet)
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Hotel Damisa or similar, Thimphu (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)

Hiking: Up to 2 kilometers (1.2 miles)

DAY 6

Journey to Buddha Dordenma, hike through Kuensel Phodrang Nature Park

Making the most of our day, we'll take an early breakfast before departing for Buddha Dordenma, overlooking Thimphu valley. This statue is said to emanate an aura of peace and happiness to the entire world, and we'll visit the temple the Buddha sits on. Afterwards, we'll hike a forest trail from Buddha Dordenma, down through the Kuensel Phodrang Nature Park. After lunch, we'll journey to the lush district of Punakha, known for the Punakha Dzong, a 17th-century fortress. Our journey to Punakha will take us over the Dochula pass. When the weather is nice, this pass (3,100 m / 10,300 ft) offers tremendous views of the eastern Himalayan ranges and along the pass there are an astonishing 108 memorial chortens. We'll take some time to explore this majestic fortress, which is the administrative center of Punakha District. Elevation: Punakha - 1242 meters (4,075 feet)

Dharma Suddhi or similar, Punakha (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)

Hiking: Up to 5 kilometers (3 miles), 2 hours

DAY 7

Hike to Chimi Lhakhang Temple

We'll stretch our legs after breakfast with a hike up the trail leading to the Klamsum Yulley Namgyal Chorten. The stupa was built to protect Bhutan from evil forces and help bring peace to the world. Your ascent will be rewarded with incredible views overlooking the Punakha Valley. Afterwards we'll explore the Punakha Dzong, taking a short hike from the Dzong across a swing bridge towards a local farmhouse, where we'll enjoy lunch. We'll then drive to Chimi Lhakhang, the Fertility Temple. This Buddhist temple is renowned throughout Bhutan as a fertility inducing magnet - thousands make the pilgrimage each year in the hopes of having a child, as well as receiving a blessing from the saint with the 'magic thunderbolt of wisdom'. Elevation: Punakha - 1242 meters (4,075 feet)

Dharma Suddhi or similar, Punakha (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)

Hiking: Hike to Chimi Lhakhang: 1.5 kilometers (1 mile), 1 hour, elevation + 30 meters (100 feet)

Hiking: Hike to Khamsum Yulley Namgyal Chorten: 3.4 kilometers (2.1 miles), 1-2 hours, elevation +/- 200 meters (656 feet)

DAY 8

Hike the Gangte Nature Trail

This morning we'll journey east to Phobjikha. The walk we'll take here, along the Gangte Nature Trail, is spectacular! We'll pass through flowering meadows, lush forest and a small village. At the end of our hike we'll arrive at Khewang Lhakhang, a 15th-century Buddhist Temple with statues of the past, present and future Buddhas. This area has some wonderful valley viewpoints, where there are opportunities to see Black-necked cranes, or 'Thrung Thrung Karmo', the subject of many Bhutanese songs and folklore. Our hotel tonight offers another fine example of the local hospitality you'll experience on this trip, with outstanding service and exotic food... And did we mention the views!?! Elevation: Phobjikha - 3000 meters (9,842 feet)

ABC Lodge or similar, Phobjikha (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)

Hiking: 7.5 kilometers (4.6 miles), 2-3 hours

DAY 9

Journey to Thimphu, visit the National Museum, onto Paro

After breakfast we'll depart for the journey back to Paro, taking lunch along the way. In Paro we'll visit Rinpung Dzong, and you'll also have views of this Buddhist monastery from your hotel, as it's lit up in the evening. Elevation: Paro - 2200 meters (7,218 feet)

Tashi Namgay Resort or similar, Paro (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)

Hiking: Up to 2 kilometers (1.2 miles)

DAY 10

Hike to Tiger's Nest

A trip to Bhutan is not complete until you've visited Paro Taktsang, Tiger's Nest. We'll take an early breakfast so that we can begin hiking whilst the trail is quiet - the trek is challenging - and thankfully this is what protects this extraordinary attraction from overcrowding. Once you've cleared the trees you'll get your first glimpse of the Tiger's Nest, somehow perched on the cliff high above the valley floor. Once at the monastery you'll take a fascinating tour of the buildings, with plenty of time to find a quiet spot and soak it all in. You'll be in awe, wondering how the Buddhists established this area, first as a meditation cave in the 8th century and later as a monastery in the 17th century. Amazing! Our final dinner will take place at the 'Farmhouse' for a Bhutanese Cultural performance and wait for it... Some hot stone baths! Elevation: Paro - 2200 meters (7,218 feet)

Tashi Namgay Resort or similar, Paro (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)

Hiking: Up to 6.5 kilometers (4 miles), 5 hours, elevation +/- 518 meters (1,700 feet)

DAY 11

Fly to Kathmandu, free afternoon

We'll take a morning flight back to Nepal, so with any luck, we'll be treated to more spectacular Himalayan views out of the right-hand side of the plane. For those who are keen after lunch, we'll walk to Durbar Square, the place where Nepal's kings were crowned in past times. The square is in the center of old town Kathmandu and is the city's greatest example of traditional architecture, so much so that it was designated a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1979. Tonight we'll meet at a local restaurant for our final dinner together to celebrate our achievements and adventures in the Himalayas. Elevation: Kathmandu - 1400 meters (4,600 feet)

Hotel Thamel Eco Resort, Kathmandu (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)

DAY 12

Depart

Today is the final day of your Nepal and Bhutan cultural exploration. If you have extra time after your trip, we're happy to give suggestions on how to make the most of it. On the other hand, if you're on your way home today, we'll send you back refreshed and invigorated from the great hiking and adventures you've had with us!

No Accommodation (Breakfast)

Useful Info

Where does the trip start?

On the first day of the trip, our two pick-up locations are Kathmandu airport (KTM), whenever you fly in on Day 1, or we'll meet you at the [Hotel Thamel Eco Resort](#) at 5pm. For the Airport location, a representative from Active Adventures will show you to our hotel taxi van. They will be holding an Active Adventures Himalayas sign so they are easily recognized.

You are welcome to book your pre-trip stay at Hotel Thamel Eco Resort with our partner, Earthbound Expeditions, please contact our team in Nepal on earthboundnpl@gmail.com and they will assist you with arranging your requests, as well as airport transfers and additional pre or post trip services. You're also welcome to book your pre-stay at any other hotel in Kathmandu, though you must make your own way to one of the two pick-up points at the pre-designated times.

Where does the trip end?

Your trip ends with a drop-off at either the Kathmandu Airport in time for flights departing any time or anywhere in the Central Kathmandu downtown area after breakfast.

What flights would you recommend?

Arrival: If you're flying into Kathmandu on the first day of your trip then we recommend arriving in Kathmandu before 4pm.

Departure: On the last day of the trip, you can fly out at any time that suits.

What do I need to bring to the first night trip briefing?

Please meet us in the lobby of the Marriott Hotel at 5pm for a pre-trip briefing and our first dinner together! The Marriott Hotel is a 15 minute drive from the Tribhuvan International Airport, and is located at Manakamana Marg, Kathmandu 44600, Nepal, ph +977 1-4443040.

Please bring along your passport, a photo copy of your passport and a copy of your travel insurance document.

How fit do I need to be for this trip?

As an [Activity Level 1-2](#) trip, you'll need a good level of fitness for this trip. While you don't have to be extremely fit, you should be in the habit of doing regular aerobic exercise, ideally involving some up hills, down hills and steps. Advance preparation means you'll enjoy the active and outdoor nature of your trip all the more.

Please head to our [Fitness Guide](#) for great tips on how to prepare along with a workout plan!

This trip begins at an altitude of 1,400 metres (4,600 feet) in Kathmandu and will take you up to 3,120 metres (10,240 feet) at Tiger's Nest. Unless you've travelled to and slept around this altitude in the past there is no reliable way to predict how well you're going to cope. While most people experience some mild symptoms, these are usually limited to a few days while your body adjusts and acclimatizes.

What accommodations do we stay at on this trip?

We've selected the accommodation for the unique character and adventuresome feel - this trip isn't designed as a tour of the fanciest hotels in Nepal & Bhutan. We prefer to stay in quaint, comfortable B&B's and lodges, all with private, ensuite bathrooms.

The best time to do laundry will be during our two night stay in Punakha or in Paro on your free afternoon. While there may be other opportunities to do laundry elsewhere if need be they won't be as convenient. Self-service laundries are rare, so you'll probably need to use on-site hotel laundry services or off-site lavanderias, though we recommend hand-washing technical fabrics yourself.

How much luggage can I bring on this trip?

You are allowed one piece of luggage on your trip, plus a daypack. Your main piece of luggage should not exceed 50 pounds (23 kilograms) and can be anything from a duffel bag to a sports bag with wheels or a suitcase. You'll also want a good quality backpack sized 25-30 liters (2000 cubic inches) to use throughout the days.

Do I need a visa to visit Bhutan?

While we assist in taking care of your visa for Bhutan, it is your responsibility stay up to date on the latest visa and entry requirements for your destination. Please use the [CIBT entry tracker](#) on our website as a guideline or visit the relevant immigration webpage for more information regarding this.

The Bhutan visas are processed through an online system by Active Adventures so you need to supply us with a clear image of the photo page of your passport as soon as possible, and you can upload this in your Travel Wallet. The visa cost of US\$40 and Sustainable Development Fee of US\$200 per day is included in your trip cost. At your point of entry you will be required to show your visa clearance letter, which your guide will supply to you and the visa will then be stamped into your passport.

What is not included?

Flights to and from trip start/end points
Pre/Post accommodation
Travel insurance
Gratuities for your guides and porter(s)

Is tipping expected in Bhutan?

Tipping is accepted in Bhutan (and appreciated!), most people also choose to tip their Active Adventures guides. We recommend USD\$20 per day, per guest, for your Active Adventures trip leader, your local Nepali guide and local Bhutan guide; US\$5 per day, per guest, per City Guide and US\$5 per day, per person, per Driver. You are welcome to tip an equivalent amount in the local currency. There are plenty of ATM's and banks in the larger towns of Bhutan. Your loose change (or 5%) is fine in cheaper places; around 10% in more expensive restaurants. Tips are gratefully accepted in either their local currency or US dollars.

How do rooming arrangements work?

Trip prices are based on shared arrangements (typically two guests per room), unless otherwise stated. For solo travelers, we'll pair you with another person of the same gender to share rooms and if there's no one suitable to share with, there's no forced single supplement. However, if you specifically request your own rooms, you can opt to pay the single supplement. Solo travelers who book within 90 days of departure, where there are no other solo travelers willing to share, will be required to pay the single supplement.

For Family Vacation bookings, families consisting of four guests traveling with children aged 17 and under will be automatically assigned one shared room. However, the following alternative rooming allocations are available:

Families consisting of four guests with all children aged 13 and above are welcome to opt for additional rooms as per advertised double occupancy adult rates.

Families consisting of four guests with at least one child aged 12 and under are automatically assigned a shared room. However, families can opt to pay the adult rates for all guests in their family to have an additional room.

The same principles apply for families consisting of more than four guests.

Rooming preferences are subject to availability and must be communicated in writing at time of booking. Automatic assignments as per this policy will be applied in the absence of any specification provided by guests. Any request for additional rooms during trips will be at guests' own expense and subject to rates made available by the accommodation provider at the time. All minors (guests aged 17 and under) must be accompanied by at least one adult.

General Trip Information

You can find details on recommended flights and fitness, as well as trip start and end in the 'Useful Information' section above.

Accommodation

You'll love the interesting places we've discovered over the years. You'll stay in a comfortable hotel in Kathmandu, and in local tea houses (small guesthouses) selected for their comfort, cleanliness and style. All the tea houses are located in spectacular surroundings with stunning views. Our Bhutan trips will stay in a range of small hotels and resorts selected for their comfort, personality, valley views and impeccable hospitality.

Included

- Our own highly experienced trip leader, with you from start to finish
- A team of specialist local guides and porters for the duration of the Nepal treks
- Industry-leading Guest-to-Guide ratio (averaging 6:1)
- Your own 'Travel Wallet', an online space with everything required for your adventure
- Our knowledgeable Customer Service Team to answer your queries - just a phone call, email or chat away
- Customer Service pre-trip phone calls to ensure you're 'trip ready'
- All accommodations for the duration of your trip
- All meals except where indicated in the itinerary
- Unlimited snacks to keep you fueled
- Flights as outlined in the itinerary
- All activities outlined in the itinerary
- All necessary equipment (well-maintained and safe) for activities
- Down jacket, sleeping bag, and hiking poles for the duration of the Nepal treks
- All gratuities for hotels, restaurants, and activities
- All hiking and park entry fees and permits
- Transportation in our air-conditioned vans - safe, clean, modern, and comfortable!

Itinerary Updates

We update our itineraries regularly, so please check our website for the most up-to-date itineraries and pricing. We make every effort to ensure itineraries are updated as necessary, though changes may occur without prior notice due to unforeseen circumstances.

Hiking Trips

You don't need to be experienced in trekking or be used to hiking at altitude, and you won't need to carry a big backpack on these trips as our team of porters will be carrying gear and supplies. This will leave you free to carry just a daypack. There is no technical climbing involved either - you just need to put one foot in front of the other! If you're energetic and in good shape, you'll have a wonderful time! So, with all the research, logistics, safety and hospitality taken care of, you can focus on the most important thing - making the most of your adventure!

If you'd like some tips on appropriate fitness for our Himalayan treks, please get in touch and we'll be happy to help.

Excluded

- International/Domestic Flights and transfers to and from the meeting point
- Accommodation before/after the trip (but we can organize this for you if required!)
- Optional extra activities
- Travel insurance (Mandatory for this destination)
- Alcoholic beverages
- Gratuities for your guides at the end of your fabulous trip