

BEST OF NEPAL AND BHUTAN

All Women's Cultural Tour

Ex Australia Kathmandu 31 October 2024



NEPAL

Without a doubt this country is a potpourri of culture and diversity. It boasts as having the highest mountain in the world Mt Everest mixed with unique wildlife and exotic culture. Discover yourself amidst this strange world of mystical beliefs and incredible history. Every aspect of life is tainted with spiritual reasons. You will have many opportunities to witness this aspect of life, and to share with people your own ideas about it. The art and craft of Nepal are basically based on the religious themes taken from Buddhism and Hinduism. Nepalese art has been influenced and promoted since the earliest recorded times by the Newars. In Nepal, ethnical cultural groups are diverse and many of them have their own languages and customs. The country's capital Kathmandu and largest city simultaneously reeks of history and the wear and tear of increasing modernity. The tightly packed historical centre, with its squares and temples, continues to preserve a world light years away from shantytowns, expensive hotels, restaurants and shops on the city's outskirts. Kathmandu's core is Durbar Square, with the Vishnumati River to the west and Ratna Park to the east, The Bagmati River forms the southern boundary, whilst Thamel, the popular tourist hangout sprawls to the north. This would have to be one of the most exciting cities in the world today.

No other area in Nepal has such a splendid variety of natural beauties as the Annapurna region. It is a rare combination of long arrays of snow-capped peaks, crystal lakes, and turbulent rivers with deep gorges, Tibetan monasteries, and picturesque villages, inhabited by simple and friendly ethnic people.

BHUTAN

Nestled in the Himalayas is the idyllic nation of Bhutan - the world's only democratic monarchy. Bhutan cautiously emerged from isolation in the 1970's and has since embraced a policy of strictly controlled tourism and development.

Bhutan is a rare gem. In 2006 approximately only 12,000 tourists were permitted to enter and taste the delights of Bhutan's wonderful Buddhist culture, marvel at her magnificent scenery, trek through a stunning array of mountains and valleys and to view some of the world's rarest flora and fauna in a totally unspoiled environment. Bhutan offers sensational opportunities for Eco-friendly visitors and will continue to refrain from indulging in mass-market tourism, although a small increase in visitor numbers has been approved.

Bhutan has resisted globalization and therefore has protected its strong Buddhist culture and way of life. There is little crime, a stable government and exceptionally friendly people. Whether you are a bird-watcher, trekker, weaver, culture seeker or scenery lover... Bhutan is a must see destination, unlike no other.

The country boasts a glorious mosaic of botanical treasures and with its pristine environment these remain largely untouched and in some cases undiscovered. Bhutan is home to an enormous diversity of flora with over 50 species of rhododendrons alone and over 600 species of orchids. Bhutan is famous for the legendary Blue Poppy which blooms only once and then dies. With few people in the world ever setting eyes on it, a mystique surrounds this beautiful species and it is now the national flower of Bhutan.

PROPOSED ITINERARY

Day1 Kathmandu. Arrive Kathmandu 31 October Upon your arrival at Kathmandu's Tribhuvan International Airport, your driver will meet you and transfer you to your hotel in Bhaktapur. **Transfer to your hotel. (B)**



Day 2 Bhaktapur - Nargakot: 1 November

Bhaktapur meaning the City of Devotees, this place is the home of medieval art and architecture. Lying 14km/9 miles east of Kathmandu City, this place was founded in the 9th century and is shaped like a conch shell. The city is at the height of 5,600ft above sea level. In Bhaktapur you will visit the Durbar Square with its array of temples overlooked by the Palace of 55 Windows built by King Bhupatindra Malla, The Nyatapola Temple. This temple also built by King Bhupatindra Malla, is the best example of the Pagoda style and stands on five terraces on each of which stands a pair of figures, two famous strong men, two elephants, two lions, two griffins and two goddesses. A Bhaktapur city tour takes you to the brick-paved narrow alleys connecting to open squares with several Hindu and Buddhist shrines. You'll be mesmerized by the ancient Newari history, architecture, culture and taste authentic Newari food. Your guide will take you to Bhaktapur Durbar Square, the

oldest Hindu temple Changu Narayan, on the outskirts of this city, and many more sights. **Late afternoon transfer to Nargakot a hill station situated 1 hours' drive from Bhaktapur. (BD)**



Day 3 Nargakot – Bandipur November 2

After breakfast drive you will drive towards Pokhara on the Privity Highway stopping at the UNESCO city of Bandipur which was once a commercial centre along the trade route to Tibet., Bandipur is a beautiful town situated around 1,000 meters on a ridge part way between Kathmandu and Pokhara. It is a fantastic example of traditional Newari culture, and the town itself seems completely untouched by modernization. Arrive for lunch then the afternoon is free to explore this amazing town. Transfer to your hotel. **Overnight Bandipur (BD)**

1 November

Day 4 Bandipur – Pokhara 3- November

Depart Bandipur after breakfast and drive to Pokhara for approximately 3-hour drive. The remainder of the afternoon is free in Pokhara. (B)



Day 5 Pokhara – Lwang Village 4 November

This morning your guide will take you on a boat trip across the lake, and an easy hike 1 hour to the Buddhist Peace Temple. Return to your hotel before driving to the village of Lwang a beautiful scenic hilly village lying in the Kaski district. It is 20-30 km northwest from Pokhara. The village is highly famous for the organic tea gardens. As well as nowadays the place is getting familiar for the Homestay. Lwang is inhabited mainly by Brahmin, Chhetri, Gurung, Blacksmith, Tamang, Newar people. Thus, the visitors will have a great opportunity to experience the culture of people of various races and castes. Visitors are allowed to stay in a small stone roofed houses with clean lanes and surrounding, served with typical Nepali food (dal, rice, curry) and local chicken, alcohol made from local millet, cultural events and shows. Though, Homestay in Lwang can be an extraordinary experience with scene of the Pokhara Valley, tea farm in the surroundings with mountain at backdrop as well as typical mixed cultures and

traditions. **We will leave our main luggage at the hotel in Pokhara and take a small bag with overnight toiletries and change of clothes. (BLD)**



Day 6 Lwang – Chitwan 5 November

Early this morning, we will take a short hike through the tea gardens of Lwang to see a spectacular sunrise over the Himalaya mountains. Returning to our homestay for a traditional Nepalese breakfast. We bid farewell to our hosts and returned to Pokhara to collect our luggage and drive to Chitwan. Approx. 5 hours' drive

The jungle activities in Chitwan National Park include Jeep driving into the Jungle, canoeing, bird watching, jungle walk, bathing the elephants and an indigenous cultural dance show. This national park is full of wildlife and makes for the perfect setting to get in touch with nature. **Overnight Jungle Lodge (BLD)**



Day 7 Chitwan Wildlife Park 6 November

Today will be full of adventure, either riding on the back of an elephant, jeep safari, canoeing or jungle walking. We will see rhino, many species of birds, deer, crocodiles and if you are lucky maybe the odd sloth bear and tiger.

Overnight Lodge (BLD)

Day 8 Chitwan - Kathmandu 7 November

Today, you'll start the day with a short drive to the airport to catch your flight to Kathmandu. On arrival in Kathmandu, we will transfer to our hotel. The afternoon is free to wander the tourist streets of Thamel. Or you may like to visit Kathmandu's UNESCO World Heritage sites like Swoyambhu (Monkey Temple) and Basantapur Durbar. **Transfer to your hotel. (BD)**



Day 9 Kathmandu - Paro 8 November – with Druk Air Bhutan's National Air Carrier.

The green wall of hills known as dooars, or gateways into Bhutan from the plains climb continuously higher as the plane flies north towards the Tibet border. Silver rivers thread the valleys, waterfalls plunge down the forested mountain- side, and to the north, the great snow-capped peaks of the inner Himalayas rise up into the sky. As the aircraft enters the Paro valley, look down and you will see the Paro Dzong overlooking Paro Chu (river) with Ta Dzong, watch tower. On arrival at Paro airport you will be met by your guide and driver who will take you on a sightseeing excursion of Paro. Catch the early flight to Paro, Bhutan. Our guide will welcome you and drive you to Paro town.

Visit the watch tower also known as Ta Dzong where the army used to inspect the valley against the Tibetan invasion. Now the watch tower is converted into the great museum of Bhutan. In the afternoon you will drive to the Haa Valley (2.5 hours) over the Chelela Pass, your highest point of the trip at 3800m. When the weather permits one can view the most scared mountain in the country Mt. Jomolhari (7314m). **Overnight Hotel (BLD)**



Day 10 Haa – Thimpu 9 November

Today you will continue your drive to Thimphu. After lunch visit the Memorial Chorten (temple) built in memory of the late 3rd King. This place now teems with elderly devotees chanting prayers. Visit Changangkha Lhakhang, the oldest temple in the valley offering a beautiful view of the valley. Continue to Takin enclosure, where Bhutan’s national animals are kept. Continue your drive to visit one of the world’s largest sitting Buddha Statue, offering bird eye view of the Thimphu city. Visit the Tashichho Dzong, the fortress, which houses the throne of the king (open after 5pm and on weekends). Evening stroll at leisure vibrant Thimphu Street, which sells anything from red rice, sundried chilly peppers, handcrafts, souvenirs to modern utilities. Overnight: **Thimphu| Altitude: 2300m**
Overnight Hotel (BLD)

Day 11: Thimphu Sightseeing 10 November

Morning visits the lively and colorful Farmers Market (Friday, Saturday, Sunday) where the locals from the surrounding villages come to sell their produce. Visit the traditional Hand Made Paper Mill. Visit the School of Arts and Crafts, where students learn 13 different arts and crafts used predominantly in Bhutan. Visit Folk Heritage Museum, which houses Traditional Bhutanese house with lifestyle. Lunch in the city and visit the National Library, which has a collection of Bhutanese rich

religious text and the contemporary Buddhism books. Drive further up to visit the Dechenphodrang Monastic School where young monks fill the place. Continue to Zilukha Nunnery. After lunch you have two options for some nice hikes. If you prefer a short and easy one could go for Wangditse temple hike. If you prefer a longer hike, choose Cheri Temple Hike. **Overnight: Thimphu (BLD)**



Day 12: Thimphu to Gantey nt the stunning Phobjika Valley 11 November

After breakfast drive towards Punakha valley crossing over **Dochula Pass (3200m.)**. If the weather permits one can enjoy a spectacular breath-taking view of the highest mountain peaks of Bhutan at a site that stretches almost 180 degrees. After lunch continue to **Phobjikha**. En route could stop for a short hike to the ancient **village of Rinchengang** overlooking the ruins of **Wangdi Dzong**. This valley is protected being winter home for the endangered **Black Necked Cranes** migrating to Bhutan every end of Oct to end of Feb. This valley is an outdoor paradise. If you are too tired after the long drive, could relax in the hotel and enjoy the breathtaking view of the valley. **Overnight Hotel: Phobjikha| Altitude: 2900m (BLD)**



Day 13: Phobjikha Crane Festival 12 November

Morning takes a walk from your hotel and meet the school children, who cheerfully walk to the school. After late breakfast drive to the **Gangtey Goempa** temple, the largest monastery in the country belonging to a different sect of Buddhism to witness the most popular Black Necked crane festival where locals from around the valley come to witness the annual festival. It's a colorful festival dedicated to the Black Necked Cranes which is considered very sacred. Many other cultural and religious dances are also performed to commemorate the event.

Evening could go for **Phobjikha Nature trail**, through traditional villages and through the swamp of roosting place for **Black Neck Crane**. It can start after the festival from the hilltop overlooking the valley towards the valley. 2900 m **Overnight Hotel (BLD)**



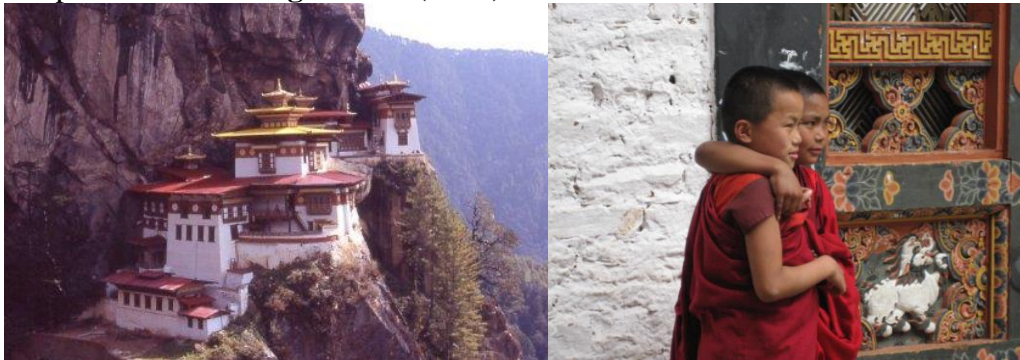
Day 14: Gantey - Punakha 13 November

Departing early retracing our drive to Punakha where we will visit **Punakha Dzong (fortress)**, which houses the most elaborate temple in the country. Visit Chimi Lhakhang on foot the temple of fertility associated with religious art of phallus. **Overnight: Punakha (BLD)**

Day 15: Punakha – Paro 14 November

This morning drive to the old capital of Thimphu crossing over **Dochula Pass (3200m.)**. If the weather permits one can enjoy a spectacular breath-taking view of the highest mountain peaks of Bhutan at a site that stretches almost 180 degrees.

Walk around the newly built **108 temples** and continue driving through the vegetation that changes drastically. En route just before arriving Thimphu for lunch then retracing your steps to Paro **Overnight hotel (BLD)**



Day 16:| Paro Sightseeing 15 November

Today is what you have come to Bhutan to experience, hiking to the Tiger's Nest Monastery. It is a short drive to the start of your 3 hrs uphill hike to Tiger's Nest, the most revered temple in the country that literally hangs on a granite cliff overlooking the Paro valley. Most of the day will go on the hike. On the way back, if you have the energy and time visit the Kichu Lhakhang, one of the oldest temples in Bhutan which marks the beginning of Buddhism in the country. Hot stone bath available at an additional cost. Farewell dinner with your guide.

Overnight: Paro (BLD)

Day 17: Depart to Kathmandu. 16 November After Breakfast depart to the airport for your flight to Kathmandu. You have the choice of connection an evening flight home or staying 1 extra night in Kathmandu at your own expense.

Price Twin Share AUD6650

8 Nights Nepal

Inclusions:

INCLUDES: RETURN FLIGHT KATHMANDU TO BHUTAN

1 Night Bhaktapur, 1 Night Nargakot 1 night Bandipur 1 night Kathmandu. 1-night Pokhara in boutique 3-star hotels
8 breakfasts 6 dinners 3 lunches meals as per itinerary
1-night Lwang Village stay including all meals,
2 Nights Chitwan including all meals, guide and activities.
Experienced English Speaking Nepalese Guide,
Airport arrival and departure,
Internal flight Chitwan – Kathmandu
Ground transport and entries fee into Bhaktapur.
Multi Entry Visa Nepal

8 Nights Bhutan

Inclusions:

1. Accommodation on twin sharing basis in 3-star deluxe standard hotels.
2. Three meals a day
3. English speaking guide
4. Visa arrangement
5. Government royalty and taxes
6. Transportation and sightseeing as per the itinerary.
7. Museum visiting fees.
8. Bottled drinking water 1 bottle daily throughout the trip.
9. Airport Transfers

Not Included:

Gratuities
Hot Stone Bath
Hard and Soft Drinks
Visa for Nepal

