Bhutan & Nepal | HIMALAYAN KINGDOMS HIKING

CULTURAL HIKING ADVENTURE | 13 DAYS

April 1-13, 2019
October 14-26, 2019
October 28-November 9, 2019

TRIP ITINERARY

1.800.941.8010 | www.boundlessjourneys.com
A passion for travel. Simply put, we love to travel, and that infectious spirit is woven into every one of our journeys. Our staff travels the globe searching out hidden-gem inns and lodges, taste testing bistros, trattorias, and noodle stalls, and discovering the trails and plying the waterways of each remarkable destination. When we come home, we separate wheat from chaff, creating memorable adventures that will connect you with the very best qualities of each destination.

Unique, award-winning itineraries. Our flexible, hand-crafted journeys have received accolades from the world’s most revered travel publications. Beginning from our appreciation for the world’s most breathtaking and interesting destinations, we infuse our journeys with the elements of adventure and exploration that stimulate our souls and enliven our minds. Whether you are looking for a challenging physical expedition or a leisurely cultural exploration, Boundless Journeys has exceptional itineraries to match your sense of adventure.

Insider connections. There is simply no substitute for traveling with a knowledgeable insider, and our expert local guides will open doors for you that other travelers miss, like dinner with their extended family in Peru’s Sacred Valley, or meeting an art scholar in Florence. Relationships developed over many years allow you to experience our destinations through a well-connected friend.

Small groups. Although the camaraderie of a group of like-minded travelers often enhances the journey, there can be too much of a good thing! We tread softly, and our average group size is just 8–10 guests, allowing us access to opportunities that would be unthinkable with a larger group.

Flexibility to suit your travel style. We offer both scheduled, small-group departures and custom journeys so that you can choose which works best for you. Not finding exactly what you are looking for? Let us customize a journey to fulfill your travel dreams.

Customer service that goes the extra mile. Having trouble finding flights that work for you? Want to surprise your traveling companion with a bottle of champagne at a tented camp in the Serengeti to celebrate an important milestone? There is no request that is too big—or too small—for our staff to handle. From your first call, we guide you through choosing your trip, provide advice on preparing for your adventure, and hold your hand until you return home.

Multi-year recipient of Travel + Leisure magazine’s “World’s Best Tour Operator”; and recognized by the editors of National Geographic ADVENTURE magazine as one of the Best Adventure Travel Companies on Earth.
Thank you for your interest in this fantastic journey to Bhutan & Nepal. We have hand-crafted this tour from our own experience and hope you fall in love with the area—as we have!

THE INSPIRATION FOR THIS JOURNEY
This active journey combines the highlights of western Bhutan, with a five-day trek through the foothills of the Annapurna Mountains of Nepal. While in Bhutan, we explore this ancient kingdom and discover its stunning landscape and unique culture. We hike through small villages and to monasteries and temples accessible only by foot.

In Nepal, epic mountain scenery, terraced hillsides, beautiful forest, and friendly villagers greet us on our cultural trek. Our route is along traditional trade routes through valleys and passes of the Annapurna region. Our lodge and porter-supported trek is done in style and comfort usually unavailable while trekking in Nepal. For those wishing to conclude their journey with a flight over Mount Everest, this can be arranged (at an additional cost) and is a perfect way to complete your journey to the world’s highest mountains.

HIGHLIGHTS
• Six days exploring temples, monasteries, and villages on foot in Bhutan
• A five-day lodge-supported cultural trek in the Annapurna Mountains of Nepal
• Dramatic scenery with spectacular river valleys, snowcapped sacred mountains, terraced rice fields, and striking architecture
• A spectacular flight across the Himalayan range, passing the world’s tallest peaks, including Mount Everest
TOUR OVERVIEW

THE BASICS
Duration: 13-day trip
Accommodations: 2 nights in deluxe hotels, 6 nights in classic hotels, and 4 nights in trekking lodges
Tour start: Paro, Bhutan
Tour end: Kathmandu, Nepal
Trip rating: Easy
(See page 14 for more details)
Land cost: $5,795 per person
Single Supplement: First single reserved: $295*; additional singles: $795
*Must reserve at least 120 days ahead.
Internal Airfare $750 per person (BKK-PBH/ PBH-KTM; subject to change)
Everest Flight $250 per person

WHAT’S INCLUDED
Just pack your bags – we’ve got you covered! When you’re on a Boundless Journeys adventure, every detail is taken care of for you, so you can relax and truly experience each moment. Put your wallet away, leave your travel books behind, fold up your maps, and BE there. Your Boundless Journeys adventure includes:

- Expert leadership
- All accommodations and meals
- Local wine and beer with included dinners
- All on-tour transportation
- All activities as noted in the itinerary
- Bhutanese visa fees and departure taxes
- All gratuities except for those for your guide and driver, which are at your discretion
- Explorers Club savings on your next scheduled, small-group trip (conditions apply)

International airfare is not included in the price of your trip. Please contact your local travel agency or the airlines directly to make any international travel arrangements. If you would like assistance with booking your flights or other travel plans, please contact Boundless Journeys for a referral to our partners who will best fit your needs. Boundless Journeys will purchase your airline tickets between Bangkok, Bhutan, and Kathmandu for you. The cost of these tickets is $725 (subject to change) and you will be required to pay this amount at the time you reserve your trip.
DAY 1
Arrive at the airport in Paro, Bhutan. Transfer to the capital city of Thimphu to explore some of the city’s many interesting sights.

DAY 2
Hike to the Cheri Gompa Monastery, visit the Choki School of Arts, and learn about Bhutan’s Gross National Happiness concept.

DAY 3
Drive from Thimphu to Punakha. Visit the Chime Lhakang Temple and hear our local guide spin tales of the unorthodox teachings of the legendary Divine Madman.

DAY 4
Hike to the Khamsung Yuley Namgyel Temple, visit the Punakha Dzong, and spend some time at the Nalanda Buddhist Institute and learn about the lives of the young monks who reside there.

DAY 5
Drive from Punakha to Paro. Visit the “twin temples” Kyichu Lhakhang, and possibly the National Museum and Rinpung Dzong, depending upon timing.

DAY 6
Hike up to the iconic Paro Taktsang, also known as Tiger’s Nest Monastery.

DAY 7
Fly from Paro to Pokhara via Kathmandu.

DAY 8
Trek from Pokhara to Lamakhet.

DAY 9
Trek from Lamakhet to Ghandruk.

DAY 10
Trek from Ghandruk to Landruk.

DAY 11
Trek from Landruk to Dhampus.

DAY 12
Trek from Dhampus to Pokhara. Fly from Pokhara to Kathmandu.

DAY 13
Optional scenic Everest flight. Depart Kathmandu or extend your stay in Nepal.
DAY 1: Arrival in Bhutan

Activity Overview: Walking on local paths and dirt roads (please note that walking options may change depending on flight schedules)
Activity Level: Easy
Activity Length: 1-2 hours
Drive time: approximately 1 hour

Our flight into Bhutan provides spectacular views of the country's landscape as we approach the airport in the Paro Valley. The valley is a green bowl surrounded by jagged Himalayan Mountains and forested hillsides, crossed by beautiful rivers and dotted with medieval fortresses. The first thing that we notice as we disembark in Bhutan is the absence of noise and a feeling of peacefulness that is rare in most other Asian cities. The Paro Valley has kept its bucolic nature, and is one of the most scenic valleys in Bhutan. Paro is believed to be one of the first valleys to have received the imprint of Buddhism.

We are transferred to Thimphu, home of the royal family. Before becoming Bhutan’s official national capital in 1961, Thimphu was a simple, rural farming valley. Small and secluded, it is unlike any other world capital. The city is quiet, and may be the only capital in the world without a traffic light.

Our itinerary today is dependent on flight arrival times, and guests may be able to partake in all or some of the following activities:

Our exploration takes us to many of Thimphu’s interesting sights. If time allows, we may visit the National Textile Museum, the Thimphu Dzong (seat of the government), the Heritage Museum, and the Giant Buddha above town, giving us some excellent views of the Thimphu Valley. (Please note that museums and schools are closed on weekends and national holidays)

Dinner this evening will highlight Bhutanese cuisine, either at our hotel or one of Thimphu’s fine restaurants.

DAY 2: Cheri Gompa and Choki School of Arts

Activity Overview: Hike on local paths and hiking trails with 1,300’ elevation gain and loss (highest elevation: 9,186’); additional optional hiking available
Activity Level: Easy to moderate
Activity Length: about 2 hours (3 miles)

This morning a short drive through the countryside surrounding Thimphu brings us to the Jigme Dorji Wildlife Sanctuary, the largest protected area in the country. The area is home to several endangered species, including: the takin, snow leopard, blue sheep, tiger, red panda, and the Himalayan black bear. More than 300 species of birds have been catalogued within the region.

Our walk begins from the small village of Dodena. The trail starts by crossing a covered bridge over the Wang Chhu (river), and from here we climb steadily to Cheri Gompa, a small monastery perched on the hill with a view of the Thimphu Valley. Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal built this monastery in 1620, and this is where the first community of monks in Bhutan was established. The monastery is considered very sacred, as it contains the ashes of Tempi Nima, the father of the first Shabdrung of Bhutan, and beautiful frescoes of Buddhist saints.
After our visit to the monastery, we descend on the same route, keeping our eyes open for the goral (wild goat) that are often spotted on the cliffs nearby. Back at the village of Dodena, we drive to Cabesa, home of the Choki School of Arts (closed on weekends and holidays). The Choki School provides free, skills-related education in the traditional arts and crafts of Bhutan to Bhutanese children who are unable to complete their formal education.

This evening before dinner, we will enjoy a Bhutanese cultural teaching delivered by a local expert. This allows us the opportunity to learn more about Bhutan's unique culture and its remarkable Gross National Happiness concept.

Accommodation: Hotel Druk, Thimphu
Meals: B, L, D

DAY 3: Temple of Divine Madman

Activity Overview: Walk on local paths with 131’ elevation gain (highest elevation: 4,921’)
Activity Level: Easy
Activity Length: 1-2 hours
Drive time: approximately 3 hours*

This morning, after an early breakfast, we say goodbye to Thimphu and transfer to the Punakha Valley, our home for the next two nights. The road to Punakha crosses the Dochula Pass (10,230’), offering a great view of the eastern Himalayan mountains. From the pass, our road descends through magnificent pine and rhododendron forests, and wanders through some of Bhutan’s most picturesque countryside.

On the road to Punakha we stop in a small village where a short walk brings us to Chime Lhakang, a temple dedicated to the Lama Drukpa Kunley. Drukpa Kunley is one of Bhutan’s favorite saints, and is more commonly known as the “Divine Madman.” He traveled throughout Bhutan and Tibet using songs, humor, and outrageous behavior to dramatize his teachings, believing that the stiffness of the clergy and social conventions were keeping people from learning true Buddhism. This site is still believed to hold fertility powers for women wanting to conceive.

Accommodation: Drubchu Resort, Punakha
Meals: B, L, D

DAY 4: Khamsung Yuley Namgyel Temple

Activity Overview: Hike on local paths with 656’ elevation gain (highest elevation: 4,921’)
Activity Level: Easy to moderate
Activity Length: 3-4 hours

Following breakfast and a drive through the Punakha Valley, we begin our hike by first ascending a series of switchbacks to the Khamsung Yuley Namgyel Temple. From this modern temple, we are afforded grand views of the Mo Chu River Valley below. We then descend from the temple and follow a well-worn path down the valley through rice fields and small villages. Along the way we are rewarded with stunning views—the terraced rice paddies providing an exotic backdrop to the river below.

After enjoying a picnic lunch along the river, we continue our walk to the Punakha Dzong. Constructed in 1637, the Punakha Dzong was the second of Bhutan’s dzongs and for many years it served as the seat of the government. Today
A BOUNDLESS MOMENT IN NEPAL:

Red and black printed cushions line the low-backed chairs of our table; oversized painted masks adorn the walls; and the place settings glitter with crystal, colorful fanned napkins, and silver drinking goblets. Then comes the food: tender, momo mutton dumplings, sweet mushroom soup in golden bowls, six different curries, ginger-garlic pickles, buckwheat pancakes and airy semolina pudding. There are 22 courses in all and, as promised, Krishnarpan lives up to its reputation—an ancient Nepalese feast, fit for the modern age.

It is the home to Bhutan's spiritual leader, the Chief Abbot Je Khempo, who resides here with 1,000 monks during the winter months due to Punakha's relatively low altitude by Himalayan standards (4,000'). From this spectacular dzong we can look back to see the Khamsung Yuley Namgyel Temple perched on the hillside far in the distance. A short walk from the dzong takes us back to the road where we meet our driver and return to our hotel.

Following our hike, we have the special opportunity to visit the Nalanda Buddhist Institute, just outside of Punakha. There we meet the resident monks and learn about their lives. Please note that this may take place in the morning, depending on the monastery’s schedule for the day.

Accommodation: Drubchu Resort, Punakha
Meals: B, L, D

DAY 5: Paro Dzong & National Museum

Activity Overview: Walking on dirt roads and local paths
Activity Level: Easy
Activity Length: 1-2 hours
Drive time: approximately 4 hours

This morning we return by road to Paro, catching another glimpse of the mighty Himalayas over the Dochula Pass. Upon our arrival in Paro, we visit Kyichu Lhakhang. Kyichu Lhakhang, meaning “twin temples,” is believed to have been built in 659 AD by King Songtsen of Tibet, and reflects the introduction of Buddhism to Bhutan. The temple is one of 108 that were built throughout the Himalayas in one day in an effort to subdue a mighty ogress; it is still believed to hold her left foot in place.

We then make our way by vehicle to the National Museum (closed on government holidays). The museum’s collection includes ancient artifacts, weapons, antique thangkha (painted or embroidered religious pictures), textiles, and stamps.

Finally, we head (either by foot or vehicle, depending on timing) to the valley’s magnificent Rinpung Dzong. If we are fortunate, we may have the opportunity to explore within the dzong’s mighty walls. However, if the Administrative Body is in session, we must admire from the outside.

Accommodation: Raven’s Nest, Paro
Meals: B, L, D

DAY 6: Taktsang (Tiger’s Nest) Monastery

Activity Overview: Hiking on hiking trails with 1,650’ elevation gain and loss (highest elevation: 10,171’)
Activity Level: Moderate to strenuous
Activity Length: 4-5 hours (4.5 miles)

This morning we enjoy a hike to the famous cliff-side hermitage called Taktsang—“Tiger’s Nest”—a monastic retreat built into a sheer cliff face high above the Paro Valley. Our hike begins on the valley floor and is a steady uphill climb on a wide hiking trail that switchbacks through pine forests, with glimpses of Tiger’s Nest along the way. We pass water-powered prayer wheels and mani stones, as well as a shrine where a high lama was supposedly born—all reminders that this is not just a hike, but a spiritual pilgrimage for many.

As we near the monastery, we stop by a small teahouse for snacks and tea and take in our first up-close view of
Taktsang. From here our hiking trail levels out for a short while, before we begin climbing down steps and cross a bridge, eventually leading us to this most impressive sacred site. Legend has it that the Tibetan Buddhist saint, Padmasambhava, flew across the Himalayas on the back of a tiger and landed here, bringing Buddhism to Bhutan. Entry into the monastery feels like stepping back in time and we have the chance to visit several shrines that comprise the temple complex. During our exploration, our guide brings Tiger’s Nest to life with the tales of Buddhism that make this one of the most famous pilgrimage sites in all of Bhutan.

We return to the valley floor, where we enjoy a trail-side picnic lunch before heading back to our hotel. We have some time this afternoon to unwind and relax after our hike, or you may stroll the Paro market before dinner.

Accommodation: Raven’s Nest, Paro
Meals: B, L, D

DAY 7: Fly from Paro to Pokhara

An early morning departure from Paro brings us to Kathmandu, where we begin the second half of our epic journey. Upon landing in Kathmandu, we are met by our guide and then transferred to the domestic airport for our flight to Pokhara (3,080’), the rural capital of western Nepal. Our evening is spent in comfort at the Temple Tree Resort, whose rooms are filled with ethnic touches evoking the deep cultural heritage of the area. Surrounding the resort are spacious landscaped gardens, a swimming pool, and nearby to Pokhara Lake, stunning views of the Annapurna range.

Accommodation: Temple Tree Resort, Pokhara, Nepal
Meals: B, L, D

DAY 8: Pokhara to Lamakhet

Activity Overview: Hiking on trails with 1,540’ elevation gain and 1,150’ elevation loss (highest elevation: 3,470’).
Activity Level: Moderate
Activity Length: 3-4 hours (4.4 miles)
Drive time: approximately 1 hr

Following a hearty breakfast this morning, we depart with our trekking guide and porters for the starting point of our trek. Today’s hike follows a ridge line in the lower foothills of the Annapurnas, with surrounding views of the Pokhara Valley. Early this afternoon, we descend into the Modi River valley, our home for the night (3,600’). The lodge has magnificent views of the sacred and still unclimbed Fishtail Mountain, or Machhapuchhre, as it is locally known. We enjoy lunch at the lodge, followed by an optional walk to the nearby village of Birethanti. Those who prefer can independently explore the river valley surrounding the lodge.

Accommodation: Sanctuary Lodge, Lamakhet, Nepal
Meals: B, L, D

“Kinley Tshering was the most amazing guide. I have traveled to many places around the globe and been around a lot of guides. Kinley is truly outstanding. His patience, knowledge and good humor made every day special for us. He never tired to explain details to us or find a cup of tea. He is full of life and his love for his country showed greatly.”

– G.M., Baltimore, MA
DAY 9: Lamakhet to Ghandruk

Activity Overview: Hiking on trails with 3,000’ elevation gain (highest elevation: 6,600’).
Activity Level: Moderate to strenuous
Activity Length: 5-6 hours (7 miles)

After breakfast we leave the lodge, walking through outlying farms following the Modi River valley. Soon we begin to ascend out of the valley and up toward the mountains. We take a relaxing pace, stopping for refreshments en route with spectacular views of the surrounding valleys. Our trail passes through small hamlets, terraced rice fields and subtropical forests, giving us glimpses of life in the mountains. We arrive at Himalaya Lodge in Ghandruk (6,600 feet) in time for a late lunch, and have time this afternoon to enjoy the magnificent close-up views of the surrounding mountains.

Accommodation: Himalaya Lodge, Ghandruk
Meals: B, L, D

DAY 10: Ghandruk to Landruk

Activity Overview: Hiking with 3,000’ elevation loss and 1,534’ elevation gain (highest elevation: 6,600’).
Activity Level: Moderate
Activity Length: about 4 hours (4 miles)

After enjoying a relaxing breakfast and the glorious views from our lodge, we start our trek to Landruk. En route, we explore the mountain village of Ghandruk, once a major recruitment centre for the famous Gurkha soldiers. The women of Ghandruk maintain a local industry of weaving traditional Nepalese rugs.

Today’s trek involves a steep descent to the river valley, followed by a steep ascent up the other side of the valley, primarily hiking on stone steps. After leaving the village of Ghandruk, the trail descends to the banks of the Modi River. Here, you’ll be at the base of the cliffs where the famed honey hunters of Nepal climb on ropes to collect the honey from wild honeybees. You’ll then cross a suspension bridge to the opposite banks of the Modi, from where it will take us about an hour to trek up a switchback trail to reach the village of Landruk. Landruk affords more glorious views of the Annapurna range. We will arrive in time for lunch.

Following lunch, you may choose to explore Landruk before settling into to La Bee Lodge and enjoying a well-deserved rest.

Accommodation: La Bee Lodge, Landruk, Nepal
Meals: B, L, D

DAY 11: Landruk to Dhampus

Activity Overview: Hiking with 1,065’ elevation gain and 1,195’ elevation loss (highest elevation: 6,889’).
Activity Level: Moderate
Activity Length: 5-6 hours (7.5 miles)

This morning our trail enters a sub-tropical forest full of magnificent flora, including tree orchids, rhododendrons and magnolias. After approximately an hour, we arrive at the village of Tolka. We then ascend to a ridge, arriving at the village of Pothana, where Tibetan traders live and sell their souvenirs. Here we will stop for lunch before continuing
the rest of the way to Basanta Lodge, our home for tonight. Later this afternoon, we have the option to hike to the old village of Dhampus (4,920’), or to remain at the lodge, where sweeping views of the entire Annapurna Range are ours to enjoy.

Accommodation: Basanta Lodge, Dhampus, Nepal
Meals: B, L, D

**DAY 12: Dhampus to Pokhara**

**Activity Overview:** Hiking on hiking trails with 1,950’ elevation loss (highest elevation: 4,920’).

**Activity Level:** Moderate

**Activity Length:** about 2 hours (1.6 miles)

**Drive time:** approximately 1 hr

The trekking portion of our journey ends this morning, as we depart along the ridge, descending through wooded hillsides and terraced farmland to the valley floor. It is here that we meet our vehicle for the drive to Pokhara, and our flight to Kathmandu.

Upon arriving in Kathmandu, we are transferred to the five-star Dwarika’s Heritage Hotel. This afternoon we have the option to venture to Patan Durbar Square, Boundanath Stuppa or Pashupatinath temple, each significant sites for Buddhists and Hindus residing in the city. We will conclude our day enjoying a celebratory dinner at a favorite restaurant in Thamel or at one of Dwarika’s world-renowned restaurants, bidding a final farewell to Nepal.

Accommodation: Dwarika’s, Kathmandu, Nepal
Meals: B, L, D

**DAY 13: Departure from Kathmandu**

**Mt. Everest Flight** (optional, see below).

After an early morning breakfast, we have the opportunity to experience one of the most spectacular mountain flights in the world. An optional flight (not included in cost) departs Kathmandu and flies east along the Himalayas, giving us eye-level views of the highest peaks on earth, including Mount Everest. After the flight, we return to the hotel where we say goodbye before continuing to the airport for our homeward journey.

Meals: B

**MOUNT EVEREST FLIGHT**

You may have the opportunity to see some mountain views on your flight from Bhutan to Nepal, but should you be interested in seeing scenic mountain views from a closer distance, you can opt to reserve your spot on a scenic mountain flight.

This optional, scenic flight lasts approximately one hour, and the cost is $250 per person. This flight may be scheduled on the morning of the last day before your departing international flight, if time allows. International departure flights should be scheduled **no earlier than 2:00 p.m.** to allow enough time for the mountain flight. Alternatively, this flight can be arranged on post-tour days if you are spending additional time in Kathmandu after the tour. Please keep in mind that your scenic Everest flight is dependent upon the weather and runs the chance of being cancelled due to inclement weather.

Please contact Kristen Bernarsky, the destination manager for this trip by email: kristen@boundlessjourneys.com or by phone: 800-941-8010 should you be interested in arranging a scenic Mount Everest flight.

*Driving time is estimated without stops. The total transfer time may be longer when taking rest stops, road construction or other unforeseen delays into account.*

**PLEASE NOTE:** This is a typical itinerary, and actual activities may vary to take advantage of weather conditions, local events and to allow serendipity to play a hand in your experience. Accommodations are as outlined in the itinerary, although we reserve the right to change these should the need arise. See our booking terms and conditions for more information about our change policy.
ACCOMMODATIONS

This itinerary includes a combination of the standard and deluxe hotel options available in Bhutan. Although the hotels in Bhutan cannot be compared to international standards, they are comfortable and offer all necessary facilities. We believe that any inconveniences due to these modest accommodations are far outweighed by the unforgettable experience of visiting Bhutan.

We stay at deluxe hotels in Kathmandu and Pokhara and during the trekking portion of our trip we are in mountain lodges, which are the very best accommodations on the Annapurna circuit. The lodges are simple and rustic, but fit well with the environment. They have private bathrooms, two twin beds in each room (which can be pushed together upon request), and electricity.

If you prefer to stay in luxury hotels, please contact us to discuss a private journey.

**NIGHTS 1, 2**
Hotel Druk
Thimphu, Bhutan
Tel 011-975-2-32296
drukhotel@druknet.bt

**NIGHTS 3, 4**
Drubchu Resort
Punakha, Bhutan
Tel: 011-975-02-376237/38
drubchhu@gmail.com
www.drubchhu.com

**NIGHTS 5, 6**
Raven’s Nest
Paro, Bhutan
Tel 011-975-8-270244/45/46/47
ravensnestbt@gmail.com

**NIGHT 7**
Temple Tree Resort
Pokhara, Nepal
Tel: 011-977-61-465 819 | info@templetree.com
www.templetreenepal.com

**NIGHT 8**
Sanctuary Lodge (3600’)
Lamakhet, Nepal; Annapurna Trekking Route
Its remote location next to a mountain river provides tranquility. The rooms are simple, but with private baths and feature touches of local style.
Confirming hotels: Due to the unique tourism policy in Bhutan, we are unable to confirm which hotels we will be using until four weeks prior to departure. The listed accommodations will most likely be what we can expect, but may alter due to availability.
TRIP RATING
Boundless Journeys’ trips are designed for energetic and flexible individuals who like to be active and have a spirit of adventure and a positive attitude. Himalayan Kingdoms Hiking is rated 3, moderate, on a scale of 1-5 (with 5 being the most strenuous). The walks and hikes for the first part of this trip are easy to moderate day hikes, generally from 2-5 hours in length with minimal vehicle support. During the Nepal trekking portion of the trip (days 8-12), hikes are from 3-6 hours in length with no vehicle support. Elevation gains and losses vary from approximately 500'-3,000' in one day. A few days involve long drives on narrow, bumpy, winding roads.

PREPARING FOR THIS TRIP
It is very important that you realistically assess your physical condition with regard to the demands of this trip. The more well-prepared you are for the activities, the more you will enjoy yourself. As a general guideline, we suggest that you engage in easy to moderate aerobic activities (such as walking, hiking, jogging, or cycling) for at least 30-45 minutes several times a week for 4-6 weeks before the trip. If you live in a flat area, try to incorporate some stairs into your workout, or use a treadmill with varying incline capability (consult your doctor before undertaking any new fitness program). Please contact us if you have any doubts regarding your physical match with this tour.

OUR TREK IN NEPAL
Our trekking route is moderate and we follow a leisurely pace. The route in the foothills of the Annapurnas is carefully planned to take advantage of amazing mountain scenery and charming lodges. Each morning after breakfast we set out at about 8:30 a.m., stopping mid-morning for tea, and then continuing on until our midday stop for lunch. The trails are generally in good condition and many are made from inlaid stones, including steep steps at times. Time spent on the trail will average 3-6 hours per day, with plenty of time to stop along the way. Porters will carry our luggage, and all you need to carry is a daypack with extra layers, your camera, water, and lunch (when having a picnic lunch).

THE ALTITUDE
BHUTAN
Our trip begins in Thimphu, which is situated at 7,500’, in the foothills of the Himalayas. After our first two nights, we move to the Punakha Valley, which offers a relatively low elevation of 4,300’. Our third hotel in Paro is at approximately 7,300’, and our walks and hikes in Bhutan will take place at elevations from 4,300’ to approximately 10,000’. Our drive over Dochu La pass will take us to our highest elevation at 10,230’. There is time to move at a comfortable pace, allowing ourselves to adjust to the mountain air. Keeping well-hydrated, avoiding excessive alcohol, eating frequent, light meals, and getting plenty of rest will help with any effects of altitude that you may feel.

NEPAL
In spite of being among the highest peaks in the world, we will not be trekking at a high elevation, and the elevations you will experience on this trip are not extreme. Kathmandu is at 4,500’, Pokhara about 3,080’, and during the trek elevations will range from 3,000’ to 6,600’.

WEATHER
The mountainous areas of Bhutan and Nepal have pronounced rainy and dry seasons. The driest weather and
The clearest skies are in the spring and fall. The planting and ploughing time of year is March through May and flowers are in bloom during this time. The harvest season is October through November. The months of December through February are clear and cool (can be below freezing at night) and it is the shoulder season, so you will encounter fewer visitors. June through August is the monsoon season and it is generally not recommended to travel to Bhutan at this time of the year.

WHEN TO RESERVE

It is important to reserve your trip early, as flights to and from Bhutan are limited. The Bhutanese national airline will only accept reservations with full payment of the ticket. Therefore we are unable to hold group seats in advance of reservations. Flights can only be confirmed upon receipt of your deposit, as well as the payment of $725 (subject to change) for these flights. Please contact our office with any questions regarding these policies.

DEVELOPMENT IN BHUTAN

Although visiting Bhutan, in many ways, is like stepping back in time and has been a longtime favorite of Boundless Journeys’ travelers for this reason, it is important to understand that this evolving society is also eager to keep pace in the modern world. While the government is approaching the development of their country with a sensitivity towards preserving the environment and culture, you can still expect to encounter some of the less positive signs of modernization. Some examples include: road construction projects that may hinder driving or cause noise and dust; litter in developed areas; begging; packs of free-roaming street dogs. We ask you to visit Bhutan with an open mind and leave any rigid expectations about the pristine nature of the country behind. It is important to embrace what you see and experience without judgment and recognize that Bhutan, just as any country, is struggling to be a part of this complex and rapidly changing world.

WHEN TO GO

Bhutan and Nepal are generally delightful for hiking in the spring and fall. The driest weather and clearest skies are typically in October and November and it is the harvest season. During March through May, beautiful flowers are in bloom and it is the planting and ploughing time of year. The months of December through February are clear and cool (can be below freezing at night) and it is the shoulder season, so you will encounter fewer visitors. June through August is the monsoon season and it is generally not recommended to travel to Bhutan at this time of the year.

AVERAGE TEMPERATURE °F (HIGH/LOW)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>APR</th>
<th>OCT</th>
<th>NOV</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thimphu*</td>
<td>68/45</td>
<td>71/50</td>
<td>64/41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paro</td>
<td>64/40</td>
<td>66/45</td>
<td>57/34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punakha**</td>
<td>76/53</td>
<td>82/66</td>
<td>72/51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pokhara***</td>
<td>78/68</td>
<td>78/62</td>
<td>69/49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kathmandu</td>
<td>77/57</td>
<td>74/59</td>
<td>68/49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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*highest elevation  ** lowest elevation  
*** Expect temperatures to drop by 5°-20° as you ascend into the mountains

Please note: We have found that most real time weather websites and smart phone apps do not reflect accurate temperatures for Bhutan. For the most reliable information, we recommend visiting www.weatherbase.com.

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We are confident that with this attitude, the Bhutan you experience will be a fascinating and memorable place.

ROAD CONDITIONS IN BHUTAN
Due to the ongoing road-widening project taking place on the national highway from Thimphu to Samdrubjongkhar, you can expect some delays and rough roads especially for those traveling towards central and eastern Bhutan. If you are prone to motion sickness, please come prepared with medication and request to sit towards the front of the vehicle.

TRAVELER’S RESPONSIBILITY
Trip participants have certain responsibilities to both Boundless Journeys and your fellow travelers. This includes understanding the conditions described in the trip itinerary and making sure it is appropriate for your interests and abilities, based on a review of the trip ratings, consultation with Boundless Journeys’ staff, and perhaps your doctor. In addition, trip participants are responsible for preparing for a trip by undertaking the proper fitness training. At the guide’s discretion, a participant may be asked to leave the trip if the guide feels that the person’s further participation may be detrimental to the individual or to other trip participants. If you have any questions about the difficulty level of the trip you have chosen, please contact Boundless Journeys to speak with one of our Destination Managers.

SMALL GROUP TRAVEL
Traveling with a small group affords us the opportunity to seek out the most remote and exotic destinations on the planet. Often we are exploring these locales with just 6-12 guests. The nature of active group travel is such that not all participants have the same ability level or interests. Traveling at a pace that is comfortable for the entire group, with a spirit of flexibility and adventure, are all part of this shared experience.

FOOD & WATER
The general rule for food when traveling to developing countries is “wash it, cook it, peel it, or forget it.” The well-run hotels where we stay and the restaurants where we eat prepare foods in a sanitary manner, using distilled water to wash vegetables, and iodine to kill any bacteria. You should drink bottled water, and avoid ice cubes and frozen drinks if you are unsure of the water used for making the ice. Bottled water is provided by hotels for use when brushing your teeth.

DRINKS WITH MEALS
At Boundless Journeys we believe group dinners are a time to celebrate our day, while enjoying the best of local cuisine, and good company. In keeping with this spirit, we typically include local beer and wine with group dinners. If you prefer premium wine, or liquor, please feel free to order what you like, and you may settle your tab at the end of the meal.

DRINKING WATER
We provide purified or bottled water on all trips; however, in an effort to reduce waste, we strongly encourage you to bring a water bottle to refill where safe to do so. This will be the case in much of Europe, as well as a few other destinations, where tap water is safe to drink (please review Immunizations & Health Concerns for more information). In parts of the world where water must be purified, bottled water may be our only option. Here, we do our best to provide purified water from larger containers to refill your bottles, rather than using many small single-use bottles throughout your trip. This is just one small way we strive to travel more responsibly and we appreciate your efforts in helping us to protect the extraordinary places we visit.

Boundless Journeys has taken the Travelers Against Plastic company pledge to promote sustainable travel and encourage travelers to avoid buying bottled water when they travel. You can take the pledge, too, and learn more about TAP’s efforts at www.travelersagainstplastic.org.

TRANSPORTATION
All on-tour transportation is provided in private, air-conditioned, passenger vans.
With a Boundless Journeys guide, your experience is that of friend and local adventurer. We believe strongly in working with local guides, experts in the areas to which we travel, and they hold the keys to unlocking the hidden delights of your chosen destination. Although you will never know they are at work—the mark of a truly great leader—our guides make magical things happen and add a dimension to your trip that you could not experience on your own. Over the years we have forged bonds with some of the best guides in the world, and we typically work with a small team of guides in each region. You will be informed of the guide for your trip one month prior to your departure.

Some of our guides in Bhutan:

**DAWA TASHI**
Dawa has led a variety of Boundless Journeys tours, from treks in the mountains to festival celebrations in the valleys. His local knowledge and amicable personality make him a real treasure to have on the trail. Whether hiking at high altitude or exploring local towns in the lowlands, Dawa ensures that our guests come away with an outstanding experience, providing them with a deep appreciation of his country and culture.

**KINLEY TSHERING**
Kinley (or Kelly, as he is known among his Bhutanese coworkers) joined our local staff of guides after completing extensive training in 2006, and has led many tours for Boundless Journeys, becoming a favorite among our guests. Very friendly and down to earth, Kinley is extremely knowledgeable and always determined to make your trip special.
Our featured guide in Nepal:

**MADHAV LAMA**

Madhav’s family and forefathers are from the hills surrounding the Kathmandu Valley. After completing his schooling, he began leading treks and has since worked his way up to guiding in the Annapurna region. Madhav has traveled extensively around his beloved country and enjoys sharing his knowledge with guests. His friendly attitude, attention to organization, prioritization of safety, and wealth of local information make him not only a spectacular Tour Leader but a great traveling companion as well.

What other guests have said about our guides in Bhutan & Nepal:

“It is truly impossible for me to express in words my gratitude and appreciation for the professionalism, dedication, and hard work of your team in Bhutan. Dawa was so accommodating and flexible throughout the entire tour. He certainly went out of his way to make sure the experience in Bhutan was both memorable and enjoyable for everyone in the group.”
– S.G., East Rochester, NY

“I really had a great time! Our guides Sangay and Madhav were amazing and made the trip unforgettable. By the end of the trip I stopped thinking of them as guides and considered them friends. I was very impressed with their knowledge, professionalism, friendliness, and generosity.”
– S.I., Harsens Island, MI
TRIP EXTENSIONS

There are several options for extending your trip in Asia and we would love to have you join us! The following trip extension serves as a great addition to a journey to Bhutan and Nepal. Please contact our home office for more details, or if you wish to reserve:

CAMBODIA: TEMPLES OF ANGKOR

Highlights:
• UNESCO World Heritage Site of Angkor Wat
• Bustling streets and markets of Siem Reap
• Boat cruise exploration of the iconic stilt villages
• Visit an artisans cooperative or silk farm

Duration: 4-day trip
Tour start: Siem Reap, Cambodia
Tour end: Siem Reap, Cambodia
Accommodations: 3 nights in a deluxe hotel
Trip rating: 1 2 3 4 5
   Easy . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . Strenuous
Land cost: $1,495 per person
Single Supplement: $365

WHAT'S INCLUDED

• Expert leadership
• All accommodations
• All meals
• All on-tour transportation
• All activities noted in the itinerary
• All gratuities except for those for your guide and driver, which are at your discretion

International airfare is not included in the price of your trip. Please contact your local travel agency or the airlines directly to make any arrangements you may need to and from Bangkok. If you would like assistance with booking your flights or other travel plans, please contact Boundless Journeys directly at (800) 941-8010 for a referral to our partners who will best fulfill your needs.
TO MAKE A RESERVATION
You can call Boundless Journeys at 800-941-8010, request a reservation online, or contact your travel agent. We will confirm your spot with a deposit of $500 per person and the payment of internal airfare, payable by check or credit card. The balance for your trip is due 90 days prior to departure.

ONCE YOU RESERVE
As soon as you confirm your adventure, we will provide you with an extensive, detailed trip planner that includes arrival and departure instructions, a complete packing list, regional information, required documents, a reading list, and other details.

TRIP CANCELLATION INSURANCE
In addition to your detailed trip planner, we will email you a quote for Travel Guard trip insurance. Please let us know if you would like us to purchase a policy on your behalf. Boundless Journeys strongly recommends purchasing travel insurance.

CANCELLATION & REFUND POLICY
If it becomes necessary to cancel your trip, the following schedule applies to your land cost and is determined by the day that we receive written notification:

• >90 days prior to the trip will be charged $100.
• 90-61 days prior to the start of the trip will be charged 25% of the trip price.
• 60-46 days prior to the start of the trip will be charged 50% of the trip price.
• <45 days prior to the start of the trip will be charged 100% of the trip price.

QUESTIONS? WHICH TRIP IS RIGHT FOR YOU?
Adventure travel may involve exotic destinations, unusual levels of physical exertion, and activities that may be new to you. If you have any questions about the level of comfort, difficulty, or activities included on your trip, please call Boundless Journeys at 800-941-8010, or email us at info@boundlessjourneys.com. Our travel experts look forward to helping you select the perfect adventure.

VISIT US ONLINE
www.boundlessjourneys.com for:
• additional departures
• special promotions
• detailed itineraries
• inspiring photography
• guide bios

LOOKING FOR MORE CULTURE?
Check out . .
• JAPAN: Walking the Nakasendo Trail
• VIETNAM: Cultural Explorer

PREFER A PRIVATE TRIP?
Ask about our Bhutan Custom Tours.
Please visit us online to learn about custom tour options to Bhutan.
RESPONSIBLE TRAVEL
At Boundless Journeys we are committed to exploring the world in a responsible way and continually seek ways to tread lightly across the unique landscapes and diverse cultures on this planet. Here are just some of the ways we aim to travel responsibly:

MAKING CONNECTIONS
On some of our trips, our guests have the opportunity to visit organizations working to protect the environment and improve the livelihoods of local communities. Whether it is bathing elephants at a conservation center in Myanmar, or enjoying a farm-fresh meal at a family-owned organic farm in Costa Rica, our guests form meaningful connections with the people and places they visit.

GOING LOCAL
Whenever possible, we use small, locally operated hotels that have sound environmental practices; groups dine at restaurants that feature fresh and authentic regional cuisine; we choose partners that strive for the highest standard of responsible practices; and we employ local guides and support local economies.

CONSERVING WILD PLACES
On many of our trips, we explore stunning natural landscapes where conservation is of the utmost importance. As visitors, we not only tread lightly, but actively contribute to the conservation of parks and protected areas.

LOOKING FOR INSPIRATION?
Here are just a few examples - one more involved, and one quite simple - of how our travelers give back to the places they have explored with us:

• The Botswana School Project was created in 2012 by Boundless Journeys guests who saw that there was a need for books, supplies, and computers in schools they visited in northern Botswana.
• A Bhutan guest donated baby outfits to families she met on mountain trails and in rural communities and schools.
• Two sisters who traveled to Peru donated school supply kits to a local school we visit on our Sacred Valley & Machu Picchu tour.

Learn more:
www.boundlessjourneys.com/responsible-travel/

PROUD MEMBERS
Boundless Journeys is proud to support the following organizations and the important work that they do: