

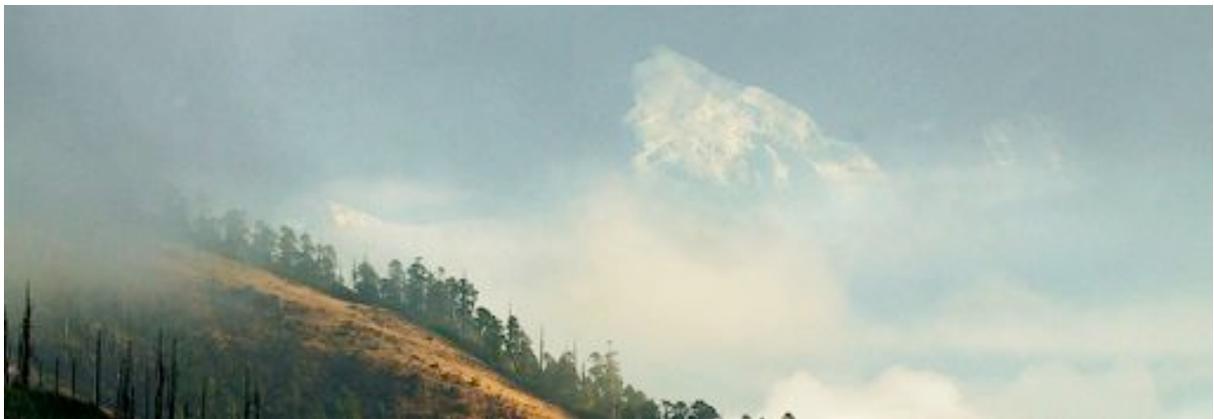
JAN Treks & Travels

Journeys into Adventure and Nature

West-Bhutan Walking Tour – 11 days

Highlights of W-Bhutan with day walks

Tour JTT-BW01: Delhi/Guwahati - Paro - Haa - Thimphu - Punakha – Paro/
Phuentsoling



Walking is the best way to discover natural areas and to see truly authentic villages. On this tour we enjoy the comfort of jeep travel, visiting the beautiful *dzongs* and tempels of western Bhutan and staying in good hotels. But every day we leave the tarmac for a short or long walk through lush green forests and picturesque time-warp villages. Anyone with a reasonable fitness can participate.

Day 1: Delhi or Guwahati – Paro

On the clear day, Druk Air the flight to Bhutan provides the wonderful view Himalayan scenery. On a clear day, especially when flying in from Delhi, the Nepali and Sikkimese parts of the Himalayan Range – with giants like Mt. Everest. Lhotse and Kangchenjunga – loom imposingly at the horizon. On arrival at Paro Airport (2250m), immigration and customs formalities and then our representative will meet you outside the Airport.

First, we visit the National Museum. The collection includes ancient Bhutanese art and artifacts, weapons and countries, as well as exquisite postage stamps. Then we drive down to Rinpung Dzong situated at a commanding height overlooking Paro Valley. This Dzong is symbolic as the religious & secular center of all affairs of the Paro district.

Overnight at Paro.

Day 2: Paro – Taktsang Hike

After a short drive up till the road end we hike to the famous Taktsang Gumpa. This monastery, also known as Tiger's Nest, clings spectacularly to a high rock face. In the afternoon drive up the valley to Drukgyel Dzong, built in 1646 by



Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal to commemorate his victory over Tibetan invaders. We may also have time to visit the 7th century Kyichu Lhakhang, one of the oldest monasteries of the kingdom, and Drugyen Dzong, which was built to commemorate the victory over Tibetan invaders. Overnight at the hotel in Paro.

Day 3: Paro – Haa

First, we drive halfway up the Chele La (3988m), the highest motorable road in Bhutan. From the road we hike to Kila Goenpa, a nunnery monastery about an half an hour climb up and from there we continue hiking for about an hour in a gradual ascent towards the Chele La. The pass itself is marked by a multitude of prayer flags. We descend down to Haa valley and visit two temples, Lhakhang Karpo and Nagpo. Overnight at the hotel in Haa.

Day 4: Haa – Thimphu

Drive to Thimphu, Bhutan's capital, through the villages of Haa district to Chuzom ('confluence'). On arrival we visit Tashichho Dzong, ('the fortress of the glorious religion'), the largest dzong of Bhutan which houses His Majesty's throne room and office for the cabinet secretariat, and the central monk body. Overnight at Hotel in Thimphu.

Day 5: Thimphu Halt

Local sightseeing in Thimphu. Visit as time permits: the National Chorten (built as a memorial to Bhutan's Third King and as a monument to world peace); Changangkha Lhakhang which date back to 12th century. The Takin Reserve, (the National animal of Bhutan). Dupthob Goemba, where female practice Buddhism. The institute for Zorig Chusum, where students learn the 13 traditional arts and crafts of Bhutan; the National Institute of Traditional Medicine (only the museum) where herbal medicines are made up and dispensed and traditional medicine practitioners are trained; Folk Heritage Museum, dedicated to connecting people to the Bhutanese rural past through exhibits of rural life; the National Library, which houses an extensive collection of Buddhist

literature including many ancient Buddhist texts in Block-Printed format. In the afternoon visit to a traditional paper making factory and the National Weaving Centre.

Day 6: Thimphu - Phobjika

Drive to Punakha via Dochula Pass (3120m), stopping briefly here to take the view and admire the 108 Chortens or Druk Wangyel Chorten which was initiated by Her Royal Queen Mother Ashi dorji wangmo Wangchuck to honour of 4th Druk Gyalpo and his people for the victory from the war in southern Bhutan in 2003 and well being of all the sentient beings and Mani wall and prayer flags which decorate the pass. If the weather is clear the following peaks can be seen from this pass (left to right):

Masangang (7158m or 23,484 feet), Tshedengang (6960m or 22,835 feet), Terigang (7060m or 23,163 feet), Jejegangphugang (7158m or 23,484 feet), Kahngphugang (7170m or 23,524 feet), Zongaphugang (7060m or 23,163 feet), Table Mountain that dominates the isolated region of Lunana and finally, Gdagkar Puensum the highest peak in Bhutan at 7497m or 24,596 feet.

From the pass we will make a 45 minutes walk along the old trail – now only being



used by shepherds and their animals - down through rhododendron forest to Tebesa, a little hamlet on the road. Apart from the blossoming of the rhododendrons in the spring time, this area is very rich in birds. After we meet the cars again, we'll continue our journey to Phobjika, via Wangdue Phrodang.

Overnight at hotel in Phobjika (3000m).

Day 7: Phobjikha – Halt

Phobjikha is set in a beautiful broad valley. It has a lovely old monastery and quaint farmhouses but it is most famous for its black-necked cranes. The cranes breed high on the Tibetan Plateau but in order to avoid the harsh winters there they migrate to here in order to avail of the relatively soft climate.

We drive down to the school ground and hike up to the Gangtey monastery which is now controlled by the government. It is the only Nyingmapa monastery in western Bhutan and the biggest Nyingmapa monastery in Bhutan. It is a 4 Km hike through the marshy dwarf bamboo and blue pines which are also decorated by long 'old man beard' hanging from the trees. After seeing the monastery we visit the Crane Information Centre, run by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. Overnight at the hotel in Phobjikha.

Day 8: Phobjikha – Punakha

After an early breakfast we set out for a 4 hours walk. We'll climb the mountains north of Phobjikha through lush forest rich in birds to the Shashi La (3200m). If we're lucky, we can see the famous Himalayan Monal pheasant. After reaching a pass, where we can enjoy good views of the Himalayas (Jhomolhari, Jichu Drake and Tserim Gang) if the weather cooperates, we descend to the main road. There, the jeeps will pick us up to continue our journey to Wandue, where we will visit the impressive dzong.



If the weather is not that good we drive directly to Wangdue via the Lawa La. After visiting the dzong which is also the district administration for Wangdue District, and having lunch we make a short hike to the Rinchengang village, where the houses have a very unusual clustered building style. The villagers are descendants of Indian craftsmen who constructed Wangdue Dzong in the 17th century. After doing a very good job they were

given land here by the local magistrate.
Dinner and overnight at hotel in Punakha.

Day 9: Punakha – Halt



After breakfast we visit Punakha Dzong, the winter residence for the Chief Abbot, the head of the Monastic Body and the old capital of Bhutan. After this we drive a few Km and then hike to Khamsum Namgyel Chorten. This stupa was built by the Queen mother of the 5th King of Bhutan.

After Khamsum we walk to Punakha through Yebasa village to Sonagasa

where the car will be waiting.

After lunch visit to the newly built temple above hotel Zangdopelri.

Dinner and overnight at hotel.

Day 10: Punakha – Thimpu

In the morning, we hike to Chhimi lhakhang, the fertility temple which date back to 15th century. Couples without children, miscarriage, and early death of the children get here today to get the fertility blessings.

After lunch we drive to Thimphu, on the way stopping at Dochu La. After a short tea/coffee and toilet break we hike up for about 1,5 hours to the Lungchotse Lhakang, situated at 3350 m altitude and commanding an even better view of the Himalayas. We hike back or continue descending about an hour and a half to the end of Thimphu valley.

After reaching Thimphu, there might be some free time to explore the city.

Dinner and overnight at hotel.

Day 11: Thimpu - Paro / Phuentsoling

After breakfast we drive to Paro for boarding the flight to New Delhi/Bangkok or Guwahati.

Or: we drive down to Phuentsoling on the border with India. In the afternoon, visit Zangtopelri temple in the town. Overnight at the hotel.



(Day 12: Exit to India)

In case you exit through Phuentsoling you will enter India from there on this day. The itinerary becomes 1 day longer (11 nights).

Price: 250 USD per day (Jan & Febr. 200 USD), all-inclusive. USD 40 surcharge per day for individual travelers, USD 30 for parties of two.

When exiting through Phuentsoling add USD 250/200 for high/low season.

Price includes all accommodation (twin sharing), full board, all transport, English speaking Bhutanese guide throughout.

Not included: flight to/from Paro (Bhutan), land transport from Phuentsoling to next Indian destination. Please ask for quotation for additional services.

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