

Luxury Bhutan Private Tour

Each private luxury tour is custom to the wishes of each client. This itinerary is a sample. Our Sister Company, TRAVNET, may provide assistance with mileage points conversion. Do not hesitate to call Randy to create your custom tour.

Overview

In terms of its natural beauty and untouched Buddhist-based culture, Bhutan is incomparable to any other land we have ever visited! The approximate size of Switzerland, with a population the size of Fort Worth, Texas (750,000), Bhutan enjoys a pollution-free, idyllic environment, in contrast to its south Asian neighbors. Bhutan is somewhat similar to Botswana in that it seeks high-value, low-impact, and high-end tourism (rest assured you will see no big tour groups or backpackers here!). Similar to Tibet and perhaps Burma, Buddhist culture is all-pervasive here, with brightly-colored prayer flags and golden-rooted monasteries sprinkled throughout the country (in Bhutan's case the tantric form of Mahayana Buddhism). We feel traveling through the narrow, winding roads and hiking through the lush, green valleys of Bhutan truly evokes the spirit of Shangri-la, as depicted by James Hilton's *Lost Horizon*.

Though we have enjoyed our stays at AMAN's "Amankora Circuit" in Bhutan (consisting of five luxury lodges: Thimphu, Punakha, Gangtey, Bumthang, and Paro), we also very much enjoyed the newly-opened Six Senses properties and COMO Uma's two properties in Paro and Punakha. In terms of heartfelt, Bhutanese hospitality, it is no exaggeration to say that the three Six Senses properties we recently stayed at (Thimphu, Punakha, and Paro) were among the highest level of service we have experienced anywhere in the world!

Best Travel Time: [Fall](#) [Winter](#)

BHUTAN

Temperature Range

Highs: High 80's

Lows: High 50's

Area

38,364 SQ KM

14,812 SQ MILES

Population:

807,610

Language:

Dzongkha

Capital:

Thimphu

Currency:

Bhutanese Ngultrum

DAY 1

Fly to Delhi

Through our sister company, premium air provider TRAVNET, we may assist with your international airfare, as well as with mileage points conversion.

DAY 2

Arrive Delhi

Upon arrival in Delhi, you will be assisted to the historic, 5-star Imperial New Delhi for your forced overnight stay. If you are short on time, we suggest a stay at The Oberoi, Gurgaon Airport Hotel to be closer to the airport.

The Imperial New Delhi

Built in 1931 and designed with a compelling mix of Victorian and Art Deco aesthetics, the 5-star Imperial is truly one of our favorite hotels in the world. Based on the hospitality culture of both the Mughals and the British, you feel a spirit of the British Raj while staying here. With the largest collection of colonial and post-colonial art and artifacts of any hotel in India, wandering the halls of the Imperial is

always fascinating. Each of the 190 rooms and 43 suites is lavishly decorated and have nice marble baths. Amenities here include eight different dining options, a spa, salon, gym, health and racquet club, and a swimming pool.

The Oberoi, Gurgaon Airport Hotel

Located just a few minutes from Dehli Airport, The Oberoi, Gurgaon, is the best 5-star airport hotel for your overnight stay. With its contemporary design and spacious rooms and suites with views, 24-hour room service, and nice spa, it is perfect for a good night's rest before connecting to Paro the next day. We especially loved our dinner on the floating deck and the Oberoi massage we had here - very luxurious!

Accommodations: The Imperial New Delhi or The Oberoi, Gurgaon Airport Hotel

DAY 3

Fly Delhi/Paro + Private Transfer to Thimphu + Afternoon Thimphu Private Tour

Following breakfast, you will be privately transferred to the Delhi International Airport for your flight to Paro. Upon arrival in Paro, you will be privately transferred to the Amankora or Six Senses Thimphu. In the afternoon, you will be met by your private guide for a half-day of touring. Visits may include, the Tashichho Dzong, once home to the National Assembly and now home to the secretariat; the throne room; and the offices of the king, the ministries of home affairs, and finance. You may continue to the Great Buddha Dordenma, commanding the entry to Thimphu Valley. Erected to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the fourth King Jigme Singye Wangchuck, inside the 165-foot Buddha there are 125,000 miniature Buddha statues embedded. This is a perfect vantage point to enjoy the sunset.

Amankora Thimphu

Situated in a blue pine forest in the upper reaches of the Motithang area of the Thimphu Valley, we feel the 16-suite Amankora Thimphu is the highest quality lodge in the surrounding area. Though close to the cultural shopping attractions of the capital (approximately four miles away), you feel as though you are a world away in this quiet, luxury enclave. The lodge's dzong-inspired architecture features white-washed stone buildings accessed through an enclosed arrival courtyard. We love the delicious multi-cultural dining options and the comforting traditional Bukhari wood heaters.

Six Senses Thimphu

In terms of personal service and genuine local Bhutanese hospitality, we consider the service at Six Senses' Bhutan properties to be among the most heart-warming we have experienced anywhere! Set in the lush green forest on Thimphu's steep valley, this Six Senses property blends spectacular views, rustic luxury, and relatively easy access from Bhutan's capital. The lodge is beautifully located on a mountain hillside south of the capital at 2,650 meters, providing a grandiose view of the Kingdom's forested valley. As with all Six Senses properties in Bhutan, the lodge has been designed to seamlessly incorporate and reflect the history of the site that it sits within. The largest among the Six Senses Bhutan lodges, Thimphu consists of 20 suites and five villas, bringing exclusivity to its tranquil setting. The opulent design incorporates heritage with lobby-reflecting ponds, earning the lodge a nickname of "Palace in the Sky". Facilities include an indoor pool, all-day restaurant, private dining, a bar/lounge, and the Six Senses Spa.

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

Accommodations: Amankora or Six Senses Thimphu

DAY 4

Thimphu Private Tour

Following a sumptuous breakfast, you will visit the capital's rich Buddhist sites with your private guide, including the King's Memorial Chörten, where you can see practicing Buddhists circling the structure while murmuring chants and spinning their prayer wheels. Other stopovers include the National Museum, the National Institute for Zorig Chusum, the Handicrafts Emporium (a crafts bazaar), and an optional hike exploring the serene retreat of Tango Monastery.

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

Accommodations: Amankora or Six Senses Thimphu

DAY 5

Private Transfer Thimphu/Punakha + Afternoon Punakha Dzong Private Tour

Following breakfast, you will be privately transferred to Punakha via the Dochula Pass, with magnificent views of the Himalayan Range. Your drive will include a stop at the 17th-century Simthokha Dzong, Bhutan's first fortress-monastery. In the afternoon, you will be met by your private guide for a tour of the impressive Punakha Dzong, home to the remains of Bhutan's first ruler and the winter residence of the monastic leader and his entourage of monks.

COMO Uma Punakha

Though we really like the Amankora and Six Senses properties in Punakha, we believe the luxury-boutique, eight-room, COMO Uma Punakha is a very special place, especially if you are traveling with extended family or a small group of friends. The Bhutanese, family-style environment is truly wonderful! Since its founding by Singapore entrepreneur Christina Ong in 1991, COMO Hotels has become somewhat of a mini-AMAN in luxury travel circles. A big plus here are the nearby, short hikes you may enjoy without leaving the property, enjoying the stunning and remote location on the bend of the Mo Chhu River of the far western end of the lush Punakha Valley. This is one of our most favorite picturesque destinations in all of Bhutan. Consisting of eight deluxe valley-rooms and two villas, the COMO Uma's concept of luxury is a bit more amenable to Western tastes than AMAN. Unlike AMAN's policy of shunning television in its various resort properties, UMA proudly accommodates our addiction to daily news/entertainment with a TV in each room. However, like Amankora, COMO Uma offers various spa choices in two treatment rooms. All of the property's vegetables, fruit, and dairy products come from the bounty of the fertile Punakha Valley! Enjoy the delicious Bhutanese chicken curry dinner here!

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

Accommodations: COMO Uma Punakha

DAY 6

Punakha Private Tour

Following breakfast, you will have the option of two short guided hikes. They are not arduous, so we enthusiastically recommend doing both! The first hike begins at the Sopsoktha Village to enjoy a 30-minute hike across the rice fields to the Chimi Lhakhang Buddhist Temple. Known as the "Fertility Temple", Chimi is popular among childless couples seeking fertility blessings. This hike among the lush rice fields is one of the most beautiful in all of Bhutan! The second light hike takes you through the paddy fields to the Khamsum

Yulley Namgyal Chörten. Standing regally on the hill above the Punakha valley, this Chörten is a classic example of gorgeous traditions and architecture of Bhutan.

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

Accommodations: COMO Uma Punakha

DAY 7

Private Transfer Punakha/Gangtey + Afternoon Phobjikha Valley Private Tour

Following breakfast, you will be privately transferred to Gangtey. In the afternoon, you will be met by your private guide for a visit to Phobjikha Valley and the black-necked crane information center, famous as this is the winter home for the very rare black-necked crane. Every year, approximately 800 – 1,000 birds arrive in Phobjikha Valley from late October and stay through mid-February (experts estimate that fewer than 6,000 cranes exist in the wild).

Amankora Gangtey

Part of the Black Mountains National Park wildlife reserve, the seldom-visited Phobjikha valley is home each winter to a flock of endangered black-neck cranes. It is here that the Amankora Gangtey is located, near the village of Gangtey, and set on a forested knoll with scenic views of the valley floor and the Goempa Monastery. From each of the eight suites, you can enjoy a view across the valley. Amenities also include king-size beds, traditional wood-burning stoves, and banquette window-seats, while bathrooms feature terrazzo-clad bathtubs and a separate shower. We particularly enjoy the dining room's panoramic view of the valley through floor-to-ceiling windows and we strongly recommend enjoying a candlelit, hot-stone heated bath while you're here.

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

Accommodations: Amankora Gangtey

DAY 8

Morning Gangtey Private Tour

This morning, you will be met by your private guide to take part in the morning prayer ceremony at Gangtey Goempa, the only Nyingmapa monastery on the western side of the Black Mountains and the biggest Nyingmapa monastery in Bhutan. If interested, you may also offer food at the ceremony, one of the oldest and most common Buddhist rituals.

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

Accommodations: Amankora Gangtey

DAY 9

Private Transfer Gangtey/Bumthang

Following breakfast, you will be privately transferred to Bumthang. If interested, you may stop enroute to visit a wool weaving center.

Amankora Bumthang

We love the Amankora Bumthang's location in the picturesque Choekhor Valley surrounded by fields of buckwheat, millet, and potatoes, with apple orchards on nearby slopes. Situated next to the Wangdichholing Palace, each of the 16-suites are situated around a Bukhari, with views of the courtyard and palace. Amenities here include a dining room with delicious and fresh cuisine, a library and study room with Wi-Fi, and a luxury spa.

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

Accommodations: Amankora Bumthang

DAY 10

Bumthang Private Tour

Bumthang is the name given to a combination of four valleys: Chumey, Choekhor, Tang, and Ura. The respective altitudes vary from 8,500 to 13,200 feet. You will embark on a full-day excursion through temples, monasteries, such as Jambey Lhakhang. Considered the "Switzerland of the East", you will also have the option to hike to Kurjey, where funeral rites of the senior members of the Royal Family are sometimes conducted. From here, you will continue on a leisurely walk through the verdant countryside and Chamkhar Chhu River to Tamzhing, a temple complex founded in 1501 and home to many training monks.

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

Accommodations: Amankora Bumthang

DAY 11

Fly Bumthang/Paro + Afternoon Paro Dzong Private Tour

Following breakfast, you will be privately transferred to the Bumthang Airport for your short flight to Paro. Upon arrival in Paro, you will be privately transferred to the Amankora Paro. In the afternoon you will be met by your private guide for a visit to Paro Dzong, a fine example of Bhutanese architecture. Perched above Paro Dzong is its Ta Dzong (watchtower), built in 1649 to protect the undefended dzong and renovated in 1968 to house the National Museum.

Amankora Paro

This is our favorite Amankora property in Bhutan! Made up of a total of 24 suites divided amongst six accommodation blocks (each with four suites), we feel this property to be the highest quality hotel/lodge in the greater Paro area. Designed with rammed earth walls and wood-paneled interiors, the lodge incorporates AMAN's signature minimalist aesthetic. Located in a forest near Balakha Village (30 minutes from Paro Town), guests enjoy views of the 17th-century Drukgyal Dzong ruins, as well as Mt. Jomolhari. Though there is no fitness center or pool, we do enjoy the very nice two-level spa with glass-walled sauna and yoga studio. The lodge's restaurant offers large glass window-walls for idyllic views of the outside valley and forest. Following the arduous, five-hour round-trip hike to Tiger's Nest, walking on the soft grass carpet entrance to the lodge is a lovely treat!

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

Accommodations: Amankora Paro

DAY 12

Tiger's Nest Guided Hike

Following breakfast, you will be driven to the wondrously idyllic valley of Paro with your private guide. We feel this verdant, heavenly area is truly among the most beautiful settings in the world. Here, you will begin your hike to Bhutan's most famous and visually-stunning monastery retreats, Paro Taktsang, also known as "Tiger's Nest". Hugging the side of a cliff 3,000 feet above the Paro Valley, this is Bhutan's most sacred site and a most surreal image. Though considered moderately difficult by local Bhutanese standards, we consider this to be an arduous journey by Western standards, particularly due to the steep grade and high altitude. We suggest walking at a slow pace, taking advantage of several stations to rest along the way. Though you may decide to hire a horse for the uphill journey to Tiger's Nest, they are not allowed on the journey downhill, which can be even more treacherous due to the muddy and slippery conditions. The Tiger's Nest Café is approximately half-way up to the Temple. If you are generally physically fit, you should be able to reach this point in about 90 minutes. If you are unable to reach this point in that time frame, you may find it very difficult to reach the end-point. We recommend bringing hiking poles and casual hiking boots (no gym shoes – Randy's mistake!). Those who suffer from acrophobia will find this hike highly challenging when they reach the narrow path of rails leading up to the temple entrance.

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

Accommodations: Amankora Paro

DAY 13

Fly Paro/Delhi/Home

Following breakfast, you will be privately transferred to the Paro Airport for your return flight to Delhi. Upon arrival in Delhi, you will connect to your onward flight home. If interested, we recommend an extension to the other-worldly Varanasi!

Meals: Breakfast