

15 NIGHT AMANKORA JOURNEY
THIMPHU - GANGTEY – BUMTHANG – PUNAKHA - PARO

The tiny Buddhist Kingdom of Bhutan awaits, nestled high in the Himalayas its isolation from the world has cultivated a culture rich in traditions, religion and a benevolent monarchy. The dramatic landscapes, from snow capped peaks and deeply forested slopes to raging, boulder strewn rivers, sit largely undisturbed as the endeared environmental initiatives and religious beliefs leave the Kingdom pristine and a jewel of nature. The Amankora program takes you into this ancient Kingdom for an adventure into the hearts and lands of charming farmers, fascinating weavers, enchanting monks and charismatic leaders.

Itinerary

Day 1	Arrival, Transfer to Thimphu, o/n Thimphu
Day 2	Thimphu Valley Exploration, o/n Thimphu
Day 3	Explore Thimphu valley, o/n Thimphu
Day 4	Transfer to Phobjika, explore Valley, o/n Gangtey
Day 5	Explore Phobjika Valley, o/n Gangtey
Day 6	Phobjika Valley Exploration, o/n Gangtey
Day 7	Transfer to Bumthang, o/n Bumthang
Day 8	Explore Bumthang Valley, o/n Bumthang
Day 9	Explore Tang Valley, o/n Bumthang
Day 10	Transfer to Punakha Valley, o/n Punakha
Day 11	Punakha Valley Exploration, o/n Punakha
Day 12	Explore Punakha Valley, o/n Punakha
Day 13	Transfer to Paro Valley, o/n Paro
Day 14	Transfer to Paro Valley, o/n Paro
Day 15	Explore Paro Valley, o/n Paro
Day 16	International Departure



Day 01:
Arrival

From the flight in, weaving through the valley, arrival in Bhutan is like no other. The transfer to Thimphu is approximately 1 ½ hours and upon arrival and following lunch you will have the choice of the National Memorial Chorten, and perhaps time to stroll Main Street for some interesting Himalayan artefacts or textiles. *(Overnight at Amankora Thimphu)*



Day 02:
Tour of Thimphu

This morning you will head to the north end of the valley to view Trashi Chhoe Dzong, the seat of Bhutan's government and Royal offices, and pay a visit to Pangri Zampa, two 16th century buildings that now house a monastic training school for astrologers. At the head of the valley, should you wish to stretch your legs, a short hike will take you to Cheri Goemba, the monastery where the first monastic body was established in the Kingdom. Back in town you should be able to visit a few

of the capital's cottage industries like traditional paper making and the weaving centre. *(Overnight at Amankora Thimphu)*

Day 03:

Day Excursion to Phajoding

Phajoding (alt.2, 800m) is located on the hill overlooking the entire Thimphu valley (alt.2, 400m) from the west. There are several little monasteries spread out on the plain below. It is a steep climb, taking about 3 ½ hours up and about two hours down, passing through wooded areas of chirpine and rhododendron. You might even meet a few people going to pray and light butter lamps in the monasteries. *(Overnight at Amankora Thimphu)*

Day04:

From Thimphu to Gangtey

A departure for a dramatic drive over the high mountain pass of Dochu La and on to the Phobjika Valley. Sights on the way include one of Bhutan's first fortress monasteries, the 17th century Simtokha Dzong, and ancient wall paintings at the Hongtsho Goemba monastery. The journey continues over the 3,050m mountain pass where on a clear day, towering Himalayan peaks are clearly visible. The descent down thru the Punakha Valley along the Kingdom's only east-west highway continues on through the scenic village of Wangdi. Carrying on the highway follows the scenic Dang Chhu before climbing thru forests of bamboo and oak, and just before crossing the Pele La pass, a small side road splinters off to the hidden Phobjika Valley. On arrival you will have time to visit the striking Gangtey Goemba, sitting at the head of the valley, and perhaps strolling thru the quaint Gangtey village or hike amongst the blooming rhododendrons behind the lodge. *(Overnight at Amankora Gangtey)*



Day 05:

Exploring Phobjika Valley

This morning will start with a visit to the Black Neck Crane Center and dependent on the season, time spent in the Center's nearby hide is a must to view the breeding cranes. Various walks or a mountain bike ride thru this magnificent valley can be arranged. Soaking up the beauty of the valley from the Lodge or returning to the revered Goemba for an audience with the Tulkul may be attractive, relaxing alternatives for the day. *(Overnight at Amankora Gangtey)*

Day 06:

Further exploration of Phobjika Valley

Various walks or a mountain bike ride through this magnificent valley can be arranged. Soaking up the beauty of the valley from the Lodge or returning to the revered Goemba for an audience with the Tulkul may be attractive, relaxing alternatives for the day.

**Day 07:
From Phobjika to Bumthang**

Today's journey onward to Jakar (Bumthang) is perhaps long, but certainly memorable with dramatic landscapes of terraced farmland, deep river valleys and precariously perched farmhouses viewed from the only east west highway that has been ingeniously carved out of the mountain faces. Following a brief stop at Chendebji Chorten, which according to belief was built to cover the remains of a demon spirit, you will carry on to what was the original home of the royal family. Upon reaching Trongsa you may take time to stroll this quaint village and official business permitting, perhaps visit the Trongsa Dzong, ancestral home to Bhutan's monarch where you will often find novice monks reciting mantras or practicing on sacred horns, flutes or drums. The drive onward to Bumthang takes you over the picturesque Yotong La and down into the Chhume Valley, home of Bhutan's famous Yatra weaving. Here you will have a chance to browse the traditional textiles and perhaps see the weavers create their intricate handiwork. *(Overnight at Amankora Bumthang)*



**Day 08:
Explore Bumthang Valley**

This morning you will explore our neighbouring palace, Wangdichhoeling, home to the 2nd King, and the auspicious prayer wheels next door. Heading up valley, you will take in the grand Kurjey Lhakhang, considered one of Bhutan's most auspicious monuments, that was once the resting place of Guru Rimpoche, and Jambay Lhakhang, home to the early winter festivals that draw thousands of Bhutanese for their annual blessings. Heading back into town and across the Bumthang Chhu, you will enjoy a visit to the sin alleviating Tamshing Monastery followed by quick visits to the valleys unique cottage industries – Red Panda Brewery, Bumthang Cheese/Dairy Facility and the Bumthang Distillery, home to numerous distinctive spirits. *(Overnight at Amankora Bumthang)*



**Day 09:
Explore Tang Valley – Bumthang District**

Today you will explore further in Bumthang district with an excursion the stunningly beautiful Tang Valley. This seldom visited valley offers a treat in revealing some off the beaten track lhakhangs and monasteries, and the amazing museum at Ugen Choeling Palace. A short hike takes you up to this well maintained Palace and its cultural treasures inside. Along way you will stop for a traditional picnic with breathtaking views of the pristine surroundings. *(Overnight at Amankora Bumthang)*

**Day 10:
From Bumthang to Punakha**

Today you will start with an early departure for the lengthy drive to Punakha. Upon entering the Punakha Valley you may stop to stretch your legs for a short walk thru the valley floor to the Chimi Lhakhang, the auspicious fertility monastery built by the “Divine Madman” in 1499. *(Overnight at Amankora Punakha)*

**Day 11:
Explore Punakha Valley**

Your day in Punakha Valley begins with a hike up thru fields of chillies, cabbages and rice along the banks of the Mo Chhu to the upper end of the valley to the Khamsum Yuelley Namgyal Chorten, a stunning monument recently built by the Queens and consecrated in 1999. Returning down thru the valley you will have plenty of time to take in the impressive Punakha Dzong, home to the remains of Bhutan’s first ruler, Shabdrung Nawang Namgyal, and the winter residence of the monastic order’s leader and his entourage of monks. Later a picnic lunch will be served on the banks of the Punak Chhu at a vantage point of the stunning Dzong and confluence of the Mo Chhu and Pho Chhu. Following lunch a quick drive will take you to the village of Talo where you will stop to walk the stunning, quiet grounds of the village temple and perhaps visit the home village of the Kingdom’s four Queens. *(Overnight at Amankora Punakha)*



**Day 12:
Punakha Valley Exploration**

Today, you could further explore the valley on various hikes or by bicycle. Alternatively, you may wish to simply relax in the lodge’s courtyard or the spa.



**Day 13:
From Punakha to Paro**

After descending back down from Dochu La, you will follow your way back up the dramatic Wang Chu and Paro Chu river valleys, before crossing thru Paro Town towards the north end of the valley. Here, set in a pine forest, you will find the Amankora lodge and its spa. In the afternoon, there is an

opportunity for a quick stroll to the nearby ruins, a visit to some of the valley's oldest and holiest religious monuments or a ramble down Paro's main street. Evenings at Amankora may include informative lectures on the history, religion, flora and fauna of the region or an intriguing movie on the Himalayas. (*Overnight at Amankora Paro*)

Day 14:
Paro Valley Exploration

The day starts with a visit to the National Museum, housed in the Ta Dzong (watchtower). Here, an intriguing collection of artefacts provide a wonderful introduction to the rich culture and heritage of the Kingdom. Just a short walk downhill lays the dominating Paro Dzong, a fine example of Bhutanese historic architecture. From the Dzong, the tour crosses Nyamai Zampa, a traditional cantilever bridge, and guests are then driven to the town temple, built in 1525, to view ancient wall paintings. Paro options include picturesque picnic spots or, perhaps, a visit to a traditional farmhouse to lunch with the family. This afternoon there will be choice of excursions with those wanting a further immersion into the culture and religion, visits to the Kyichu Lhakhang, Dumtse Lhakhang and the Drukgyel Dzong alter room can be organized. For the hikers, a beautiful trail can be taken up behind the lodge carrying on past Drukgyel Dzong, along the Paro Chhu, then across a suspension bridge and up thru terraced farmland and forests before looping back down the river to a second bridge and across the river, returning to the lodge. (*Overnight at Amankora Paro*)

Day 15
Paro Valley Exploration and Tiger's Nest Hike

This morning will begin with a hike up to view one of Bhutan's most revered monuments, the Taktshang Goemba, more commonly referred to as the "Tiger's Nest". The four to five hour return trek offers spectacular views of this sacred monastery perched on a cliff face 900m above the valley floor. The balance of the day can be spend browsing shops in town, enjoying the spa around the lodge or taking on another hike into the rich forests that rise up behind the lodge. (*Overnight at Amankora Paro*)



Day 16
Departure Day
Morning transfer to airport

Tarif du circuit Bhoutan (hors vols internationaux)

Hébergements, formules restauration mentionnées, prestations détaillées ci-dessus, voiture avec chauffeur et guide, frais de visa et toutes les taxes :

21 400,00 Euro* pour 2 adultes.

** Tarif donné à titre indicatif, soumis à augmentation annuelle, variable selon les saisons et les promotions ponctuelles applicables.*