

Earthbound Expeditions

West To East Bhutan Tour

12 days, from US$3,947 per person

Duration	Group size	Country
12 days	**15 people**	**Bhutan**

West To East Bhutan Tour Overview

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A cultural tour of Bhutan introduces you to Bhutanese heritage through festivals, sacred pilgrimage sites, rural villages and temples. On this West to East Bhutan tour, there are many stops for panoramic views of the valleys and mountain peaks, so you can enjoy the country's unspoilt nature. The journey across the kingdom begins in western Bhutan, in the towns of Paro and Thimphu.

Cultural journey through Nepal and Bhutan

You travel to the cultural heartland of Bumthang and experience the distinct character of each part of the country, where traditional ways of life are well preserved. In just over two weeks, this trip takes you through the western and central valleys, with their unspoilt forests and dense tropical jungle, then to the eastern part of the country and across the border into India.

The variety of plant life in Bhutan's tropical forests is remarkable, and many people regard the country as a paradise for botanists. Throughout the journey, the people are friendly and the views are impressive. You travel to the easternmost part of the kingdom, including the remote village of Trashiyangtse, and leave Bhutan for Assam, a rarely visited area of India. This cultural tour gives you an insight into the people, culture, traditions, religion and ecology of Bhutan.

The West to East Bhutan tour takes you through mountain landscapes and green valleys. You see the architecture of the dzongs, monasteries and traditional Bhutanese houses, and some religious festivals. You also have the opportunity to try Bhutanese food and meet local people.

Please note:
The trip can also be combined with Rajasthan in India (the Taj Mahal, Jaipur and Delhi), with Tibet (Lhasa), Darjeeling or Sikkim, or with a Buddhist circuit tour including Lumbini, Bodhgaya, Kushinagar and Sarnath.

Bumthang festival (mid-November)

If you would like to attend the festival in Bhutan, you need to travel in mid-November. At midnight you walk to Jambay Lhakhang to watch the dancers perform naked around the fire, which is believed to be the most sacred dance. The participants are masked, and local people sing folk songs and socialise.

Itinerary

Day 1

Arrive in Kathmandu

A representative of Earthbound Expeditions meets you at Tribhuvan International Airport in Kathmandu, holding an Earthbound Expeditions sign, and transfers you to your hotel.

Altitude: 1,400 m On foot: None, arrival day Night: Hotel, Kathmandu Meals: Dinner

Day 2

Kathmandu sightseeing and drive to Nagarkot

After breakfast, your tour begins with a visit to the UNESCO World Heritage Sites of the Kathmandu Valley, travelling by air-conditioned bus. We visit Pashupatinath, Boudhanath, Swayambhunath and Patan Durbar Square. You then continue to Nagarkot, a quiet hill station surrounded by green hills and fresh air.

Altitude: 2,175 m On foot: Easy walking, 2–3 hrs Night: Hotel, Nagarkot Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 3

Fly to Paro

There are flights to Paro from Bangkok, Delhi, Dhaka and Kathmandu. The flight into Paro is spectacular, and on arrival you will notice the fresh air of this heavily forested country and its panoramic views. In clear weather you can see the Paro valley under a clear sky.

Altitude: 2,200 m On foot: None, flight day Night: Hotel, Paro Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 4

Hike to Taktsang (Tiger's Nest)

Taktsang Monastery is one of the best-known sites in the Himalaya. It stands on the side of a cliff 900 metres above the floor of the Paro valley and is the landmark of Bhutan. The walk to the top takes some effort, and there are fine views and a peaceful atmosphere at the monastery. The monastery dates from the 1600s. According to tradition, Guru Padmasambhava, who brought Buddhism to Bhutan, arrived here on the back of a flying tiger and meditated here for three months. You explore the monastery and the views from it. We then drive to Thimphu for the night.

Altitude: 2,200 m On foot: 4–5 hrs Night: Hotel, Paro Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 5

Drive to Punakha

The drive to Punakha takes about 3 hours, through pine and cedar forests. You stop at the Dochula Pass for a panoramic view of the Himalayan ranges, surrounded by rhododendrons, junipers, pine forests and birdsong. We continue to Lobesa, where we walk for a short while to reach Chimi Lhakhang temple.

Altitude: 1,200 m On foot: None, 3 hr drive Night: Hotel, Punakha Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 6

Drive to Bumthang

The drive from Trongsa to Bumthang takes about 3 hours. In Bumthang, you check in at your lodge.

Altitude: 2,600 m On foot: None, 7–8 hr drive Night: Lodge, Bumthang Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 7

Drive to Mongar and sightseeing

The drive to Mongar crosses the Thrumshing La, the highest pass, at 3,800 metres. Mongar is the district headquarters and the first town built on a slope. You visit the prayer wheel and the clock tower, the well-known landmarks of Bumthang.

Altitude: 1,600 m On foot: None, 7–8 hr drive Night: Hotel, Mongar Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 8

Drive to Trashiyangtse

Trashiyangtse is a culturally diverse district, whose inhabitants include the Tshanglas and the Khengpas. The district has white stupas, green hills and small settlements.

Altitude: 1,750 m On foot: None, 4–5 hr drive Night: Hotel, Trashiyangtse Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 9

Trashigang sightseeing

Trashigang is an attractive and welcoming town. It was once on an ancient trade route to Tibet. You visit Trashigang Dzong, which dates from 1659, learn about its history, and visit the old bazaar.

Altitude: 1,100 m On foot: Easy walking, 2–3 hrs Night: Hotel, Trashigang Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 10

Departure from Bhutan

You leave Bhutan and drive to the Indian town of Guwahati, then either continue to Sikkim and Darjeeling or return to Kathmandu for your onward flight.

Altitude: 1,100 m On foot: None, departure day Night: No overnight Meals: Breakfast

What's included

- All accommodation in Nepal and Bhutan.
- Full-board meals.
- Private transfers.
- Professional English-speaking tour guides.
- All airport pick-ups and transfers.
- Farewell dinner with a Nepali cultural show.
- Return flights from Kathmandu to Bhutan.
- Travel permits.
- Bhutan visa fees.
- Entrance fees for major monuments in Bhutan.
- Yoga and meditation classes in Nepal.
- One meditation class in Bhutan.

Not included

- Personal travel insurance.
- All personal items.
- Some lunches and dinners.
- Tips for guides and drivers.
- Mountain and road rescue.
- Other emergency evacuations, which will be charged if required.
- Expenses arising from illness, landslides, political disturbances, re-routing, flight cancellations or any other unforeseen situations or events outside our control.
- Drinks, telephone bills, laundry, postage and similar items.
- Nepal visa cost: USD 25.
- City monument entrance fees of approximately USD 35, payable on arrival.

Photos, videos and reviews of this trip: earthbound.rajansimkhada.com/west-to-east-bhutan-tour