

CULTURE + WALKING

BHUTAN

Himalayan Villages & Monasteries



Classic
JOURNEYS



“Classic Journeys provides unbeatable access to experiences around the globe.”

— *Travel + Leisure*

Inside the Mysterious Kingdom

In all of Bhutan, there is not a single stoplight. Gross National Happiness is an official measure of the country's well-being. And the number of foreign visitors is strictly limited to protect the culture and environment. This is a destination on a higher plane in so many ways! Of course, there's the Himalayan factor, tucked as it is into a niche in the soaring chain. Bhutan is also one of the world's most Buddhist countries, and its historic dzongs (monasteries) perch serenely over sweeping expanses of terrain. Lush valleys are carpeted with rice and mustard fields and criss-crossed by footpaths. For an insider's look at this heavenly land, you'll meet the Bhutanese farmers, wood carvers, yak-herders and mask dancers. To make your Asian adventure even more remarkable, join us for a 5-day/4 night extension to India's dramatic Darjeeling region.

DAY 1

PARO VALLEY / THIMPHU

- Fly in from Bangkok or Delhi and meet your guide
- Enjoy a guided stroll in the capital of Thimphu

You undergo a wonderful transition on this morning's included flight. Leaving behind one of the world's biggest cities, you step from your plane into a land of otherworldly calm.

Shrines dot the emerald-green Paro Valley. Terraced rice fields defy common sense as they climb the hillsides to forests of rhododendron and pine. Bhutan wears Buddhism on its sleeve, and you'll get early lessons in the vocabulary of its structures. Remember stupa. It's the Sanskrit word for a mound-like structure that shelters relics, and it's sometimes called a chorten. On a single stop, you'll see Tibetan, Nepalese and Bhutanese styles clustered at the confluence of two rivers. Your destination is Thimphu, the nation's capital, but along the way at Tamchog Lhakhang for picturesque photo opportunities.

After, you'll stroll through the streets of Thimphu with your local guide to the King's Memorial, circled by an endless string of Bhutanese, murmuring mantras and spinning prayer wheels. Your hotel was built in the dzong style, with a glamorous contemporary interior – a grand setting for your first two nights.

OVERNIGHT: THIMPHU (TAJ TASHI)
MEALS: L, D

DAY 2

TANGO GOMPA / INSTITUTE OF ZORIG CHUSUM

- Share a local trail with pilgrims and packponies
- Interact with monks against a backdrop of prayer flags
- Visit a crafts school to learn about 17th century techniques

This morning's woodland trail is quintessentially Bhutanese. It wends past an enormous gold rock painting of Guru Rinpoche. You share the path with local pilgrims and pack ponies. And then your destination peeks through the trees above. It's Tango Gompa, where Drukpa Kunley (The Divine Madman) erected a monastery in the 15th century. You'll see a gathering of monks, arrayed in their best robes. Strings of multi-colored prayer flags catch the breeze so that their wishes for long life, prosperity and happiness can be caught by the wind and sent out into the world.

Later, you return to Thimphu for a fascinating afternoon visit to the Institute of Zorig Chusum – the Arts & Crafts School. Bhutan takes its traditions so seriously that 13 traditional crafts were formally categorized in the late 17th century. These same crafts – including weaving, paper-making, blacksmithing, slate carving and carpentry – are still taught here today, and you'll see how they're kept alive. You'll also visit Tashichho Dzong, the country's formal seat of government, to see the throne room of King Jigme Khesar Wangyel Wangchuck.

Note: The elevation gain to the Tango Monastery is 400 meters and the altitude is 2,800 meters.

OVERNIGHT: THIMPHU (TAJ TASHI)
MEALS: B, L, D

DAY 3

PANA VILLAGE / PUNAKHA

- Follow a guided footpath through mustard and rice fields
- Pause for conversations with friendly local villagers

After an early breakfast, you head to Buddha Dorden, located at the top of a hill in Kuenselphodrang Nature Park. You'll explore the park before driving up into the sky to Dochula Pass for views to some of the country's highest peaks.

Back at a lower altitude, you follow a path through mustard and rice fields. Along the way, you pass through the rural villages, pausing at the tiny settlement of Pana where your guide arranges meeting the people who live here.

As Bhutan's rivers tumble down from the mountains, they roll and smooth the rocks, creating white cobbled banks of stone. Where the Pho Chhu (Father River) and Mo Chhu (Mother River) meet, you see Punakha Dzong – one of the country's grandest structures – standing guard. Damaged by fires and earthquake over the past four centuries, it has been fully restored by the current king.

Later, you visit a Chimi Lhakhang, a monastery renowned throughout Bhutan as a place which induces fertility for all the visitors who come here wishing for a child.

OVERNIGHT: PUNAKHA
MEALS: B, L, D

DAY 4

KHAMSUM YULLEY NAMGYAL CHORTEN

- Walk amongst rice paddies and emerald green terraces to Khamsum Yulley Namgyal Chorten

This morning your guide leads you on a walk to Khamsum Yulley Namgyal Chorten, a classic example of Bhutanese architecture. Instead of being designed as a place for communal worship, it was built to fight off negative forces, and bring peace and harmony for all living beings.

It's no wonder the Paro Valley holds divine sway over Bhutan. Snow Mount Chomolhari soars over its northern reaches. Intensely blue glacial melt roars down through deep gorges to water the fertile valley, famous for its red rice. It seems like every pine copse and hillock comes with its own myth or legend. To breathe in the beauty, you take a woodland walk that leads you to one of the distinctively arched covered bridges, a stone inlaid path and Rinpung Dzong.

As at all of your meals, you'll dine on Bhutanese specialties. The nutty-tasting local rice is a staple. The national dish is ema datshi, a stew of chilis and cheese. Bhutan tradition has it that, when offered food, you cover your mouth and decline...after another invitation or two, you accept!

OVERNIGHT: PARO
MEALS: B, L, D

DAY 5

TIGER'S NEST MONASTERY

- Approach Tiger's Nest monastery along an incredibly scenic footpath
- Attend an archery demonstration to witness Bhutan's national sport

Taksang (Tiger's Nest) Monastery doesn't look possible. How can it cling to such a slight toehold on the mountain's steep flank? Who could conceive of a place so graceful but commanding? How could it even have been built? Even more remarkable, Bhutan's most famous sight has already stood for more than 10 centuries.

You'll approach on a footpath that offers a succession of amazing views. The trail is divided into several stages, so you can relax at a lower-level vantage point or ascend all the way, over a stream, past a waterfall, then up to the monastery and cave where Buddhism in Bhutan is said to have been born.

Archery is to Bhutan as soccer is to Brazil. It's the national sport – and you'll be surprised how rowdy it can be, complete with cheerleaders, bulls-eye dances and chanting. Late afternoon, you'll see what its all about at a demonstration of the locals' longbow skills.

Note: The hike to Tiger's Nest Monastery is 4 miles round trip. The elevation gain is 900 meters above Paro Valley and the altitude is 3,100 meters above sea level.

OVERNIGHT: PARO
MEALS: B, L, D

DAY 6

KYICHU LHAKHANG / CHELE LA PASS

- Participate in a sacred butter lamp lighting ceremony
- Accept an invitation to a traditional mask dance ceremony dating to the 8th century

For Buddhists, 108 is a sacred number, and one of the most striking rituals is the morning lighting of 108 butter lamps to dispel the darkness of ignorance. We'll make the pilgrimage to beautiful Kyichu Lhakhang to witness the ceremony – an event you won't soon forget. And you'll feel another form of reverence – this time for the majesty of nature – when we make the drive to Chele La Pass, the highest in Bhutan. From this lookout point, you have an expansive view of the eastern Himalayas, including 22,000-foot Jhomolari.

Later in the afternoon, you may want to arrange a spa treatment or a meditation class at the resort. This evening, you'll enjoy a cultural performance, including the traditional mask dance that's been a part of local life since the 8th century.

OVERNIGHT: PARO
MEALS: B, L, D

DAY 7

PART COMPANY WITH A TRANSFER TO PARO AIRPORT

- Part company with a transfer to Paro airport

You transfer to Paro airport for your outbound flights. If you're continuing on to our Darjeeling extension, it begins now with our morning flight to Bagdogra, India.

MEALS: B



Tour Hotels



Taj Tashi

Set in Thimphu, this hotel is a blend of gold-hued dzong architecture with a serene, contemporary interior. It offers striking views of the mountains and great proximity to the bustling local markets.

OVERNIGHT: THIMPHU | NIGHTS: 2



Dhensa Boutique Resort

Perched above the Punakha Valley, this hotel is a gorgeous modern interpretation of traditional Himalayan design. Suites are set in six cottages, each with a private balcony. The views of the Punakha river and stairstep paddies are truly spectacular.

OVERNIGHT: PUNAKHA | NIGHTS: 1



Le Meridien Paro Riverfront

With a compelling location close to Paro International Airport and the riverfront, Le Meridien Paro is the ideal place to stay and explore Bhutan. Unlock this holistic destination with attractions including sacred fortresses and monasteries.

OVERNIGHT: PARO | NIGHTS: 3

Tour Dates & Prices

Tour Dates	Price per Person	Price per Person
	Double Occupancy	Single Occupancy
April 14-20, 2020	\$6,095	\$7,820
November 3-9, 2020	\$6,295	\$8,020
April 13-19, 2021	\$6,195	\$7,920
November 2-8, 2021	\$6,395	\$8,120

Want a different date? Or your own date? Visit [CLASSICJOURNEYS.COM/PRIVATE](https://www.classicjourneys.com/private) to learn more about private journeys.

INTERNAL AIRFARE

This trip includes internal flights from Bangkok, Thailand to Paro, Bhutan round-trip, which are priced separately from the land tour. The total cost for the internal flights is approximately \$955 per person. If you prefer to fly through Delhi, India, we can make these flight arrangements for you as well. Please note: Classic Journeys will issue your Bhutan Visa (issued 3-5 days prior to trip departure).

Trip Essentials

TRIP LENGTH: 7 Days, 6 Nights

START: Paro Airport (PBH), Paro, Bhutan Classic Journeys will book flight from Bangkok, Thailand or Delhi, India to the starting point of the tour in Paro, Bhutan.

END: Paro Airport (PBH), Paro, Bhutan Classic Journeys will book flight from Paro, Bhutan to Bangkok, Thailand or Delhi, India.

TERRAIN: Moderate on good trails. An average of 2 to 4 hours of walking per day, except on the transfer days.

What's Included

- Memorable accommodations for 6 nights
- 6 breakfasts, 6 lunches, 6 dinners
- Airport transfers in Paro on Day 1 and Day 7
- Bhutan Visa (issued 3-5 days prior to trip departure)
- Full-time experienced guide(s) who are with you throughout the trip and handle behind-the-scenes logistics
- Admissions to scheduled events as noted in the detailed daily itinerary
- Gratuities for hotels, meals, and baggage
- All land transportation during the trip

Above & Beyond Benefits

- Invisible Check-In
- Privileged Access Events

READY TO BOOK?
CLICK TO MAKE A RESERVATION

Or give us a call

1-833-387-1210

Mon-Fri 8:00AM – 5:00PM PST

moreinfo@classicjourneys.com



TRAVEL WORRY-FREE!

It's easy with insurance from Travel Guard. Your policy can cover trip cancellation, travel delays, lost luggage, medical emergencies, and more. If you are traveling with kids, add them to your policy at no extra cost. [Click here](#) or call 800-826-4919 for details.

AMBASSADOR CLUB

As a Classic Journeys guest, you are invited to join the Ambassador Club after your first Classic Journeys tour. As a member, you'll have access to a [whole suite of Ambassador benefits](#) you can use immediately and as often as you like.

ENJOY THE UNEXPECTED

When you travel with Classic Journeys, you can expect handcrafted surprises built into every trip, but some things just can't be anticipated. Unusual weather, a once-a-year festival or an unscheduled site closing will inspire us and your local guide to improvise and modify this itinerary. Likewise, the hotels named here are used on the majority of our trips, but occasionally one of them can't accommodate us. If that happens, you can count on us to let you know before departure and make sure you're in a hotel of equal or better quality. It's our goal to make your trip exceptional!

**Any discount offered cannot be combined with other offers, and only applies to published (regularly scheduled public) departure dates in our catalogs or on our website.

THE Classic Journeys Difference

HANDCRAFTING TRIPS OF A LIFETIME.



At the end of the day, we fundamentally believe that every guest on every departure of every trip should have a trip of a lifetime. We're fortunate to play the role of well-connected friend, linking our guests with amazing guides, artisans, winemakers, hoteliers, restaurateurs, naturalists, and too many others to list here.

That's what motivates me and our team — in our La Jolla HQ and around the world — every day. Join Us!

President & Founder



You can expect the highest standards:



Luxurious Lodgings:

Ours include coveted properties that appear in "World's Best" and "Gold List" rankings.



Included Activities:

You'll never be surprised with add-on fees on your activities that include snorkeling to cooking lessons.



Local Guides:

Your guides are locals who are always at your side like well-connected friends.



Small Group Travel:

With an average of just 10-12 guests, it's a small footprint that guarantees you access that's off-limits to larger groups.



Amazing Cuisine:

From Michelin-starred restaurants to lunch in a farmhouse kitchen, you'll have a seat for the region's signature dishes.



Unmatched Value:

"Excellent value" and "unbeatable access" are two of the reasons that Travel + Leisure has consistently voted us a World's Best Tour Operator.

You'll enjoy these handcrafted travel experiences in Bhutan...

- Approaching Tiger's Nest Monastery on an incredibly scenic footpath
- Accepting an invitation to a local farmhouse for dinner
- Witnessing a butter-lamp blessing and native dancers
- Interacting with monks against a backdrop of prayer flags
- Visiting a crafts school where you learn about 17th-century techniques

"We loved the well-organized days, the wonderful hotels, and having a guide that cared about each one of us. On each Classic Journeys trip we have taken, we experienced what it is like to live in that country."

—Paul and Barbara S., Stone Mountain, GA

Let's Go!

TO RESERVE: 833.493.5038 | CLASSICJOURNEYS.COM/RESERVATIONS

You might also enjoy...



India

Rajasthan & Taj Mahal

Culture + Walking

PICTURE YOURSELF...

- Exploring rustic villages
- Traversing countryside trails
- Scouting bustling bazaars with a local chef

For more information, visit <https://www.classicjourneys.com/india/>.



Myanmar

Mandalay to the Temples of Bagan

Culture + Walking

PICTURE YOURSELF...

- Shopping in local village markets
- Meeting the fisherman, farmers and cigar makers
- Hot-air ballooning over the temples of Bagan

For more information, visit <https://www.classicjourneys.com/myanmar/>.



Nepal

Himalayan Villages & Chitwan Safari

Culture + Walking

PICTURE YOURSELF...

- Meeting Nepali farmers and villages on valley walks
- Experiencing sunrise over the Himalayas
- Spotting one-horned rhinos in Chitwan National Park

For more information, visit <https://www.classicjourneys.com/nepal-walking-tours/>.

You might also enjoy...



Thailand

Phuket, Chiang Mai & Chiang Rai

Culture + Walking

PICTURE YOURSELF...

- Cruising through Phang Nga Bay on a traditional junk boat
- Mingling with members of colorful hill tribes
- Communing elephants along forest and jungle paths

For more information, visit <https://www.classicjourneys.com/thailand/>.



Southeast Asia

Vietnam, Laos & Cambodia

Culture + Walking

PICTURE YOURSELF...

- Rambling past rice fields to friendly villages untouched by tourism
- Playing with an elephant in the Mekong River
- Absorbing Angkor Wat at sunrise

For more information, visit <https://www.classicjourneys.com/vietnam/>.

“Enthusiasm is Contagious”

AS TRAVEL + LEISURE NAMES CLASSIC JOURNEYS THE WORLD'S BEST TOUR OPERATOR FOR 2019, FOUNDER EDWARD PIEGZA REVEALS HOW IT FEELS. ENTHUSIASTICALLY.



EDITOR'S NOTE: Just before publication of this issue, Travel + Leisure magazine announced that its readers have voted Classic Journeys the World's Best Tour Operator for 2019. It's the second time Classic Journeys has won that recognition and the 14th consecutive year the company has been in the Top 10.

Congratulations! How did you get the news?

I received a top-secret email and phone call from the editor of *Travel + Leisure* a few weeks ago with orders not to tell ANYONE. Friends and neighbors must have wondered why my smile has been so extra big lately. Now they know.

And how does it feel to be the World's Best Tour Operator again?

Awesome. Humbling. So, so satisfying. Deeply gratifying to learn that we have achieved what we set out to do which is to handcraft trips of a lifetime for every guest who travels with us. I'm known as long-winded, so I could probably come up with 10 or 15 more ways to describe it if you want me to keep going.

Why do you think *Travel + Leisure* gave you this recognition?

Actually, it isn't the *T+L* editors who make the decision. That's the best part. Their readers cast the votes. So the people who do the traveling, the guests who explore the world with us and our competitors — they are the ones who raised their hands to tell *T+L* that Classic Journeys is the World's Best Tour Operator based on their own experiences. Let me say it right here: "To all of you who voted for us, you are the World's Best Guests!"

What do you think makes your guests the World's Best Guests?

That's easy. They are curious. They care about connecting with people of different cultures and immersing themselves in the world. They treasure experiences more than things. Like the old ad slogan went, they go for the gusto and crave the chance to have one-of-a-kind moments. They are incredibly interesting and interested people, and all of us at Classic Journeys count it as a real privilege to share in their passion for travel. And we feel that way on the

other 364 days of the year when we're not celebrating recognition like this.

I guess this is what you meant when you told me that "Enthusiasm is contagious."

Absolutely. That's not our official motto, but it could be. We love what we do. We enjoy helping guests figure out how to invest their precious time and budget. I can honestly say that all of us feel that way — the Guest Services folks who interact with you while you're planning your trip, the Tour Operations team members who plan all of the logistics, the local guides who lead each one of our trips full time. There's just a huge amount of positive energy in what we do, and I think it truly is hard to resist. We'd climb into every one of our guest's suitcases and go along with them if we could. Because we can't, we call each guest while they're on tour just to be sure they are having a trip of a lifetime.

Has anyone ever called Classic Journeys obsessive?

I hope so, because we are. Everything is in the details. For instance, we've created a special tour for the total eclipse of the sun which is going to pass over parts of South America in 2020. We've already analyzed likely traffic patterns in the most remote areas and figured out how to structure our itinerary so that our guests will be in place in the path of totality while the people who don't plan ahead will be stuck in jams on remote dirt roads. We enjoy obsessing about details like that so that our guests never have to.



How can you top this?

Oh, we never let ourselves think of it that way. We just continue to approach every single guest on each and every departure like the most important guest we've ever had. It seems to be working! Of course, we keep looking for new ways to win more converts. For 2019, we've launched a new series of Classic Journeys that are based from

"I voted for you!"

We've heard that expression so many times lately from guests who registered their votes with *Travel + Leisure*. Given the results, we know it's true ... and you know that your votes really count!

STAFF AND GUIDES

"I always feel like I'm traveling with a best friend. I prefer your local guides to the ones that other companies fly in."

ITINERARIES AND DESTINATIONS

"If it's on my bucket list, you always seem to go there. Of course, with so many options you always seem to make my list longer and longer!"

ACTIVITIES

"On your trips, I've cooked with Michelin chefs, sung songs with Quechua schoolchildren, and walked on glaciers with the descendants of Vikings. Fun doesn't begin to describe it."

ACCOMMODATIONS

"How you manage so many 5-star properties on these trips shocks me. But please, please, please keep it up!"

FOOD

"I have never eaten so well so often so happily. When you people claim that you are foodies, you aren't kidding."

OVERALL VALUE

"We have never had a better vacation at any price."

river cruise boats. On a different note, seeing how many travelers can't always find as much vacation time as they really want, we have developed a series of 6-day or shorter quick trips that go as far afield as Iceland, the Galápagos and Morocco.

Final thoughts?

It's always an honor to win recognition. But, for all of us at Classic Journeys, the biggest privilege is to share the dreams of our guests and make those dreams come true. That connection is the best feeling of all.