

# Black Necked Cranes and Royal Orchid Trek

Trip Code: BCO

Version: BCOB The Black Neck Cranes and the Royal Orchid Trek Royal Orchid Trek - Black Necked Cranes Festival



WALK & TREK



GUIDED GROUP



MODERATE



## HIGHLIGHTS

- Explore the Phobjika Valley, winter home of the rare Black Necked Cranes
- Camp in comfort and experience 'the last Shangri-La' on an easy paced 5 day trek

- Visit the Tiger's Nest, the beautiful Tang Valley and the monasteries of Bumthang
- Stay in remote villages few travellers get to see and get to know local communities
- Join the festivities at the Black Necked Cranes Festival

#### AT A GLANCE

- 6 days trekking
- 7 days touring
- Max altitude - 3460 metres
- Join at Kathmandu

#### ACCOMMODATIONS & MEALS

- All meals included
- 4 nights Camping
- 10 nights Hotel

VIEW DATES, PRICES & BOOK YOUR HOLIDAY HERE

## Introduction

Discover the beauty of the Phobjika Valley, visit the rare Black-necked Crane at Gangtey, enjoy a short trek through a beautiful and rarely visited part of rural Bhutan, and visit all the highlights of the Paro Valley on this walking and cultural [adventure holiday in Bhutan](#). Travelling via Kathmandu, the adventure begins with a flight across the Himalaya to Paro. Journeying east, the first part of this diverse adventure is a trek along the Mangde Chu (river) towards Gangkhar Puensum, the world's highest unclimbed peak. Following the moderately paced Royal Orchid Trek, we travel into an area known as 'the last Shangrila' on account of its isolation from the rest of the world and the sheer beauty of its scenery. Here we will stay as special guests of Drongthang Village, a wonderful way of learning all about Bhutanese life and culture.

In Drongthang rural life continues as it has for centuries. We will have the opportunity to interact with the local community, sharing their daily lives at work and play. Few tourists come here so this is a genuine opportunity to get under the skin of one of the most fascinating and least known countries in the world. In Drongthang rural life continues as it has for centuries. We will have the opportunity to interact with the local community, sharing their daily lives at work and play. Few tourists come here so this is a genuine opportunity to get under the skin of one of the most fascinating and least known countries in the world.

Our accommodation on trek will be in comfortable safari style tents. Our meals, prepared by our specially trained chefs, will be served in a dining tent with a view few restaurants can surpass! Next, we travel west to Gangtey in the Phobjika Valley, where we can view the famous Black-necked Cranes that make this particular valley their winter home. From Gangtey we continue westward, visiting the impressive Punakha Dzong before crossing the Dochu La to reach Thimphu.

We end our adventure with a hike up to the iconic, cliff-hanging Tigers' Nest monastery before we bid farewell to our Bhutanese hosts and return to Kathmandu.

**BOOK EARLY for BHUTAN!** With only two airlines operating flights into Paro from Kathmandu, seats are limited and in high demand. Book early to guarantee your place on your chosen departure. We strongly advise booking a year in advance where possible.

## Is this holiday for you?

This is a cultural adventure, which includes a moderate trek that is suitable for anyone with some hill walking experience. The trek is fully supported and you will only be required to carry a small day pack each day.

The 5-day trek traces a route between villages and monasteries in the valley of the Mangde Chu to the north of the town of Jakar. Following paths used by local villagers, the conditions underfoot are nowhere difficult and the altitude attained is not extreme. This route presents a great variety of landscape type; ranging from terraced farmland, through some of the finest mixed forest in the world, to open, alpine pastureland.

Whilst on trek we will be well looked after, sleeping on comfortable mattresses in safari style tents, which you can stand up in.

There are some reasonably drives necessary to travel as far East as we do. We break the journeys as regularly as possible, which allows us to see all main sights of Western Bhutan.

# Itinerary

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Version: BCOB The Black Neck Cranes and the Royal Orchid Trek Royal Orchid Trek - Black Necked Cranes Festival

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## DAY 1

**Arrive Kathmandu. Transfers from Kathmandu Airport to the group hotel are provided.**

The holiday starts at the group hotel in Kathmandu. Transfers from Kathmandu Airport are provided. The rest of the day is free to relax or for independent sightseeing. We have also arranged for dinner in the hotel tonight, which you can take at your own leisure.

Meals: **D**



**Accommodation**  
Hotel

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## DAY 2

**Fly to Paro. Drive over the Dochu La (3100m) to Punakha (1310m). Overnight Punakha.**

The group will meet in the lobby of the hotel. We transfer together back to airport in time to check in for the flight to Paro. The flight from Kathmandu to Bhutan is one of the most spectacular of all mountain flights. From the left side of the plane Everest, Makalu and Kangchenjunga, three of the world's highest mountains, are visible.

The total flying time is 45 min and soon we are descending into the Paro Valley.

In Paro we are met by our Tour Leader and transfer to Punakha, a drive of around 3hrs that will take us across the Dochu La (3100m). Descending to Punakha we can expect warm temperatures, fertile farmland, fruit trees and rice paddies. We check into our hotel and have a little time to relax and explore before dinner.

Meals: **B L D**



**Accommodation**  
Hotel

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**DAY 3****Transfer to Jakar in the Bumthang Valley (2800m). Afternoon walking tour of Valley. Overnight Bumthang Valley.**

This morning we make the 5hrs drive to Jakar. In the afternoon, we will enjoy a walking tour of the Bumthang Valley - one of the most beautiful and sacred in Bhutan. The valley is wide, filled with fields and villagers busy with their day's work. The guru Padmasambhava, who introduced Buddhism to the region, meditated in many of the local caves and each now has a dedicated temple or shrine. We start our exploration at Kurje Lhakhang, a 17th-century temple next to which a spectacular monastery has been built. From Kurje, we cross a bridge over the Chamkhar Chu (river) and walk through paddy fields to Tamshing. This temple complex was founded in 1501 by one of Bhutan's most famous saints, Pema Lingpa 'the treasure discoverer'. The monastery is home to many apprentice monks. We continue beyond Tamshing and end our walk across from our accommodation with a visit to the 'Swiss Project' where local people produce cheese, beer, apple juice and honey.

Meals: **B L D**



**Accommodation**  
Hotel



**Time**  
2 - 3 hrs walking

**DAY 4****Excursion to Tang Valley. Overnight Bumthang Valley.**

After breakfast at the hotel, we transfer (1.5hrs) through pine forests to the Tang Ugyencholing Manor house, where we can visit the museum of ancient culture. We next drive to Pemachiling nunnery to witness an elaborate drum ceremony performed by the nuns. We take our lunch here and some of the nuns will join us during our meal. After lunch we will visit the Membar Tsho (flaming lake), where the renowned Terton Pema Lingpa, is reputed to have discovered treasure from the lake in the late 15th century. Before returning to the Bumthang Valley we will also visit the Zangtopelri - the celestial abode of Guru Rimpoche. In the evening we can take a stroll through downtown Jakar for some souvenir shopping or enjoy local coffee in one of the cafes.

Meals: **B L D**



**Accommodation**  
Hotel

**DAY 5****Drive to Trongsa crossing the Yutong La (3460m). Trek to Kasiphey.**

From Bumthang we follow the winding road through the folds of the Himalayan foothills, crossing the Yutong La (3460m) to reach Trongsa Sherubling (3hrs) where we begin our trek. We meet with our trek

crew and horsemen and set off on today's walk. We start with a hour's gradual ascent to the village of Sengibi and then have a long climb up to the hillside village of Gagar (2500m), which is known locally as 'Happy village'. From here we descend to Kasiphey Dzong (2682m). The temple was built by Gangteng Trulku Rinpoche and is home to around 45 monks. Our camp is already set up in the grounds of the Monastery which commands a tremendous view over the wooded hills of the Mangde Chu Valley. This is glamping with a view!

Meals: **B L D**

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	<b>Accommodation</b> Camping		<b>Ascent</b> 500M		<b>Descent</b> 325M		<b>Time</b> 6 hrs trekking		<b>Distance</b> 10KM
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## DAY 6

### Trek to Drongthang Village (2621m) and meet our hosts.

We begin today by descending to the charming village of Thrispang. From here, we enjoy a gentle stroll beside the Mangde Chu, a river that begins life as the melting snows of Gangkhar Puensum (7570m), the world's highest unclimbed peak. The final hour of today's trek is a little steeper as we ascend to our next fixed camp close to the recently renovated Drongthang temple. After lunch at camp we head into Drongthang to meet our hosts. They will have various activities planned for us and we can assist with everyday tasks such as threshing, making butter tea or Arak (the local moonshine), or grinding flour with stone slabs. Not many tourists visit the valley and this is a genuine opportunity for cultural exchange and to gain an insight into the rural life in this isolated region.

Meals: **B L D**

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	<b>Accommodation</b> Camping		<b>Ascent</b> 325M		<b>Descent</b> 550M		<b>Time</b> 4 - 5 hrs trekking		<b>Distance</b> 8KM
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## DAY 7

### Exploration around Drongthang Village. Accompany the local farmers and assist with their daily tasks such as ploughing or butter churning.

We spend the morning exploring the neighbouring hamlet of Mangdephu, which is also the highest habitation along the Mangdi Chu.

This whole area was once regarded as a Baeyul (Shangrila) of the Guru Padmasambhava. Renowned for its beauty, the valley is also famous in Bhutan for being the place where the King's orchids grow. Orchid flowers are used in two popular Bhutanese dishes known as Olatsey and Olatcho. To make these dishes the flowers are boiled until soft and then added to a mixture of spices, chillies and melted cheese. The favoured Royal orchids are the species *Cymbidium hookerianum*.

Today we will also accompany and assist the local farmers. We may be able to help plough a field using traditional methods, milk the cows or churn butter. It's not all work though, there are also games to be played! We can try 'Khuru', a form of darts or 'Soksum', a form of javelin throwing.

During the day we will all join together and enjoy a traditional lunch served in one of the villagers houses.

Afterwards we return to camp and this evening, in keeping with typical Bhutanese hospitality, the villagers of around 30 households will turn out to present some traditional entertainment.

Meals: **B L D**

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	<b>Accommodation</b> Camping		<b>Ascent</b> 275M		<b>Descent</b> 100M		<b>Time</b> 2 - 3 hrs walking		<b>Distance</b> 5KM
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## DAY 8

### This morning we bid farewell to our hosts and trek to Bemji (2400m).

After breakfast, we bid farewell to our new friends and hike downhill to the Mangdu Chu. Along the way we pass through several small hamlets, individual farms and terraced fields. We stop to take our lunch in a scenic spot overlooking the river valley and then continue our descent to a bridge across the Mangde Chu. On the other side, we climb gradually to the village of Bemji with its lovely manor house. Our camp tonight will be in the school yard, which offers the best level ground in the village.

Meals: **B L D**

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	<b>Accommodation</b> Camping		<b>Time</b> 4 - 5 hrs trekking
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## DAY 9

### Final day of Royal Orchid Trek and drive to Gangtey (3100m).

We finish the Royal Orchid Trek with a walk of around 2 hours to reach Kakaling chorten and our vehicles. We say goodbye to our trekking team and set off for Gangtey (4-5hrs). After leaving the valley of the Mangde Chu, the road climbs steadily, at first lined with tall pines, then eventually reaches an 'alpine' zone of rhododendrons and dwarf bamboo. The high point of the day is the Pele La (3420) marked with a chorten and prayer flags. Given good weather, the views from here are excellent, stretching over the Black Mountains to the distant snow-capped Himalaya. We descend from the pass and turn south off the main road. Soon we enter the tranquil Phobjikha Valley with its well-tended fields and pine forests. In the centre of the valley, rising from a small ridge, stands Gangtey Gumpa one of the oldest private monasteries in Bhutan and one of a handful belonging to the Nyingmapa sect. The valley is famous as the winter home to the very rare Black-Necked Crane. Experts estimate that fewer than 800 cranes exist in the wild and every year they make an incredible journey from Tibet across the Himalaya to reach this



small valley. The Cranes usually arrive in late October or early November and stay until March.

Meals: **B L D**



**Accommodation**  
Hotel



**Time**  
2 hrs trekking

## DAY 10

### Join the celebrations at the Black Necked Cranes Festival.

Today we will spend the day in and around Gangtey. We will join the local villages in celebrating the Black Necked Cranes, at a festival that takes place in the courtyard of the Gompa. The festival is a chance for the villagers to rejoice and celebrate the arrival of this majestic bird, which shares their home for the winter months. The festival will include folk song and masked dancers. We will also have a chance to view the cranes themselves either before or after our time at the festival.

Meals: **B L D**



**Accommodation**  
Hotel

## DAY 11

### Drive to Thimphu. Sightseeing Punakha and Chimi Lhakhang en route.

This morning we have another opportunity to view the black-neck cranes in their specially protected meadow. The Bhutanese Government has recognised the importance of the birds and has made special provision for their protection, such as paying compensation to the local people who are constrained in what they can do with their cropland over the winter period. After breakfast we set off on our drive to Thimphu and en-route we stop to visit the yellow roofed Chimi Lhakhang temple. This involves a 20 - 30 minute walk across rice fields and a short climb up to the temple, which is dedicated to Drukpa Kuenley, known as the divine madman. Drukpa Kuenley is revered for having defeated a demon who lived on the Dochu La. The temple is a popular pilgrimage place for those wishing to receive fertility blessings. Afterwards, we visit Punakha Dzong, sited at the confluence of the 'Pho' & 'Mo' Chus (Father & Mother rivers). Built in 1637 by Zhabdrung, the impressive fortress / monastery guards the Southern entrance to the Punakha Valley. Punakha was the capital of Bhutan until 1955 and is the winter residence of the 'Je Khenpo' (head religious abbot) of Bhutan and most of the senior monks from Thimphu. The imposing appearance of the Dzong from all angles lends itself to photography and depending on what events are taking place at the time of our visit, we may be able to look inside. In the afternoon, we continue our drive to Thimphu.

Meals: **B L D**





**Accommodation**  
Hotel



**Time**  
1 hr trekking

## DAY 12

### Sightseeing Thimphu. Drive to Paro. Sightseeing Paro.

We enjoy a morning of sightseeing in the Bhutanese capital, which will include the the Royal Grand Mother Memorial Chorten and the Buddha Dordenma, the largest seated Buddha in the world. As we pass the archery ground we will check to see if a tournament is taking place. We will also have time to browse the many shops or visit the local farmers' market. After lunch, we transfer to Paro where we will have time to visit the impressive Ta Dzong and the ancient watchtower above, which now houses the National Museum.

Meals: **B L D**



**Accommodation**  
Hotel

## DAY 13

### Hike to the Tiger's Nest (Takstang) Monastery. Overnight Paro.

This morning we head straight off to make the scenic hike to Taktsang Lhakhang, the Tiger's Nest, one of the most recognised religious sites in the entire Himalaya and only accessible on foot. Clinging to a vertical granite cliff 900m above the valley floor, the monastery dates from 1692 and was built around the cave where Guru Rinpoche was said to have meditated for 3 years, 3 months, 3 weeks, 3 days and 3 hours. According to legend, the Rinpoche arrived in the wrathful form of Guru Dorji Drolo, riding on the back of a flying tiger, and subdued the evil spirits of the region, which then became protectors of the dharma. One in particular, Singye Samdrup, is believed to be the principal guardian of Takstang.

An hour's walk will bring us to the classic viewpoint for Takstang, looking across the gorge to the monastic buildings clinging to the cliff wall opposite. There is a small teahouse located here where those that do not wish to go all the way to the temple can rest and enjoy a drink with a truly unforgettable view.

The final approach to the monastery takes us down to a sacred waterfall, surrounded by a thousand fluttering prayer flags, where every crack in the rock is crammed with tsa-tsas (small caskets containing the ashes of the dead), before climbing back up towards the monastery. Leaving our bags and cameras at the gate, we may be allowed in to explore the various chambers and altar rooms.

Returning to Paro, we can relax at our hotel or do some last minute shopping in town. Tonight we will enjoy a farewell dinner to celebrate our journey through the Land of the Thunder Dragon.

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Meals: **B L D**

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	<b>Accommodation</b> Hotel		<b>Ascent</b> 790M		<b>Descent</b> 790M		<b>Time</b> 5 hrs trekking		<b>Distance</b> 8KM
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#### DAY 14

### Fly to Kathmandu. Overnight hotel.

We have an early transfer to Paro Airport for the morning flight to Kathmandu. On arrival we transfer to our comfortable hotel. The remainder of the day is free to explore the city or for shopping in Thamel. An evening meal is included at the hotel, for those that wish to dine together, or you are free to head out into Thamel independently to a restaurant of your choice.

Meals: **B D**

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	<b>Accommodation</b> Hotel
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#### DAY 15

### Your holiday ends after breakfast. Transfers to Kathmandu Airport are provided.

Your holiday ends after breakfast. Transfers to Kathmandu Airport are provided. To extend your holiday in Nepal, why not pre-book a day's sightseeing tour in the Kathmandu Valley, or a multi-day excursion to the wildlife reserve at Chitwan. Contact the KE team for details.

Meals: **B**

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## Extensions

When booking your holiday, you will be able to 'add an extension option'. Once we have received your booking we will contact you to discuss additional services required for the extension and to take any additional deposit.



### Chitwan Jungle Extension

The jungles of southern Nepal are an interesting counterpoint to trekking in the foothills or the high Himalaya. Tiger Tops Tharu Lodge provides a relaxing and comfortable base for a wildlife safari and cultural village experience. During two days of wildlife viewing in the Chitwan National Park 'buffer zone' - the interface area between visitors and the animals that live at Chitwan - you will be accompanied by expert guides on safaris by jeep by boat and on foot.

**3 days from**  
**US\$1,545** per person

## Holiday Information

### What's Included

- A professional and qualified tour leader plus support crew
- Bhutan visa fee
- Flights between Kathmandu and Paro
- All transfers and land transport involved in the itinerary
- All accommodation as described
- All meals
- Full service camping on trek including all camping equipment
- 'Thermarest' inflatable camping mats whilst camping
- FREE Sleeping bag and down jacket hire is available for this holiday on request

## What's not Included

- Travel insurance
- Nepalese visa costs
- Tips for drivers and trek staff
- Miscellaneous expenses - beer and souvenirs etc

## Joining Arrangements & Transfers

The holiday starts at the group hotel in Kathmandu.

Airport transfers are provided for all clients arriving Kathmandu on Day 1 and departing on the last day of the Land Only itinerary and all clients with additional nights booked through KE.

Hotel contact details and an emergency telephone number will be provided with your booking confirmation.

## Meal Plan

All meals are included in the holiday price.

## Food & Water

It is not recommended to drink untreated water from the taps. If you are on a trekking or cycling holiday, water is supplied to fill up your individual bottles. This will be boiled, filtered or provided in large jerry cans or 5 litre bottles. Additionally you should take purification tablets or a filter bottle (such as a [Water-To-Go bottle](#)) to treat your water when in towns or where water is not supplied. We do not encourage the purchasing of single use plastic bottles.

The Bhutanese love chillies; red, green, raw, cooked and flavouring their condiments – fans of spicy food will be in their element in Bhutan! Don't panic if spicy food is not for you, all the hotels and restaurants in Thimphu and Paro offer a range of delicious dishes suitable for all tastes. Breakfasts whilst in hotels will consist of choice of cereal or muesli, eggs, toast, beans, sausage or bacon with tea, coffee and juices.

You can expect to be fed very well during the trekking section of your holiday. Our trekking chefs are old hands at managing camps and meals whilst in the mountains. A senior trek cook and camp manager must have a minimum of five years of training and experience to qualify for the post! Our cooks have undergone training both on Bhutanese and continental dishes and can expect to be served a wide variety of delicious food on trek. Breakfast and dinner will be taken at the camp sites, whilst lunches will generally be carried on ponies and served mid-way on the trekking route for the day. Tea and hot drinks will be provided throughout the day and you will also usually also get a wakeup call from the camp crew with a nice cup of hot *Chai*! Whilst on trek drinking water will be purified by boiling and will be provided regularly.

## Special Diets

Whilst we can cater for vegetarians, albeit sometimes with a more limited choice, we cannot always provide special diets. Due to the nature of some of the trips that we operate and the countries in which we operate them, it can be very hard (and sometimes impossible) to cater for a wide range of dietary choices and you may have to supplement your diet with food/snacks from home. If you have specific dietary requirements please do speak to our sales team and they will be able to advise you whether or not we will be able to offer your specific choice. Please note that we are unable to provide separate menus and cannot accept liability for any problems arising from special dietary requirements or intolerances.

## Accommodation

This holiday includes 2 nights in Kathmandu, one en route to Bhutan and one on the return journey. In Kathmandu we use a comfortable, centrally located hotel.

In Bhutan, we use a good standard of hotel and lodge accommodation at Thimphu, Jakar, Gantey and Paro.

Whilst on trek we spend 4 nights staying in tented accommodation in a fixed camp with safari style tents. The tents we use are very spacious with traditional carpets and rugs for added comfort. We will sleep in beds raised off the floor and with a bedside cabinet.

In camp, as well as the tents used for sleeping, there will also be a mess tent, with chairs and tables, where the group will dine (and socialise into the evening), a toilet tent and even a shower tent where hot water can be provided for you to wash with. Our team will also bring bowls of hot water to your tent in the mornings and when you arrive at the camp each day. On cold nights, we'll even provide hot water bags/bottles when it is time for you to retreat to your tents for the evening.

All accommodation is twin share. If you are travelling by yourself you will be paired up with another traveller of the same sex. Single accommodation is available for a supplementary cost. If you are planning to extend your holiday, additional nights in Kathmandu are available on request.

## Group Leader & Support Staff

The group will be met and escorted in Kathmandu by a local KE representative. Once in Bhutan the group will be accompanied throughout by a professional and qualified tour leader. During the trek the tour leader will be assisted by local guides and a crew including cooks, baggage animals and their handlers.

## Altitude

This holiday involves going to moderately high altitude. During the course of your trip you will reach altitudes in excess of 2500 metres. Most people will have no difficulty with this level of altitude but before coming on the holiday, we recommend you read the advice on [trekking at high altitude](#). You can also talk to one of our trekking experts if you have any concerns about altitude.

## Spending Money

Approximately £250 (or equivalent dollars, Euros etc.) changed to local currency, should be allowed for miscellaneous expenses including approximately £50 - 70 for tips to local staff. We recommend that you carry your travel money in the form of cash, since you will exchange the majority of this on arrival. On arrival in Kathmandu you will only need a small amount of Nepalese rupees for drinks in the evening and we suggest that you change £10 or £20 at your hotel. When you arrive in Paro you will be able to change money at the airport into Bhutanese Ngultrum. Sterling, US Dollars and Euros are all equally acceptable for exchange in Nepal and in Bhutan. If you are intending to buy expensive souvenirs, you should budget accordingly (credit cards can be useful in this respect). Also, if you expect to buy considerable quantities of soft drinks or beer, you should make an allowance for this. You can withdraw cash from ATM's in Kathmandu. In Bhutan money can be easily exchanged but you cannot rely on withdrawing money from ATM's.

## Guidance on Tipping

Tipping is the accepted way of saying thank you for good service.

As a rough guide we suggest that each group member contributes US\$150 (in local currency equivalent) to a group tipping pool, around \$30 per person of this should go into a kitty for drivers, hotel porters and waiters (you can give this to your tour leader who will make sure it is distributed fairly).

Normally the trek staff are given their tips at the end of the trek. Your Bhutanese tour leader will advise the group on an appropriate level of tipping for each crew member. Most groups will mark the end of their trek by handing out the tips with a bit of a ceremony on the last evening.

A tip for your main Bhutanese tour leader is not included in the above. As a group you may want to make a separate collection to tip your tour leader separately during dinner on your final evening in Bhutan.

## Baggage Allowance

For this holiday you should take one piece of luggage, which should be a soft duffel bag, and a daypack. Your bag on trek will be carried by pack animals and should not weigh more than 15kg. It is possible to leave extra baggage at the hotel in Kathmandu and also in Paro. Checked baggage allowance for the flight from Kathmandu to Paro is 30kg and for the domestic flight from Paro to Jakar it is 20kg. For other international flights please check your baggage allowance with your airline.

## Group Size & Holiday Status

For each holiday there is a minimum number of participants required to enable it to go ahead. Once the minimum number is reached, the trip status will change from 'Available' to 'Guaranteed to run'. You can check the trip status for each departure in 'Dates and Prices' table. Other than in exceptional circumstances, we will not cancel a trip once it has achieved this guaranteed to run status and so you are free to proceed with your international flight booking and other travel arrangements.

# General Information

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## Passport & Visas

The information that we provide is for UK passport holders. A passport with 6 months remaining validity at the end of your stay is generally required, and you should have at least 2 blank pages for each country that you visit.

**It is your responsibility to ensure that you have the correct travel documents and visas for your holiday.** Please ensure that you check for the latest advice before travel. For the most up to date information on entry requirements, please visit the [UK Government website](#).

If you are travelling via India (Delhi or Calcutta) to your destination you may also require a visa for India. This may apply even if you are not leaving the airport unless your baggage has been checked all the way through to your destination. Generally, if you use the same carrier for both legs of your journey, you will not need an India Visa. Please download the detailed information document: [Visa PDF India](#).

## Visa Nepal

All nationalities require a visa. The visa process is partly automated and the fee is \$30 for 15 days, \$50 for 30 days, \$125 for 90 days. The visa is FREE for children under 10 years. The visa allows multiple re-entry. Payment must be made in cash and USD, GBP or Euros are accepted.

Part of this on-arrival visa process involves filling in a 'Tourist Visa Application Form' and you can simplify the procedure at Kathmandu Airport by filling this form in online (**within 15 days of travelling**) at [this link](#). This generates a receipt which you present (hard copy or saved on your phone) on arrival. This should allow you to go straight to the cashier to pay for your visa and has the potential to save you time in the visa queue.

Whilst these are not now needed for the visa process, we recommend that you travel with at least 2 spare passport photographs.

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## Visa Bhutan

All nationalities require a visa. KE will apply for the visa for you and the visa fee is included in your holiday cost.

Please note that this will be a group visa and will list the names, date of birth and passport details for all members of the group. A copy of this visa will be issued to each member of the group in Kathmandu prior to your check-in for the flight to Paro in Bhutan and your passport will be stamped on arrival in Paro.

We require a copy of the information page of your passport in order to make the arrangements for your Bhutan Visa. A colour scan must be emailed or posted to us at the earliest opportunity.



## Health & Vaccinations

If you have a severe allergy please inform the KE office before you travel. We will do all we can to help, but we cannot guarantee an allergy free environment on KE trips. You will need to carry your own treatment for the allergy with you, as 'adrenaline auto-injectors' are not carried as standard by KE leaders and staff. You should inform your leader on arrival of your allergy, and let them know where you keep your adrenaline pen.

Dengue fever is a known risk in places visited. It is a tropical viral disease spread by daytime biting mosquitoes. There is currently no vaccine or prophylaxis available and therefore the best form of prevention is to avoid being bitten. We recommend you [take precautions to avoid mosquito bites](#).

## Preparing for your Holiday

Getting some additional exercise before coming on an active holiday makes a lot of sense. The fitter you are, after all, the more enjoyable you will find the experience.

You should be aerobically fit and comfortable with walking for around 5 hours for consecutive days. Hill walking, with a good amount of ascent and descent, is the best training. Running, cycling and swimming are also good for developing cardiovascular fitness and stamina.

## Climate

In general the climate of Bhutan is colder and damper than one would expect to find in the Himalaya of India or Nepal. The monsoon usually arrives in June, and lasts until early September, bringing with it the heavy rainfall which is responsible for the lush vegetation which carpets much of Bhutan. March and April, as well as later September through to December are the best months to visit Bhutan. Pre-monsoon the weather is generally very good, with bright, sunny mornings and sometimes a moderate build up of cloud in the afternoons. Day-time highs of around 20°C can be expected at altitudes around 2000 metres with average daytime temperatures at 3000 metres around 10 to 15°C. Night-time temperatures at any time can reach or dip below freezing.

## Travel Aware

As a reputable tour operator, KE supports the British Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office's '[Travel Aware](#)' campaign to enable British citizens to prepare for their journeys overseas. The 'Travel Aware' website provides a single, authoritative source of advice for all kinds of travellers and we recommend that prior to travel, all KE clients visit the official UK Government website at [travelaware.campaign.gov.uk](http://travelaware.campaign.gov.uk) and read the FCDO Travel Advice for their chosen destination. North Americans can also check out the U.S. Department of State website: [www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov) for essential travel advice and tips.

KE treat the safety and security of all clients as the most important aspect of any trip we organise. We would not run any trip that we did not consider reasonably safe. Should the FCDO advise against travel for any reason, we will contact everyone booked to travel to discuss the situation. We receive regular updates direct from the FCDO and are in constant touch with our contacts on the ground. If you have any questions about government travel advice, please call our office.

## Single Use Plastic

KE do not encourage the use of single use plastic items. We are ensuring that our agents all over the world are working together to reduce the problem and educate those around them. We are leading by example in our KE office by reducing our plastic use.

## Books

- Bhutan. A Trekker's guide. Bart Jordans. Cicerone Press.
- Bhutan. (Lonely Planet Guide). Stan Armington.
- Bhutan, Land of the Thunder Dragon. Owen Edmunds.

## Maps

### Bhutan Himalaya. 1:380 000. ITMB Publishing

ITMB publish a general road map which also shows the general relief and has an index of towns and major villages. There are also sections for Thimpu and Paro with detailed street plans.

## Travel Insurance

It is an essential condition of joining a holiday with KE Adventure Travel that you have a valid travel insurance policy to cover the cost of medical treatment and to protect the value of your holiday in the event of cancellation. When taking out insurance please ensure the policy you choose covers you for the activities and altitude included in your itinerary.

For appropriate insurance cover we recommend Campbell Irvine Direct. Please go to our [Travel Insurance](#) page for further information and to get a quote.

Please note that a paper copy of your travel insurance is required if you are travelling to Huaraz and the Huayhuash region.

# Equipment Information

## Equipment List

Please try to keep the weight of your baggage to a minimum. See the 'baggage allowance' section for further details.

The packed weight of your kit bag while trekking should be no more than 15kg.

**You SHOULD bring the following items:**

- Sleeping bag (comfort rating to -10°C)\*
- Warm jacket (down)\*
- Hiking boots
- Socks
- Trekking trousers
- Lightweight waterproof overtrousers
- Underwear
- Baselayer shirts
- Casual shirt and/or T-shirts
- Fleece jacket or warm jumper
- Waterproof jacket
- Sunhat
- Warm hat
- Sunglasses
- Gloves or mittens
- Daypack 25 - 30 litres
- Headtorch with spare batteries
- Sun protection (including total bloc for lips, nose etc.)

- Water bottles 1 Litre x2 (we encourage re-filling water bottles rather than single use plastic)
- Water purification tablets
- Washbag and toiletries
- Antibacterial handwash
- Small towel
- Selection of dry bags (to keep bag contents dry)
- Basic First Aid Kit including: Antiseptic cream, throat lozenges, diarrhoea treatment (Imodium) painkillers, plasters and blister treatment, Insect repellent, and re-hydration salts (Dioralite).

**The following items are optional:**

- Trainers, shoes or similar
- Spare laces
- Scarf or neck buff
- Swimwear (for hotel pools)
- Travel clothes
- Trekking poles
- Repair kit - (eg. needle, thread, duct tape)
- Camera
- Reusable cloth bag for shopping (to avoid plastic bags)

## NOTES

\*FREE sleeping bag and down jacket hire is included in your KE holiday booking upon request.

Please make all requests at least 6 weeks prior to the trip departure date. Note all hire / rental equipment is issued in Bhutan. Please remember to allow room in your trek bag for these items.

'Thermarest' inflatable camping mats are provided whilst camping.

## FESTIVAL DRESS CODE

The Bhutanese always come dressed in their finest clothing for a festival and so you may want to bring a smarter set of clothes with you to use on the days you are attending the festivals. Long sleeves and long trousers are best, women might want to bring a scarf. Dirty boots or open toed sandals should be avoided where possible. Hats and umbrellas should be avoided.

## FESTIVAL ETIQUETTE

Bhutan's Tshechus (festivals) are religious events and the festival grounds are purified and consecrated by lamas. The dancers are in a state of meditation, they believe that they transform themselves into the deities they represent on the dance ground, generating a spiritual power, which purifies, enlightens and blesses the spectators. Out of respect, whilst watching the dances, you should not eat, drink, talk or laugh loudly at inappropriate times. You should not use flash photography and please be respectful when photographing dancers or onlookers. The festivals are not tourist attractions, they are manifestations of religious traditions thousands of year's old, which we are fortunate to be able to witness.

## Cotswold Outdoor



Many of the Equipment items listed above are available from [Cotswold Outdoor](#) - our '**Official Recommended Outdoor Retailer**'. When you book a holiday with KE you will receive 12.5% discount voucher from Cotswold Outdoor and other retailers. [>> Find out more](#)

## Land Only Information

The LAND ONLY dates and prices are for joining at the hotel in Kathmandu. Transfers from Tribhuvan International (Kathmandu) Airport to/from the group hotel are provided on the first and last day of the holiday.

## Flight Inclusive Information

The FLIGHT INCLUSIVE dates and prices are based on UK flights from London to Kathmandu. Outbound flights will usually depart from the UK in the evening, arriving mid afternoon the following day (day 1 of the itinerary). Return flights will depart Kathmandu usually in the morning of the last day of the itinerary, arriving in the UK later the same day.

# Why Choose KE

## Why KE

KE have been running holidays to Bhutan for over 20 years, and we are extremely proud of our long standing relationship with our good friends in Bhutan. Staying as guests of Drongthang Village, the home village of many of our Bhutanese colleagues, is a true celebration of this friendship and a wonderful way of learning all about Bhutanese life and culture. If you would like the chance to visit one of Bhutan's spectacular festivals then be sure to check out our special festival departure, which coincides with the Black-necked Cranes festival.

**Please Note** This document was downloaded on 20/05/2024 and the trip is subject to change