

JHOMOLHARI TREK

Day 01. Arrival at Paro: The flight into Paro on our national carrier, Druk Air, is a befitting introduction to the spectacular beauty of our country. In clear weather, magnificent views of the world's highest peaks give way as you land in the lush green Paro valley. Your Bhutanese escort from Dragon Adventures will greet you on arrival, and then drive you the short distance to the hotel. Dinner and overnight at the hotel in Paro.

Day 02. Paro sightseeing: After breakfast, drive to the ruins of Drukgyel Dzong. Now in ruins, it was built by Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal to commemorate the victory over the Tibetan invaders in 1644; the dzong name's means "Victorious Druk. " The dzong was used as an administrative center until 1951 when a fire caused by a butter lamp destroyed it. Then visit Kyichu Lhakhang, one of Bhutan's oldest and most sacred monasteries dating from the introduction of Buddhism in the 8th century followed by a visit to Rimpung Dzong (Paro Dzong) built in 1646 by Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal. The dzong presently houses administrative offices. After lunch, we will tour the Ta Dzong, an ancient watchtower, which has been, since 1967, the national museum of Bhutan. Dinner and overnight at the hotel in Paro.

Day 03. Paro – Shana (Start of Trek): (Distance 14 kms. Time 5/6 hrs. Altitude 2,820 m, 9,250 ft) Our trek to Shana starts at Drukgyal Dzong. Following the Paro River, we pass cultivated fields and tiny picturesque villages. The forests are alive with numerous birds and brightly colored butterflies. We overnight at camp Shana.

Day 04. Shana – Thangthangka: (Distance 21 kms. Time 7/8 hrs. Altitude 3610 m, 11,850 ft) The trail follows the river through a heavily forested area with several isolated farmhouses. It narrows and closes-in as it winds up and down along the drainage. We pass a junction along the way where another path leads north over the Tremo La to Tibet. Overnight camp is in a meadow with a stone shelter.

Day 05. Thangthangka – Jangothang: (Distance 15 kms. Time 5/6 hrs. Altitude 4,115 m, 13,500 ft) In the morning, after passing a small army post, the trail slowly leaves the forest-line and gradually climbs into a beautiful valley passing Tegethang, a winter home of yak herdsman. Lunch will be served in one of these huts. Lots of yaks will be seen today before we arrive at the Jhomolhari base camp. High mountains overlook the camp and visible nearby are the ruins of an old fortress used to guard Bhutan against Tibetan invasions.

Day 06. Jangothang: Rest day at Jangothang. Enjoy the superb view all around. A chance to acclimatize and walk to the Jhomolhari glacier or to the lakes in the opposite direction.

Day 07. Jangothang – Lingshi: (Distance 15 kms. Time 7/8 hrs. Altitude 4,700m, 15,500 ft) The trail follows the stream for half an hour and crosses the bridge to the right side. Start the climb up to the first ridge with a breathtaking view of Jhomolhari, Jichu Drakey and Tsrin Ghang. Then walk towards the valley, almost flat for a while until the climb to the Nyeley La. After the pass it's a gradual descent to our Lingshi overnight camp, enjoying the panorama view of the peaks and Lingshi Dzong.

Day 08. Lingshi – Shodu: (Distance 15 kms. Time 8 hrs. Altitude 4820 m, 15,800 ft) The trail today climbs to Yalila La, from where on a clear day, impressive views of Mounts Jhomolhari, Tserim Kang and Masagang can be seen.

Day 09. Shodu – Barshong: (Distance 13 kms. Time 6/7 hrs. Altitude 3,600 m, 11,800 ft) This is the place where we come back to the tree-line. The path follows the Thimphu River, descending through rhododendron, juniper and other alpine forest. The views of the cliff-facing rocks and waterfalls are stunning. A hot lunch will be served by the riverside. After lunch the trail gradually ascends to the ruins of the Barshong Dzong before reaching the camp.

Day 10. Barshong – Dolamkencho: (Distance 10 kms. Time 5/6 hrs. Altitude 3,600 m, 11,800 ft) The road descends through alpine forest and once again joins the Thimphu river for a while. After lunch we climb to Dolamkencho camp.

Day 11. Dolamkencho – Dodena – Thimphu (End of Trek): The path descends through bamboo forests all the way to Dolamkencho, finally joining Thimphu River again. Arrive at Dodena where you will be picked up for the drive to Thimphu (15 km). Overnight at the hotel.

Day 12. Thimphu Sightseeing: The day begins with a visit to the National Memorial Chorten built in 1974 in honor of our late King Jigme Dorji Wangchuk, and the Dupthop Lhakhang one of the few surviving nunneries in Bhutan. We then visit the National Library, stocked with ancient Buddhist manuscripts, and the Painting School where traditional art is still kept alive through instructions in the art of painting Thangkas (sacred Buddhist religious scrolls). After lunch we drive to the Traditional Medicine Institute where medicines are prepared according to ancient practices, and to Lungtenzampa to observe the Royal silver smiths and Bhutanese paper factory at work. Other highlights include a visit to the Tashichho Dzong, seat of the national government and the Central Monastic Body, including the summer residence of the Je Khenpo (Chief Abbot of Bhutan). The Tashichho Dzong is open to visitors only in winter when the Je Khenpo and the Monk Body move to Punakha the ancient winter capital of Bhutan. We drive to Simtokha Dzong; the oldest dzong in Bhutan built by Shabdrung in 1627 and finally visit the Handicrafts Emporium followed by shopping for souvenirs in the shops of Thimphu. Overnight in hotel.

Day 13. Thimphu- Punakha - Paro: (Distance 72 kms, 2 hrs drive). After breakfast, drive to Punakha via Dochula pass. If the weather is clear, we stop for a while at Dochula to view the Higher Himalayas. Lunch will be in Punakha. After lunch, we will visit Punakha Dzong built in 1637 by Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal and situated between Pho Chu (male river) and Mo Chu (female river). For many years until the time of the second king, it served as the seat of the Government. The construction of the Dzong was foretold by Guru Rimpoche, who predicted, "...a person named Namgyal will arrive at a hill that looks like an elephant." At one time there was a smaller building here called Dzong Chu that housed a statue of Buddha. It is said that Shabdrung ordered the architect, Zowe Palep, to sleep in front of the statue. While Palep was sleeping, the Shabdrung took him in his dreams to Zangtopelri and showed him the palace of Guru Rimpoche. From his vision, the architect conceived the design for the new dzong which, in keeping with tradition, was never committed to paper. The dzong was named Druk Pungthang Dechen Phodrang, "Palace of Great Happiness." The war materials captured during the battle with Tibetans are preserved here. Punakha is still the winter residence

of the Je-Khenpo and King Jigme Dorji Wangchuk convened the first National Assembly here. In the evening, we will drive back to Paro. Enroute we can visit, Chimi Lhakhang, built in the 15th century by the Divine Madman, Drukpa Kinley. Overnight in hotel.

Day 14. Departure: Early morning, drive to the airport and farewell.