

THE DRUK PATH TREK

- Grade:** Moderate 
- Duration:** 13 days land-only
- Trekking Days:** 6
- Maximum Altitude:** 4210m
- Minimum numbers:** Requires just 4 participants to guarantee these departures at the advertised price.
- Dates and prices:** Our latest dates and prices list is available at www.catreks.com or from the CAT office.
Please also see note ** on page 3 of this document.



Trekking along the Druk Path (Doug Scott)



This trip captures the very essence of the ancient Kingdom of Bhutan, which lies secluded in the Himalaya, enveloped in a web of unique customs and deeply held beliefs that are intriguing to visitors.

The Druk Path is a wonderfully scenic route, which connects the valleys of Paro and Thimphu, crossing a lake-studded chain of mountains that separates the two valleys. In autumn and spring, clear weather permitting, it offers superb views of the Bhutan Himalaya, and in May the landscape turns to a blaze of colour with the blooming of the rhododendrons. Quiet forest trails, shimmering trout-filled lakes and yak herds grazing on the higher ridges are typical of the trek. Most days consist of 4-5 hours walking but as some of the time you will be walking at altitude, you may find it takes you longer.

There are rather few settlements along the route but several days are spent visiting Bhutan's key cultural sites before and after the trek. On our full day in the Paro valley we visit a Bhutanese farm and the Kyichu Lhakhang, the country's most revered Buddhist shrine. Ta Dzong, once a fortified watchtower, now houses the national museum and a gentle walk down a trail that leads to the Rinpung Dzong, meaning 'fortress of the heap of jewels'. From Thimphu, Bhutan's colourful capital, we have a day exploring the surrounding region, with visits to Punakha's 17th century Dzong and the Wangdi Valley, hosting a magnificent festival in October, which we have timed our visit to coincide with. In Thimphu itself, we have a day visiting all the main cultural sights, including the Painting School, where Bhutan's famous Thangka paintings are produced and the Herbal Medicine School, where centuries old cures are still taught.



Children in Wangdiphodrang, Bhutan (Doug Scott)

- **Land-only prices:**

The cost of flights are less predictable than they used to be. Airlines now request full payment upfront. As a result, we will quote you a land-only cost, and quote separately for the cheapest flights we can find at the time of your booking. We will, however, require full payment for the flights prior to booking them. If you prefer to search for alternative flights yourself, we can sell you the trek at the land-only price.

OUTLINE ITINERARY

**** The dates for this trip are dependent on the flights in and out of Paro. Flights into Bhutan are operated by Druk Air, who do not release their flight schedules until fairly close to each trekking season. Flights operate between Kathmandu and Paro, and between Delhi and Paro, but neither service is daily. Consequently, NO international flights should be booked prior to checking dates with the Community Action Treks office, as it may be necessary to reschedule the dates, to spend extra time in Delhi or Kathmandu, or to re-route to fit in with the Druk Air flights.**

**This itinerary currently fits into the Kathmandu – Paro schedule:
Flights Kathmandu to Paro are currently on Thursdays, and returning on Sundays.**

Walking and journey times are approximate

- Day 1 Arrive Kathmandu or Delhi ****
Transfer to the hotel and stay overnight
- Day 2 Fly to Paro**
Transfer to the airport for the flight to Bhutan. Stunning mountain views are a possibility if the weather is clear during the short flight. On arrival we are met and transfer to the hotel in Paro.
- Day 3 Paro**
Drive the winding road north west up the Pa Chu to Drukgeyl Dzong, the ruined fort which once defended this valley from Tibetan invasions. Mount Chomolhari, the sacred summit, reaches skyward as a splendid backdrop to the fort. Below the Dzong, we visit a typical Bhutanese farm before continuing to the Kyichu Lhakhang, one of the oldest and most sacred shrines of Bhutan. Afternoon visit to Ta Dzong, once a fortified lookout tower and now the National Museum. This fascinating day of discovering the cultural gems of Paro ends with a walk down the trail to visit the Rinpung Dzong, meaning 'fortress of the heap of jewels'. Overnight at the hotel in Paro.
- Day 4 Paro- Jele Dzong, 6-7km**
Today is a short trekking day along a well-graded trail to our first night's camp. If the weather is clear the Paro valley can be seen with snow capped mountains behind. Overnight camp (2591m).
- Day 5 Jele Dzong - Jangchulakha, 10km**
We start with an hour and a half climb before the trail levels out to a more gradual ascent. Today we walk through thick alpine forests and rhododendrons. You may see yak herders around camp (2896m).
- Day 6 Jangchulakha - Jimilangtso, 11 km**
The trail follows the ridge and on a clear day the views of the mountains and valley are sensational. Camp is close to the lakes of Jimilangtso. These lakes are famous for their giant sized trout. Overnight Camp (3353m)
- Day 7 Jimilangtso - Simkota, 11km**
The trail takes you through dwarf rhododendron trees and bypasses the lake of Janetso. Today we may come across a yak herders' camp and get an idea how these people live. Our overnight camp is close to Simkota lake and if you are lucky you can catch some lake trout for dinner. Overnight camp (3506m)
- Day 8 Simkota - Phajoding, 10km**
Today you begin with a gradual climb and if the weather permits, you will enjoy majestic view of Gankkar Puensum, the highest mountain in Bhutan, and also the other peaks. The trail slowly descends till you reach the Phajoding lodge. Overnight in the lodge or camp (2896m)
- Day 9 Phajoding - Thimphu, 7-8km**
The trek to Thimphu is all the way down through a forested area of mostly blue pine. Taking a leisurely pace you reach Thimphu in about 3 hours. Afternoon at leisure. Overnight at the hotel in Thimphu (2592m)
- Day 10 Excursion to Punakha/Wangdiphodrang**
After breakfast full day excursion to Punakha and Wangdi valleys. The drive from Thimphu crosses 3100m Dochula Pass affording one of the best views in Bhutan. In Punakha, we visit the Dzong situated at the junction of Pho Chu and Mo Chu rivers. Built in the 17th Century by Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal, this Dzong has played an important role in Bhutan's history. Then drive to Wangdiphodrang visiting its 17th century Dzong and the local market. Evening drive back to Thimphu. Overnight at the hotel in Thimphu.
- Day 11 Thimphu - Paro**
Full day of sightseeing in Thimphu, with a visit the King's Memorial Stupa, built in 1974; the Tashichhodzong, a beautiful medieval fortress/monastery and the Handicrafts Emporium. In the afternoon we visit the

National Library that houses ancient Buddhist texts and manuscripts, the Painting School and the Herbal Medicine school, famous for its traditional cures which are still practised. Evening drive to Paro. Overnight at the hotel in Paro.

Day 13 Depart Nepal or India **

Transfer to the airport for return flight. Extra days in Kathmandu or Delhi, or extensions in Nepal or India can be arranged if you wish once the Druk Air schedule has been released.

Day 12 Fly to Kathmandu or Delhi **

After breakfast, drive to Paro airport for flight to Kathmandu or Delhi. Transfer to hotel.

Important Note: Whilst we expect that the trek will run as per the itinerary, participants should accept that there is a possibility of changes being necessary subject to local conditions.

• Important note – minimum numbers:

Before booking flights, please note that this trip requires a minimum of 4 trekkers before we can guarantee the departure at the advertised price. Please note that should you decide to book your own flights, it is essential that you check with the Community Action Treks office to ensure that the departure is guaranteed before committing financially to any flights or travel arrangements.

The Price Includes:

- Return scheduled flights between Kathmandu/Delhi ** and Paro
- Airport transfers in Nepal/India** and Bhutan
- Accommodation for 2 nights in hotel in Kathmandu/Delhi** in room with shower and wc and inclusive of breakfast
- Participation in trek as detailed, inclusive of full board, transportation to/from start/end of trek, camping equipment (not sleeping bags) guide and porter services (15kg load per trekker), trek permit and national park fees
- Hotel accommodation in Bhutan as per itinerary

Not Included:

- Meals other than breakfast in Kathmandu/Delhi**
- Nepal/India and Bhutan Airport taxes (allow approximately £25)
- Nepalese or Indian** visa (Nepal: Multiple entry tourist visa: £15 for 15 days validity, Indian transit visa approx £26)
- Bhutan visa (allow approximately £40)
- Bhutan Tourism Fee (allow approximately £7)
- Drinks, telephone calls, laundry, souvenirs and other such personal expenses
- Travel insurance
- Tips