

Trekking for Kids Bhutan Trek - April 8-21 2017

April 8 -DAY 01: ARRIVE PARO

The flight to Paro is one of the most spectacular mountain flights in the world, with a constantly changing panorama of some of the highest mountains on earth. You will be met by at the Paro airport exit doors following customs formalities. After lunch enjoy afternoon sightseeing around Paro, including a visit to the Rimping Dzong to see the painting of the great saint Milarepa. Dzongs are large monasteries and district administrative centers, which were once strategic forts. Before dinner at the hotel, there will be an orientation on Bhutanese etiquette by your local guide. Overnight at your hotel in Paro.

April 9- DAY 02: PARO

In the morning, attend the Paro Tsechu (festival). Tsechu is a dual cultural and religious festival where people from all walks of life come and witness beautiful mask dances as well as traditional dances. You will see locals dressed in their finest clothes who have walked from miles around to attend the festivities. They come to watch masked dances, to pray, and to feast. While the underlying purpose of the festival is spiritual, dances are more often like plays, telling stories where good triumphs over evil, or depicting significant historical events, especially surrounding the life of Bhutan's patron saint, Padmasambhava (also known as Guru Rinpoche, the second Buddha). There is inevitably a great deal of socializing as well. Overnight at your hotel in Paro.

April 10 -DAY 03: PARO

After breakfast, drive to the project site where we will work on finishing up the projects we helped fund and do some simple religious ceremony with the monks. The afternoon will be spent doing activities with the children. Overnight at your hotel in Paro.

April 11-DAY 04: PARO – THANGTHANGKA (7-8 hours)

The trek begins. A 3 hours drive brings us to the end of the road at Shana. While the horsemen and staff are loading the horses, we will start walking on the trail that follows the river, *Chomolhari*, from *Thangthangka* through a forested area with scattered farm houses. We climb steadily through oak, rhododendron, bamboo & fern, passing a junction where a path leads north over the Tremo La to Tibet. In former days, traders returning this way from Tibet were taxed in salt at a bridge just beyond Shana but the border is now closed. Our campsite is in a meadow at Thangthangka, 3520m. A long day, made more strenuous due to the altitude. 12.5 miles (20 km), 7-8 hours, 2,526ft (770m) ascend

April 12-DAY 05: THANGTHANGKA – JANGOTHANG (7 hours)

The trail slowly leaves the forest line and gradually climbs into a beautiful valley, passing Tegethang, a winter home of the yak herdsman. Lots of yaks will be seen today before we arrive at Chomolhari's base, Jangothang. Chomolhari, 24,000 ft, (7315m) overlooks the camp and visible nearby are the ruins of an old Dzong which used to guard Bhutan against Tibetan invasions. 12 miles (19 km), 7 hours, 1575ft (480m) ascend

April 13-DAY 06: JANGOTHANG (Rest Day)

A rest day – our bodies need to acclimatize and catch up with the height gain of the last two days. There are a number of good side trips from camp you can walk easily up the valley towards Chomolhari, climb the ridge behind camp to a high pedestal, or walk to a beautiful high lake with very fine views of Chomolhari ‘Goddess of the Holy Mountain’ & Jitchu Drake (6989m). Alternatively, recline in your tent and enjoy superb views from there!

April 14-DAY 07: JANGOTHANG – LINGSHI (7-8 hours)

Our route today crosses Nyile La (4890m), ‘Sleepy Pass’, a challenging climb still dominated by Chomolhari and Jitshu Drake but with views of Tserim Gang (23,000ft, 6526m) to the north and Gancheta (‘Great Tiger Mountain’, 22,440ft, 6840m) to the east. In these high altitudes we hope to see bearded vultures and Himalayan griffon as well as blue sheep. From the pass we descend to reach our camp – the horses tend to travel faster than us so with any luck there will be a welcome brew ready at camp. 11 miles (18km), 7-8 hours+, 2755ft (840m) ascend

April 15-DAY 08: LINGSHI – WALEYTHANG (8 hours)

Today we cross the Yale La (15,813ft, 4820m). An early start is needed, as it’s a long day with a lot of climbing. The gentle trail along the Mo Chu River is initially dominated by Lingshi Dzong behind us, which recedes in the distance as we climb. After 3 hours we cross the river, then another 2 hours at a slow and steady pace should see us on the pass enjoying a splendid panorama including Chomolhari, Gancheta, Tserim Kang and many others. In snow this crossing may be tougher for the horses than for us. A steady, never too steep descent leads past slopes where blue sheep graze and we follow the Thimphu Chu on a good track to Shodu. Now our route diverges from the river and the main trail and heads off to a camp at Waleythang (13,650ft, 4160m.) 8 hours+. 3084ft (940m) ascend

April 16-DAY 09: WALEYTHANG – JIGMELANGTSHO (7-8 hours)

Following the valley downstream from our camp, we cross the Tango Chari Chu, thankfully on a new bridge, the old version being little more than a wobbly plank. The trail climbs across another forested ridge to drop into the next valley. A slow climb now leads through pine forest and over to the large sacred lake of Jigmelangtsho where we camp.

April 17-DAY 10: JIGMELANGTSHO -TSALUNA(6-7 hours)

The trail follows the Jigmelangtsho River and will be descending all day towards Tsaluna village. On the trek down, you may see farmers at work, giving you an insight into Bhutanese rural community. After arriving at the village, your cars will be there to pick you up and drive to Thimphu, the capital city for the night. Overnight at your hotel in Thimphu.

April 18-DAY 11: THIMPHU- Sightseeing in the capital

After a well earned, restful night, visit some of the highlights of Thimphu including the National Memorial Chorten, completed as a memorial stupa for the Third King who passed away in 1972 by the Royal Queen Mother.

After lunch, drive to Kuensel Phodrang popularly known as Buddha Point where the world's largest and tallest statue of Buddha is built. From here you will enjoy a beautiful view of the Thimphu valley. In the evening, explore the bustling small city of Thimphu.

You will then visit the Tashichho Dzong, which houses the secretariat, the throne room and offices of the King and the ministries of home & cultural affairs and finance. Part of this dzong also serves as the summer residence of the Dratshang (Central Monastic Body), including the Je Khenpo (Chief Abbot of Bhutan). Overnight at your hotel in Thimphu.

April 19-DAY 12: THIMPHU-PUNAKHA

After breakfast at your hotel, drive to Punakha (1310m), which is an ancient capital of Bhutan. On the way we will stop at the Dochula Pass (3150m), a perfect location for capturing some breathtaking photos and if the weather permits you will also be able to enjoy spectacular views of the mighty Himalayas.

After a light refreshment, you will continue with the drive and before you enter Punakha, there will be a short leisure hike to Chimey Lhakhang (the Fertility Temple). If you heard or read of the Divine Madman, then you will know this temple. It was built in 1499 in honor of the Divine Madman Lama Saint Drukpa Kuenley after he subdued the demons of the Dochula Pass with his "magic thunder bolt of wisdom". The temple is also known as "the Temple of Fertility" and a wooden effigy of the Lama's thunderbolt is preserved inside the temple. Women who are unable to conceive child go to this temple to receive blessings or empowerment from this saint. Believe it or not, there are real life stories of miracles.

Later, you will visit the Punakha Dzong, built in 1637 by Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyel, the founding father of Bhutan. The dzong is impressively located between two rivers, the Pho Chu (Male River) and the Mo Chu (Female River). This was the second dzong built in Bhutan by Zhabdrung. Punakha dzong is also winter residence of the Je Khenpo (Chief Abbot) and the Central Monastic Body. Overnight at your hotel in Punakha.

April 20-DAY 13: PUNAKHA-PARO

Today you will return from Punakha to Paro. Visit Tiger's Nest (Taktsang) Monastery in the afternoon. The walk of approximately 3.5 hours uphill takes you almost a kilometer above the Paro valley (for those who cannot hike we will arrange a horse for transfer up to cafeteria for extra charge). The view of Tiger's Nest Monastery built on a sheer cliff face 900 metres above the valley floor is a spectacular sight. The Monastery is an important pilgrim site for Buddhists. The great Guru Rimpoche is said to have flown here on the back of a tigress when he brought the teachings of the Buddhist Dharma to Bhutan in the 8th Century. Overnight stay at hotel in Paro.

April 21-DAY 14: DEPART PARO

Breakfast in the hotel, and then drive to the airport for flight to your onward destination.