



TRIP DETAILS | BHUTAN

WE'LL GENERALLY BE TRAVELING AROUND 4,000 - 7,000 FEET WITH A MAX ELEVATION OF 10,000 FEET. ALTHOUGH THE WEATHER IS TYPICALLY NICE IN OCTOBER AND NOVEMBER, CONDITIONS CAN CHANGE QUICKLY. A WARM JACKET WILL KEEP YOU COMFORTABLE IN THE UPPER ELEVATIONS. IF YOU KNOW YOU RUN COLD, PACK APPROPRIATELY.



Basic Dzongkha words and phrases don't easily translate between English and Dzongkha, but here are a few phrases to get you started.

"Tashi Delek" — "Blessings and Good Luck"
"Kuzgozangpo La" — "Hello"

PACKING LIST

- 2 Pairs of Long Pants
- 2 Dresses / Skirts for Women
- 4 Shirts
- Fleece Pants
- Casual Shoes
- Hiking Shoes
- 3 Pairs of Wool Socks
- Heavy Fleece or Down Jacket
- Rain Coat and Rain Pants
- 1-2 Warm Beanies
- Underwear
- Daypack
- Sunscreen and Sun Hat or Visor
- Earplugs for Sleeping
- Book or Journal
- Camera / Spare Batteries
- Sunglasses with Strap
- Headlamp / Spare Batteries
- Contacts or Spare Glasses
- Personal Medications / First Aid Kit
- Toiletries
- Handy Wipes / Hand Sanitizer
- Collapsible Hiking Poles (Optional)
- Schnacks — (See page three)

RIVER GEAR

- Paddle Jacket
- 2-3 Capilene / Wool / Synthetic Tops, Light to Heavy Weight
- 2 Pairs of River Shorts
- Synthetic Long Johns
- Water Bottle (See Section On Purification)
- River Shoes or Athletic Sandals
- Neoprene Gloves (Optional)
- Neoprene Socks (Optional)



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TRIP CHECKLIST

- Send a scanned copy of passport to the [NWRC Global Headquarters](#).
- Complete your Trip Registration online, or fill out the paper form and mail or fax it to the NWRC office.
- You are required to purchase travel insurance that includes, among other things, an evacuation benefit. Your trip insurance should cover the trip cost and Druk Air flight, since there are no refunds once we've booked your space. We recommend [Travel Insurance Select](#).
- Meet with your doctor and / or local travel clinic to receive vaccinations and advice for medications before the trip. Please plan ahead as some vaccinations may take several weeks.
- Make your flight and hotel reservations in anticipation of your arrival in Bangkok.
- Final payment is due 60 days before your trip.

GETTING TO BHUTAN

The easiest way to fly from the United States is through Bangkok, Thailand. Your Druk Air flights from Bangkok to the Paro Airport in Bhutan will be arranged for you along with your Visa. We will meet you at the airport in Paro when your flight arrives.

At the Bangkok airport, you will need to go through customs and immigration in order to reach the Druk Air counter. In Thailand, you don't need a visa if you are a United States citizen staying for maximum of 30 days for the purpose of tourism.

You have a few options for arrival in Bangkok.

- Arrive in Bangkok a couple days early, explore the town, and get over your jet lag. This is the recommended option since you'll be well rested when you arrive in Bhutan, and since Bangkok is an interesting city.
- Arrive in Bangkok the day before your flight to Paro and sleep at the [Novatel Hotel](#), which is close to the airport.
- Arrive in Bangkok late the night before your flight to Paro and sleep at the airport.

Please be aware that bags over 44 lbs may be subject to additional package fees.

PERSONAL FIRST AID KIT

- Tums, Pepto Bismol, ibuprofen, motions sickness meds, personal prescriptions
- Band-Aids and antibiotic ointment
- If you have something you are particularly prone to: ear infections, foot rot, or sinus problems, bring what you need with you.
- The [Center for Disease Control](#) provides free information for travelers.
- Please advise your trip leader if you are taking any medications or have any health concerns.

WATER PURIFICATION

We will always have plenty of bottled purified water available but the empty bottles add up and it's nice to purify your own water when possible. Here are some good options if you're looking into a personal purifier.

- Chemical - Chlorine dioxide is the current preferred chemical treatment method to kill microorganisms and viruses in your water. This method is cheap, portable and comes in tablets or liquid. (AquaMira, Katadyn, Potable Aqua \$10-\$20)
- UV - Ultraviolet light is a great way to make water safe to drink, and new technology has made this option portable.

PADDLE JACKET

We provide basic paddling jackets, wetsuits, and helmets when they are required. A "paddling jacket" or "dry top" is a piece of river gear that we recommend you invest in for this and future trips and works well as a back-up rain jacket. Be sure you get one that (a) fits well, (b) is fashionable, and (c) keeps you warm on the river.



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WEATHER AND CLIMATE

The weather is typically quite pleasant in November. Daytime highs are often comfortable, however mornings can be brisk. The weather in November is typically quite nice with sunny skies and highs in the 80s, but please be prepared for cold weather and rain. We will likely experience chilly temperatures when we go over the 10,000 foot Dochula Pass.

BEING IN BHUTAN

The inhabitants of Bhutan are gracious, gentle, and very hospitable. They are peace loving and possess a lively sense of humor. This is truly adventure travel, and sometimes, traveling in a developing country can be fascinating and frustrating at the same moment. Our goal is to maximize the former and minimize the latter without insulating you from the experience. So, a certain “roll-with-the-punches” attitude will go a long way in making your trip fun and memorable. We'll work hard to provide you with an incredible experience. It is possible that the roads could become impassable for a spell or the rivers raging. We will make the most of any situation. If we can't follow our rafting itinerary, we'll do our best to substitute something just as unforgettable.

ACCOMMODATIONS

Hotels vary in style and quality from town to town but are generally considered to be one of the welcome surprises for visitors to Bhutan. All hotels are clean and well maintained. During the colder months, hotels are heated and extra blankets or comforters are provided in each room. Hotel staff are exceptionally accommodating and will do whatever they can do make guest feel more comfortable. All hotels have their own restaurant, and some also have a bar.

In general, Bhutan is a VERY conservative country, and we try hard to not offend the culture. Women please wear pants or long skirt when traveling in public. Giving children candy or money often does more harm than good.

Spending a little time with the locals usually turns out to be a great experience for everyone. They very much enjoy your time and conversation, and looking at your digital camera pictures of themselves!

FOOD

Bhutanese typically eat a spicy dish called Ema Datshi, a zesty combination of peppers and cheese served with rice. We will typically eat western style food served buffet style at our hotels and restaurants. There will be a variety of meat and vegetable dishes served with tea. Bottled water, soda, and beer will be available at an extra charge.

“Schnacks” — Sharing makes the trip a bit more social. We'll provide ample snacks, but it's always nice to bring something from home to share with the rest of the group during the trip. Feel free to share your favorite candy, trail mix, or bars with the rest of the group!

CURRENCY

The national currency of Bhutan is the Ngultrum (Nu). CASH in the form of US Dollars in 100 Dollar Bills is the easiest currency to exchange and can be exchanged when you arrive at the airport. There are a couple ATMs in Thimphu, but they are not reliable, so please do not depend on them. The nicer souvenir shops in Thimphu, associated with hotels, do take credit cards and can exchange traveler's checks.

All normal expenses during the trip are covered, except for drinks at our meals. Most people bring between \$500 - \$1000 for shopping, drinks, miscellaneous items, and tips.

PASSPORTS AND VISAS

You will need a passport that is valid for 6 months from date of travel. Bring a photocopy of the important pages of your passport and a copy of your birth certificate in case you lose your passport. Keep all these items separate from your valuables. Your Bhutan Visa and your Druk Air ticket will be emailed to you prior to your trip. You MUST have copies of these emails at the Bangkok Airport.



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GEOGRAPHY

The Kingdom of Bhutan lies east of Nepal and west of the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh. It is south of the Tibetan region of China and north of the Indian states of Assam and West Bengal.

Located in the heart of the high Himalayan mountain range, Bhutan is a land-locked country surrounded by mountains in the north and west. Altitudes in the more populated central regions range from 400 feet in the east around Trashigang to a high of 17,000 feet over the highest pass. The altitude at Thimphu, the capital, is 7,700 feet.

LANGUAGE

Most Bhutanese speak both English and Dzongkha, the national language of Bhutan. The word “dzongkha” means the language spoken in the dzongs “fortresses” established throughout Bhutan by its unifier, Ngawang Namgyal, in the 17th century. Nepali and Hindi are also commonly spoken throughout Bhutan.

RELIGION

Bhutan is the only country in the world to retain the tantric form of Mahayana Buddhism as its official religion. The Buddhist faith has played, and continues to play, a fundamental role in the cultural, ethical, and sociological development of Bhutan and its people. It permeates all strands of secular life, bringing with it a reverence for the land and the well being of everything and everyone. The religion, which influences every aspect of life here, was also the main impetus behind Bhutan’s birth as a country.

To ensure the perpetuation of Buddhism in the Kingdom, one son from each family normally attends monastic school. While the Dzongs are centers of administrative and government activities for all the community, they are also predominantly the homes and temples of the monastic community/body.

HISTORY AND POLITICS

The history of the Kingdom dates back to the 8th century, with Guru Rinpoche’s legendary flight from Tibet to Bhutan in 747 A.D, on the back of a tigress. The Guru arrived in Taktsang (Tiger’s Nest), on the cliffs above the valley of Paro, and from there began the propagation of the Tantric form of Mahayana Buddhism. In the ensuing centuries, many great masters preached the faith, resulting in the full bloom of Buddhism in the country by the middle ages.

Although sectarian at first, the country was eventually unified under the Drukpa Kagyupa sect of Mahayana Buddhism in the early 17th century, by the religious figure Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal. The Shabdrung codified a comprehensive system of laws and built dzongs which guarded each valley during unsettled times, and today serve as the religious and administrative centers of their respective regions. In the next two centuries, the nation was once again fragmented into regional fiefdoms with intermittent civil wars.

At the end of the 19th century, the Tongsa Penlop, Ugyen Wangchuck, who then controlled the central and eastern regions, overcame all his rivals and united the nation once again. He was unanimously accepted as the first hereditary monarch of Bhutan in 1907. Monarchy passed from father to son for four more generations.

After his coronation, his Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck, opened Bhutan for tourism in 1974. He decided that English would be the country’s second language, and it is now taught in all schools. He is credited with bringing Bhutan into the modern age, and opening relations with nations around the world. In March 2005, King Jigme Singye Wangchuck unveiled the government’s draft constitution which introduced major democratic reforms. He also abdicated the throne to his son, Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck (the 5th King), in order to give him experience as head of state before the democratic transition. Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck was coronated in 2008 and married Jetsun Pema in 2011.

Quick Bhutanese translations:
Chhu = river, La = pass, Dzong = monastery/fortress,
Lhakhang = Monastery, and Stupa/Chorten = shrine

