

## India and Bhutan Tour

<b>Trip code</b>	
<b>Package name</b>	India and Bhutan Tour
<b>Duration</b>	13
<b>Max. elevation</b>	3180 m
<b>Level</b>	MODERATE
<b>Transportation</b>	All grounded vehicals depending on group size.
<b>Accomodation</b>	3***hotel twin sharing bed basis during the tour
<b>Starts at</b>	Kolkatta
<b>Ends at</b>	Paro
<b>Trip route</b>	kolkatta - Darjeeling - Silguri - Phuntsholing - Thimphu - Punakha - Bumthang - Gangthey - Thimphu - Paro
<b>Cost</b>	USD 3,950 per person

## Highlights

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## Overview

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**India and Bhutan Tour combines the sightseeing tour of the most famous places of two south Asian countries which are culturally, historically and naturally rich. You will experience the hustle and bustle of a city life of Kolkata to the peaceful environment of Bumthang. You will observe the variation of culture, customs, tradition and architect of two different countries.**

India and Bhutan are both the South Asian countries which have their own historical as well as cultural importance. Both these countries also possess some great view of Himalayas. Unlike India, Bhutan is not well into modernization but also the Bhutanese people are educated and are interested

on what is happening around the world. You can experience remote and picturesque parts of India and Bhutan on this incredible overland adventure. From India's cultural capital of Kolkata to the Bhutanese gem of Paro, journey through lush rice paddies, hilltop monasteries and stunning mountainous terrain. Friendly local people, beautiful vistas and character-packed destinations, this tour will provide a new insight to your living.

Flying over to the International Airport of Kolkata, the very same day we will take a train to Siliguri. After an overnight journey, we reach Siliguri in the next morning from where we will take a 4 WD to Darjeeling, one of the famous hill stations of India. After spending two nights in Darjeeling, we drive back to Siliguri and have a sightseeing tour there. From Siliguri, we take a bus to Phuntsholing from where we leave India and enter the kingdom of Bhutan. After applying the visa, the next day we drive to Thimphu and have one night extra for the sightseeing tour. From Thimphu we further drive to Punakha and then to Bumthang, Gangtey and finally to Paro where our 13 days tour comes to an end.

## Trip Itinerary

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### Day 1 : Arrival at Kolkata.

From your place, you can fly to Kolkata Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose International Airport, India. After baggage and custom clearance, you will be transferred to your respective hotel by one of the representative of Nature Trail Travel & Tours, Trekking & Expeditions. The afternoon is then free to explore Kolkata, before taking an overnight sleeper train from Kolkata to Siliguri. During your free time, you can perhaps discover the world's largest tree (The Great Banyan Tree) at the A. J. C. Bose Botanic Gardens, the place where tea was first cultivated in India. Explore the streets of the BBD Bagh, the heart of Kolkata and one of the best areas of British colonial architecture in the world. Possibly visit and support the Usthi Foundation's school and farm for impoverished children in Kolkata, and see the amazing work they do (if available). Visit the Eden Gardens, the most famous and iconic cricket stadium in India. See the famous Howrah Bridge over the Hooghly River, thought to be the busiest bridge in the world with 150,000 pedestrians and 100,000 vehicles crossing every day. Discover the incredible array of art and historical artefacts on display at the Indian Museum in Kolkata, the largest and oldest museum in India. Explore the vast fields and parks of the Maidan (the 'lungs of Kolkata') and observe daily life away from the chaos of the city. See the huge white marble Victoria Memorial, built in the early 20th century by the British Viceroy of India and a grandiose reminder of Kolkata's colonial past. Visit the Mother Teresa of Calcutta Centre, a museum illustrating the life and work of the famous and controversial missionary. There are plenty of things to see and do. You may need an extra day for whole day sightseeing tour in Kolkata. Thus, you can contact Nature Trails Travel & Tours, Trekking & Expedition's if you would like help in booking pre-tour accommodation in Kolkata.

### Day 2 : Arrival at Siliguri and drive to Darjeeling – 2 hrs. drive.

Early morning, our train stops at the Siliguri Station. From here, we take a four wheel drive along the narrow but steep path to reach Darjeeling. We pass through the winding roads and drive for about two hours in order to reach Darjeeling. Darjeeling is situated on a high ridge, linked by a series of steps and winding lanes at an elevation of 6,700 feet above sea level. Surrounded by rice and tea terraces, Darjeeling is a town that is really more a collection of villages. The resultant distinctive Darjeeling tea is

internationally recognized and ranks among the most popular of the black teas. Views are amazing from here, so take a walk and get your bearings of the area. One can observe the spectacular views of Kangchenjunga, the world's third-highest mountain, and the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The cool climate and slow pace of life here are an abrupt contrast to the rest of India. It's a pleasant place to explore, with monasteries and tea plantations to visit and Tibetan craft shops and markets to browse through.

### **Day 3 : Full day sightseeing tour in Darjeeling.**

Early in the morning, drive to Tiger Hill to see the spectacular sunrise view. You can also see the incredible view of Mount Kanchenjunga, the third highest mountain in the World. Take a scenic ride on the famous Darjeeling Himalayan Railway up to Ghoom, the highest train station in India. The views are fantastic from here, looking down onto the rivers below with Mount Kanchenjunga in the background – and on a clear day even Mount Everest can be seen in the distance. Perhaps visit the Tibetan Refugee Self Help Centre near Darjeeling, a home, hospital, and craft center for Tibetans who have fled persecution and taken sanctuary in India. You can also visit the huge and colorful Dali Monastery near Darjeeling, the residence of the supreme head of the Kagyupa sect of Buddhism. Visit the Japanese Peace Pagoda in Darjeeling, one of a series of stupas built worldwide to promote world peace and non-violence. Explore the Happy Valley Tea Estate, the oldest tea plantations in Darjeeling, and learn all about the tea industry for which the area is famous. See the museum at the Himalayan Mountaineering Institute, containing many exhibits from mountaineering history and the grave of Tenzing Norgay, one of the first men to summit Mount Everest.

### **Day 4 : Drive Darjeeling to Siliguri – 2 hrs. drive.**

Retrace your steps back to Siliguri today. If you want, you can explore the nearby tourist spots. Perhaps visit Triratna Monastery, 15 – 20 minutes from Siliguri a monastery in the Nyingma tradition of Tibetan Buddhism. Visit Dudhia, a picturesque tourist spot. Explore Mahananda Wildlife Sanctuary, a wildlife sanctuary at the foothills of the Himalayas. One can hire a vehicle and enter the sanctuary at a minimal entry fee. Different types of wild animals are found here. However it is famous for its wild elephants and peacocks. However, the sanctuary is closed during monsoon seasons, i.e. 15th July to 15th September. Visit North Bengal Wild Animals Park, which contains, a leopard, tiger, rhino, deer and Himalayan black bear safari, bird aviaries, small cats compound, crocodile ponds and a botanical trail. Possibly visit Sed-Gyued Institute of Buddhist Studies, Salugara, inaugurated by the Dalai Lama in 1999; this institute is in the Gelepu tradition of Tibetan Buddhism. The compound includes a 100-foot Tashi Gomang Stupa.

### **Day 5 : Drive Siliguri to Phuntsholing – approx. 6 hrs. drive.**

The Bhutan Government buses depart for Phuntsholing at 7:30 am and 1:30 pm every day from the bus station. There are more frequent Indian buses to the border town of Jaigaon. From this border you'll exit India and enter Bhutan kingdom. There you will be welcomed by our Bhutanese guide. If you haven't got the Visa then our leader will collect all your passports to get the visa process underway, in order to save time in the morning. In the evening, if you are not really tired then you can explore the beautiful town.

### **Day 6 : Drive Phuntsholing Thimphu(2,320m/7,424ft) – approx. 8/9 hrs. drive.**

This morning, enjoy a leisurely breakfast while the visa process is underway. Once officially inside Bhutan, drive from the warmer climates of Phuntsholing up to the Bhutanese capital of Thimphu, nestled in the foothills of the Himalayas. Use free time in the evening to take a stroll around Thimphu, and begin to soak in the relaxed atmosphere and laid back way of life of this picturesque country. Recharge your batteries tonight after a long day of travel in your hotel in Thimphu. Today's driving time will take around eight to nine hours.

## **Day 7 : Thimphu sightseeing tour.**

After appetizing breakfast, we will proceed for full day sightseeing tour in Thimphu. Initially, we start our sightseeing tour with a visit to National Memorial Chorten. This temple was first initiated by the Third King as a protection from the negative elements of modernization, and as a monument to world peace. The Royal Queen Mother completed it as a memorial Stupa for the Third King who passed away in 1972. Then we will continue our visit to 12th century Changangkha Temple and Drubthob monastery housing the Zilukha Nunnery. If you want to see Takin, the national animal of Bhutan then you can proceed onto mini-zoo. The Takin (a goat-antelope) was declared the national animal of Bhutan because it is strongly associated with the country's religious history and mythology. After sightseeing of these sites, if you still have some time left then you can visit to National Library, the priceless collection of Buddhist manuscripts and few English version books; Folk and Heritage Museum, which displays day to day livelihood of typical Bhutanese farmers in medieval period and their accessories; Late King's Memorial Stupa, built for the world peace and Traditional Handmade Paper Factory; Painting School, which preserves our traditional paintings, sculpturing and wood curving and National Handicraft Emporium, the best place to look for souvenir from Bhutan. You can also visit the Rinpung Dzong, meaning 'fortress of the heap of jewels' to see the painting of the great saint Milarepa, considered as the master of meditation by the Bhutanese and believed to have attained enlightenment in a lifetime. The Dzong is now used as an administration center and school for monks. Dzongs are large monasteries and district administrative centers, which were once strategic forts. Some of the landmarks are closed on the weekend (Saturdays and Sundays). Therefore, if your visit to Thimphu coincides with the weekend, you can walk through the Thimphu Market to see the variety of food of Bhutan, including basket upon basket of fiery chilies, cheese and a variety of greens. (This market is open only from Friday-Sunday). After a full day sightseeing tour in Thimphu, we further drive to Punakha, valley famous for the massive amount production of crops and fruits.

## **Day 8 : Drive Thimphu to Punakha(1,250m/4,100 ft) 76 km – approx. 2/3 hrs. drive.**

After breakfast, we set out on a scenic drive to Punakha with a stop at Dochu La pass (3,100m) for a hot drink, where on a clear day we can get spectacular views of the Eastern Himalaya ranges. You'll probably notice the change of climate and vegetation as we approach the low-lying Punakha at 1,250 metres altitude. From the pass, we drive downhill through rhododendron, fir and hemlock forests. We stop at Lobesa and hike through rice paddies to Chimi Lhakhang temple. This temple is dedicated to Drukpa Kuenley, or the 'Divine Madman', who is believed to bless women who seek fertility. On arrival to Punakha this afternoon, visit the strategically placed Punakha Dzong (Palace of Great Happiness) at the confluence of the Po Chu and the Mo Chu rivers. If time permits observe the incredible 52m-tall golden Buddha Dordenma statue in the hills above Thimphu, the largest sitting Buddha statue in the world. Tonight, spend the night in a traditional farmhouse and relax before another day of travel.

## **Day 9 : Drive Punakha to Bumthang – approx. 8/9 hrs. drive.**

On the following day, we drive to Trongsa. Trongsa is the gateway to central Bhutan at 2,180 metres. Set amid spectacular scenery, Trongsa Dzong, the ancestral home of Bhutan's royal family, commands the eye from miles away. You'll also be able to visit Ta Dzong, which is the newly opened museum in the watchtower. Dedicated to the Wangchuk dynasty, it tells the stories of the Dzong and the valley, featuring personal belongings of the kings and queens of Bhutan. Continue through some of Bhutan's most idyllic landscapes to Bumthang, an area of high valleys that sits between 2,580 – 3,100 metres. On arrival at Bumthang, you will stay in a local farmhouse where you'll experience a genuine slice of Bhutanese life and hospitality. The facilities here are quite basic, but the accommodation is exactly how a typical Bhutanese family live; and the food are in no way adapted for tourists.

## **Day 10 : Sightseeing tour in Bumthang.**

Sightseeing tour in the spiritual heartland of Bhutan includes many legendary monasteries, temples and palaces. Take a beautiful 6-hour hike into the hills above Bumthang to visit the peaceful and remote Padtshaling Monastery. Visit the incredible Trongsa Dzong, the largest Buddhist fortress in Bhutan set against the stunning backdrop of the Black Mountains. You can also visit sacred sites including Jamba Lhakhang, Kurje Lhakhang and Tamshing Lhakhang, followed by a visit to MembarTsho (Burning Lake), one of Bhutan's most important pilgrimage sites. You can also visit Bhutan's largest Dzong, Jakar, with its picturesque location overlooking the Chokhor Valley.

## **Day 11 : Drive Bumthang to Gangtey – approx. 6 hrs. drive.**

Drive for about six hours to reach Gangtey. Gangtey is situated at the height of 2,900 metres above sea level. On arrival, enjoy the immense views of the remote Phobjikha Valley and the Black Mountains. Move onto visit Gangtey Gumpa (one of Bhutan's oldest and recently renovated monasteries) and explore the valley where the villagers continue to live a traditional Bhutanese rural lifestyle. This is the site where black-necked cranes visit in their hundreds in November of each year, after spending the summer in Tibet. Explore the colorful, recently-restored Gangtey Gumpa, a monastic college famous for its annual festival to welcome the migration of black-necked cranes.

## **Day 12 : Hike around Gangtey village.**

This morning, venture out on a day walk in the valley known as the Shasi La Nature Trail. The trail is used by the people of Sha Ngawang and Chitokha to migrate between their summer and winter homes in Gangtey. It was also an important trail used by the Gangtey Truelku and his followers in the past, when migrating between his winter residence in Sha Chitokha and Gangtey Gumpa. The walk takes around six hours for casual trekkers to reach Kheylaykha from Phobjikha, and is especially great for bird lovers as there's an abundance of wildlife in the area.

## **Day 13 : Drive Gangtey to Paro – approx. 4/5 hrs. drive.**

If you have still some days to extend then there are two choices on this day. Either hike up to the hilltop village of Rinchengang and learn about its interesting history or drive to Paro after breakfast and have a sightseeing tour around the valley. Rinchengang is picturesquely situated on a steep ridge near Wangdi. So, the choice is yours. Upon arrival at Paro, you can visit impressive Paro Dzong, one of the finest

examples of Bhutanese architecture. If you have to catch up a flight today then we will directly transfer you to the airport for your departure.

## Inclusions

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### What is included?

Accommodation twin sharing bed basis of full board Meals (breakfast, lunch, and dinner) in Bhutan.

Accommodation twin sharing bed basis on B/B Plan in India. ( Bed and Breakfast)

All the grounded transportation from India and Bhutan during the tour.

English-speaking, government-licensed local guide for sightseeing in Nepal and Bhutan.

Entry and permit fees during a Sightseeing tour

India and Bhutan visa fee and special permit from Nepal to Bhutan tour.

### What isn't included?

Any Lunch and dinner in India.

Entry Visa fees - at present \$25 for 15 day, US\$ 40 for 30 day, and US\$ 100 for three month visa on entry into Nepal.

Travel and medical insurance.

Personal expenses (laundry, bar bills, snacks, phone calls, internet.)

Tips for guide and driver (tipping is expected)

Loss, theft or damage to baggage and personal effects. (We strongly advise you to get personal travel insurance.)

## Complimentary