



Paro Dzong

Bhutan

Land of the Thunder Dragon

A Redbird itinerary

delivered by Mark Bratt Travel

<https://markbratttravel.com>

Tiger's Nest & the Taj Mahal

12 nights visiting:

Delhi – Thimpu – Punakha – Paro – Agra - Delhi

From £4,170 pp

(£400 single room supplement)

(including UK/India return flights and India/Bhutan return flights with 30kg baggage allowance)

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About the Tiger's Nest and the Taj Mahal itinerary devised by Redbird

I am most fortunate; I have visited Bhutan three times and I have travelled extensively in the 'Land of the Thunder Dragon'. I have seen bananas growing alongside rice paddies and looked up to see snow-capped Himalayan peaks. I have witnessed 'tsechus', the community religious festivals that are the heart of Bhutan, and I have seen a country steeped in tradition emerging, at its own pace, into a modern world.

Bhutan is the last remaining Himalayan kingdom, and its ancient culture has been remarkably well-preserved. Bhutan is a land of pristine natural beauty, and Buddhist traditions. And Bhutan is actually the world's only carbon neutral country, with forest covering 70% of the land, which absorb three times more climate changing carbon than emissions produce.

It is a country that has remained largely off the beaten path, and as a result, it offers a rare and unforgettable travel experience, where you can enjoy the Bhutanese philosophy of **Gross National Happiness** (GNH). GNH is a unique concept that measures the well-being of a nation by taking into account not just economic factors, but also social, cultural, and environmental factors. By visiting Bhutan, you can learn more about this philosophy and see how it shapes the lives of the Bhutanese people.

With the ending of Covid travel restrictions, Bhutan imposed a prohibitively expensive tourist tax of US\$200 per person per day. This tax adds considerably to the cost of visiting a country that is both stunningly beautiful, largely unspoiled and culturally rich. The tax, called a *sustainable development fee*, sits on top of other costs for hotels, food transportation and guide fees; this makes Bhutan an exclusive destination, unaffordable for most who would like to sample its inimitable attractions. **But there is good news:** the SD tax has now been halved to \$100/day (£80) and I have designed a 12 night itinerary, using small, affordable, traditional family hotels, that provides an introduction to Bhutan at a great price. And, because access to Bhutan is via India (Delhi) I have included an optional short extension to visit nearby Agra to see the incomparable, awe inspiring marvel, the Taj Mahal.

Graham Ellison Roberts – Redbird Travel



Paro Taktsang (Tiger's Nest) monastery



The Taj Mahal, Shah Jahan's monument to love

Tiger's Nest & the Taj Mahal – the itinerary

Bhutan may be visited at any time of the year but, to avoid the low visibility caused by the SW monsoon, and the possibility of road closures in winter, it is recommend that travel is best from March to May and from September to November when the skies are clear, and the temperatures are mild.

- Date TBA UK departure from the airport of your choice for your flight to Delhi.
(We will find the best flights for you)
- Day 01 On arrival at Delhi airport by flight [Ex TBA; ETA -TBA hrs], you will be met by our representative who will be holding a paging board with your name on it and then you will be transferred to your hotel. (Standard check-in time at the hotel is 1400 hrs – though an early check-in can be requested if needed).
In the evening you can take a stroll through INA market accompanied by our expert chef. This walk is followed by a cooking demonstration and dinner with the family.

Haveli Hauz Khas
- Day 02 Breakfast at your hotel.
After breakfast, you will visit old Delhi's sights including Raj-Ghat, Red Fort, Jama Masjid (Masjid-i-Jehan-Numa, commonly known as the Jama Masjid of Delhi, is one of the largest mosques in India. It was built by the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan between 1644 and 1656) and the street market Chandni-Chowk by tuc-tuc.
Later, a further sightseeing tour of New Delhi visiting the Qutab Minar, Humayun's Tomb, India Gate, and Sir Edwin Lutyens' architectural gems; the President's Residence & the Old Parliament House.
Return to your hotel.

Haveli Hauz Khas
- Day 03 An early start - Tea/coffee at the hotel.
In time, you will be transferred to Delhi International airport for the flight to Paro. [Ex KB203; ETD: 0410 Hrs, ETA: 0640 Hrs]
The flight is spectacular with Mt. Everest and other Himalayan mountain peaks in view.
As you step off the aircraft, Bhutan's first welcome gift to you is the pristine mountain air.
You will be met by your guide who will be holding a paging board with your name on it and then you will be transferred to Thimphu [Approx. 35 miles, approx. 1.1/2-hour]. The road leads through the Paro Valley to the confluence of the Paro and Thimphu rivers at Chuzom.

On arrival, in Thimphu (Altitude 2,320m) check in to your hotel.

The capital of Bhutan, and the centre of government, religion and commerce, Thimphu is a small city with a mixture of modern development alongside ancient traditional buildings.

In the early evening you have a guided visit to the National Memorial Chorten, before returning to the hotel, via a local craft Bazar.

Osel Bhutan / Similar

Day 04

In the morning after breakfast, take a short drive to the north of Thimphu to Buddha Dordenma, the gigantic 54m bronze Shakyamuni Buddha statue celebrating the 60th anniversary of King Jigme Singye Wangchuck. This statue, one of the largest in the world, is said to capture the essence of tranquility. A meditation chamber is housed in the base.

Later in the morning, visit the Textile Museum.

After lunch, you will be taken to the Sangaygang viewpoint at 2,685m offering views across the Thimphu Valley.

The sightseeing day concludes with a visit to Trashichho Dzong. This monastery/fortress is the seat of government, and it presently houses the throne room and offices of the King, the cabinet secretariat and the ministries of home affairs and finance.

In the early evening explore the Centenary Farmers Market, popularly known as Weekend Market.

Osel Bhutan / Similar

- Day 05 Breakfast at the hotel.
After breakfast, you will drive to Punakha (1,300m, 46 miles, approx. 2.5-hour drive) via the Dochu-la mountain pass (3,088m/ 10,130 ft) stopping briefly to take in the view and admire the 108 memorial chortens, and the prayer flags which decorate the highest point on the pass.
- Punakha served as the capital of Bhutan and seat of government until 1955. Located at an elevation of 1300m above sea level.
After lunch, visit Punakha Dzong or 'Palace of Great Happiness' Then a short excursion to Chimi Lhakhang. This temple built in 1499 is known as the Fertility Temple.
- Zhingkhram Resort / Similar
- Day 06 Breakfast at the hotel;
After breakfast, embark on a scenic nature walk (always optional) leading to the majestic Khamsum Yuelley Namgel Chorten. Then walk across 180m Punakha Suspension Bridge, gracefully suspended over the gushing waters of the Mo Chhu River. It is a marvel of engineering and a thrilling experience for you to try.
- After lunch, visit Wangduephodrang Dzong, a historical fortress with its roots tracing back to 1638 when it was founded by Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal.
- Following your dzong visit, explore Rinchengang village, famous for its traditional stonework and thought to be one of the oldest villages in Bhutan.
- Zhingkhram Resort / Similar
- Day 07 Breakfast at the hotel.
After breakfast, drive to Paro (Altitude 2,280m) (78 miles, approx. 4-hour drive) along the scenic highway.
- Paro is home to many of Bhutan's oldest temples and monasteries, the National Museum and country's only international airport
- On arrival in Paro, check in to your hotel.
- The rest of the day will be at leisure.
- Paro Eco Lodge

Day 08 After breakfast., you will proceed to visit Ta Dzong, originally built as the Watchtower, which now houses the National Museum. Ta Dzong visit is followed by a short walk down the trail to visit Rinpung Dzong (Paro Dzong), meaning (“Fortress of the Heap of Jewels”),

You will also visit a typical farmhouse. Bhutanese farmhouses are very colorful, decorative and traditionally built without the use of single nail.

The rest of the day will be at leisure.

Paro Eco Lodge

Day 09 After an early breakfast, embark on a hike (always optional) to one of the highlights of Bhutan - Taktshang Monastery or Tiger’s Nest (approx. 5 hours round trip walk). It is one of the most famous of Bhutan’s monasteries, perched on the side of a cliff 900m above the Paro valley floor. It is quite a stiff walk but very rewarding. There is a small tea house along the route where you can rest for a while. (Alternatively the trek can be done on pony back, though I would say that, if you are not used to riding, this could leave you with aches in unusual places – GER)

In the evening explore Paro city centre and the local market.

Paro Eco Lodge / Similar

Day 10 Breakfast at the hotel;
In time, you will be transferred to Paro International airport for onward flight to Delhi. Flight: KB 202; ETD: 1155 Hrs, TBA: 1345 Hrs.
Arrival in Delhi and drive to Agra (126 miles, approx. 4.5-hour drive)

The evening will be at leisure.

The Coral Tree Homestay

Day 11 - **The tour can end here, and you will return to the UK, or you can stay for two more nights and visit the Taj Mahal**

Optional extension tour

Day 11 Breakfast at the hotel;
After breakfast, you will have excursion to Fatehpur Sikri (24 miles, approx. 1-hour drive). The city was founded in 1571 by the Mughal Emperor Akbar as the capital of his empire. But due to a shortage of water Fatehpur Sikri was abandoned in 1610. It is an affecting, ghostly reminder of the splendour of the Mughal Empire.

On your return you will visit the Agra Fort, Itmad-ud-Daula

In the evening, you will visit Mehatab Bagh for view of Taj Mahal across the Yamuna River.

The Coral Tree Homestay

Day 12 Today you will see the Taj Mahal at sunrise. This funerary mosque was built in 1631 by Shah Jahan in memory of his wife Mumtaz. It is rightly considered to be one of the world's greatest works of architecture. It does not disappoint.









After this visit, return to the hotel for breakfast. The rest of the morning will be at leisure.

In the afternoon, you will drive to Delhi. (126 miles, approx. 4.5-hour drive)
The evening is at leisure.

Haveli Hauz Khas

Day 13 Breakfast at the hotel.
In time, you will be met and transferred to Delhi International airport for your onward flight to the UK [Flight: TBA; Time: TBA]

YOUR ACCOMMODATION

Day	Nts	City	Hotel	Room Category	Meal
Day 01-03	02	Delhi	Haveli Hauz Khas 	Standard Room 	BB
Day 03-05	02	Thimphu	Osel Bhutan/ Similar 	Standard Room 	FB
Day 05-07	02	Punakha	Zhingkhram Resort/ Similar 	Standard Room 	FB
Day 07-10	03	Paro	Paro Eco Lodge/ Similar 	Standard Room 	FB

Day 10-12	02	Agra	The Coral Tree Homestay 	Standard Room 	BB
Day 12-13	1	Delhi	Haveli Hauz Khas 	Standard Room 	BB

Tiger's Nest and the Taj Mahal - Price

The price shown is per person for 2 people traveling together and sharing a double room.

VALIDITY: Mar–May and Sept-Nov 2024

India section:

Tour cost based on twin sharing basis £ 950.00 pp

Bhutan section:

Tour cost based on twin sharing basis £1,800.00 pp

Single Room Supplement £ 400.00 pp

India/Bhutan International Flights [Economy Class]

[Baggage: Check in – 30 Kgs/PP & Cabin - 5 Kgs/ PP]

Delhi - Paro – Delhi £ 690.00 pp

(price subject to change up to the point of ticketing)

UK/India International flights

LHR/Del or MAN/DEL return [Economy Class] £ 730.00pp (date sensitive)

(price subject to change up to the point of ticketing)

Total price per person £4,170.00 (+£400 single supplement)

Redbird is a travel advice service from Graham Ellison Roberts <https://redbirdtravel.co.uk/>

“Since relinquishing my ATOL during Covid I have made new relationships with like-minded tour operators who share my passions. This means that my itineraries are fully bonded and protected”. Graham

The delivery of Tiger's Nest & the Taj Mahal will be by Mark Bratt Travel <https://markbratttravel.com/> a fully bonded tour operator.

The Tiger's Nest & the Taj Mahal

price includes:

International return flights UK/India

International return flights India/Bhutan

12 nights' accommodation on twin sharing basis as per the hotel grid;

Meal plan as stated above; [BB: Bed & Breakfast; FB: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner];

All transfers and sightseeing tours as per the itinerary;

English speaking accompanying guide as per itinerary in Bhutan;

English-speaking guide in Delhi and Agra;

Bhutan Sustainable Development Fee & Taxes;

Entrances (As per the itinerary)

Bhutan Visa Fees;

All transfers, sightseeing and excursions as per the itinerary will be by 4 x 4 SUV Hyundai Tucson / Santa Fe.

The price excludes:

Expenses of personal nature like tipping, laundry, telephone/fax calls, alcoholic beverages, camera/video camera fees at monuments, medical expenses, airport departure taxes where not included in the ticket price, etc.;

Indian visa fees

Meals other than those specified above;

Any insurance;

Any other services not mentioned in the inclusion.

Bhutan Hotels

Thimphu: [Either of these hotels]

Hotel Osel (<https://www.oselbhutan.com/>)

Hotel Phuntsho Pelri (<https://bhutanhotels.com.bt/hotel-phuntsho-pelri>)

Hotel Tashi Yoedling (www.tashiyoedling.com)

Punakha: [Either of these hotels]

The Four Boutique Hotel (www.fourboutique.com.bt)

Zhingkhams Resort (www.bhutanhotels.com.bt)

Hotel Lobesa / Hotel River valley (www.hotelrivervalley.com)

Paro: [Either of these hotels]

Paro Eco Lodge (www.bhutanecolodges.com)

Hotel Olathang ([//bhutanhotels.com.bt/hotel-Olathang](http://bhutanhotels.com.bt/hotel-Olathang))

Olathang Cottages (<https://bhutanhotels.com.bt/olathang-cottages>)