

Bumthang Owl Trekking

Trip code	
Package name	Bumthang Owl Trekking
Duration	12
Max. elevation	3879 m
Level	MODERATE
Transportation	Private vehicals depending on group size during the tour and trek.
Accomodation	3***hotel, Lodge twin sharing bed basis during the tour and trek.
Starts at	Paro
Ends at	Paro
Trip route	Paro - Thimphu - Tiger Nest - Wangdeu - Bumthang - Schonath - Kitiphu - Gangtey - paro
Cost	USD 3,340 per person

Highlights

Overview

Bumthang Owl Trekking offers fantastic views of an unspoiled natural environment endowed with a diverse array of flora and fauna as well as an opportunity to visit ancient Buddhist temples and monasteries.

Bumthang Owl Trekking is recently opened route which takes you to the virgin forest of Schonath full of wilderness. This trek is an adventurous trek with the opportunity to the rural/village life in a grand village like Dhur. During the trek, you will walk through the virgin temperature forest of blue pine,

hemlock, fir, spruce, juniper with under growth of bamboo species, rhododendrons, birch, maple, chestnut and many others. In spring, the rhododendrons flowers bloom that beautifies the whole trek route. The valley views and the Himalayan snow capped mountains in the north give you the life time memories. Birds of different species can be observed enroute. Among them the big monal pheasants can be sighted around the second day camp and Tharpaling area during mornings and evenings. The monastery life in Tharpaling, Choedak and Zhambala are yet very interesting.

Bumthang Owl Trek offers an invigorating experience of the culture and environment of the country. It is an easy to moderate level of trekking. Though this trip is of 12 days, the trek is only 3 days long and the itinerary can always be modified as per your requirement and convenience. We start our tour with a scenic flight over the dragon kingdom Paro and have a sightseeing of this city on the same day. On the second day of our tour, we will hike up to the Taktsang Monastery which is also known as "Tiger's Nest Monastery". Continuing our tour, we will drive to the capital city of Bhutan, Thimphu and after a sightseeing tour; we drive towards Gangtey on the next day. After a long drive for about six to seven hours, we reach Trongsa and visit Trongsa Dzong, have some sightseeing tour around the famous monasteries and temples of Bumthang. On the seventh day, our trek starts. We start our trek from Dur, passing through Kitiphu and finally concluding our trip to Jakar with a grand view of Jakar Dzong. One of the best times to undertake this trek is in late spring, between April and early June when the rhododendrons are in full bloom. When trekking through this area in autumn there is a possibility of encountering Himalayan Black bears so caution should be practiced. If it is possible to schedule your trek during one of the local festivals you will be able to enjoy additional insights into the traditions and culture of this region

Trip Itinerary

Day 1 : Flight to Paro. After arrival, sightseeing tour

Fly over to the dragon kingdom Paro passing by Mountains of 5500 meters to Paro. Paro is a beautiful valley and is home to many of Bhutan's oldest monasteries and temples, and the country's only international airport. 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 including Mount Everest, Mount Kanchenjunga, Mount Chomolhari and Jitchu Drake peak. Paro Airport has been described as "the most difficult commercial airport in the world". 1980 meter runway length presents a double challenge, due to the extremely low density altitude at the site. So, only a handful of well experienced pilots are certified to operate commercial airplanes here thus, making least number of flights in a day. After immigration and custom formalities, check out from the departure lounge. There you will meet one of the representatives of Nature Trail Travels & Tours, Trekking & Expedition who will greet you and then escort you to your respective hotel where you will stay overnight. Before lunch, at the hotel there will be an orientation on Bhutanese etiquette by your guide.

Visit to Ta Dzong Museum for a colorful introduction to Bhutanese art, history and culture. This Museum houses many religious relics, works of art and handicrafts offering a great orientation

into Bhutan's historical, cultural, and religious past. This Dzong was converted into the National Museum in 1968 which boasts antique thangkas, textiles, weapons and armor, household objects and rich assortment of natural and historic artifacts. Here you can also learn about Bhutan's history. Then we will visit 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 was built in 1645 to defend the valley against Tibetan invaders and is recently used as an administration center and school for monks.

Day 2 : Hike to Tiger's Nest Monastery

Hike to the famed Taktsang monastery. Taktsang is a prominent sacred Buddhist site and temple complex perched on the edge of upper Paro Valley. It is also known as the Tiger's Nest and considered to be the most sacred place. This magical monastery clings to a vertical granite cliff 300 meter above the valley. Legend has it that the great Guru Padmasambhava flew to this spot on back of a tigress and meditated in a cave during the 8th century for 3 months. When the Guru finished his meditation, he instructed to build the monastery. The temple was built around the cave and is a hallowed shrine for Bhutanese pilgrims. The spectacular view along the way and the historical sites draw many tourists to this imposing monastery. There are also a number of temples scattered along the route. Later we descend down to the Drugyal Dzong (Bhutan Victory Fort), which was built in 1646 by Shabdrung to commemorate Bhutan's victory over Tibetan invaders during the 1600s. Historically and strategically this dzong withstood all its glory and had captured western eyes in 1914 vide National Geographic magazine. On a clear day we can see Mount Chomolhari, Bhutan's second-highest mountain, at 7,314 meters.

Day 3 : Drive Paro to Thimphu (2,320m/7,424ft): 2 hrs. drive

Drive to the capital of Bhutan, Thimphu following the Pachu River. Once a rustic village sitting in a broad, fertile river valley, Thimphu is today the nation's bustling capital having population about 1, 00,000. The town is made up of just three lines of shops and is the only capital in the world without traffic lights. At evening, we walk around the National Memorial Chorten built in 1974 in honor of the late King. 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. The Memorial Chorten is an impressive monument with its golden spires shining in the sun, its bell tinkling in the wind and an endless procession of elderly people circling around it. Later visit Zilukha Nunnery where the nuns meditate and practice Buddhism. Also visit the folk Heritage Museum, which is dedicated to connecting people to the Bhutanese rural past through exhibition of items and artifacts used in rural households, Textile Museum, where the art of tradition weaving is still kept alive and preserved through exhibition and has a good collection of old textiles which are rich in its colors and design. You can also visit the Handicrafts Emporium, where all types of Bhutanese handicrafts are made and sold. We will stay overnight at Thimphu.

Day 4 : Drive Thimphu to Gangtey via Wangdue

Leaving Thimphu, we drive towards Gangtey, where the road climbs steeply through a forest of pine and cedar, festooned with hanging lichen high up near Dochula pass (3,050 m). This pass often offers panoramic views of the Himalayan mountain ranges. After stopping for a tea and view, we descend along a series of hairpin bends to the fertile valley of Wangdue, one of the major towns and district headquarters of Western Bhutan, where we make a short stop to view the Wangdue Phodrang Dzong dramatically located on the spur of a hill at the confluence of the Tsang Chu and Dang Chu rivers. From here a gradual climb takes you into the valley of Gangtey (Phobjikha). Gangtey lies towards the East of Punakha and Wangdue on the flanks of the Black Mountain. This is an old monastery of Gangtey Gumpa dating back to the 17th century. A few kilometers past the Gumpa on the valley floor are the fascinating valley of Phobjikha. The gentle sloping hillsides of Phobjikha are described as “the most beautiful valley in the Himalayas”. This is winter home of black necked cranes that migrates from arid plains in the north to pass winter in milder and lower climate. Stay overnight at hotel.

Day 5 : Drive Gangtey to Bumthang via Trongsa – approx. 6/7 hrs. walk

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. The drive to Bumthang via Trongsa is about six hours crossing over Pelela Pass (3,300 m) and Yotongla Pass (3,400 m). The Central road, across the Black Mountains was completed 30 years ago, and it brought about great changes to the people in central Bhutan. We then climb steadily passing through semi-tropical vegetation and then to Pelela Pass with an alpine environment of rhododendrons and dwarf bamboo. This pass is traditionally considered the boundary between west and east Bhutan. If the weather is clear, the Himalayan range can be seen, particularly the peak of Jomolhari (7314 m) to the west. Enroute we cross Chendebji Chorten built many centuries ago to suppress a demon. You'll also be able to visit Ta Dzong, which is the newly opened museum in the watchtower. Commanding the Mangde Chu at an altitude of 2,200 metres Trongsa Dzong is the most impressive Dzong in Bhutan. Built in 1644 by the Zhabdrung, the Dzong is an architectural masterpiece. 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. Bumthang is also known as the heartland of Buddhism. The Guru and his lineage of Tertons, treasure finders, have led to the sprouting of many temples in the valley. 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 6 : Bumthang sightseeing

Sightseeing tour in the spiritual heartland of Bhutan includes many legendary monasteries, temples and palaces. Bumthang is one of the most spectacular valleys in Bhutan and also the heartland of Buddhism. You will start your pilgrimage sightseeing tour with a visit to Jambay Lhakhang. It was built in the 7th century by the Tibetan King Songtsen Goempo, believed to be the reincarnation of the Buddha of Compassion. It is one of the 108 monasteries built by him to

subdue evil spirits in the Himalayan region. The next site we will be visiting today is Chakhar (Iron Castle) Lhakhang. Chakhar Lhakhang lies beyond a short distance from Jambay Temple. Although it is easy to mistake it for a house and drive right by, this is an interesting temple and is worth a short visit. Then drive up to the valley to Kurjey Lhakhang. Kurjey means, "Body imprint". The temple to the right is the oldest and was built by Minjur Tempa in 1652. It was built around the cave in which Guru Rimpoche meditated and left his body imprint. A few minutes' walk from Kurjey will lead us to Tamshing Lhakhang. Cross the small suspension bridge and you can see a temple which is known as Tamshing Lhendrup Chholing (Temple of the Good Message).

If time permits, visit the Kungzandra Monastery which is one and half hour walk from the road. It is one of the places where Guru Rinpoche meditated as did his disciple Namkha Nyingpo, and a little temple is said to be to have been established there at the end of the eight century. However the present site was founded by the saint Pema Lingpa in 1488. Overnight Lodge.

Day 7 : Trek Bumthang to Schonath (3450 m) via Dhur (2900 m)

Our Bumthang owl trek starts from this day. We commence our trek from Manchungang and visit the biggest village in Bumthang, called Dhur at an elevation of 2900 meters above sea level. The village consists of about 75 households with a recorded population of around 800 people. The single village has three types of inhabitants the Kheps (tax payers) having cattle and farmland, Brokpas (nomads) having Yaks and a third group having either. This village has two different dialects, the usual Bumthang Kha and the Brokke (nomadic dialects). Climb down to the river where the traditional water-driven flour mill can be visited. This traditional water driven flour mill used to be a source of livelihood for the people of Dhur village. It has been abandoned after the intake channel was washed away by flashflood. The program has been rehabilitated as it symbolizes an authentic Bhutanese tradition. Continue the trek uphill through the blue pine forest and reach the camp at Schonath (3450m) in hemlock and juniper forest. Apart from the sounds of insects, the hauling of owls through the night is quite common, hence the name of the trek is Owl Trek.

Day 8 : Trek Schonath to Kitiphu (3879 m)

On the following day, we walk through the crude forest of huge temperate trees like spruce, hemlock, fir, birch, oak, etc. Various species of rhododendron blooming during the months of April and May makes you breathe the real wilderness of Bhutan. You will be walking through shrub bamboo which is the main undergrowth in these wild forests. After about two hours of walk, you will arrive at the Drangela Pass (3600m). A further ascend, you will reach at your campsite, Kitiphu ridge from where you can enjoy spectacular views of the snowcapped mountains and valleys underneath. The main treat for today is the stunning view of Mount Gangkar Phuensum (7541m), the highest unclimbed peak in the world.

Day 9 : Trek Kitiphu to Jakar/Bumthang

Leaving Kitiphu, our trail descends towards the monasteries of Zambhalha, Chuedak and Tharpaling respectively. Among these three monasteries, Chuedak monastery has 100 Avoloketeshvaras in the form of Chukchizhey (eleven heads) where you may pray for yourself and all living beings. You might even stop for a sip of holy water which is a plenty around this place to quench your thirst, wash your sins and purify your body and soul. At afternoon, the walk will take you along the ridge of Kikila and following the traditional trek route between Trongsa and Bumthang through scenic hills and forests. This trail is also known as the Royal Heritage Trail. Your trek will finally end with a grand view of Jakar Dzong. Overnight stay at Bumthang.

Day 10 : 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 11 : Drive Gangtey to Paro – approx. 4/5 hrs. drive

Hike up to the hilltop village of Rinchengang and learn about its interesting history. Rinchengang is picturesquely situated on a steep ridge near Wangdi and then drive to Paro. Upon arrival at Paro, you can visit impressive Paro Dzong, one of the finest examples of Bhutanese architecture.

Day 12 : Departure

Ending our trip, you will be transferred to the airport for your flight back to home. During the flight you will enjoy breathtaking views of the Himalayan peaks that include sacred Bhutanese mountains such as Jomolhari and Jitchu Drake.

Inclusions

What is included?

Airport pick up & drop by private vehicle as your require.

Private vehicals for round trip.

Standard accommodation twin sharing bed basis for the duration of tour.

All meals fixed breakfast, lunch & dinner with Tea and Coffee for whole duration of your stay in Bhutan.

Mineral water supply for the trip.

Local licensed English speaking Bhutan Tour & Trekking Guides.
All sightseeing tours, Monument /Museum entrance Fees as per itinerary.
Country Presentation & Tour Briefing on arrival evening.
Bhutan Visa Fees and Visa Processing assistance.
The required number of trekking & touring staff.
All trekking access, route permits logistics & fees.
Luggage will be hauled by horses, mules or yaks at higher elevations.
Government tax which goes to the country's health & education projects.

What isn't included?

Your travel insurance.
Bottled/alcoholic/cold drinks room service.
International airfares and airport departure tax.
Personal Equipment.
Tips to staffs-Tipping is expected.
Any others expenses which are not mentioned on Price Includes section.

Complimentary