

Uma

PARO, BHUTAN
PART OF THE COMO GROUP

BLESSINGS OF BHUTAN & The Druk Path Trek



SMALL GROUP ADVENTURE - 10 NIGHT FULLBOARD PACKAGE
(3 Nights Camping & 7 nights at Uma Paro)

October 7th to 17th 2009

This ten night special small group adventure is for those travelers who have time to enjoy the best of both worlds - a classic, challenging wilderness trek combined with a deep experience of the Bhutanese people and their culture.

Our experienced guides lead four separate days out in the Paro valley and the remote and unspoilt Haa valley incorporating such highlights as, Taktsang 'Tiger's Nest' Monastery, the National Museum, Drukgyel Dzong and the ancient temple of Kyichu Lhakhang. Exploring mainly on foot but also by vehicle and returning to the comfort of Uma Paro each evening - accommodation is included on a full-board basis, excluding beverages - there is plenty of free time to relax, enjoying the peace, views, swimming pool, spa and daily yoga class.

For generations the Druk Path was an important trading link between Paro and Thimpu, crossing the chain of remote mountains that separates the two valleys. The trail goes as high as 13,800 ft (or 4100metres) and in clear weather the panoramic views of the Himalaya are breathtaking throughout. Our four-day trek, though short, is challenging and begins with an ascent through apple orchards and ancient pine forest past a pre-Buddhist temple to Jele Dzong perched on a grassy ridge dotted with yaks. Day two provides the biggest challenge and promises a magnificent day in the mountains, crossing a small pass marked with prayer flags, a reminder of the strong Buddhist culture of the Kingdom. The trek then follows a ridge through dwarf rhododendron and pine, passing a series of small lakes before heading up above the treeline. The final descent via the monasteries at Phadjoding leads into Thimpu, the capital of Bhutan, where we enjoy a brief sightseeing program before returning to Paro. In days gone by the route was used as a corporeal punishment for Bhutanese soldiers who were made to complete the four-day trek in a single day.

This is an active itinerary in general and because of this and the heights reached on this trek, this trip has accordingly been graded as a moderate to hard trekking adventure: you will need to be healthy and fit to gain the most from the experience.

DAY 1 Wednesday October 7th

Fly Bangkok to Paro, Arrival at Paro International Airport, Uma Paro check-in, show round & easy walk

After the awe-inspiring early morning mountain flight from Bangkok Uma Paro staff will welcome you at the airport for the 10 minute transfer to the property. We invite you for a short, guided walk in the afternoon in and around Uma Paro for orientation and acclimatisation purposes.

Overnight: Uma Paro

DAY 2 Thursday October 8th

Daywalk Zurig Dzong, Rinpung Dzong, Ta Dzong, Paro Town & Kyichu Lhakhang Wind through pine forests high above Uma Paro to the pretty grounds of the fortress-like monastery of Zuri Dzong. Traverse across to Ta Dzong, housing Bhutan's National Museum (open Tuesday-Saturday) with magnificent views over Paro, and on down to visit Rinpung Dzong – 'Fortress on a Heap of Jewels'. The trail then leads across Paro Chhu (river) via a traditional covered bridge (Nyamai Zam) and then past the main archery ground, Ugyen Pelri Palace and into Paro town. A few kilometres north of Paro, we pay our respects at Kyichu Lhakhang one of the oldest temples in Bhutan with its magic orange tree that bears fruit all year round.

Duration: 5 - 7 hours (depending on time spent in National Museum and Paro)

Difficulty: Easy to Moderate

Guided with picnic

Overnight: Uma Paro

DAY 3 Friday October 9th

Floating Goddess Day Trek A magical and memorable day begins with a drive along the peaceful Do Chhu (river) Valley, up a rough track past tiny hamlets to the trailhead. Deep in ancient forest we follow the rushing course of the Do Chhu deeper into this remote and untouched valley - very few foreigners have passed this way. In the season the flowering rhododendron provide a riot of colour and on a warm day pilgrims may be tempted into a refreshing dip in one of many swimming holes. Towards the head of the valley the trail switchbacks as it steepens and Chumbu Monastery can be glimpsed above with craggy peaks looming behind. The monks at this spectacularly positioned and remote monastery afford all pilgrims a warm welcome particularly if they are bearing small gifts and offerings for the supernatural statue of the 'Flying Yogini', that seemingly floats in the air. Having paid our respects we climb higher to a beautiful mountain lake before bidding the monks a fond farewell and heading for home.

Duration: 7 - 8 hours

Difficulty: Moderate

Guided with picnic

Overnight: Uma Paro

DAY 4 Saturday October 10th

A Day Out in the Haa Valley Day Start early for the drive to Haa via Chele La (pass) which at 3810m is the highest road pass in Bhutan, snaking upwards through blue pine and rhododendron (Etho Metho) forests for 35km. On a clear day the view sweeps away to snow-dome of Bhutan's highest peak Mt Jhomolhari (7314m). After a bracing walk along the prayer flag bedecked ridge it is down into Haa – the whole drive should take no more than 2.5 hours. Wangchulo Dzong is presently occupied by the Indian Army, however this makes for a quirky experience. Having visited the bazaar it is a short walk (or bike ride) along the Haa Chhu (river) to a picnic spot. At Lhakhang Karpo (the White Temple), many young monks await to offer a warm, noisy welcome and may accompany us to the nearby Lhakhang Nagpo (the Black Temple). The Haa valley only opened to foreigners in 2002 due to its proximity to the border with Sikkim and Tibet. This unspoilt valley harks back to a simpler more traditional time. For those who would rather a walk than to visit Haa we recommend a 3-4 hour hike up to Kili Goemba an ancient nunnery, topping out at Chele La. Time permitting, once back in the Paro Valley, a further option is a 20 minute walk out to the dramatically positioned Dzongdrakha Goemba complex.

Duration: 7 - 9 hours

Difficulty: Easy

Guided with picnic

Overnight: Uma Paro

DAY 5 Sunday October 11th - Uma Paro (2360m) To Jele Dzong (3450m)

Day 1 Trek The trek starts from the lobby at Uma Paro, heading up past Gemjola Monastery and Chhubjakhar Monastery then winding gradually uphill through apple orchards, smallholdings and ancient pine forest to a whaleback ridge. The altitude gain today is significant so it is recommended that you walk at a slow and steady pace. Tonight's camp is in a yak pasture below Jele Dzong which is perched on the ridge itself and whose monks welcome visitors. The dzong was the former residence of one Ngawang Chhogyel (1465-1540), cousin of the famous saint Lama Drukpa Kinley with the colourful moniker, the Divine Madman. The views of Paro town far below and of mount Jhomalhari (7314m) are breathtaking on a clear day. The views of Paro town far below and of Mt. Jhomalhari (7314m) are breathtaking on a clear day.

Duration: 4 - 6 hours

Difficulty: Moderate to Hard

Guided with picnic

Overnight: Camp

DAY 6 Monday October 12th - Jele Dzong (3450m) To Jimilang Tsho (3870m)

Day 2 Trek Cross the Jele La (3490m) and descend below the ridgeline to walk through forest of pine and rhododendron before climbing to reach a yak herders' pasture and possible picnic spot at Jangchu Lakha (3780m) with great views of the Himalayan range. In the afternoon follow the undulating ridgeline to a saddle at 4,020 metres and then continue to the Jangchu La pass at (4180m). From here it is a steep descent to camp at Jimilang Tsho Lake (3880m). The lake is known to house a large number of trout, believed to have been introduced by the British in the last century. From near the camp there are good mountain views including the sacred peak of Jichu Drake (6989m).

Duration: 7 - 9 hours

Difficulty: Hard

Guided with picnic

Overnight: Camp

DAY 7 Tuesday October 13th - Jimilang Tsho (3880m) To Simkotra Tsho (4110m)

Day 3 Trek Today is much shorter so enjoy a leisurely breakfast by the lake and relax for a while. The ascent from the lake is steep at times, through dwarf rhododendron and over a spur to the lake of Janye Tsho. As the trail winds and undulates trekkers are rewarded with views across the deep valley to the route from two days ago and to Jele Dzong, now a tiny white dot in the distance. Crossing one final spur the Simkotra Tsho (4110m) can be seen below, the camp for night is by this lake.

Duration: 5 - 7 hours

Difficulty: Hard

Guided with picnic

Overnight: Camp

DAY 8 Wednesday October 14th - Simkotra Tsho (4110m) To Thimphu (2400m)

Day 4 Trek This morning begins with an ascent to a small saddle at 4150 metres before descending to another small lake then climbing to the Phume La pass (4210m) which is adorned with prayer flags. Again there are fine views of the Bhutan Himalaya from here plus the first view of Thimphu far below. The trail now descends all the way first to the pilgrim site at Phajoding (3870m) then into pine and juniper forest descending all the way to the road head at Motithang on the outskirts of Thimphu. The rest of the afternoon can be spent sightseeing in Thimphu, before returning to Uma Paro.

Duration: 4 - 6 hours

Difficulty: Moderate to Hard

Guided with picnic

Overnight: Uma Paro

DAY 9 Thursday October 15th

Free For relaxing around Uma Paro enjoying the facilities or perhaps trying some other activity like the Bhutanese national sport of archery or maybe a well-earned muscle soothing therapy such as the traditional Bhutanese hot stone bath.

Overnight: Uma Paro

DAY 10 Friday October 16th

Highlights of the Paro Valley - Taktsang Walk, Drukgyel Dzong & Kyichu Lhakhang One of the most amazing and important pieces of architecture in Bhutan, Taktsang Goemba defies logic, gravity, and reason. Legend has it that this cliffside was where Guru Rinpoche (Padmasambhava) landed on the back of a flying tigress, bringing Buddhism to Bhutan from Tibet.

To avoid the hot sun an early start is advisable for the two-hour climb, via the cafeteria, to the Tiger's Nest viewpoint. Descend steeply, then climb up to the monastery, passing a waterfall (visit monastery if it is open - with sufficient notice Uma Paro can arrange a permit). We retrace our steps or alternatively (time permitting) head further up to several remote temples and monasteries. Drive further up the valley to Drukgyel Dzong, built in 1644 by Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal to control northern route to Tibet. The route is picturesque, and the site of dzong magnificent (from here, only two-day hike to the border with Tibet, dominated by Mt Jhomalhari). On the 17km drive back to Paro we pay our respects at Kyichu Lhakhang one of the oldest temples in Bhutan with its magic orange tree which bears fruit all year round. This evening you are invited for a firelit farewell dinner in our courtyard at Uma Paro.

Duration: 7 - 8 hours

Difficulty: Moderate to Hard (ascent should not to be attempted until at least third day in Bhutan, after acclimatization has occurred)

Guided with picnic

Overnight: Uma Paro

DAY 11 Saturday October 17th

Fly Paro to Bangkok Druk Air departs in the early morning to avoid adverse weather conditions so after breakfast, it is time for your transfer to the airport for the group flight back to Bangkok.

Additional Trek Information

For a trek at this level, fitness is most important and you may have to improve yours before departure to get the most enjoyment out of the experience. The Druk Path is equivalent to extended walking in mountainous terrain at home, but usually at significantly higher altitudes; climate and remoteness can also play a part. Previous trekking experience is desirable but not essential if you are confident of your physical condition. A detailed pre-departure information sheet, designed to help you prepare for your adventure will be sent out with your booking confirmation.

Packing Essentials: warm jacket; good leather or waterproof fabric boots or shoes with good soles; waterproof jacket; sunglasses; warm hat; sunhat; sunscreen; 4 season sleeping bag; torch; backpack; towel; thermal underwear.

Packing Recommended: trekking pole; gloves; tracksuit or thermal underwear; shorts for cycling; small backpack; torch; lip balm; a sufficient supply of any medication you are taking.

NB. Camera film is a rarity in Bhutan so bring your own supply which should be in your carry-on luggage.

For further information and a full packing list, please refer to the Uma Paro Pre Departure Information sheet for Trekking.

Please Note

This itinerary is intended as a guide only. Local conditions and weather may necessitate variations to the program and can affect the availability of views and panoramas described. Be aware that all times stated are approximate, and may vary with individual and group fitness.

Package Inclusions

All Bhutanese Government Visa Fees, Taxes and Royalties

Accommodation on a full board basis throughout (excluding beverages)

The Services of an experienced English-speaking Bhutanese Uma Paro Guide

Full service 3 night camping trek

Entry permits and fees

Transport including airport transfers

Mineral water on all days out

Welcome drink

Complimentary scheduled 1 hour daily yoga class whilst at Uma Paro (except Sundays)

Complimentary use of the swimming pool, library and gym

In order to take advantage of the FIT surcharge waiver guests must arrive and depart on the scheduled Druk Air flights to and from Bangkok on the 7th and 17th of October. (any other flights will attract the FIT surcharge (\$30 pppd for two people and \$40 pppd for single travelers)



Maximum Group Size 12 people (minimum 3 people)

The group will be led by one of Uma Paro's highly trained and knowledgeable Bhutanese guide throughout. The trek is a full service adventure and all the general camp chores will be performed by our local staff, including making and breaking of the camp and all cooking and washing up. All your main luggage is carried for you and you will only have to carry whatever you require for that days' walk. All single travelers benefit from their own room and tent whilst on trek.

Uma Paro provides complimentary drinking water for all guided itineraries. If you have any special dietary requests, please let us know in advance. Where stated, trips include lunchtime picnics prepared by Uma Paro's chefs.

Throughout your stay you have the option to participate in a range of extra Outdoor Activities at an additional charge.

Private airport transfer is available at an additional charge

Please read this document in conjunction with your confirmation letter and pre-departure information.

For more information on Uma Paro, including the full range of itineraries (including easier overnight camping treks) and services (including tailor-made itineraries, private individual trips and the hosting of special events) we offer, please refer to the website www.uma.como.bz or email info.paro@uma.como.bz.