

Himalayan Kingdom Marathon Bhutan



31st May, 2015

Bhutan Information

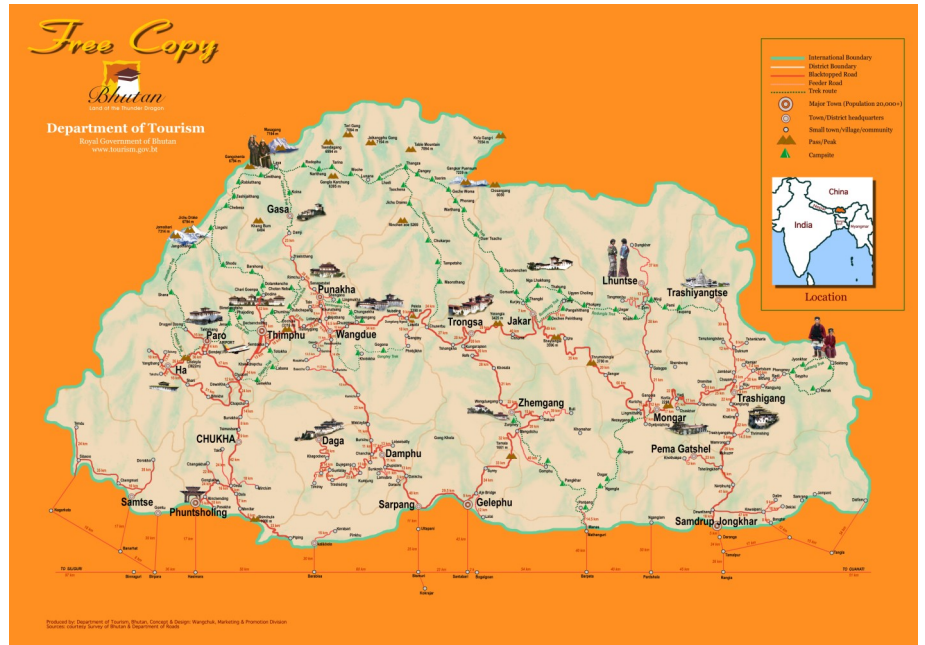


Bhutan

Bhutan, the land of the Thunder Dragon

is mystical, enchanting and like nowhere you have ever been. Voted one of the world's top travel destinations, Bhutan remains accessible only to the privileged few.

The country of happiness



Nestling between Tibet and India it is a country of raw natural beauty; from stunning mountain scenery to tropical plains. This pristine scenery is home to exotic wildlife and is one of the last refuges of species like the Black-Necked Crane, the Golden Langur and even the Royal Bengal tiger.

The Bhutanese people with their Buddhist beliefs have a strong sense of identity and of the interdependence between man and nature. This is expressed in the national policy of Gross National Happiness and concern for the environment.

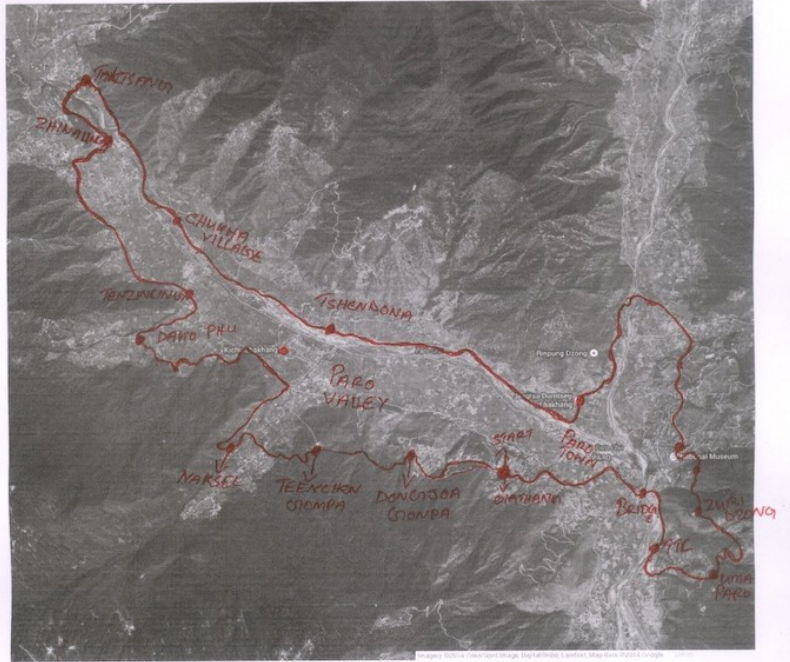


Marathon Day - 31st May 2015

Marathon and Half Marathon start time - 7:30am

The Route

Following the Paro River downstream runners are at 2200m altitude. You will then climb steadily up the side of a valley passing Ringpung Dzong, and up to Zueray Dzong at the highest point of the race (2530m) on a 4km road climb followed by 1km gently up hill on forest trails. From here you start to drop to the valley passing through Uma Resort (2413m). Dropping back to the river, the half marathon will finish at the bottom of the hill near the Teacher training College while the marathon continues across the river valley on road.



Rising up past the Olantang Hotel on the otherside of the valley for 3km on road to 2,400m, you will then run on forest trails along a line of Chortens festooned with prayer flags before dropping and rising on a number of side valleys. At 32km there is an amazing section through paddy fields bringing you close to rural Bhutan before a final loop with incredible views of the Tigers Nest, to approach the finish line back at Zhiwa Ling.

The first half of the race is easier than the second half with long sections of flat running on the river banks and one longish between 14 and 18km, where runners are rewarded with fantastic views up the valley before the drop to the finish. This makes the half marathon suitable for all runners and run/walkers regardless of pace as there is no cut off time. Cut off time for the marathon is 8hrs but with some flexibility depending on weather conditions. Transportation from the finish back to the start is provided for half marathon runners.

Terrain

The route is a mixture of gravel road, farm fields and mountain tracks with a few sections of tarmac road through Paro Town. We recommend trail running shoes.

Weather Conditions

We recommend light clothing as it will be approx 24C during the day.

Make sure you have sunscreen on, sun glasses and a hat because of the strength of the sun at altitude.

Prize Giving

7:00pm - There will be a prize giving ceremony this evening at one of the hotels when you can relax and enjoy a few local beers.

Marathon Day - 31st May 2015

Support on Route

Refreshments

There will be mineral water in bottles, bananas and rice every 5km but we recommend that you take with you gels and water with electrolytes either in a belt or camelback.

Signage

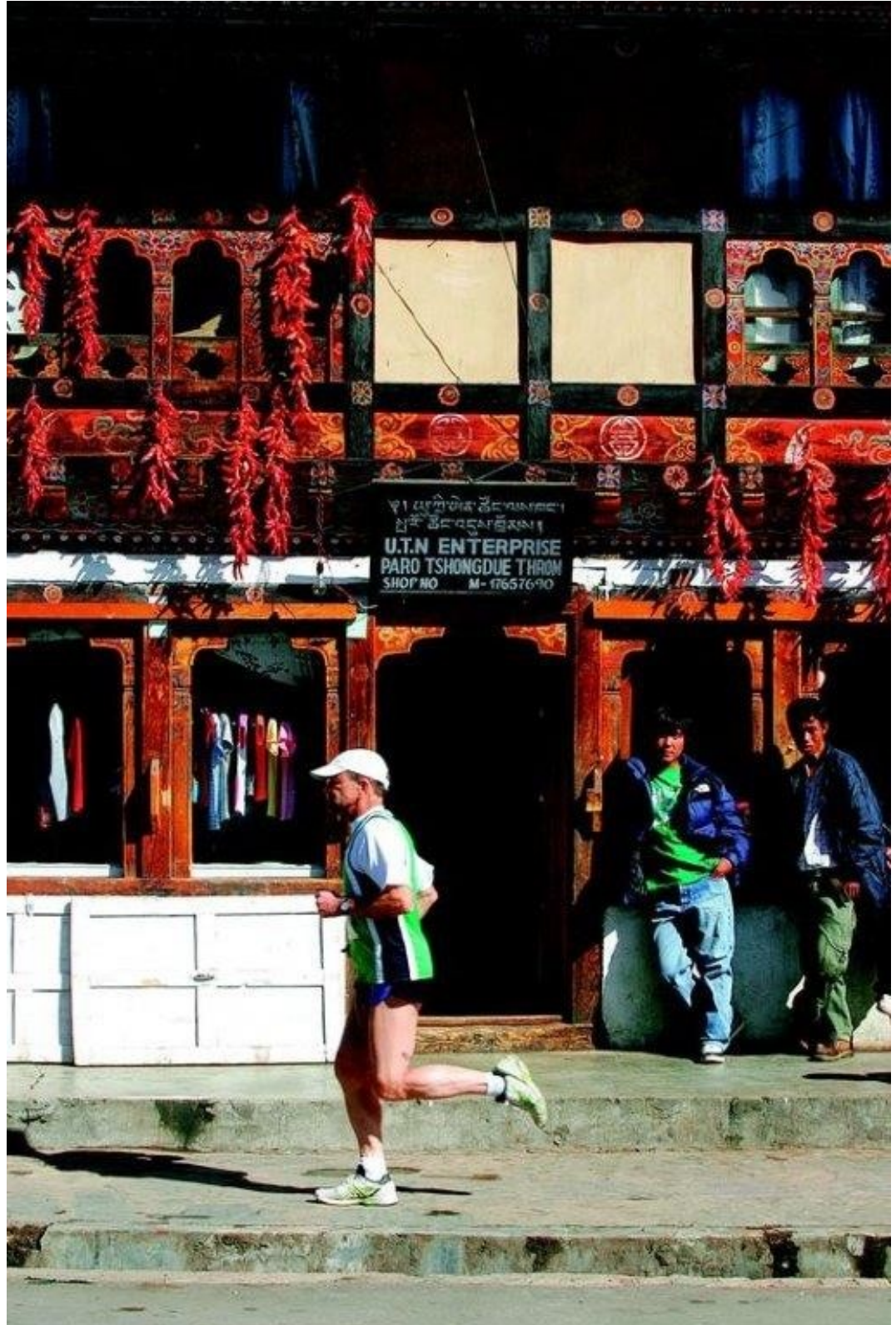
The route will have approx 60 marshals showing the way.

Black arrows on bright yellow board at corners and junctions will show the direction and blue and white '2:09 Events' tape hanging from trees at regular intervals on straights will ensure you know you are on the correct route.

Medical

Medics will be contactable along the route.

A fully qualified doctor will supervise first aid on race day.



Trekking Kit List

People often tell us it was colder on trek than they had anticipated – please make sure you bring plenty of warm clothes particularly for night time – it can be below freezing in camp

Rucksack or kit bag to put overnight trekking kit in for horses to carry (may get a bit beaten up)
Waterproof sacs to put over your pack and plastic bags to help segregate and organise things
Day pack (30 litres or so) to carry things you want access to during the day
Sleeping bag - 3 season up to about 3000 metres, 4 season above that
Silk liner for extra warmth
Thermarest inflating mattress (if you feel you need extra padding - thin mattresses are provided)

Clothing (generally, layers of clothing make sense as temperature changes regularly)

Trekking trousers
Fleece pants or tracksuit to wear in camp
T-shirts, long sleeve shirts, sweatshirt
Thermal underwear (top and bottom) for night use

Outerwear

Down jacket if above 3500 metres
Fleece
Windproof jacket
Waterproofs
Scarf and gloves

Footwear

Hiking boots (should be water repellent)
Sandals or trainers for use in camp
Thick hiking socks and silk sock liners to guard against blisters

Headwear

Broad brimmed hat or baseball cap for sun during the day with bandana for shading the neck
Woollen hat or balaclava for evenings
Polarising sunglasses - best to have the ones with side covers

Other

Walking poles
Head torch with spare batteries and bulbs
Washing line
Small knife
Water bottles (metal)
Dextrose tablets, snack bars and energy drinks

Medicines

Medicine for diarrhoea eg Immodium
Rehydration sachets eg Dioralyte
Paracetamol or Nurofen
Plasters and Compeed for blisters
Antiseptic cream
Strepsils, Lemsip, cold and flu medicine
Sting relief and Insect repellent

Toiletries etc

Hand towel
Soap and biodegradable liquid for laundry
Toothbrush and toothpaste
Toilet paper, tissues, wet wipes
Matches for burning paper used on the trail (there will be a toilet tent at camp)
Sun cream (including total sun block)
Lip salve
Iodine tablets - or you can just use boiled water and on shorter treks mineral water
Tweezers
Camera, film and polarising filter
Books, iPod, playing cards and other diversions for evenings eg Yahtzee dice



General Information

Visas

We organise Bhutanese visas for you. If you are coming in and out via India you will need an Indian visa and you need to apply for this before you leave home. If you are in transit through India and don't leave the airport you can get by without a visa, but it is probably safer to get one anyway in case of delays; also because you can't usually check your luggage through all the way to Bhutan, so it is easier to manage this if you can go through immigration, collect your luggage and check in again from there. Don't forget to get a multiple entry visa if necessary. If you are flying with Druk Air and have a stopover en route you don't need a visa for India/Nepal/Bangladesh as you don't get off the plane. For Kathmandu if you are stopping over you can get a 15-day visa on arrival for US\$30 – you need to take 2 passport photos with you. If you are coming into Bhutan via Phuntsholing you need to bring 2 passport photos with you, but arriving at Paro you don't need to bring photos, just the copy of the visa authorisation we send you. If you come in overland you should be sure to get your exit stamp for India at the immigration office and not at the border.

Money

The Bhutanese unit of currency is called the ngultrum and is pegged to the Indian rupee. Ngultrum are not available outside Bhutan. Please note also that you cannot easily convert Ngultrum back to dollars. You can spend Indian Rupees in Bhutan, but 500 and 1000 Rupee notes are not accepted anywhere. For spending money you should bring dollars if possible, as they are the easiest currency to change. **You get better exchange rates for high value (\$100) notes** and also in some of the luxury hotels. Euros and sterling are also accepted throughout. Travellers' cheques are not really worthwhile, as the exchange rates are poor. If you do want to buy souvenirs, credit cards can be used now in most places, although you may want to bring cash for market purchases where they won't be. Visa is more readily accepted than MasterCard but there are places that you can use either. **It is possible to use credit cards in a couple of ATM's in Thimphu, but only to draw out local currency and not foreign currency. So bring all the US\$ cash you think you might need as it is difficult to get hold of it in Bhutan if you run out.**

Guides

We take a lot of care with the guides we hire for you, as we know that on an escorted tour a guide can make or break a trip. We have many tried and trusted guides who have worked with us for years and who have received consistently high feedback from clients. It is not unusual for clients to tell us that our guide was the best they have ever had in years of travel and we are lucky to have many excellent guides on our books. Having said that, very occasionally we find that clients are not satisfied with the guide we have chosen for them, for one reason or another, and sometimes we only find out about this after the trip is finished. We would ask that if you have any problem at all with your guide you tell them that you would like to speak to Karma in the office in Thimphu or Choki (whether in Thimphu or London) and we will endeavour to sort the problem out straight away – either by instructing the guide to do things differently to meet your needs, or if necessary changing the guide.

Hotels in Bhutan

We do our best to book the best hotels available for our clients in each location. However, provision is limited, particularly at festival times, and we cannot always get our first choice. Clients are often disappointed with the standard of accommodation available, especially given the charge for the trip. We are sorry about this, but it is largely out of our hands! Many hotels do not have adequate heating, so particularly in the winter months you should come prepared for this. Hot water can be sporadic. Also, it is best to bring any "must have" items with you, as hotel rooms are not stocked with equipment or toiletries as they are in the west. You will, however, be able to get laundry done almost everywhere, although you need to leave plenty of time for them to get the drying done, as they are reliant on the sun shining.

General Information

Vaccinations

We can't give medical advice as to exactly what vaccinations you will need for your trip, but advice we have had suggests you may want to consider ensuring you are protected from typhoid, tetanus, diphtheria, polio, hepatitis and rabies. Japanese encephalitis is also sometimes recommended, but check with your doctor or travel clinic once you know the time of year and the nature of your itinerary. There is no need to worry about malaria in central Bhutan, but you will obviously need to consider what protection you might need for other countries you are travelling through, or if you are coming in or going out overland through the south of Bhutan. In any event you should bring insect repellent, as there is a risk of encountering biting insects even if they don't carry malaria.

Druk Air

For the best views it is worth sitting on the left of the plane as you fly into Paro from Kathmandu (and on the right when you fly out). It is amazing how close you get to Everest and surrounding peaks! Unfortunately we are unable to influence seating in advance, so make sure you get to the airport in plenty of time so that you can request this at check-in. Generally you should check in 2 hours before the flight. Luggage limits are 20kg per person, although they are generally fairly lax about excess weight and if you do get charged the amounts are not high.

Personal items

You can't count on getting any of your necessary personal items, medicines or toiletries in Bhutan so bring what you need with you. This includes camera film and batteries. It is also worth knowing that Thimphu unfortunately suffers from the same problem as Kathmandu in the shape of hundreds of stray dogs who like to commune loudly at night – so if you are a light sleeper you might pack some earplugs!

Smoking

Except in a few districts in the east of the country where there is a total ban on tobacco, smoking is still allowed in Bhutan but the sale of tobacco is prohibited. So if you need to smoke, bring your own and be prepared to be taxed on your supplies on entry to the country. There is also a recent law prohibiting smoking in offices and some public places.

Water

It is not advisable to drink untreated water in Bhutan. Mineral water is freely available. We always carry bottles in the car during the day so just ask your guide if you want some at any point either on the journey or to take to your room. On trek you can get boiled water at camp, but you may want to bring something to use to treat additional water to drink during the course of the day.

Communications

Overseas mobiles and blackberries generally don't work in Bhutan, although some report successful connections on the Vodafone. If you want to you can purchase a SIM card for the B-mobile network and use this in your phone - you need to ensure you have unlocked your phone from your home network first. The mobile network in Bhutan is available across the country, although there are still some black spots. Internet and wi-fi is also available in most of western Bhutan and in some other towns (including Bumthang), but it is patchy and intermittent with slow speeds, so be prepared for frustrations and delay with connecting this way. Let us know if you need to stay in closer contact with home or office during your trip and we will work out an arrangement to facilitate this.

General Information

What to bring

This obviously depends on the time of year and the type of trip you are doing, so do ask us if you have specific questions. But here are some pointers:

- **It is appreciated if you dress reasonably smartly for festivals eg no jeans or trainers (sneakers) if possible.**
- **Formal dress is required to visit inside Taktshang monastery (Tiger's Nest) and Paro Dzong.** This means long trousers (no shorts). Short skirts (above the knee) are prohibited. Shirts may be short-sleeved but must have a collar. No vest tops. Any shoes with socks are acceptable (including trainers/sneakers), but not flip flops or sandals).
- Apart from festivals you will not need smart clothes (unless you are staying in luxury hotels and wish to dress accordingly) and it is better to dress for warmth and comfort.
- From March to late September you should be prepared for some rain, so bring a light rainproof jacket.
- Don't forget sunscreen and lip protection – the sun can be very strong.
- If you are trekking, have a look at the information on our website at <http://www.bluepoppybhutan.com/Trekkinginfo.htm> and <http://www.bluepoppybhutan.com/documents/Trekkingkit.pdf>
- If you are planning to try a hot stone bath don't forget your swimming costume.
- If you visit a family home for tea it is customary to leave a small amount of money as a gift on parting, in local currency.

If you want to charge electronic equipment during your stay you should bring an adaptor suited to India – they have two or three round pins, slightly larger than those used in Europe. The two pin plug will fit in a three pin socket as well. The voltage in Bhutan is also the same as India - 230V, 50 cycles AC.

Many hotels in Bhutan don't have television, so bring plenty of reading material if you like to read in the evenings.



General Information

Tips

This is always a tricky one, but we try to help by giving you an idea of local expectations, while stressing that what and who you choose to tip is entirely up to you and will obviously depend on the service you have received. As a general rule, the amount that you may be expected to tip will depend on the length of your trip. But there is also an unwritten hierarchy, with the guide expecting the biggest tip, followed (if you are trekking) by the cook, then the driver and then (again if you are trekking) by the helpers and horsemen in that order.

If the amounts quoted seem like a lot, remember that many staff are only employed through the tourist season (perhaps six months of the year, if that) so the tips help to see them through the off season when they may not be able to get other work.

For a small group (1 or 2 people) the following may be appropriate for the group to tip, depending on the type and length of itinerary:

Tips for guide and driver

10 to 14 day tour: Guide - US\$140; Driver - US\$100.

22 day tour: Guide - US\$200; Driver - US\$150.

Additional tips for trekking staff if applicable

5 day trek: Cook - US\$100; Helpers - US\$50 (each); and Horsemen - US\$15 (each)

10 day trek: Cook - US\$120; Assistant cook - US\$60; Helpers - US\$60 (each); and Horsemen - US\$30 (each)

15 day trek: Cook - US\$160; Assistant cook - US\$80; Helpers - US\$70 (each); and Horsemen - US\$40 (each)

For a larger group (3 or more people) the following may be appropriate for the group to tip, depending on the type and length of itinerary:

Tips for guide and driver

10 day tour: Guide - US\$180; Driver - US\$120.

14 day tour: Guide - US\$200; Driver - US\$160.

22 day tour: Guide - US\$250; Driver - US\$180.

Additional tips for trekking staff if applicable

5 day trek: Cook - US\$120; Helpers - US\$60 (each); and Horsemen - US\$20 (each)

10 day trek: Cook - US\$180; Assistant cook - US\$70; Helpers - US\$70 (each); and Horsemen - US\$30 (each)

15 day trek: Cook - US\$220; Assistant cook - US\$120; Helpers - US\$80 (each); and Horsemen - US\$50 (each)

General Information

Climate

The following are maximum and minimum temperatures (in Celsius) to be expected in towns across Bhutan throughout the year:

	JAN		FEB		MARCH		APRIL		MAY		JUNE	
	Max	Min	Max	Min	Max	Min	Max	Min	Max	Min	Max	Min
PARO	9.4	-5.8	13.4	1.5	14.5	0.6	17.6	4.6	23.5	10.6	25.3	13.1
THIMPHU	12.3	-2.6	14.4	0.6	16.4	3.9	20.0	7.1	22.5	13.1	24.4	15.2
PUNAKHA	16.1	4.2	19.6	5.3	21.1	9.2	24.4	11.9	27.2	14.8	31.2	19.5
WANGDI	17.0	4.3	19.0	7.8	22.8	10.4	26.2	12.9	29.1	17.7	29.2	20.1
TRONGSA	13.0	-0.2	13.9	0.4	16.7	4.4	20.1	6.6	21.0	11.6	22.2	13.6
BUMTHANG	10.8	-5.1	10.0	-1.4	16.2	3.5	18.7	3.9	21.3	9.5	22.5	13.5
MONGAR	15.5	8.2	15.9	8.3	20.0	11.6	22.8	14.0	25.1	17.4	26.1	19.5
TASHIGANG	20.4	10.5	21.7	11.5	24.8	14.4	28.3	17.0	30.0	20.6	30.7	22.6

	JULY		AUG		SEPT		OCT		NOV		DEC	
	Max	Min	Max	Min	Max	Min	Max	Min	Max	Min	Max	Min
PARO	26.8	14.9	25.3	14.7	23.4	11.7	18.7	7.4	13.9	1.4	11.2	-1.7
THIMPHU	18.9	13.4	25.0	15.8	23.1	15.0	21.9	10.4	17.9	5.0	14.5	-1.1
PUNAKHA	32.0	21.6	31.4	19.8	29.9	20.4	27.8	18.9	22.3	13.0	15.0	7.9
WANGDI	18.4	16.2	29.1	20.0	27.5	19.1	26.1	14.7	22.6	9.6	19.1	6.3
TRONGSA	25.3	15.3	23.8	15.0	22.6	14.2	21.8	11.7	19.8	6.4	18.2	2.5
BUMTHANG	14.1	10.9	23.0	13.7	21.6	12.1	19.5	5.9	16.1	-0.5	12.3	-2.3
MONGAR	16.1	15.8	25.4	19.6	24.7	19.4	22.7	15.8	19.9	11.2	15.7	9.5
TASHIGANG	31.5	23.1	30.2	22.7	30.0	23.9	29.1	17.7	26.1	13.6	23.0	11.6

General Information

Rainfall

As a guide, rainfall in Thimphu and Paro is about 25mm a month in January to March, rising to 50mm in April and May, 75mm in June, and then a whopping 355mm in July, 300mm in August, 125mm in September, back down to 75mm in October, 25 mm in November and 0 in December.

Temperatures while trekking

Daytime temperatures will be in the high 20s falling to 5° C at night between 1000 m and 3500 m. At higher altitudes temperatures can range from about 20° C during the day down to -10° C at night.

Culture and customs

The Bhutanese are generally tolerant of Westerners and don't expect that they will necessarily follow, or understand, local customs, so they are not quick to take offence, but it is worth bearing in mind the following:

- It is polite to take any items offered to you (or to hold something out to another person) with two hands. This is also often done when shaking hands. If you only use one hand to take something from someone make sure it is the right hand.
- Follow your guide's lead on this – it is customary to remove your shoes on entering the important rooms of temples (and indeed private houses).
- It is also customary to leave a small amount of money on the altar – you will see people touching the note to their forehead first. If a monk is present he will then pour some holy water from a small jug into your hand – if you wish you could make the gesture of taking a sip and then spreading the rest over your head
- Don't touch people on the head or feet (although this rule does not apply to small children), and don't point your feet at anyone. If you are sitting on the floor try to sit cross-legged or kneel with your feet behind you.
- Don't point at people or religious objects or pictures. If you are indicating something in a painting, use your whole hand, palm upwards, pointing the tips of your fingers in the relevant direction. If you are waving someone towards you use your hand palm downwards.
- Remember that you should always turn prayer wheels or navigate round a chorten, religious monument or temple in a clockwise direction.
- Photography and filming inside temples is not allowed. Please ask if they mind before taking pictures of local people.
- We also suggest that you discourage begging. Don't give money or candy to local children. It will encourage them to beg whenever they see foreigners. Instead you could leave small donations to schools or the village development fund so that the money can be used to benefit the whole community.

General Information

Recommended reading

- Beyond the Sky and the Earth: a Journey into Bhutan (Jamie Zeppa) – if you only read one book about Bhutan make it this one! A beautifully told tale of an unseasoned traveler getting to grips with life in the undeveloped world and falling in love with the country and its people.
- Hidden Bhutan: Entering the Kingdom of the Thunder Dragon (Martin Uitz) – a wonderful collection of anecdotes in easy to read snippets offering an informed perspective on Bhutan's culture and customs.
- Bold Bhutan Beckons (Tim Fischer and Tshering Tashi) – a fascinating study offering both western and eastern perspectives on ancient and modern Bhutan (by virtue of its dual authorship); the sections written by Tshering Tashi are painstakingly researched and are of particular interest as they allow the reader to gain an insider's insight into the lives and customs of the Bhutanese. [visit www.pagodatreepress.com to order this book or contact us for an order form]
- Dreams of the Peaceful Dragon: Journey into Bhutan (Katie Hickman) – an account of a voyage to the east of the country long before Bhutan was a tourist destination.
- Kingdom of the Golden Dragon (Isabel Allende) – a novel set in a mythical kingdom loosely based on Bhutan.
- The Blessings of Bhutan (Russ and Blyth Carpenter) - a study of contemporary Bhutan, written in a somewhat quirky style, which gets under the surface to connect with the reality of the life and culture of Bhutan and its people.
- Treasures of the Thunder Dragon: A Portrait of Bhutan - written by Ashi Dorji Wangmo Wangchuck, the first wife of the fourth King and containing interesting insights into the life of the royals and their perspective on the country at large.
- Kingdoms Beyond the Clouds: Journeys in Search of the Himalayan Kings (Jonathan Gregson) - an account of his journeys through the Himalayan region and his attempts to interview the (somewhat elusive) royal families of the region, only two of whom (those of Nepal and Bhutan) then remained in power.

As travel guides we recommend:

- Lonely Planet Guide to Bhutan – 4th edition March 2011
- The Footprint Guide to Bhutan - 2nd edition September 2010
- Bhutan - A Trekker's Guide by Bart Jordans (2008) which has maps and in depth summaries of 27 treks across the country.
- And for those brave enough to try the language:
- Vol 1 of Languages of the Greater Himalayan Region: Dzongkha (George van Driem) which comes complete with CDs and is available from CNWS Publications at Leiden University in the Netherlands.

General Information

History, Religious Life and Political Administration – a (very) potted version!

Once in Bhutan, your guide will be pleased to answer any questions you have about Bhutanese history, culture, customs or religion, but the following may help to give you a bit of background and to put things in context before you come.

Buddhism was brought to Bhutan by a Tibetan king, Songtsen Gampo, who constructed the first two Buddhist temples (in Paro and Bumthang) in the 7th Century. Then in the 8th Century a Tantric Buddhist, Padmasambhava arrived from an area of Pakistan to introduce his particular form of Buddhism to Tibet and Bhutan. He is generally known as the Guru Rinpoche or 'Precious Master' and every temple in the country pays homage to him. All the places he visited and wherever he meditated are now places of pilgrimage for the Bhutanese.

Many different Buddhist sects subsequently developed and there still exist a number of different forms of Buddhism being practised in Bhutan today. But the next most significant religious figure to be aware of is Ngawang Namgyel. His honorary title by which he is usually known is the Shabdrung. He arrived in Bhutan in 1616 and proceeded over a number of years to unify the country as one in place of the various separate states existing previously. It was he who constructed the first *dzong* (at Simtokha) and left a legacy at his death of a well-organised system of administration and law.

He established a state clergy under a religious leader (the Chief Abbot) known as *Je Khenpo* and a political system administered by monks led by a chief known as the Desi. The system lasted until the monarchy took over in 1907. The country was divided into provinces headed by governors or *penlops* who governed from their respective *dzongs*. The *penlop* of Trongsa eventually emerged during the 19th Century as the most powerful and his son was subsequently elected as the first King of a unified Bhutan.

A hereditary monarchy was born, with the fifth King now having taken the throne, albeit with much of his power having been ceded by his father, the fourth King, to a new Parliament following historic elections held in 2008. Parliamentary democracy is taking its place in the life of Bhutanese Citizens who voted in the *Druk Phuensum Tshogpa* party, and its leader Jigmi Y Thinley, with an overwhelming majority (45 seats out of 47).

Elections were also held for the National Council which is the upper house. It meets twice a year for 3 weeks and the sessions are public. Laws are discussed and voted on and matters of national interest debated.

The King holds ultimate judicial power such that all citizens can appeal to him as a last resort. But a High Court has been set up with 6 Judges: 4 appointed by the King, and 2 by the Assembly to represent the people. All districts have a local court presided over by a magistrate appointed by the Chief Justice, but local cases are also tried by village headmen. The system of law follows closely that established by the Shabdrung. There are no private lawyers and each litigant pleads his own case. Crime rates remain low and the cases generally involve matters relating to family disputes and property rights. That said, the Code of Law has recently been reviewed

and students are being sent to India to train as lawyers, so there will be gradual change in this area in due course.

As far as local administration is concerned, the 3 initial districts set up by the Shabdrung are now 20, known as *dzongkhags*, each with its own *dzong* as the centre of administration, governed by a head known as a *Dzongda* who is responsible to the central government in the form of the Home Ministry. Each district is divided into blocks known as *geogs* which are administrative units grouping several villages together.

General Information

Committees formed from representatives of the local people as well as civil servants have been established for each *geog* to decide on development plans for the area. The head of the *geog* is known as the *Gup* and he holds a lot of power locally – all the more so now that more decision making powers have been devolved from central government as a result of the decentralisation and devolution policy adopted in recent years.

There is not space here to describe the Buddhist religion in great detail, and this is obviously a complex subject. The Lonely Planet has a very helpful and succinct summary of the basic tenets of Buddhism and an explanation of the particular way that Buddhism developed in Bhutan and is practised today.

But it is useful to be aware of the extent to which the religion influences and forms an integral part of daily life for most Bhutanese.

Most Bhutanese worship the Buddha, Guru Rinpoche and a number of other deities and indigenous gods as well as local religious masters (or *lamas*) and monks.

Rituals are performed on all occasions – birth, marriage, death, illness, departing for a trip, building a new house and so on. The *tsip* (astrologer) will be consulted before any important act is undertaken – when travelling it is vital to know which is an auspicious day and time to depart; when buying a car to know which is an appropriate colour, and so on.

Each house has its own altar (called a *choeshum*) containing at least three statues – the Guru Rinpoche, the Buddha and the Shabdrung. Daily prayers will be offered here together with the offering of butter lamps on auspicious occasions. And every available opportunity will be taken to visit temples or monasteries, particularly on auspicious dates, to offer butter lamps, circumambulating and turning the prayer wheels.

Where possible money will be donated to monks and monasteries and good causes sponsored. It is the duty of every person to offer support to those who are dedicated to religious life, and to perform pious acts, to ensure their own good fortune in a future life. The religion is followed unquestioningly as a matter of custom and most families will try to send one of their sons to train as a monk from an early age.

