

# HIMALAYAN KINGDOMS: NEPAL, BHUTAN & DARJEELING

21 OCTOBER – 7 NOVEMBER 2025

FROM  
£10,440  
PER PERSON

Tour Leader: Louisa Thompson

  
The Ultimate  
TRAVEL COMPANY





Our adventure begins in Nepal in the wonder-filled capital of Kathmandu, a fascinating and exotic city of ancient temples, palaces, stupas and colourful streets of traditional houses, many intricately carved. We also visit the nearby medieval Newar town of Bhaktapur. We travel on to the Pokhara Valley in the Nepalese Himalayas to stay in a remote mountain lodge with breath-taking scenery, before returning to Kathmandu.

We then fly on to the tiny Kingdom of Bhutan, which for centuries was closed to western visitors and remained hidden behind the peaks of the Himalayas – thankfully no longer the case today. Our journey encompasses splendid chortens (stupas) and dzongs (monasteries) along with the country's spectacular landscape of fertile valleys, lush forests and snow-capped peaks. We meet the delightful people and discover the unique culture of this delightful Kingdom on the 'roof of the world'.

Our final stop is Darjeeling in West Bengal, one of India's most celebrated tea-growing districts. Clinging like a limpet to a ridge in the Himalayan foothills, it is an extraordinary town, comprising various levels, interlinked by steep stairways, and fine examples of Victorian Gothic architecture. From wherever you look, mountain views surround you and Kanchenjunga at 8,848 metres towers above you. Nearby Ghoom Monastery can be reached by the famous miniature Darjeeling Himalayan Railway and offers an insight into the Buddhist way of life, hidden away up here in the hills.





Mount Everest



Phewa Tal Lake



UNESCO World Heritage Site Bhaktapur

## 18-DAY ITINERARY, DEPARTING 21 OCTOBER 2025

### 21 October London / Doha

Suggested flights (not included in the cost of the tour) Qatar Airways QR 8 departing London Heathrow at 16.00 hrs.

### 22 October Doha / Kathmandu

Arrive Doha at 00.45 hrs. Connect to Qatar Airways QR 652 departing Doha at 03.05 hrs arriving Kathmandu at 10.30 hrs. Transfer to Dwarika's Hotel where three nights are spent. Dwarika's is a palace-complex style hotel with architecture that recalls the Durbar squares, temples, courtyards, stupas and tall houses with intricately carved windows of a 15th century Nepalese town, complemented, of course, by 21st century amenities and comforts. The spacious guest rooms and suites are all individually designed and decorated with traditional fabrics and accessories. There are three restaurants which all use ingredients from Dwarika's own farms. Facilities include a swimming pool inspired by 12th century Malla Dynasty baths, the Pancha Kosha Himalayan Spa and a Yoga and fitness centre.

Lunch under own arrangements. Afternoon city tour of Kathmandu including the famous UNESCO Pashupatinath Temple which is considered one of the most sacred temples of the Hindu faith, serving as the seat of the national deity, Lord Pashupatinath, and famous for its burning ghats. Also visit the great white stupa at Boudhanath, one of the world's largest stupas and the most important Tibetan Buddhist monument outside Tibet. Nepali dinner at Dwarika's Hotel's Krishnar Pan restaurant.

### 23 October Kathmandu

Visit Swayambhunath, the 'Monkey Temple', the oldest shrine in the world established more than 2,500 years ago, situated on top of a high hill, and commanding superb views of the valley below. The four sides of this ancient structure are painted with the compassionate eyes of Buddha. Continue to Patan by crossing the Bagmati River. Visit Durbar Square in Patan, city of arts and architecture, founded in 250 AD and known as Lalitpur. It is renowned for its fine works in bronze, silver, and copper.

Lunch at Chez Caroline's. Return to Kathmandu for an afternoon rickshaw ride around Durbar Square before continuing to the shopping district of Thamel. Afternoon to either go shopping, explore Kathmandu further or take in the atmosphere. Dinner under own arrangements.

### 24 October Kathmandu

Dawn flight from Kathmandu Airport over Mount Everest (8,848 metres) during which you will have a bird's-eye view of the highest peak in the world and the Himalayan panorama. Return to the hotel for breakfast. Transfer to Bhaktapur for lunch in a local restaurant.

Explore Bhaktapur, an ancient Newar town which is the third largest in the Kathmandu Valley and is listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site due to its rich culture, temples, and wood, metal, and stone artwork. Return to Kathmandu and dinner under own arrangements.

### 25 October Kathmandu / Pokhara

Transfer to Kathmandu Airport for a flight to Pokhara and transfer to the Lakeside which is situated besides

Phewa Tal Lake. Enjoy a boat ride on the lake and some free time for shopping.

Lunch under own arrangements. Afternoon transfer to Tiger Mountain Pokhara Lodge where three nights are spent. Situated on a spectacular hilltop ridge above the Pokhara Valley, the lodge has stunning mountain views. Accommodation is in hand-cut stone bungalows, set in natural gardens around the hilltop. The lodge's spa services include massage, yoga, and meditation. Dinner at the lodge.

### 26 October Pokhara

Ridge-top walk through the natural beauty of the Annapurna Mountains with breath-taking views. Stop for a picnic lunch en route.

Return to relax or enjoy the lodge's facilities. Dinner at the lodge.

### 27 October Pokhara

Day to enjoy the various activities on offer at the lodge, including more walks, which may include bird watching or visiting a local village, or relax and have a massage. Lunch and dinner at the lodge.

### 28 October Pokhara / Kathmandu

Transfer to Pokhara Airport for a flight to Kathmandu. Check into Dwarika's Hotel where a further night is spent. Remainder of the day at leisure for shopping and relaxation at the hotel.

Lunch under own arrangements. Dinner under own arrangements.

### 29 October Kathmandu / Paro / Thimphu

Transfer to Kathmandu Airport for a morning flight to Paro, Bhutan. Transfer to Thimphu with a brief stop en route to visit the chain iron bridge built by the great master architect





Punakha Dzong



Dochula Pass



Taktsang (Tiger's Nest) Monastery

Thangtong Gyalpo. Check into the Pemako Hotel, located in the heart of Thimphu city, built in the imposing style of a dzong (monastery) where one night is spent. Facilities include a spa offering massages and hot stone baths.

Lunch at the hotel. Visit the Tibetan-style National Memorial Chorten which houses religious paintings and tantric statues, as well as the splendid gold Buddha Dordenma, the largest sitting Buddha in the world which sits on top of a hill protectively overlooking the valley below. Continue to the 12th century Changangka Monastery, perched like a fortress on a ridge above central Thimphu and where parents traditionally come to get auspicious names for their newborns or blessings for their young children from the protector deity Tamdrin. Time permitting, visit Tashichho Dzong, a Buddhist monastery and fortress, which has been the seat of Bhutan's government since 1952 and presently houses the throne room and offices of the King. Dinner at the hotel.

### 30 October Thimphu / Punakha

Morning visit to the Textile Museum which shows the living national art of weaving including weaving techniques, styles of local dress and textiles. Continue to the Craft Bazaar where you can purchase different types of handicrafts from across Bhutan. Drive to Punakha, set in a fertile valley where rice and fruit are cultivated, which was once the capital of Bhutan (until 1955) and seat of government, stopping en route at the Dochula Pass. Marking the height of the pass are 108 stupas built by Her Majesty the Queen Mother to honour the victory of the Bhutanese army in the 2003 war of Southern Bhutan.

Lunch at a local restaurant. Continue towards Punakha stopping for a short hike to Chimi Lhakhang (the fertility temple) built in memory of the great saint Drukpa Kuenley, popularly known as 'The Divine Madman'. The monastery is highly believed to bless women with fertility. Continue to Punakha and check into the Dhensa Boutique Hotel, which sits in the heart of the verdant and lush Punakha Valley surrounded by pine forests, where two nights are spent. Facilities include a spa, sauna, steam room and wood fired hot tub. Dinner at the hotel.

### 31 October Punakha

Visit Punakha Dzong built by Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal in the 17th century and situated at the junction of Pho Chu and Mo Chu rivers. Inside, the utse is six storeys high and topped with a golden roof, whilst the fortress is divided by three courtyards housing administrative, monastic and religious buildings respectively. It also houses a set of 108 volumes of the Kanjur (a holy book) written in gold. The dzong is now the winter home of the chief abbot and hundreds of monks and serves as administrative headquarters of the district. Walk across Punakha Suspension Bridge.

Lunch at a local restaurant. Walk through the rice terraces to Khamsum Yuelley Namgyel Chorten, built by the Queen Mother and dedicated to her son, the current King. The temple has commanding views of the valley up to the high mountains of Gasa and houses hundreds of images of various protector deities. Drive on to the town of Wangdue, former site of the country's second capital, to visit Wangdue Phodrang Dzong with its commanding view of the valleys

below. Visit the Shangchhen Dorji Lhengdrup Nunnery, made up of a collection of brass roofed buildings and brilliant white chorten that gleam high above the pine covered ridge of the Punakha valley. Dinner at the hotel.

### 1 November Punakha / Paro

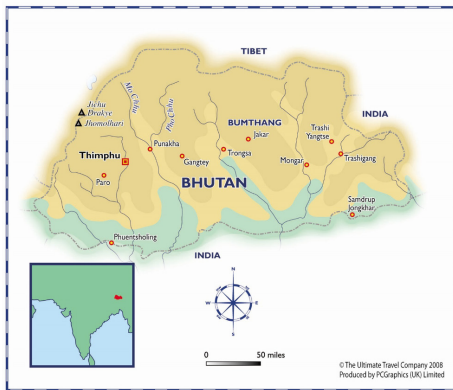
Drive to Paro. On arrival check into the Zhiwaling Heritage Hotel where two nights are spent. From its traditional Bhutanese architecture and elegant temple made with 450-year-old timbers to its Swedish under-floor heating, the hotel seamlessly combines the past and present. Facilities include a spa and meditation house.

Visit to Paro Dzong's neighbouring watchtower (Ta Dzong) which now houses the National Museum, the only museum in Bhutan which has a spectacular and varied collection giving a fascinating insight into the history and culture of the Kingdom. Continue to Rinpung Dzong a large Drukpa Kagyu Buddhist monastery and fortress. It houses the district Monastic Body and government administrative offices of Paro Dzongkhag. Dinner at the hotel.

### 2 November Paro

Hike (5 hrs each way) to the Taktsang (Tiger's Nest) monastery, which perches on the side of a cliff, 900-metres above the valley. It was founded by Guru Rimpoche who, legend has it, flew on the back of a Tigress and meditated in the cave, where the monastery stands, for three months. The monastery itself was built by Desi Tenzin Rabgye in 1646 and is a place of pilgrimage, and is a recognised holy place. Lunch at a café en route back down. Dinner at the hotel.





### 3 November Paro / Bagdogra / Darjeeling

Transfer to Paro airport for a flight to Bagdogra.

Lunch under own arrangements. On arrival you will drive towards Darjeeling up into the hills through teak forest and tea plantations. Check in at the Taj Chia Kutir Hotel where three nights are spent. The hotel is nestled within the historic Makaibari Tea Estate a couple of hours' drive from Darjeeling and facilities include a spa and an indoor pool. Dinner at the hotel.

### 4 November Darjeeling

Drive to Darjeeling, India's most famous hill station which sits on a high ridge surrounded by lush tea plantations set against a backdrop of snow-capped peaks. Fifty years after the British departed, the town remains as popular as ever with those escaping the heat of the plains, and promenades such as the Mall and the Chowrasta still burst with life. The greatest appeal for visitors is its stupendous mountain vista – the equal of any hill station in India, with Kanchenjunga, the third highest mountain in the world, dominating the northern horizon. Visit the Himalayan Mountaineering Institute which was set up following the successful ascent of the Mount Everest by the local hero Tenzing Norgay Sherpa and Sir Edmund Hillary on 28 May 1953. Also visit the Padmaja Naidu Himalayan Zoological Park and Tibetan Refugee Centre.

Lunch at a local restaurant. Take a ride on the World Heritage Toy Train, a narrow gauge one built

between 1879 and 1881. Visit Ghoom monastery, a renowned Buddhist centre, where a group of Tibetan monks preserve the silken padded cushion on which the Dalai Lama is reputed to have sat on one of his visits. Return to the hotel. Dinner under own arrangements.

### 5 November Darjeeling

In the early 1840s it was noticed that the climate of Darjeeling was very conducive to the growth of tea. Tea plantations were established and have expanded all over the area today because of growing demand. Darjeeling tea, which had a premium value in the international market, began to be called the 'Champagne of the East' and for years formed the mainstay of the economy of this area. The name 'Darjeeling' continues to be synonymous with tea and today you will be taken to visit one of the many tea plantations that cling to the mountainside.

Picnic lunch. Dinner under own arrangements.

### 6 November Darjeeling / Bagdogra / Delhi

Drive to Bagdogra Airport for a flight to Delhi.

Lunch under own arrangements. Transfer to the Pullman Aerocity Hotel near the airport where one night is spent. Dinner under own arrangements.

### 7 November Delhi / London

Transfer to Delhi Airport. Suggested flights (not included in the cost of the tour) British Airways flight BA 256 departing Delhi at 10.50 hrs arriving London Heathrow at 15.10 hrs.

## TOUR PRICES PER PERSON

Tour Price	£10,440
Single Supplement	£2,860

*Please note we have not included the cost of the flights in the tour price. Please contact us for prices should you wish to book them through us.*

## PRICE INCLUDES

- Accommodation throughout as shown in the itinerary
- Breakfast daily; 11 lunches; 10 dinners
- Domestic flights
- Flight over Everest
- All entrance fees, visits, excursions, and transportation as per the itinerary
- Gratuities in restaurants for included meals
- Gratuities to driver/s
- Porterage
- Gratuities to guide/s
- Local English-speaking guide/s
- The services of your tour leader throughout

## PRICE EXCLUDES

- International flights
- Travel insurance
- Visas
- Items of personal expenditure (e.g. telephone calls / laundry etc.)
- Government levies or taxes introduced after costing and publication of this programme on 07.10.24



Darjeeling Himalayan Railway aka "Toy Train"





## YOUR TOUR LEADER



### LOUISA THOMPSON

Louisa joined Ultimate Travel in 2016, where she joined the Escorted Tours team, organising cultural and wildlife trips worldwide. She now sells tailor made trips, focusing mainly in Australasia and North Africa. Louisa's led and accompanied tours in Spain, Russia, eastern and southern India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Antarctica. She loves anything to do with the outdoors and is always planning unique and off the beaten track trips to some whacky destinations. She really enjoys photography and cooking and is always up for an adventure.



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