



adventure
associates

Kathmandu Summit Club

KINGDOM OF BHUTAN TREK

EXPEDITION MANUAL



AUSTRALIAN
HIMALAYAN
FOUNDATION


Kathmandu

Trek in the mystical Kingdom of Bhutan and help raise funds for the Australian Himalayan Foundation's women's education projects.

ABOUT THE TRIP

Offered exclusively to Summit Club members, our trek takes place in the foothills of the Bhutan mountain ranges and is an introductory Himalayan trek that travels through picturesque villages and semi alpine forest underneath snow capped mountains. The main focus of this trip is to visit the Australian Himalayan Foundation projects in Bhutan and to experience the unique culture of Bhutan and its people. Working in partnership with local NGO RENEW, an organisation dedicated to the empowerment of women and girls, AHF has been supporting a Girls' Scholarship Program in Bhutan for over five years that recognises that investing in the education of girls is fundamental to creating strong, stable families, communities and countries.

The program currently supports the education of over 250 girls from some of the most disadvantaged corners of Bhutan (where children often walk up to 3

hours a day to reach the nearest community primary school) with access to an education up to Year 10 by providing textbooks, school uniforms, school bags and the building of girls boarding facilities. Beneficiaries are mainly vulnerable girls who come from very low socio- economic backgrounds and are often the victims of domestic violence and sexual abuse. The scholarship program aims to give girls coming from disadvantaged families or who have no family support the opportunity to continue education and complete schooling. In some instances, scholarship recipients are provided with additional assistance such as boarding during school terms and vacation periods. Our trek takes us into remote villages that are completely cut off from the outside world for up to 5 months each year. Here we can interact with the local people and get a glimpse of what it's like to live the very basic life of a subsistent farmer in one of the harshest, high-altitude environments in the world.

YOUR AMBASSADOR - KERRYN PLUMMER

Kerryn is the office manager & co-ordinator of the Treks and Challenges for AHF. She has more than sixteen years of travel industry experience, and loves to create great travel adventures for people.



Kerryn loves any type of outdoor activities, travelling, talking and playing the ukulele. A mother of three daughters who give her little peace but great joy, views her work with AHF as an extension of her commitment to women and families around the world. Kerryn loves travelling with groups of people and takes great pride in seeing the transition from strangers to friends by the end of a journey, "especially a journey like this one"!

KATHMANDU

The Kathmandu Summit Club Community is a group of people who love the outdoors. They believe the world is an invitation and are passionate about exploring their own boundaries – wherever in the world that takes them. **Kathmandu** have teamed up with **The Australian Himalayan Foundation** to help raise awareness and funds, and to educate and introduce people to the philosophy of giving back to the communities that we travel through.



HIGHLIGHTS

- Trek in the Himalayan Kingdom of Bhutan on a fully supported trek escorted by AHF representative Kerryn Plummer
- Help raise much needed funds for the Australian Himalayan Foundation projects in Bhutan
- Experience the unique culture and warmth of the Bhutanese people
- Sightseeing in Paro, Punakha and Thimphu
- Trek to the famous Tigers Nest Monastery
- Visit Punakha Dzong, one of the largest in Bhutan
- Himalayan mountain views

SINGLE SUPPLEMENTS

The cost of this tour is based on twin share arrangements; if you are travelling alone we will match you up with another traveller of the same gender. If you wish to guarantee your own room and tent you can pay the single supplement applicable to this trip.

FUNDRAISING

To join this trip there is a minimum charity donation or fundraising requirement of \$1000. AHF will contact you to organise your online fundraising platform. This trek is registered through GoFundraise, payments can be made at www.gofundraise.com.au

THE AUSTRALIAN HIMALAYAN FOUNDATION

The Australian Himalayan Foundation is committed to improving the quality of life of those living in remote areas of the Himalaya. They work in partnership with these communities to help the most disadvantaged meet their needs through integrated improvements in education, health and the environment. In 2016 the AHF rolled out a vocational training projects for women from disadvantaged backgrounds with our in-country

partner RENEW. These programs have been designed to provide weaving and tailoring skills that will hopefully lead to employment opportunities for girls coming from our existing school support program. They focus on economic empowerment for those from rural and remote regions and aim to alleviate poverty through fostering new skills and building financial independence.

A masked ceremonial dancer during a festival



TRIP SUMMARY

9 day trip
3 day trek
6 nights hotel
2 nights camping

TRIP DATE & COSTS

5-13 October 2018
Cost \$3890 per person
twin share
Single supplement \$550
Minimum fundraising or
charity donation \$1000
Group size min 6
Group size max 16

INCLUDED

- Kathmandu gear voucher valued at \$250
- Escorted by Australian Himalayan Foundation representative Kerryn Plummer
- 8 breakfasts, 8 lunches and 8 dinners
- Arrival and departure transfers if arriving on day 1 and departing on day 9
- All internal transport by private vehicle
- 3 – 4 star hotel accommodation
- Sightseeing tour in Paro – Taktshang Monastery
- Experienced English speaking trek leader trained in remote wilderness first aid
- Sightseeing fees and trekking permits
- Trekking crew including trek cook, kitchen staff, and animals to carry 15kg of your personal luggage
- Trek duffel for use on trek
- Group first aid kit
- Visa for Bhutan

NOT INCLUDED

- International or domestic flights
- Any meals not mentioned in the itinerary
- Personal travel insurance
- Bottled water, soft drinks and alcoholic beverages
- Items of a personal nature such as laundry, hot showers in lodges, battery charging fees, phone calls
- Tips

Traditional Bhutanese art is a common feature on buildings in Bhutan



ITINERARY IN BRIEF

DAY 1	Join Paro
DAY 2	Hike to Taktshang Monastery
DAY 3	Drive Paro to Thimphu, visit AHF project en-route
DAY 4	In Thimphu, visit AHF project, afternoon markets
DAY 5	Commence Sinchu La trek
DAY 6	Trek Balakayba to Dupshepang via Sinchu La (3180m)
DAY 7	Trek Dupshepang to Kabji Sirigang
DAY 8	In Punakha, visit Punakha Dzong and Sangshhen Nunnery, return Paro
DAY 9	Trip concludes in Paro



A Chorten wall at the Dochu La Pass



ITINERARY IN DETAIL

B = Breakfast, L = Lunch, D = Dinner

Day 01 Join Paro

Tashi Delek! Welcome to Bhutan!

On arrival you will be met in the traditional Bhutanese manner with a Tashi Khaddar, and transferred to your hotel. In the afternoon visit Ta Dzong, which now houses the National Museum, and Rinpung Dzong. The museum's extensive collection includes antique Thangka paintings, textiles, weapons and armor and a rich assortment of natural and historic artifacts. In the evening we will hold a welcome dinner at the hotel. Overnight Paro hotel. (L,D)

Day 02 Hike to Taktshang Monastery, and visit Drukgyel Dzong

After breakfast excursion to Taktshang Monastery otherwise known as the Tiger's Nest (approx. 4/5 hours 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 said that Guru Rinpoche arrived here on the back of a tigress and meditated at this monastery and hence it is called 'Tiger's Nest'. This site has been recognized as a most sacred place and visited by Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal in 1646 and now visited by all Bhutanese at least once in their lifetime.

Afternoon drive to the ruined fortress of Drukgyel Dzong, with views to the sacred peak Chomolhari "the mountain goddess". In the evening visit Kyichu Lhkahang, one of the 108



A young artist practising Thangka painting



Learning the art of the hand loom



temples built by the Tibetan King, Songsten Gampo. The building of this temple marks the introduction of Buddhism in Bhutan.

Overnight hotel (B,L,D)

Day 03 Transfer from Paro to Thimphu

After breakfast drive to Thimphu, en-route we stop at Chuzom, the confluence of the Thimphu and Paro rivers. Also en-route we visit the Genekha Primary School, an AHF project. Upon arrival in Thimphu we check in to the hotel. In the evening we have the opportunity to participate in a cooking demonstration held at a local restaurant.

Bhutanese food is heavily seasoned with red chilies and can be quite hot. Tasty and fiery 'Emma Datshi' made with chilies and local Bhutanese cheese is the national dish of Bhutan. Overnight hotel (B,L,D)

Day 04 In Thimphu

AHF supports the work of RENEW, a grass roots not for profit organisation established by the Queen Mother of Bhutan. RENEW is dedicated to the development of women and children in Bhutan and supports girls education in remote communities. This morning we meet with the Director of RENEW for morning tea, and we may also have the opportunity to meet the Queen Mother if her busy schedule allows.

Afternoon visit the Textiles Museum and wander through the markets.

Overnight hotel (B,L,D)

Day 05 Commence Sinchu La trek (trek 4-5 hrs.)

The Sinchu La trek follows an ancient route that connects the Thimphu and Punakha provinces. Our trek begins at



Friendly smiling local schoolgirls



Traditional Bhutanese food



In the marketplace



Dechenchholing (Kabjesa).
Overnight camp at Balakayba (B,L,D)

Day 06 Trek Balakayba to Dupshepang via Sinchu La (3180m) (trek 6-7 hrs)

After approximately one hour of ascent we reach the Sinchula Pass (3,180 m), on a clear day, views of Phajoding Monastery and some of the Himalayan ranges can be seen. After an hour or so trek, we reach the village of Thinleygang. The trail then leads on for five to six hours of walking through mixed forests to our overnight camp at an altitude of 2,440m.
Overnight camp (B,L,D)

Day 07 Trek Dupshepang to Kabji Sirigang (trek approx. 8 hrs)

The third day of the trek starts with 4-hour descent through dense forests.

A small stream must be crossed twice, then we continue for another three to four hours through villages and rice fields to the village of Chorsten Nebu, an old temple. The route then descends for two hours to Kabji Sirigang, and the end of the trek, where we are transferred by road to Punakha for a well-earned hot shower.
Overnight hotel Punakha (B,L,D)

Day 08 In Punakha, visit Punakha Dzong and Sangshhen Nunnery & return to Paro (drive 4hrs)

Following breakfast we take a tour of the Punakha Dzong. Built at the confluence of two rivers. Punakha was the capital of Bhutan until 1955, and the Monastery still serves as the winter residence of the monk body. Later we take a short walk to Chimi Lhakhang. The Chimi Lhakhang is situated on a



Yaks and ponies are used for portorage in the mountains



Farmers market in Paro



hillock in the centre of the valley, also known as the temple of fertility. It is widely believed that couples who do not have children. It is widely believed that couples who experiences difficulties with fertility will usually be blessed with a child very soon after praying here. A walk through the village near the temple will give you rare glimpses into the daily life and lifestyle of the villagers.

Afternoon visit Sangchhen Dorji Lhuendrup Lhakhang nunnery: Perched on a ridge amid pine trees and overlooking valleys of Punakha and Wangdue Phodrang, gleams the magnificent structures of Sangchhen Dorji Lhuendrup Lhakhang (Temple). The temple houses a 14-foot main bronze statue of Avalokiteshvara (Chenrigzig Chagtong Chentong). Other statues include those of Guru Padma Sambawa, Gautama Buddha,

Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyel, Tsela Namsum, the 21 Taras and Tsepamay (Buddha of longevity). The Avalokiteshvara statue, one of the biggest in the country, was the handiwork of entirely local Bhutanese artisans. The temple complex also houses a permanent higher learning and meditation centre for nuns where, apart from religious trainings, it provides life skill training such as tailoring, embroidery, statue making and Thangka painting. Overnight Hotel (B,L,D)

Day 09 Depart Paro

After an early breakfast transfer to the airport for onward arrangements. (B) Overnight hotel. (B,L,D)



The imposing Punakha Dzong



Archery is the national sport of Bhutan

Crossing a mountain pass adorned with prayer flags



ABOUT THE TREK

This is a camping-based trek, but one that is very different to any camping trek undertaken in the west. You will sleep in a tent, and you will have a trek leader, trekking crew, a kitchen crew, and animals to carry your personal baggage. The crew will set up camp, cook and serve all meals. You will be woken in the morning with bed tea in your tent, there will be time for a quick wash and to pack your duffel ready for the pack animals to take to our next night's camp. You'll be served breakfast in the mess tent before departing for your days trekking.

We use two-man tents. Each tent is supplied with a foam mattress for each person.

During the day all you carry is a daypack with a water bottle, camera, jacket, sunscreen and any other personal items you might need.

The rest of your gear goes into your trek duffel bag to be carried by the animals, usually mules.

TREK DIFFICULTY & FITNESS

Preparation is important to ensuring you enjoy your trek and meet the challenge of each day. Some days we will trek for only 3-4 hours or so, and others will be longer

days of up to 5-6 hours. You should start preparing at least 6 months before your trip commences. This trip is an introductory graded trek, and so you can expect up to 6 hours of walking per day. There is no "easy" walking in the Himalaya, and so you must expect some steep ascents and descents, and possible adverse weather conditions. Aim to train 2-3 times per week, it's all about legs and lungs, and so running and cycling are good, as well as gym sessions which should include an hour of cardio work and some leg work. Extended bushwalking or hiking on the weekends is great preparation.

Anywhere where you can find lots of ups and downs will stand you in good stead for the challenge ahead. It is not about speed, but rather slow and steady. Your trek leader and staff will ensure you keep a slow steady pace, which helps with acclimatisation to the high altitudes. Once you have booked your tour you will receive our comprehensive pre-departure information covering all aspects of preparation and equipment needed for your trek.

WEATHER

Most of the central area of the country enjoys a cool, temperate climate. Bhutan's dry spring starts in March

Prayer wheels line the walls of an old monastery



and lasts until April, and autumn is from October to November. In springtime the hillsides are dotted with extraordinary rhododendrons for which Bhutan is justly famous. In late September and October, rare flowers should also be blooming. Bhutan is an untouched Botanical paradise and many species now common in western gardens owe their origins to Bhutan. During the trek, the weather is likely to be warm, sunny and dry with occasional light rain. We spend a few nights at around 2,800 metres, where it can be quite a bit cooler at night (low as 0° C). You'll need a hat and sunscreen because you'll be in the sun most of the day.

ALTITUDE

If you are ascending above 3500m, acclimatisation to altitude is an important factor and can greatly impact your enjoyment. Our trekking schedules have been carefully designed to minimise the effects of altitude. We ascend slowly and ensure an adequate number of rest days to enable safe acclimatisation. It is still possible for mountain sickness to occur, therefore a close watch is kept on each group member by the your trek leader, who is trained in recognising and treating early symptoms of acute mountain sickness.

These symptoms include bad headache, nausea, lethargy and, in extreme cases, ataxia or loss of co-ordination and severe breathlessness on rest. A mild headache and breathlessness are not uncommon at altitude but in combination with any of the above more serious symptoms, immediate descent is imperative. If you or your friends display any of these symptoms please make sure that you inform the Group Leader immediately. It is essential at altitude that you keep your fluid intake up and it is important that you drink at least 4 liters of liquid per day to keep well hydrated.

FOOD & HYGIENE

The trekking crew is very conscious of hygiene and food is carefully prepared.

Whilst camping, much of the food will be carried in with us so that we do not impact on local resources.

The food will be a mix of Bhutanese and western style and you will be amazed at the quality and variety that the kitchen staff can produce. Safe drinking water is provided for you throughout the trek. Please let us know in advance if you have any dietary requirements.

The first born son in Bhutan will have the honour of studying to become a monk



ROUTINE

The average day begins at dawn (around 6.00 am) with a hot cup of bed tea and basin of washing water. The crew will break camp and pack while you are having a cooked breakfast. The kitchen crew walks on ahead to set up and cook lunch, which we normally eat around noon.

After lunch we travel for a couple of hours. Normally we reach our campsite around mid-afternoon, which leaves time for relaxing, or exploring, there are always things to explore and curious locals to meet.

We eat around 5.30 – 6pm

OUR LEADERS IN THE FIELD

Our trek leaders are experienced and highly trained in wilderness first aid and high altitude medicine. They are local to the region and highly skilled expedition leaders who are knowledgeable and passionate. They will ensure that all aspects of your trek run smoothly.

BHUTAN – LAND OF THE THUNDER DRAGON

The Kingdom of Bhutan is a landlocked nation nestled in the eastern Himalayas, bordering China to the north and India to the south, with a total area of 38,394km². It is a mountainous country except for a strip of plains in the

south. It is a very compact country with well built roads connecting valleys and high mountain passes.

Although the country was not unified under a central authority until the 17th century, Bhutan has always preserved its independence, and followed a policy of self-imposed isolation. Bhutan was largely cut off from the rest of the world until the 1950's. It's formidable geographical boundaries kept out foreign authority and allowed the Bhutanese to develop a strong degree of common identity, despite ethnic and linguistic diversity. Today, Bhutan has retained its integrity and distinctive way of life virtually intact.

With monasteries and prayer flags dotting every hill and valley, Bhutan is predominantly a Buddhist country, and the influence of religion is highly visible in everyday life as it permeates every aspect of life in Bhutan. Worship and faith take many forms, from daily prayer before the shrine room at home to reciting prayers with the rosary or a prayer wheel.

CONSERVATION

Bhutan's long commitment to the maintenance of biological diversity and productivity is rooted in its understanding of the importance of forest systems to the survival strategies of remote and isolated communities,

A trekker takes in the views below Tiger Mountain



its beliefs and customs, and understanding of sustainable development. The country has placed environmental conservation at the core of its development strategy. The first modern legislation enacted in 1969 was replaced by the 'Forest and Nature Conservation Act, 1995' which is specifically aimed at protecting the country's forests and wildlife.

Considering its size, Bhutan probably has the greatest biodiversity among Asian countries. The country has received international acclaim for its commitment to the maintenance of its biodiversity, reflected in its decision to maintain at least 60 percent of the land area under forest cover for all time and designate more than one quarter of its territory as national parks, reserves and other protected areas.

ADVENTURE TRAVEL

In the remote areas that we operate things don't always go to plan. By its very nature adventure travel presents it's own challenges, sometimes flights don't run on time, or traffic makes us run late. The weather may not always co-operate or any other number of issues may arise to keep us on our feet. Sometimes we may need to adjust our itinerary and schedules due to events beyond our control. If something like this occurs your trek leader will

always keep you informed. Keep an open mind and a flexible attitude, and any challenges that may arise will be taken in your stride.

HOW TO BOOK

Adventure Associates will be handling all arrangements for this trip. Passion, integrity and going 'beyond the ordinary' are the values that have made Adventure Associates such a long-standing success. Adventure Associates can also provide assistance with booking your international flights and any pre or post tour arrangements you require. To confirm a place on this exciting project we require a \$500 deposit and completed booking form.

Any questions concerning this trip please contact Julie at Adventure Associates. Julie will be looking after all aspects of your trip arrangements.

julie@adventureassociates.com

Alternatively you can access a Booking Form on our website and read the Terms and Conditions.

<http://www.adventureassociates.com>

Giant Thangka unfurling ceremony of the Thimphu Festival





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