

# BHUTAN: The Chomolhari Trek

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## TRIP ITINERARY

May 13-24, 2008



## Bhutan with Outward Bound International... operated by Boundless Journeys

Join Outward Bound International and Boundless Journeys on a 12-day adventure along Bhutan's premier trekking route that leads into a breathtaking Himalayan valley, to the base of Bhutan's most sacred mountain, Chomolhari (23,997').

Ian Wade, Director of Outward Bound International, will accompany the trek which is arranged by Boundless Journeys. Ian has visited Bhutan several times, and he is past President of the American Mountain Guides Association and an Everest summit climber.

*"I am not as much concerned about the Gross National Product,  
as I am the Gross National Happiness."*

-- Bhutan King, Jigme Singye Wangchuck

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The Chomolhari Trek

HIGHLIGHTS

- 8-day trek to a spectacular base camp below Chomolhari, the “Divine Mountain”
- Dramatic scenery with spectacular river valleys, snow-capped sacred mountains, terraced rice fields, and striking architecture
- Warm and welcoming Bhutanese people and a devout Buddhist culture

DETAILS

- 12-day trip begins and ends in Paro, Bhutan
- 4 nights in deluxe hotels, 7 nights full service camping
- All meals included

2008 DATES

May 13-24

ACTIVITY RATING

1 2 3 4 5

Easy.....Most Strenuous

Moderate to strenuous trekking, 6-8 hours per day; most trekking is between 8,000-14,000 feet with significant elevation gains and losses. Two high passes of approximately 15,000-16,000 feet.

Along the lofty ridges of the Himalayas, cradled between Tibet and India, lies the Kingdom of Bhutan, a place that has for centuries remained blissfully untouched by the rest of the world. With very few visitors entering the country, Bhutan’s landscape has remained pristine, the rivers are pure, and the mountains are magical. On our trek through this modern-day Shangri-La we pass through scattered hamlets and farmland, into a deep and richly forested valley, and to high alpine pastureland where yak herders graze their animals. We meet welcoming local people, red-robed lamas, and nomadic yak herders as we learn about the Bhutanese way of life while surrounded by spectacular mountain scenery.

## Itinerary

### Day 1

**Arrival in Paro, Bhutan. Visit Kyichu Lhakhang, the Paro Dzong, and Bhutan’s National Museum.**

**Walk – easy to moderate, 1-3 hours.**

Our flight from Bangkok, Thailand into Bhutan provides spectacular views of

Bhutan’s landscape as we approach the airport in the Paro Valley. The valley is a green bowl surrounded by jagged Himalayan mountains and forested hillsides, crossed by beautiful rivers, and dotted with medieval fortresses. The first thing that we notice as we disembark in Bhutan is the absence of noise and a feeling of peacefulness that is rare in most other Asian cities. The Paro Valley has

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kept its bucolic nature and is one of the most scenic valleys in Bhutan. The houses are considered to be among the most beautiful in the country, and Paro is believed to be one of the first valleys to have received the imprint of Buddhism.

We are greeted with a warm Bhutanese reception and transferred to our first hotel where we enjoy a light lunch and afternoon tea. After lunch, a short drive through town takes us to Kyichu Lhakhang. Kyichu Lhakhang, meaning “twin temples,” is believed to have been built in 659 AD by King Songtsen of Tibet, and reflects the introduction of Buddhism to Bhutan. The temple is one of 108 that were built throughout the Himalayas in one day in an effort to subdue a mighty ogress; it is still believed to hold her left foot in place today. From here an easy walk leads us through Paro countryside and by farms and fields of rice, mustard, buckwheat, eggplant, and, of course, chilies. We pass through Paro town, before crossing the Paro River as we head to the valley’s magnificent Rinpung Dzong. If we are fortunate we may get the opportunity to explore within the dzong’s mighty walls, however, if the Administrative Body is in session, we must admire from the outside.

From here, a short walk uphill brings us to the National Museum, housed in the round multi-storied Ta Dzong, built in 1775. The Ta Dzong was once the watch tower for the massive Paro Dzong, built in the 17<sup>th</sup> century by Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal. The museum’s collection includes ancient artifacts, weapons, a collection of antique thangkha (painted or embroidered religious pictures), textiles, and stamps.

We return to our lodge and relax with an orientation meeting and welcome dinner of

Bhutanese cuisine.

**Zhiwaling Hotel, Paro**



Paro Dzong

**Day 2**

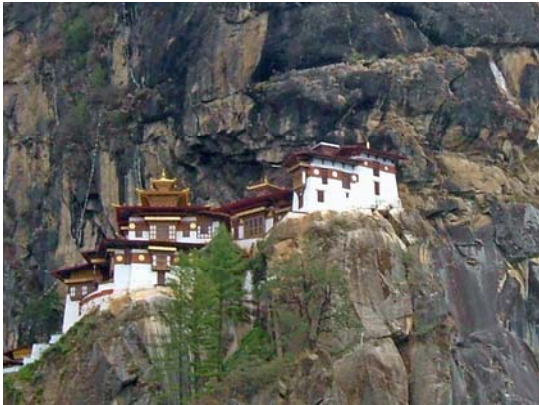
**Taktsang (Tiger’s Nest) Monastery.**

**Hike – moderate, 3-4 hours on hiking trails; approximate elevation gain of 1,650 feet.**

This morning we enjoy a hike to the famous cliff-hermitage called Taktsang, the “Tiger’s Nest.” This monastic retreat is built into a sheer cliff face high above the Paro valley. Legend has it that the Tibetan Buddhist saint Padmasambhava flew across the Himalayas on the back of a tiger and landed here, bringing Buddhism to Bhutan. Entry into the monastery is now permitted, and we may be allowed to visit this sacred site. We enjoy lunch and the views of the valley below at the Taktsang teahouse before descending to the valley floor.

**Zhiwaling Hotel, Paro**

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Tiger's Nest Monastery

### Days 3-10

#### Chomolhari Trek

This superb 8-day trek begins in Paro and leads us into northern Bhutan to a land of yak-herders and to the base of Mount Chomolhari (23,977 feet), which is the most holy mountain in Bhutan. From there our trek brings us to the remote Lingshi Dzong which once guarded the frontier with Tibet. This trek offers fabulous views of the mountains including Chomolhari, Jichu Drake and Tsheringkhang beside stunning Himalayan scenery. We encounter many yak-herders and their camps but few villages along our route.

### Day 3

#### Paro – Shana

**Trekking approximately 10 miles, 5-6 hours.**

Our trek starts from Drukgyel Dzong (8,514') with a short downhill walk on a wide trail. The trail then climbs gently through well maintained rice terraces and fields of millet. Later on we come to apple orchards and forests. Soon the valley widens, and we

reach the army post of Gunitsawa (9,273'). This is the last stop before Tibet. We continue upwards to just beyond Sharma Zampa (9,471'), where there are several good camping places in meadows surrounded by trees.

#### Camping, Chomolhari Trek

### Day 4

#### Shana – Soi Thangthangkha

**Trekking approximately 12 miles, 7-8 hours.**

The trail again follows the Pa Chu (Paro river), ascending and descending through pine, oak and spruce forests. After crossing a bridge to the left bank of the river, we stop for a hot lunch. Then we continue along the river, climbing upwards through rhododendron forests, and crossing the river once more before reaching our campsite (12,375').

#### Camping, Chomolhari Trek

### Day 5

#### Soi Thangthangkha – Jangothang

**Trekking approximately 12 miles, 7-8 hours.**

Our path ascends for a while until we reach an army camp. We then follow the river above the tree line, enjoying stunning views of the surrounding peaks. Hot lunch is served at a yak herder's camp. A short walk from here into the valley takes us to our campsite at Jangothang (13,332'). From here, the views of Chomolhari and Jichu Drake are superb.

#### Camping, Chomolhari Trek

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Trekking team

### Day 6

#### Jangothang – Lingshi

**Trekking approximately 11 miles, 7-8 hours.**

This morning we start by following a stream for half an hour and crossing a bridge to the right bank. We now start our climb up to the first ridge, enjoying breathtaking views of Chomolhari, Jichu Drake and Tserimgang. The trail then takes us across a fairly level valley floor until the climb up to Nyele-la pass (15,510'). We descend gradually from the pass to our campsite at Lingshi (13,200'), enjoying a panoramic view of the mountain peaks and Lingshi Dzong as we walk.

**Camping, Chomolhari Trek**

### Day 7

#### Lingshi – Shodu

**Trekking approximately 13 miles, 8-9 hours.**

The Laya-Gasa route leaves the Chomolhari trek route here. Our trail climbs up towards a small white chorten

on a ridge above the camp, then turns south up the deep Mo Chu valley. The trail stays on the west side of this largely treeless valley, climbing steadily for a short distance above the Mo Chu. It then crosses the river, and climbs steeply for two hours to Yeli-la (15,906'). On a clear day you can see Chomolhari, Gangchenta, Tserimgang and Masagang from this pass. Descend alongside a stream to a rock shelter in the cliff face, and then continue on downstream till reaching Shodu (13,530'), where we camp in a wide meadow.

**Camping, Chomolhari Trek**



Prayers to the Heavens

### Day 8

#### Shodu – Barshong

**Trekking approximately 10 miles, 6-7 hours.**

We are now back at the tree line, and our path follows the course of the Thimphu Chu, descending through rhododendron, juniper and mixed alpine forests. There are stunning views of rocky cliff faces and waterfalls along the way. We stop by the riverside for a hot lunch, before gradually climbing upwards to the ruins of Barshong Dzong (11,880'), near which we camp for

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the night.

### Camping, Chomolhari Trek

#### Day 9

##### Barshong – Dolam Kench

**Trekking approximately 10 miles, 5-6 hours.**

The trail descends gently through a dense forest of rhododendron, birch and conifers, and then drops steeply to meet the Thimphu Chu. The trail runs along the left bank of the river, climbing over ridges and descending into gullies where side streams run into the river. The final stage of the trail climbs around a cliff face high above the Thimphu Chu, coming out onto pastureland where we camp for the night at 11,880’.

### Camping, Chomolhari Trek

#### Day 10

##### Dolam Kencho – Dodena – Thimphu

**Trekking approximately 5 miles, 3 hours.**

Our trail winds in and out of side valleys above the Thimphu Chu, making a long ascent through a forest of conifers and high altitude broadleaf species to a pass at 11,580’. The trail then drops steeply down to the river, following it southward to the road head at Dodena (8,580’). Our transport meets us here, and we drive to Thimphu where we overnight.

### Taj Tashi Hotel, Thimphu

#### Day 11

##### Thimphu Sites. Transfer Thimphu – Paro

### Easy Walking.

Thimphu is a city ideally explored on foot, and our walk today takes us between its many interesting sights. Before the day is through, we may visit the newly built textile museum, the Thimphu Dzong (seat of the government and main monk body), the School of Traditional Arts and Crafts, the Heritage Museum, and the Handicrafts Emporium, displaying the rich traditional crafts of the kingdom. Along the way we stop at a local restaurant for lunch before continuing our walk through the city.

Evening drive to Paro. Overnight at hotel in Paro.

### Zhiwaling Hotel, Paro



Young Monks

#### Day 12

##### Departure from Paro.

An early morning departure from Paro returns us to Bangkok where we say farewell and journey home or to other exciting destinations.

*Please note that this is a typical itinerary, and actual activities may vary to take advantage of weather conditions, local events, and to allow serendipity to play a hand in your experience. Accommodations are as outlined in the itinerary, although we reserve the right to change these should the need arise.*

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# Trip Details

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<b>Trip Length:</b>	12 days/11 nights
<b>2008 Departure Dates:</b>	May 13-24
<b>Land Cost:</b>	<b>\$6,350 plus a tax-deductible contribution to Outward Bound International of \$1,500. <i>Note that this pricing assumes 10 participants and there may be a surcharge if the group is smaller than this.</i></b>
<b>Meeting Point:</b>	Paro, Bhutan (upon the arrival of our flight from Bangkok, Thailand)
<b>Departure Point:</b>	Paro, Bhutan (upon the departure of our flight to Bangkok, Thailand)

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### What's Included:

- All accommodations
- Pre-tour hotel night in Bangkok
- All meals
- All transportation during the tour
- All activities as noted in the itinerary
- Bhutanese visa fees and departure taxes

### Travel Arrangements:

Airfare to Bangkok not included in the price of your trip. Please contact your local travel agency or the airlines directly to make any arrangements you may need to and from Bangkok. Due to Bhutanese government restrictions, Boundless Journeys must purchase your airline tickets between Bangkok and Bhutan for you. The cost of these tickets is included. Additional information on the arrival and departure logistics will be included with your confirmation packet.

### To Make a Reservation:

Please send a deposit of \$3,000 USD per person to:

Outward Bound International  
1914 East 9400 South, Suite 104  
Sandy, Salt Lake City UT 84093-3002 USA  
Fax: (775) 249-9766

Outward Bound International will then confirm your space with Boundless Journeys.

### Once You Reserve:

As soon as you have confirmed your adventure, we provide you with an extensive, detailed trip planner that includes arrival and departure details, a complete packing list, suggested reading lists, regional information, required documents, and other details.

### Cancellation & Refund Policy:

If it becomes necessary for you to cancel your trip the following schedule applies to the \$6,350 land cost and is determined by the day that we receive written notification. The internal airfare portion of this cost, \$935 per person, is non-refundable.

- >90 days prior to the trip will be charged \$100.
- 90-61 days prior to the start of the trip will be charged 25% of the trip price.
- 60-46 days prior to the start of the trip will be charged 50% of the trip price.
- ≤45 days prior to the start of the trip will be charged 100% of the trip price.

### Questions?

Please feel free to call Caryn Robinson at Outward Bound International, 248-505-4497, or Boundless Journeys, 800-941-8010, if you have any questions or concerns. We will be happy to assist in any way that we can.

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### ACCOMMODATIONS

- Overview:** To complement our full service camping, we've chosen some of the country's most deluxe and beautifully situated hotels for this journey. All with private bath.
- Nights 1 & 2:** **Zhiwaling Hotel**  
www.zhiwaling.com  
Paro, Bhutan
- Built in the style of a traditional Bhutanese Dzong, this architecturally stunning building is a short distance from the famed Tiger's Nest Monastery.*
- Nights 3-9:** **Chomolhari Trek Camping**
- Full service camping.*
- Night 10:** **Taj Tashi Hotel (opens Fall 2007)**  
www.tajhotels.com  
Thimphu, Bhutan
- Situated in the city center, this newly opened hotel offers comfortable rooms and a full range of amenities.*
- Night 11:** **Zhiwaling Hotel**  
Paro, Bhutan
- (see nights 1 & 2 description)*