

BHUTAN: The Chomolhari Trek

TRIP ITINERARY

May 9-20, 2011



Bhutan with Outward Bound International... operated by Etho Metho

Join Outward Bound International and pioneering Bhutanese outfitter Etho Metho 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 Etho Metho. 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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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
- The Outward Bound approach to sharing and reflecting on the adventure and experiences in Bhutan

DETAILS

- 12-day trip begins and ends in Paro, Bhutan
- 5 nights in deluxe hotels, 6 nights full service camping
- All meals included

2011 DATES

May 9 -20

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.

Outward Bound is a pioneer of adventure education. Founded

nearly 70 years ago, the organization now has operations in 35 countries and reaches over a quarter of a million people each year. The combination of adventure activities and the spirit of service to others and the environment are common to all Outward Bound programs. Risk management systems have been refined over many years to set a very high standard. Your participation in the Bhutan expedition will offer a taste of Outward Bound, the chance to learn more about its worldwide impact and also to provide tax-deductible financial support for our work of serving more young people in other countries.

Itinerary

Day 1 (Monday, May 9 2011)

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, via Druk Air, provides spectacular views of Bhutan's 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 afternoon tea. We can then explore Paro, Bhutan's second largest town: -

- *Kyichu Lhakhang, meaning "twin temples". This 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.*
- *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. The museum's collection includes ancient artifacts, weapons, a collection of antique thangka (painted or embroidered religious pictures), textiles, and stamps.*

Or we may simply walk through Paro countryside by farms and fields of rice, mustard, buckwheat, eggplant, and, of course, chilies. Perhaps an archery contest will be in progress – the national 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 kept its sport of Bhutan

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

[Zhiwaling Hotel, Paro](#)



Paro Dzong

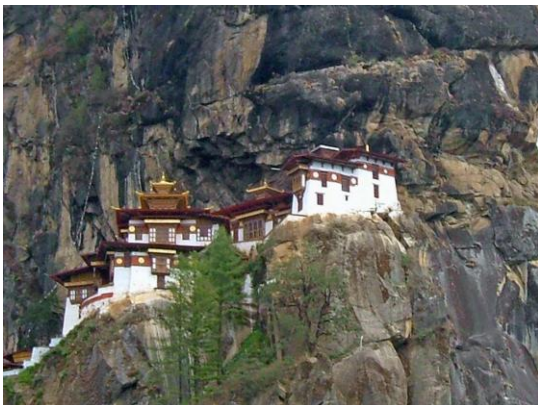
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Day 2 (Tuesday, May 10 2011)
Taktsang ([Tiger's Nest](#)) Monastery.

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



Tiger's Nest Monastery

Days 3-9
Chomolhari Trek

This superb 7-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.

Elevation is gained gradually to minimize acclimatization problems with the highest camps just over 13,000 feet. Though rarely an issue, equipment is available to treat any case of altitude illness.

Day 3 (Wednesday, May 11 2011)
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

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Day 4 (Thursday, May 12 2011)
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 (Friday, May 13 2011)
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



Trekking team

Day 6 (Saturday, May 14 2011)
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 (Sunday, May 15 2011)
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

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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 (Monday, May 16 2011)
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 the night.

Camping, Chomolhari Trek

Day 9 (Tuesday, May 17 2011)
Barshong – Dodena – Thimphu

Trekking approximately 14 miles, 8 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. One spectacular stage of the trail climbs around a cliff face high above the Thimphu Chu, coming out onto pastureland. The trail winds in and out of side valleys above the Thimphu Chu, making an 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

Days 10 & 11 (Wednesday & Thursday, May 18 & 19, 2011)

Thimphu Sites.
Easy Walking.

Thimphu is a city ideally explored on foot, and our leisurely walks over a 2-day period 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. We stop at local restaurants for lunch.

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Young Monks

Day 12 (Friday, May 20, 2011) 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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|------------------------------|---|
| Expedition Length: | 12 days/11 nights |
| 2011 Departure Dates: | May 9 -20 |
| Meeting Point: | We will assemble at the Druk Air counter in Bangkok, Thailand (BKK) for our flight into Paro, Bhutan (PBH) |
| Departure Point: | Paro, Bhutan (upon the departure of our flight to Bangkok, Thailand) |
| Expedition Cost: | US\$ 6,500. Note that this includes a \$ 1,500 donation to Outward Bound International that is tax-deductible against US income. |

What's Included:

- Airfare Bangkok – Paro – Bangkok
- All accommodations in Bhutan
- All meals in Bhutan
- All transportation during the tour
- All activities as noted in the itinerary
- Bhutanese visa fees and departure taxes
- Medical evacuation insurance through International SOS

detailed trip planner that includes arrival and departure details, a complete packing list, suggested reading lists, regional information, required documents, and other details.

Questions?

Please feel free to call us at +1 801 733 1248 or +1 801 560 1287. By email please contact execdir@outwardbound.net . We are happy to assist you in any way that we can.

Travel Arrangements:

Airfare to Bangkok is 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, Etho Metho 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.

Once You Reserve:

As soon as you have confirmed your adventure, we provide you with an extensive,

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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](#)

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 3-8:

Chomolhari Trek Camping

Full service camping.

Night 9 - 11:

[Taj Tashi Hotel](#)

Thimphu, Bhutan

Situated in the city center, this newly opened hotel offers comfortable rooms and a full range of amenities.