

HIMALAYAN KINGDOMS: NEPAL & BHUTAN

29 March - 12 April 2026



FROM
£8,460
PER PERSON

Tour Leader: Hamish van Gruisen


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 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'.



15-DAY ITINERARY, DEPARTING 29 MARCH 2026

29 March London / Doha

Suggested flights (not included in the cost of the tour) Qatar Airways QR 108 departing London Heathrow at 16.00 hrs.

30 March Doha / Kathmandu

Arrive Doha at 01.40 hrs. Connect to Qatar Airways QR 652 departing Doha at 03.25 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.

31 March 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 at the hotel.

1 April 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.

2 April Kathmandu / Pokhara

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

3 April 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.



4 April Pokhara

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

5 April 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 at the home of long-term local resident Lisa Choegyal.

6 April 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 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.

7 April 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 Kunley, 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.

8 April 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 Shangchen 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.



Kathmandu's Durbar Square

9 April 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.

Lunch at the hotel on arrival. 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.

10 April 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 the café en route back down. Dinner at the hotel.

11 April Paro / Kathmandu / Doha

Transfer to Paro Airport for a flight to Kathmandu.

Lunch under own arrangements. Suggested flights (not included in the cost of the tour) Qatar Airways flight QR 647 departing Kathmandu at 18.00 hrs arriving Doha at 20.45 hrs.

12 April Doha / London

Connect to suggested Qatar Airways flight QR 11 departing Doha at 01.10 hrs arriving London Heathrow at 06.25 hrs.



Traditional Bhutanese Cooking

TOUR PRICES PER PERSON

Tour Price	£8,460
Single Supplement	£2,180

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; 9 lunches; 11 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; portage
- 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 15/04/25



Prayer Flags



YOUR TOUR LEADER

Hamish van Gruisen

Born in Gloucestershire, Hamish initially trained as an accountant before joining The Ultimate Travel Company in 2019. Family safaris in East Africa and treks in the Nepal Himalaya during his formative years instilled a passion for travel, and since joining Ultimate he has explored Indonesia, Oman, Botswana, Tanzania, Zambia and Namibia as well as leading trips for the company to Antarctica, Japan, Southern India, Nepal and Namibia.

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