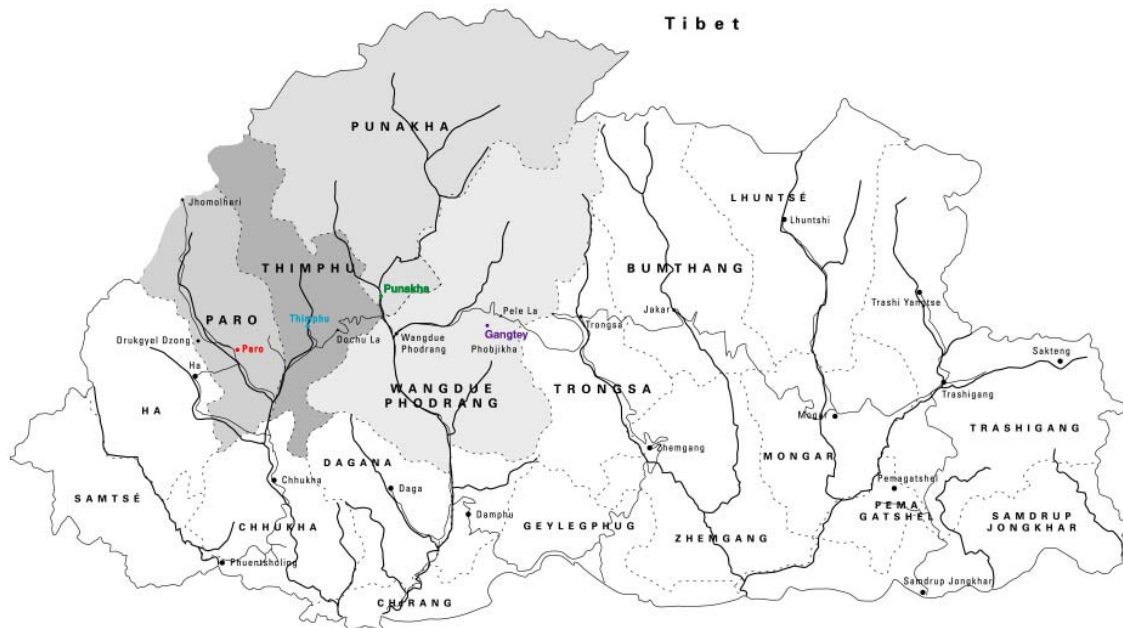


# amankora

An Adventure in the Land of the Thunder Dragon

## 7 NIGHT AMANKORA JOURNEY THIMPHU- PUNAKHA – PARO



The tiny Buddhist Kingdom of Bhutan awaits. Nestled high in the Himalayas, its isolation from the world has cultivated a culture rich with tradition, religion and a benevolent monarchy. The dramatic landscape, from snow capped peaks and deeply forested slopes to raging boulder-strewn rivers, sits largely undisturbed due to various environmental initiatives and religious beliefs. The seven-night journey takes you into this jewel of nature for an adventure into a land of charming farmers, fascinating weavers, enchanting monks and charismatic leaders.

### Itinerary

Day 1	Arrival, Transfer to Thimphu, o/n Thimphu
Day 2	Thimphu Valley Exploration, o/n Thimphu
Day 3	Transfer to Punakha Valley, o/n Punakha
Day 4	Punakha Valley Exploration, o/n Punakha
Day 5	Transfer to Paro Valley, o/n Paro
Day 6	Paro Valley Exploration, o/n Paro
Day 7	Paro Valley Exploration, o/n Paro
Day 8	International Departure

## Programme

### Day 1: Arrival

Your arrival in Bhutan is an unparalleled experience as the flight circles over the dramatic valley below. The transfer to Thimphu is approximately 1 ½ hours. Upon arrival and following lunch, you will have the choice to visit the National Memorial Chorten, National Textile Museum, Folk Heritage



Museum, and National Library with time to stroll the main street for some interesting Himalayan artefacts or textiles. (*overnight: Amankora in Thimphu*)

### Day 2: Tour of Thimphu

This morning you will visit the north end of the valley to view Trashi Chhoe Dzong, the seat of Bhutan's government and Royal offices, and Pangri Zampa, two 16<sup>th</sup> century buildings that now house a monastic training school for astrologers. At the head of the valley, should you wish to stretch your legs, a short hike will take you to Cheri Goemba, the monastery where the first monastic body was established in the Kingdom. Back in town, you will be able to visit a few of the capital's cottage industries ranging from traditional paper making to hand-rolled incense. (*overnight: Amankora Thimphu*).

### Day 3: From Thimphu to Punakha

An early departure brings you on a dramatic drive over the high mountain pass of Dochu La and on to the Punakha Valley. Sights on the way include one of Bhutan's first fortress monasteries, the 17<sup>th</sup> century Simtokha Dzong, and ancient wall paintings at the Hongtsho Goemba monastery. The journey continues over the 3,050m mountain pass where on a clear day, towering Himalayan peaks are clearly visible. The descent down the Punakha Valley along the Kingdom's only east-west highway will loop you through the town of Wangdi to visit the rustic Wangdiphodrang Dzong and perhaps the local temple next door. Time will be afforded to walk this small village and explore its row of intimate shops before heading back into Punakha Valley. This afternoon offers time to visit the village of Talo, home of the Queen's and the valley's protective deity, lhakhang. Later in the afternoon, enjoy a hike to an ancient monastery on the hilltop behind the lodge or the farmhouse and spa. (*overnight: Amankora in Punakha*).



### Day 4: Punakha Valley Exploration

Day Four begins with a hike from the Punakha Lodge along the Mo Chhu through terraces of rice, chillies and cabbage, to the Khamsum Yuelley Namgyal Chorten, a monument recently built by the Queens of Bhutan. Following the hike you will drive back up the valley towards Khuruthang, passing Punthsho Pelri Palace and several other winter homes of the royal family before reaching the impressive Punakha Dzong. This ancient fortress is the winter residence of the monastic order's leadership and still serves as the administrative headquarters for the Punakha region. A picnic lunch is served on the banks of the Punak Chu, prior to visiting the village of Lobesa.

From there, enjoy a short walk to Chimi Lhakhang, the auspicious fertility monastery built in 1499. (*overnight: Amankora in Punakha*).

### Day 5: From Punakha to Paro

After descending from Dochu La, you will follow your way back up the dramatic Wang Chu and Paro Chu river valleys before crossing through Paro Town towards the north end of the valley. Here, set in a pine forest, you will find the Amankora lodge and spa. In the afternoon, there is an opportunity for a quick stroll to the nearby ruins, a visit to some of the valley's oldest and holiest religious monuments or a ramble down Paro's main street. Evenings at Amankora may include informative lectures on the history, religion, flora and fauna of the region or an intriguing film on the Himalayas. *(overnight: Amankora in Paro).*



### Day 6: Paro Valley Exploration

The day starts with a visit to the National Museum, housed in the Ta Dzong (watchtower). Here, an engaging collection of artefacts provide a wonderful introduction to the rich culture and heritage of the Kingdom. Just a short walk downhill lies the dominating Paro Dzong, a fine example of Bhutanese historic architecture. From the Dzong, the tour crosses Nyamai Zampa, a traditional cantilevered bridge, and town temple built in 1525, to view ancient wall paintings. Paro activities involve a picturesque picnic, or a visit to a traditional farmhouse for lunch with a local family. The afternoon brings a choice of excursions; visitors interested in further immersion into Bhutan's culture and religion, must experience the Kyichu Lhakhang, Dumtse Lhakhang and the Drukgyel Dzong altar room. Hikers can take in a beautiful trail behind the lodge and past Drukgyel Dzong, that winds along the Paro Chhu, crosses a suspension bridge and ambles through terraced farmland and forests before looping back down the river to a second bridge and returning to the lodge. *(overnight: Amankora in Paro).*

### Day 7: Paro Valley Exploration – Tigers Nest Hike

This morning will begin with a hike to view one of Bhutan's most revered monuments, the Taktshang Goemba, more commonly referred to as the "Tiger's Nest". The four to five hour return trek offers spectacular views of this sacred monastery perched on a cliff face 900m above the valley floor. The balance of the day can be spend browsing through shops in town, enjoying the spa around the lodge or taking on another hike into the rich forests that rise behind the lodge. *(overnight: Amankora in Paro).*



**Day 8: Departure Day:** Early morning transfer to airport.