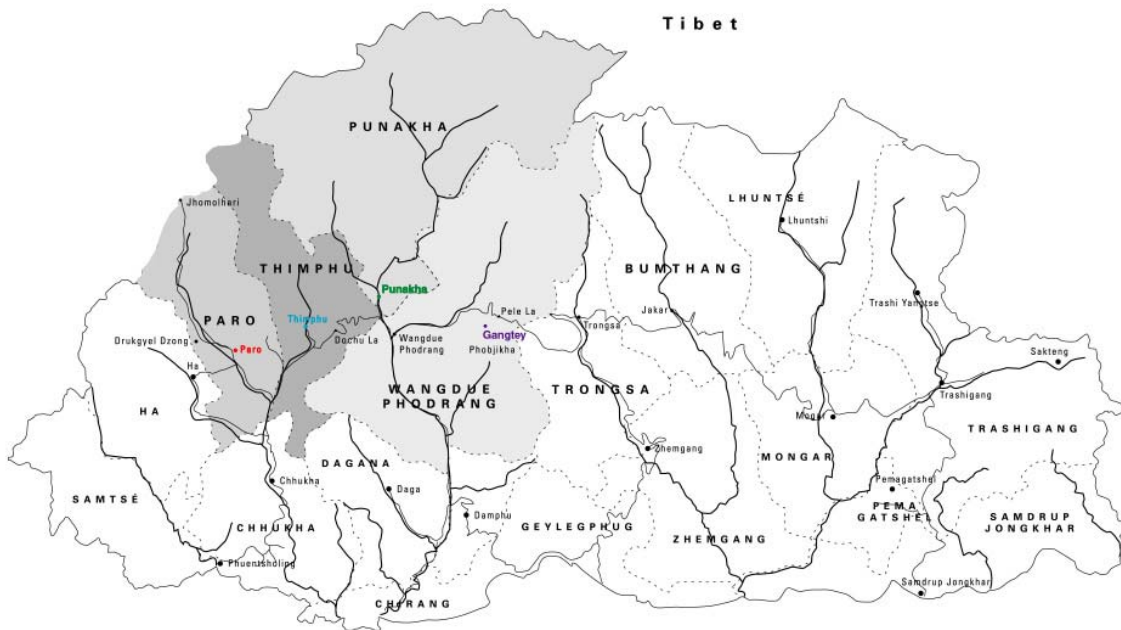


# amankora

An Adventure in the Land of the Thunder Dragon

## 8 NIGHT AMANKORA JOURNEY THIMPHU- GANGTEY- 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 eight-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 Phobjika, o/n Gangtey
- Day 4 Explore Phobjika Valley, o/n Gangtey
- Day 5 Transfer to Punakha Valley, o/n Punakha
- Day 6 Punakha Valley Exploration, o/n Punakha
- Day 7 Transfer to Paro Valley, o/n Paro
- Day 8 Paro Valley Exploration, o/n Paro
- Day 9 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 head to the north end of the valley to view Trashi Chhoe Dzong, the seat of Bhutan's government and royal office, and pay a visit to 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 may 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 Gangtey

Today see an early departure for a dramatic drive over the high mountain pass of Dochu La and on to the Phobjika 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 easily visible. The descent through the Punakha Valley along the Kingdom's only east-west highway continues through the scenic village of Wangdi. The highway follows the scenic Dang Chhu before climbing through forests of bamboo and oak, and just before crossing the Pele La pass, a small side road splinters off to the hidden Phobjika Valley. On arrival you will have time to visit the striking Gangtey Goemba, sitting at the head of the valley, and perhaps stroll through the quaint Gangtey village. (*overnight: Amankora in Gangtey*).



### Day 4: Gangtey Valley Exploration

The morning will begin with a visit to the Black Neck Crane Center and depending on the season, a viewing of breeding cranes. Various walks or mountain bike rides through this magnificent valley can then be arranged. Soak up the beauty of the valley from the Lodge or return to the revered Goemba for a possible audience with the Trulkul, should he be in residence, for a relaxing cap to the day. (*overnight: Amankora in Gangtey*)

### Day 5: Gangtey to Punakha

Today's journey back to Punakha will be swift. Upon arrival, enjoy a leisurely lunch at the lodge. In the afternoon, explore the hidden village of Talo, home of the Queen's and the valley's protective deity lhakhang. Later in the afternoon, enjoy a possibility of a hike to an ancient monastery on the hilltop behind the lodge or take time to relax in the lodge's farmhouse and spa. (*overnight: Amankora in Punakha*).

### Day 6: Punakha Valley Exploration

Day six 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 7: 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 8: 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 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. (*overnight: Amankora in Paro*).



**Day 9: Departure Day:** Early morning transfer to airport.