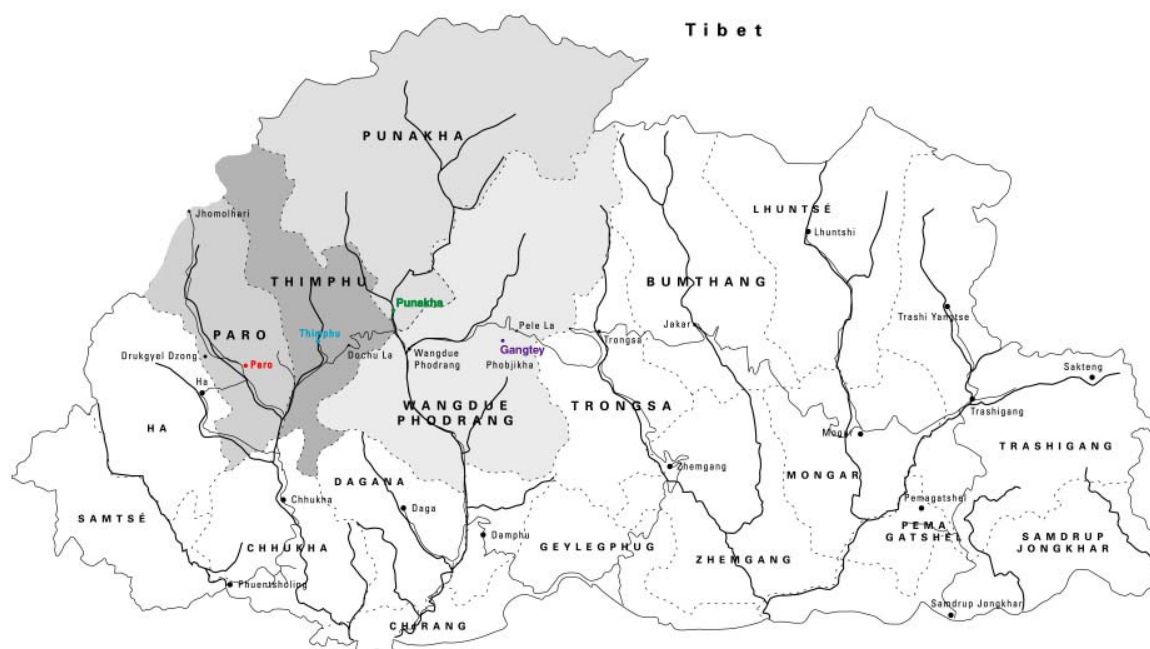


# amankora

## An Adventure in the Land of the Thunder Dragon 7-NIGHT JOURNEY



The tiny Buddhist Kingdom of Bhutan awaits, nestled high in the Himalayas its isolation from the world has cultivated a culture rich in traditions, religion and a benevolent monarchy. The dramatic landscapes, from snow capped peaks and deeply forested slopes to raging, boulder strewn rivers, sit largely undisturbed as endeared environmental initiatives and religious beliefs leave the Kingdom pristine and a jewel of nature. The programme takes you into this ancient Kingdom for an adventure into the hearts and lands of charming farmers, fascinating weavers, enchanting monks and charismatic leaders.

### Itinerary

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

### Programme

#### Day 1: Arrival

From the flight in, weaving through the valley, arrival in Bhutan is like no other. A short transfer brings guests to Amankora Paro and its spa, set inside a forest of pine. The spa offers a range of unique healing and rejuvenating treatments. In the afternoon, there is an opportunity for a quick stroll to the nearby ruins of the 17th century Drukgyel Dzong, 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. (*overnight: Amankora Paro*).

#### Day 2: Tour of Paro

The day starts with a visit to the National Museum, housed in the Ta Dzong (watchtower). Here, an intriguing 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

cantilever bridge, and guests are then driven to the town temple, built in 1525, to view ancient wall paintings. Paro options include picturesque picnic spots or, perhaps, a visit to a traditional farmhouse to lunch with the family. In the afternoon, hike up to view one of Bhutan's most revered monuments, the Taktsang Goemba, more commonly referred to as the 'Tiger's Nest'. The four-hour trek offers spectacular views of this sacred monastery perched on a cliff face 900m above the valley floor. (*overnight: Amankora Paro*).

### **Day 3: From Paro to Punakha**

An early departure and a dramatic drive following the course of the Paro Chhu (Paro River) and Wang Chhu (Wang River) on to the high mountain pass of Dochu La. Sights on the way include one of Bhutan's first fortress monasteries, the 17th 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 into Punakha Valley along the Kingdom's only east-west highway, loops through the scenic village of Wangdue for a visit to the Wangdue Phodrang Dzong and Radak Naktshang, the village temple. (*overnight: Amankora Punakha*).

### **Day 4: Punakha Valley**

The day in Punakha Valley begins with a beautiful hike from the Punakha Lodge along the Mo Chhu through terraces of rice, chillies and cabbage, to the Khamsum Yuelley Namgyal Chorten, a three-storey monument housing beautiful and complex paintings built by the Queen 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 head and still serves as the administrative headquarters for the Punakha region. A picnic lunch is served on the banks of the Punak Chhu, before visiting the village of Lobesa where a short walk ends at Chimi Lhakhang, the auspicious fertility monastery built in 1499. (*overnight: Amankora Punakha*).

### **Day 5: From Punakha to Thimphu**

On arrival in Thimphu, visits can be arranged to the Memorial Chorten, National Textile Museum, Folk Heritage Museum and National Library. After lunch, there may be a chance to sample some archery (Bhutan's national sport), visit the Thimphu zoo, home to Bhutan's national animal, the takin, and shop for Bhutanese handicrafts and jewellery. (*overnight: Amankora Thimphu*).

### **Day 6: Thimphu**

This morning you will head to the north end of the valley to view Tashichoe Dzong, the seat of Bhutan's government and Royal offices, and pay a visit to Pangri Zampa, two 16th century buildings that now house a monastic astrologer training school. At the head of the valley, a walk across one of the country's oldest cantilever bridges leads to the Goemba where the Kingdom's first monk community is based. (*overnight: Amankora Thimphu*).

### **Day 7: From Thimphu to Paro - Haa Valley Exploration**

This valley was recently opened to visitors and remains one of Bhutan's most pristine regions. At the Chuzom confluence, the road ascends the dramatic Wang Chhu valley where there is time to view the Dobji Dzong and, if time permits, hike around its high ramparts. The road into Haa winds up through quaint villages and thick conifer forests before leading into a valley carpeted with fields of millet, barley, potato and wheat. The patchwork fields are dotted with farmhouses all adorned with intricately painted cornices and door and window frames. Visits to both Chhundu Lhakhang and Lhakhang Karpo provide an insight into the history of the valley. There are arrangements to see the Wangchulo Dzong as well. The winding road then ascends through pastureland past grazing yaks, before reaching the 3,900m Cheli La Pass. Descending into the Paro Valley, the scenery transforms from sub-Alpine pasture brilliant with wild mountain flowers, to lush forests of blue pine, cypress, larch, fir and rhododendron. In the afternoon guests are free to further explore the valley or relax at the lodge. (*overnight: Amankora Paro*).

**Departure Day:** Early morning transfer to airport for international departure. *Tashi Delek!*