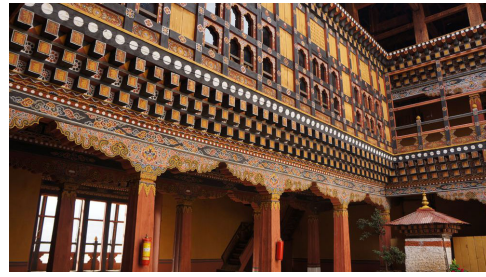




HIMALAYAS, INDIA & BHUTAN, (WNB)

Kathmandu to Kathmandu 89 Days, departing 9th January 2021



TRIP OVERVIEW

Trip Style: Overlanding

Route: Kathmandu to Kathmandu

Duration: 89 Days

Transport: Overland Expedition Vehicle, Jeep, Private Bus, Tuk Tuk, Boat, Camel, Train, Overnight Train, Flight

Accommodation: Comfortable Hotel 18 nights
Guesthouse 20 nights
Basic Hotel 38 nights
Camping 5 nights
Camping without facilities 2 nights
Overnight Train 2 nights
Overnight Boat 1 night

Meals: Breakfasts x 53, Lunches x 27, Dinners x 32

Physical Challenge:

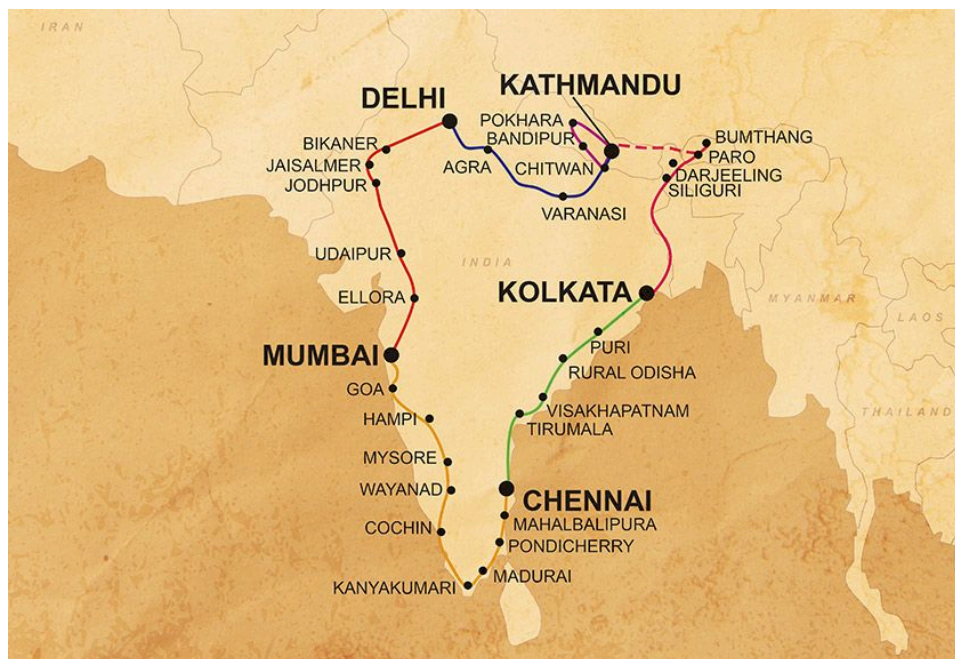


Your itinerary may include easy-paced day walks, bike rides, and other activities that are not too strenuous.

Lifestyle Challenge:



This trip has a bit of everything. Some areas that you travel through may be physically challenging; for example you may be at altitude some of the time and you may be camping for several nights. The pace of the trip can be tiring at times and some facilities will be basic. However there will also be plenty of time to relax and some comfortable accommodation.



DAILY ITINERARY

Day 1 - Kathmandu (9th January 2021)

Border Information: If you are joining the trip in Kathmandu, you will most likely enter Nepal at Kathmandu Tribhuvan International Airport (IATA code: KTM).

Wrapped around the Himalayan mountain range is the remarkable country of Nepal. It is the birthplace of the Buddha and is a land of legend and beauty. Within its narrow confines Nepal contains an utterly spectacular variety of culture and landscapes. Nepal has a stunning natural beauty and a simple charm.

There is an important group meeting at 6:00pm. Your leader will leave a note at reception telling you where and when this important meeting will take place.

Please note that many of the optional activities listed will only be possible for those with extra time in Kathmandu before the start of your trip with us - please contact the Sales team if you would like to book pre-tour accommodation with us to have extra time exploring Kathmandu.

Accommodation: Hotel Tibet A""

Day 2 - Nuwakot (10th January 2021)

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

Today our journey begins with a drive to the historic village of Nuwakot, one of Nepal's hidden gems nestled in the central hills of the country. Full of ancient temples and palaces, Nuwakot has a beautifully serene atmosphere and rustic ambience - perfect for getting a taste of the calm pace of rural Nepalese life.

Day 3 - Nuwakot (11th January 2021)

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

Today is a free day to explore the stunning village of Nuwakot and its surroundings.

Day 4 - Pokhara (12th January 2021)

Meals: Breakfast

Today we will depart Nuwakot and make our way to Nepal's second city - the adventure town of Pokhara!

Day 5 - Pokhara (13th January 2021)

Meals: Breakfast

Today we will have a free day in the fantastic city of Pokhara. The area is famous for its myriad of spectacular waterfalls surrounded by fertile forests and towering mountains, for its fantastic choice of yoga and meditation retreats, and for its overwhelming choice of adventure activities from trekking to rafting to zip-lining to mountain biking!

Day 6 - Annapurna Region (14th January 2021)

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

This morning we take a short drive out of Pokhara to the small village of Dhampus, where we start our 3-hour trek to our Annapurna eco-lodge. The lodge is dramatically located in the foothills of the mountains of Annapurna and Manaslu, and is a paradise for taking walks through the stunning Nepalese countryside.

The trek is approximately 3 hours in total, and is relatively easy but is mainly uphill. The trek can be skipped by any individual if need be.

Day 7 - Annapurna Region (15th January 2021)

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Today we will explore the area around our eco-lodge, meet many of the locals, and get into the heart of the community. We will hopefully visit a local school and give something back to the local community by helping to maintain their ingenious water systems.

Day 8 - Bandipur (16th January 2021)

Meals: Breakfast

Today we will make our way back down to the town of Pokhara. If people are feeling energetic there is an option to walk down to another village and meet the jeeps there giving people a chance to take in more incredible views of Annapurna and Machhapuchhare mountains. We will stop at a small village for lunch and then take the steep downhill trail to rejoin our overland truck on the main road. From there, we will drive to the delightful town of Bandipur.

Day 9 - Bandipur (17th January 2021)

Meals: Breakfast

Today we will have free time to relax and explore the local surroundings.

Day 10 - Chitwan NP (18th January 2021)

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Today we will drive through stunning scenery down to the lowlands of Nepal and the Terai grasslands. Our destination is Chitwan National Park, where we will stay for the next 2 nights.

If we arrive in good time we will make a visit to Bis Hazaar Tal, also known as 20,000 Lakes, which is a wetland area near the Royal Chitwan National Park. Here we will get the opportunity to see peacocks, wild boars, deer and there is also a slim chance of seeing tigers and rhinos. If we cannot visit the 20,000 Lakes area today we will make our visit tomorrow.

Day 11 - Chitwan NP (19th January 2021)

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Today we'll spend the day exploring the National Park by canoe and on foot, and there is the option to take a jeep safari! There will be an opportunity to see a traditional Nepali dance demonstration in the evening.

In Chitwan we will stay in a local guest lodge.

Day 12 - Gorakhpur (20th January 2021)

Meals: Breakfast

Border Information: Exit Nepal at Belhiya, enter India at Sonauli.

Today we enter the legendary country of India. India has so much to offer, from the beautiful landscapes of the Himalayas, to the amazing temples and coastlines, rich culture, and of course the food!

This morning we have a fairly relaxed start to the day before packing up and driving to the border. We will cross the border to India and continue on a short drive to the town of Gorakhpur

Day 13 - Varanasi (21st January 2021)

Meals: Breakfast

Today we will continue driving and reach the holy city of Varanasi in the evening.

Day 14 - Varanasi (22nd January 2021)

Meals: Breakfast

Today we will get up very early for an included boat trip down the Ganges. This is a magical time of day to see the famous ghats and watch the morning rituals of the thousands of people who come here to purify themselves in the holy river. We will have auto-rickshaws for the rest of the day to explore the rest of the city - we will have the opportunity to use them to visit a traditional silk workshop and the Mother India temple.

Day 15 - Khajuraho (23rd January 2021)

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Today we will have a full days drive to the town of Khajuraho.

On arrival we will set up camp before settling in for the evening.

Day 16 - Khajuraho (24th January 2021)

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Today we will head out for an included guided visit to the Khajuraho Erotic Temples. In the afternoon we will have some free time to explore the town or relax back at camp.

Day 17 - Khajuraho (25th January 2021)

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Today is free to explore the area, relax on the banks of the river, or take an optional jeep safari to the nearby Panna National Park in search of wildlife.

Day 18 - Agra (26th January 2021)

Meals: Breakfast

After breakfast we leave our campsite and head to the city of Agra. Most of today will be spent travelling and we will arrive in the evening.

Day 19 - Agra (27th January 2021)

Meals: Breakfast

Today we will have an included day tour of the major sites of Agra, starting with sunrise at the world-famous iconic mausoleum of the Taj Mahal, followed by a visit to the Agra Fort.

Day 20 - Jaipur (28th January 2021)

Meals: Breakfast

We leave Agra today and head overland to the pink city of Jaipur, stopping en route at Fatehpur Sikri (the old capital of the Mughal Empire).

Day 21 - Jaipur (29th January 2021)

Today we will have a full day exploring the sites of Jaipur on rickshaws with our local guide. Whilst in Jaipur there will also be the option for an early morning or late afternoon hot air balloon ride over the city.

Day 22 - Delhi (30th January 2021)

Today we leave Jaipur and travel to the chaotic Indian capital of Delhi.

Day 23 - Delhi (31st January 2021)

Meals: Breakfast

Today we will have an included guided tour of Old Delhi, heading to the Mughal Jama Masjid mosque, a local tea-maker, a Sikh temple, and the local spice markets. We will also have some free time to freely explore the sights of Delhi in the afternoon.

Day 24 - Delhi (1st February 2021)

Border Information: If joining the trip in Delhi, you will most likely enter India at Delhi Indira Gandhi International Airport (IATA code: DEL).

Today is a free day to explore Delhi. There will be an important group meeting at 6:00pm - please look for a note from your tour leader when you arrive at the hotel giving more details about this meeting.

Please note that many of the options listed below will only be possible for those with extra time in Delhi before the start of your trip with us - please contact the Sales team if you would like to book pre-tour accommodation with us to have extra time exploring Delhi.

Day 25 - Bikaner (2nd February 2021)

Today we start our journey with a full day drive to the city of Bikaner.

In Bikaner we will either stay in a local hotel or camp at an eco-lodge a short distance outside the city.

Day 26 - Jaisalmer (3rd February 2021)

Today we continue our journey with a drive to the ancient Rajasthani city of Jaisalmer, stopping at the Karni Mata (Rat Temple) for an included visit en route.

Day 27 - Jaisalmer (4th February 2021)

Meals: Lunch, Dinner

We will have free time this morning to explore the sights of Jaisalmer. In the late afternoon we will head out on an included camel safari into the Thar Desert - exploring the desert with local Rajasthani camel drivers is the most authentic way to experience the area!

Tonight we will camp out on the outskirts of the desert, sleeping under the stars.

Day 28 - Jaisalmer (5th February 2021)

Meals: Breakfast

This morning we will return to Jaisalmer from our camel safari. The rest of the day will be free to relax or explore more of Jaisalmer and the surrounding area.

Day 29 - Jodhpur (6th February 2021)

Meals: Dinner

This morning we will drive from Jaisalmer to another famous Rajasthani city, Jodhpur. En route to Jodhpur we will make an included visit to the Sambhali Trust project (a charitable project that works for the empowerment of women and girls in Rajasthan), where we will learn about the efforts of the project and make a group donation from the kitty.

After our visit we will make our way to our accommodation, rooms that have been set up by local families in their own homes for visitors. We will be splitting up into 2 or 3 small groups for our community guesthouses.

Day 30 - Jodhpur (7th February 2021)

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

After breakfast we will have an included visit to the Mehrangarh Fort and palace. The afternoon is then free to explore this wonderful city independently.

Day 31 - Udaipur (8th February 2021)

Meals: Breakfast

After breakfast we set off for our drive to Udaipur, visiting the Jain Temple at Ranakpur en route. We will have 3 nights in Udaipur, giving us plenty of time to discover this amazing, romantic Rajasthani city.

Day 32 - Udaipur (9th February 2021)

On these 2 days we will have free time to explore the sites in and around Udaipur, take part in some optional activities, and relax on one of the many roof-top terraces in the city.

Day 33 - Udaipur (10th February 2021)

We have a 2nd full day in Udaipur to give us plenty of time to discover this amazing, romantic Rajasthan city and relax on one of the many roof-top terraces

Day 34 - Mandu (11th February 2021)

Meals: Lunch, Dinner

Leaving Udaipur, we will be joined by a local cook who will accompany us during the next few days as we travel through Ajanta and Ellora.

Today will mostly be spent travelling to Mandu via the backroads of rural Rajasthan. We will be off the tourist trail here and tonight we will camp or stay in a local hotel.

Day 35 - Mandu (12th February 2021)

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Today we will visit Mandu, an extensive and largely abandoned hill-top fort from the Mughal era. We will then spend the afternoon driving to our camping spot near Kharwand Dam, en route towards Ajanta.

Day 36 - Ajanta (13th February 2021)

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Today we complete the drive to Ajanta, arriving in the afternoon. We will visit the complex of 29 ancient Buddhist temples cut into the rock face. We will find a basic camp nearby or continue onto Ellora depending on time.

Day 37 - Ellora (14th February 2021)

Meals: Breakfast

Today we will drive a short distance to Ellora where we will have an included visit to the ancient Buddhist, Hindu and Jain caves - a set of a small temples in the rock face dating from the 6th to 11th Centuries CE. We will camp in the grounds of a hotel tonight.

Day 38 - Mumbai (15th February 2021)

Setting off early today, we will say goodbye to our local cook and drive to the bustling city of Mumbai.

Day 39 - Mumbai (16th February 2021)

Meals: Breakfast

Border Information: If joining the trip in Mumbai, you will most likely enter India from Mumbai Chhatrapati Shivaji International Airport (IATA code: BOM).

There will be an important group meeting at 6:00pm at the joining hotel in Mumbai - please look out at the reception for a note from your tour leader with further details about this meeting. Otherwise, today is free to explore the sights and sounds of Mumbai.

Day 40 - Mumbai (17th February 2021)

Today will be a free day to explore this amazing city. This is also an opportunity to take a tour of the Dharavi slum areas of Mumbai.

Day 41 - Goa (18th February 2021)

We will start our journey by taking the train along the coast to Goa. We will stay for 2 nights at the relaxed beaches of Vagator in the northern part of Goa.

Estimated Journey Time (on train) - 11-12 hours.

Day 42 - Goa (19th February 2021)

We will have a 2nd night in North Goa tonight. Most travellers are drawn to Vagator for the stunning sunsets, the laid-back atmosphere and the proximity of some other quieter beaches in the area such as Arambol and Anjuna.

Day 43 - Old Goa (20th February 2021)

After our 2 nights on the northern beaches of Goa, we head off in the truck to the southern end of Goa. En route we will stop off at the site of Old Goa to spend some time independently exploring the area's colonial buildings.

Day 44 - Old Goa (21st February 2021)

We will stay for a 2nd night on either the stunning beach of Agonda or Palolem, these beaches are the perfect places to sit back and watch the fishing boats landing their catch or sample the delicious local cuisine.

Day 45 - Hampi (22nd February 2021)

Leaving the beaches of Goa behind us, we set off on a full day drive into the state of Karnataka and to the village of Hampi. The village is located within the ruins of Vijayanagara, the former capital of the ancient Vijayanagara Empire.

Day 46 - Hampi (23rd February 2021)

Today we will have a guided tour of the historical sites around Hampi by rickshaw and on foot.

Day 47 - Mysore (24th February 2021)

From Hampi we will have another full day drive to the city of Mysore, one of India's most attractive towns.

Day 48 - Mysore (25th February 2021)

On our 2nd day we will have free time in Mysore to independently explore the city's beautiful gardens, palaces, and the Shir Chamarajendra art gallery.

Day 49 - Wayanad (26th February 2021)

Meals: Dinner

Today we travel up into the cool highlands and head to the hill-station of Wayanad, a small settlement surrounded by tea and coffee plantations.

Whilst in Wayanad we stay as guests of local families at a local guesthouse.

Day 50 - Wayanad (27th February 2021)

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

There are many optional activities available in Wayanad which we will have time to do today, from hiking up Chembra Peak, visiting local waterfalls and tea plantations, or the chance to visit the nearby Muthanga Wildlife Sanctuary.

Day 51 - Kochi (28th February 2021)

Meals: Breakfast

Today we will continue our journey with a full day drive to the coastal city of Kochi.

Day 52 - Kochi (1st March 2021)

This morning we will take a local boat to Fort Cochin and have free time to explore and visit various sites including the Jewish Quarter, St Francis Church and the iconic Chinese fishing nets. In the evening we will be able to see a performance from the famous Kathakali dancers, India's most spectacular dance drama.

Day 53 - Alleppey (2nd March 2021)

Meals: Lunch, Dinner

Leaving the bustle of Kochi behind, today we embark on our included overnight houseboat cruise on the tranquil Keralan backwaters of Alleppey. We will often split into smaller groups to board our traditional 'Kettuvallom' boats which will take us around the scenic rivers and spend the night aboard.

Day 54 - Varkala (3rd March 2021)

Meals: Breakfast

After our fantastic overnight cruise along the Keralan backwaters, we continue our journey with a short drive to the beach resort of Varkala.

Day 55 - Varkala (4th March 2021)

Today we have free time to explore the surrounding areas and relax on the beautiful beaches.

Day 56 - Varkala (5th March 2021)

Our final day in Varkala today, spend more time relaxing the beautiful beaches or why not sample the justifiably-famous Keralan cuisine at one of the great local restaurants.

Day 57 - Kanyakumari (6th March 2021)

Today we will have a morning drive to Kanyakumari (also known as Cape Comorin), the very southern point of India. Here we will have free time to explore the Vivekananda Rock and the surrounding sites.

Day 58 - Madurai (7th March 2021)

Meals: Breakfast

This morning we have the option to get up early to watch the sunrise from the southern tip of India with thousands of locals, what can be an incredible experience! From Kanyakumari we then start heading back north again, and drive to the holy city of Madurai. In the afternoon we will have an included visit to the Sri Meenakshi Temple in Madurai.

Day 59 - Pondicherry (8th March 2021)

Today we head to the French-influenced town of Pondicherry, and will have a free time on arrival in the afternoon.

Day 60 - Pondicherry (9th March 2021)

On our 2nd day why not spend the day relaxing and soak up the atmosphere or explore the town and its beautiful colonial architecture.

Day 61 - Chennai (10th March 2021)

Meals: Breakfast

Today we have a short drive to the ancient city of Mahabalipuram, once the capital of the Pallava Dynasty in the 7th Century CE. On arrival we will have an included visit to the incredible Shore Temples and other monuments around the town (time permitted).

In the afternoon we will finish the short drive to the bustling coastal city of Chennai.

Day 62 - Chennai (11th March 2021)

Meals: Breakfast

Border Information: If you are joining in Chennai, you will most likely enter India in Chennai International Airport (IATA code: MAA).

Today is a free day to explore the sights, sounds and flavours of Chennai. There will be an important group meeting at 6:00pm - please look for a note from your tour leader when you arrive at the hotel giving more details about this meeting.

Please note that many of the options listed below will only be possible for those with extra time in Chennai before the start of your trip with us - please contact the Sales team if you would like to book pre-tour accommodation with us to have extra time exploring Chennai.

**Important note* - if you are joining the trip in Chennai, please make sure that you send us a scan of your Indian visa as soon as you have obtained it. If you plan to take the e-visa option, please make sure you arrange this well in advance and send us a copy of your receipt as soon as possible. If we do not receive this in advance, then we will not have enough time to get your permits for the Odisha Region and you will not be able to visit this area. We will also need these to purchase your train tickets.*

Day 63 - Tirupati (12th March 2021)

Meals: Breakfast

Today we start our journey with a drive to the bustling town of Tirupati. In the afternoon there will be an optional visit to the Sri Venkateswara holy temple in the nearby town of Tirumala. (Please note if you wish to visit the temple there is a dress code of Dhoti with upper cloth for men and saree or half-saree with blouse or churidar with pyjama and upper cloth for women. It is also quite difficult to get tickets to visit the temple due to the high numbers of pilgrims visiting the temple during this time, if we can not get any tickets available we will visit Srikalahasteeswara temple instead).

Day 64 - Vijayawada (13th March 2021)

Meals: Breakfast

Leaving Tirupati, we will spend the next few days overlanding through Andhra Pradesh, one of the least developed states in India. This is real off-the-beaten-track overlanding, and we will arrive in the small city of Vijayawada this evening.

Day 65 - Visakhapatnam (14th March 2021)

Meals: Lunch, Dinner

Today we continue our journey and drive through the back roads of Andhra Pradesh. Our final destination tonight is the coastal town of Visakhapatnam.

Day 66 - Odisha Tribal Area (15th March 2021)

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Today we will begin our guided tour through the rarely-visited Odisha Tribal Regions, which we will comprehensively visit over the next 6 days. In these regions the itinerary has to be kept fairly flexible, allowing us the freedom to alter things slightly if we hear of any special events or market days in particular villages. However, we will generally follow the plan below:

This morning we will have an early start from Visakhapatnam to arrive in a small village called Goudaguda in time to visit the Monday markets. Beautiful earthen pottery is skillfully produced in this area and you may even get the chance to try this for yourself.

Day 67 - Odisha Tribal Area (16th March 2021)

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Today we will have a guided walk in the morning through the countryside around Goudaguda, visiting the neighbouring Mahali and Kondh tribal villages.

This evening we will return to our guesthouse in Goudaguda for the night.

Day 68 - Odisha Tribal Area (17th March 2021)

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

After breakfast at our guesthouse we will drive to the lively Chatikona Market, which is a weekly highlight for the Dongria Kondh tribe. We will then continue on and travel through the hills to the village of Muniguda, our destination for tonight.

Day 69 - Odisha Tribal Area (18th March 2021)

Meals: Breakfast

Today we will continue our journey north driving through a well known Elephant Range. We will then have a chance to stretch our legs and walk into the Desia Kondh indigenous community. They are distinguished by the unique facial tattoos of the women. After a village visit and picnic lunch we will continue to Baliguda.

Day 70 - Odisha Tribal Area (19th March 2021)

Meals: Breakfast

Today we are going to continue on to the fascinating fishing town of Gopalpur, a once major port for the East India Company which has an interesting decaying charm. We will have plenty of free time here to be able to explore this fascinating town.

Day 71 - Puri (20th March 2021)

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Our tour of the Odisha tribal areas comes to an end today as we drive on to the small town of Puri.

Puri is one of the holiest pilgrimage places in India, and has a wonderful long sandy beach. On arrival we will explore the old pilgrim route by cycle-rickshaw, taking in ashrams, Hindu monasteries, a palm leaf manuscript library and the awesome Jagannath temple.

Day 72 - Puri (21st March 2021)

Meals: Breakfast

Our first full day here in Puri, we plan to take a short drive back to visit Chilika Lake and explore the lake by boat and take a walk through some of the surrounding fisherman's villages.

Day 73 - Puri (22nd March 2021)

Meals: Breakfast

Today we will begin with a cycle ride through rice paddies and rural hamlets, meeting local craftsmen and women and watching them demonstrate their unique crafts. In the afternoon we will have a guided tour of the UNESCO World Heritage site of the Konark Sun Temple.

Day 74 - Kolkata (23rd March 2021)

It will be an early start today as we will travel by train to Kolkata, the largest city in India. We will have free time today and tomorrow to explore this remarkable city, or take an optional photographic tour.

Estimated Journey Time (by train) - 7-8 hours.

Day 75 - Kolkata (24th March 2021)

Border Information: If you are joining in Kolkata, you will most likely enter India at Kolkata Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose International Airport (IATA code: CCU).

There will be an important group meeting at the joining hotel at 10:00am. Please look out for a note from your tour leader at the hotel reception when you arrive for more details about this meeting. The afternoon is free to explore Kolkata.

Please note that many of the options listed below will only be possible for those with extra time in Kolkata before the start of your trip with us - please contact the Sales team if you would like to book pre-tour accommodation with us to have extra time exploring Kolkata.

We will meet in the evening to board an overnight sleeper train from Kolkata to Siliguri - accommodation will be aboard the train tonight, where there are bunk beds with sheets provided.

Day 76 - Darjeeling (25th March 2021)

We will arrive into Siliguri at around 9:00am this morning, meeting our jeeps and drivers at the station for our onward journey through the narrow winding roads to Darjeeling. The town of Darjeeling is really more a collection of villages situated on a high ridge, linked by a series of steps and winding lanes and surrounded by rice and tea terraces.

Jeeps are used in this region rather than our overland truck as they are perfect for the narrow, steep and winding roads of the area.

Day 77 - Darjeeling (26th March 2021)

Today is a free day in Darjeeling to relax, enjoy the surrounding area and take part in some optional activities.

Day 78 - Phuntsholing (27th March 2021)

Meals: Dinner

Border Information: Exit India at Jaigaon, enter Bhutan at Phuntsholing.

This morning we will drive in locally-chartered jeeps from Darjeeling to the Bhutanese border at Phuntsholing, where our local Bhutanese guide will be waiting to receive us at the border gate. Your tour leader will collect all the group's passports to get the visa process underway in order to save time in the morning.

(Please note we will be travelling in a locally chartered bus throughout Bhutan and not our normal overlanding truck).

Day 79 - Thimphu (28th March 2021)

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

This morning we will finalise our visas and then start our journey into Bhutan with a drive in a locally-chartered bus from the warmer climes of Phuntsholing up to the capital of Thimphu, nestled in the foothills of the Himalayas.

We will have time in the evening to take a stroll around Thimphu and start to take in the atmosphere and culture of this beautiful country and its gentle way of life.

Day 80 - Thimphu (29th March 2021)

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Today we will have a day in Thimphu for sightseeing. We will have an included city tour from our local guides, including the Changangkha Temple, Memorial Chorten and the Takin Reserve, and there will also be plenty of time for free exploration and visiting the Thimphu markets.

Day 81 - Punakha (30th March 2021)

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

In the morning we will drive to the old capital Punakha, via the Dochu La Pass at 3050m, where we will stop for a hot drink and to enjoy spectacular panoramic views of the Eastern Himalaya ranges. We will notice the change of climate and vegetation as we approach the low-lying Punakha at 1250m altitude.

This afternoon we will visit the imposing Punakha Dzong (Palace of Great Happiness). Built in 1637 CE, it is strategically placed at the confluence of two rivers, the Po Chu and the Mo Chu. After this, we will take a pleasant walk for an hour or so across the terraced fields to Chimi Lhakhang (Temple of Fertility) built in the 15th century by the 'Divine Madman' (Lama Drukpa Kuenley).

In Punakha we will stay in a local farmhouse, where we will experience a genuine slice of Bhutanese life and hospitality. The facilities here will be rather basic, but the accommodation is exactly how a typical Bhutanese family live, and the food is in no way adapted for tourists.

Day 82 - Bumthang (31st March 2021)

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Today we drive to Trongsa, the gateway to central Bhutan at 2180m. Set amidst spectacular scenery, Trongsa Dzong, the ancestral home of Bhutan's royal family, commands the eye from miles away. We can also visit Ta Dzong - the newly opened museum in the watchtower is dedicated to the Wangchuk dynasty, tells the stories of the Dzong and the valley, and features personal belongings of the kings and queens of Bhutan.

We then continue through some of Bhutan's most beautiful landscapes to Bumthang, an area of high valleys at 2580-3100m.

In Bumthang we will stay again in a local farmhouse with basic facilities.

Day 83 - Bumthang (1st April 2021)

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

We will spend today sightseeing in Bumthang, the spiritual heartland of Bhutan, with its many legendary monasteries, temples and palaces. Bumthang is the collective name for an area of 4 valleys - Chokhor, Tang, Ura and Chhume.

Our guide will take us on a fascinating walking and/or driving tour of a variety of sacred sites including Jamba Lhakhang, Kurjey Lhakhang and Tamshing Lhakhang. We can also visit Bhutan's largest Dzong, Jakar, with its picturesque location overlooking the Chokhor valley.

Day 84 - Gangtey (2nd April 2021)

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Today we drive to Gangtey at 2900m. On arrival we can enjoy the views of the immense and remote Phobjikha valley and the black mountain ranges.

We will visit Gangtey Gumpa (one of Bhutan's oldest monasteries which has recently been extensively renovated) and explore the valley where the villagers continue to live a traditional Bhutanese rural lifestyle. This is the site where black-necked cranes visit in their hundreds in November each year after spending the summer in Tibet.

Day 85 - Gangtey (3rd April 2021)

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Today we will head out for a day hike in the beautiful Phobjikha Valley. We will first visit the information Centre which has lots of information on the valley famous for its migrating birds. From here we will walk through local villages and forests of blue pine trees covered with lichen (know as old mans beard) and follow the nature trail to Kingathan Village. Here we will visit a temple built by the Queen Mother before making our way back to the hotel.

The walk takes approximately 6 - 7 hours for casual trekkers. This trail is especially recommended for bird lovers.

Day 86 - Paro (4th April 2021)

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

This morning we will take a trek up to the hill-top village of Rinchengang and learn about its interesting history. After this we will continue our drive to Paro, where we will have an included visit to Ringpung Dzong, one of the finest examples of Bhutanese architecture.

Day 87 - Paro (5th April 2021)

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Today we take a day walk to the 'Tiger's Nest', the sacred Taktsang monastery which clings to the rock face 900m above the valley floor. Guru Rinpoche is said to have flown to the site riding on a tigress, and subsequently meditated here for 3 months. It is one of Bhutan's most holy sites and draws pilgrims not only from Bhutan but also from neighbouring Buddhist countries.

Day 88 - Kathmandu (6th April 2021)

Meals: Breakfast

Border Information: Exit Bhutan at Paro, enter Nepal at Kathmandu.

Today we will take a short flight from Paro to Kathmandu in Nepal. On arrival we will have free time to explore the incredible city, soak up its atmosphere, and visit its historical sites.

Please note: The flights between Bhutan and Nepal will be with Druk Air or Bhutan Airlines - both airlines sometimes change their schedules at short notice. If this happens we will inform you of any itinerary changes as soon as possible.

Day 89 - Kathmandu (7th April 2021)

Border Information: If you are finishing your trip in Kathmandu, you will most likely exit Nepal at Kathmandu Tribhuvan International Airport (IATA code: KTM).

Today is the end day for passengers finishing their trip in Kathmandu. Please note there is no accommodation included on the trip tonight - please contact your sales agent if you are interested in booking extra nights of accommodation in order to fully explore and take part in some of the optional activities available.

Accommodation:

ITINERARY DISCLAIMER

The routes, activities and places visited described in these notes are intentions and are meant as a rough guide only. By their very nature, overland itineraries need to be flexible and the regions that we are travelling through are often unpredictable. We intend to follow the planned route but exact night stops and inclusions cannot be guaranteed and it sometimes happens that we decide to make a change to our planned itinerary. This may be for a variety of reasons; climatic, road or bureaucratic conditions may demand it. Changes to the itinerary may occur with little notice so please be prepared for modifications to your trip.

Drive Times

Drive times are listed in the day-to-day itinerary. These are the approximate number of hours that the vehicle will be in motion, and does not include any time taken for coffee or lunch stops, border crossings, photo stops, activities en route, comfort breaks, shopping stops, toilet stops, etc. The times given are approximate estimates only and whilst given with the best of intentions, the drive times are heavily dependent on traffic, road conditions, weather, police roadblocks, and many other factors.

Accommodation and Meals Included

The type of accommodation and included meals are listed for each day of the itinerary. These listings show our intention and on most departures the listings will be accurate. However due to the flexible nature of overland itineraries, climatic, bureaucratic or road conditions may demand changes to our listed intentions or groups may simply decide to amend the plans from time to time.

Optional Activities

A selection of optional activities is listed in the day-to-day itinerary. This list is designed to be a helpful guide as to what is commonly available in each location, and is neither an exhaustive list, a guarantee that the activity is available, or an endorsement or recommendation. Certain activities may not be available on your particular visit and it may not be possible to do all the activities listed in the time available at each destination. It is recommended to give yourself extra time in your joining or ending city if you would like to participate in some optional activities there. Prices listed are for entrance only and do not include transport costs to and from the sites or local guides unless indicated. The prices are displayed according to our latest information and in the best faith, but prices do fluctuate due to exchange rates, season, numbers of participants, and simple increases from the operator, and therefore any prices listed are a guide only and cannot be guaranteed. If you partake in any optional activities, you do so at your own risk and it must be clearly understood that your participation is your own decision and does not form part of your contract with Dragoman. You may be required to sign/complete a waiver form or optional activity form for some optional activities. For more information around activity safety and insurance, please see the Essential Information document.

EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION

In the event of a real emergency once you have left your home country, please contact us on our out of office hours number. If you cannot get through on the phone, please leave a message with your name, reference number, contact details and a message with the help that you need and we will get back to you. Please bear in mind that real progress or action may not be possible until normal office hours, depending on the issue.

If your flight is delayed, please inform us as soon as you can and then make your way to the joining hotel as instructed in the Joining Point section of these notes.

Out of hours Number: +44 (0) 7985 106564

A FEW RULES

We expect all group members to act respectfully towards our staff and other group members. Bullying will not be tolerated.

Engaging in commercial or exploitative sexual activities, committing acts of violence or threatening violence towards local people, other group members or any member of our staff is not allowed. Any customer engaging in such activities will be required to leave the trip immediately with no refund of the trip price.

You must at all times comply with the laws, customs, foreign exchange and drug regulations of all countries visited and conduct yourself in accordance with our responsible travel policy. Any customer found contravening such laws or regulations will be required to leave the trip immediately with no refund of the trip price.

Although we are aware that in some parts of the world taking, carrying or selling drugs, or carrying weapons may be legal, it is not acceptable for Dragoman customers and our tour leaders have the right to ask you to leave the trip immediately with no refund of the trip price if you are found to be engaging in such activities.

ISSUES ON THE TRIP

While we always endeavour to provide the best possible holiday experience, due to the nature of travel and the areas we visit sometimes things can and do go wrong. Should any issue occur while you are on your trip, it is imperative that you discuss this with your group leader or our local partner straight away so that they can do their best to rectify the problem and save any potential negative impact on the rest of your trip.

We recognise that there may be times when your group leader may not be able to resolve a situation to your satisfaction. If this is the case please contact our customer relations department on customer-relations@dragoman.co.uk.

You may also choose to provide details in your feedback questionnaire which we ask you to complete at the end of your trip, but we do ask you to be aware that it is very difficult for us to provide any practical help after the trip is complete.

IMPORTANT NOTES

OVERLANDING LIFESTYLE

Dragoman was founded in 1981, and has had many years of experience of leading overland trips across 4 continents. Overlanding is all about sharing a great travelling experience with like-minded people. On your trip you'll travel in one of Dragoman's purpose-built iconic expedition vehicles on an off-the-beaten-track adventure along rugged roads, experiencing the sights, sounds and smells of the world up-close. Your journey will be overland, sometimes across vast distances, so some long days spent driving are inevitable - but these will be interspersed with breaks of a day or two at a destination or activity.

On an overland journey, you are more than just a passenger and everyone gets involved setting up camp - we supply the tent but it's up to you to pitch it! As part of your trip, you will be assigned a truck job which could be collecting firewood or water, luggage loading, organising food, stores, etc. Like all great adventures, the more you put in the more you'll get out! For more details of how an overland trip works, please see the Essential Information document.

SAFETY STANDARDS

We run adventure journeys in off the beaten track areas, which often have poor infrastructure. You should expect that some of these areas do not adhere to 'Western' safety standards. For more information, please see the Essential Information document

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN REMOTE AREAS

We will be travelling to areas in remote locations where medical assistance will not be available, and communications may be sparse. We do not carry satellite phones on our regular trips. Therefore, if you have a medical condition such as a heart condition that would put you at risk, we would suggest that this is not the trip for you. Also, please be aware that should an emergency occur, there is likely to be a considerable delay in accessing medical care, and by joining our trip you accept this risk.

VISAS, HEALTH, INSURANCE & MONEY

Before you travel there are vital things to consider such as:

- Any visas needed for your trip
- Any vaccinations needed (please consult your GP or travel clinic)
- Organising your local payment (the kitty)
- Buying travel insurance (insurance is compulsory to be allowed to join our trips)

For more information on these topics, please see the Essential Information Document.

ALTITUDE WARNING

Warning - this trip goes above 2800m.

Please note that this trip spends time above 2800 metres/9200 feet where it is possible for travellers to experience some adverse effects on your health due to the altitude, potentially including Acute Mountain Sickness (AMS), High Altitude Cerebral Edema (HACE) and High Altitude Pulmonary Edema (HAPE). Because of this it is very important that you make yourself aware of the cause and effects of travelling at altitude and monitor your health during this trip.

For further information please [download our AMS information sheet](#) or refer to the following website: www.high-altitude-medicine.com. If you are starting your trip in a destination above 2800m/9200ft we strongly advise reading this information prior to arrival. Your leader will also hand you a copy of the AMS information sheet during your trip as well as holding a short meeting prior to travelling to altitudes above 2800m/9200ft for the first time.

Some travel insurance companies will stipulate a maximum altitude limit. Please ensure that you are covered and if necessary pay the additional premium of extended cover.

NEPAL NOTES

INDIA NOTES

BHUTAN NOTES

Please ensure you have an up to date version of these notes. **These notes were printed on the 29th November 2020**