

# Amankora Journey

## “Discovery by Road and Air”

Thimphu – Punakha – Gangtey – Bumthang – Paro  
11 Nights, with domestic flight



Tang Valley in Bumthang

AMANKORA

# Amankora Journey: Discovery by Air (11 Nights)

Our **Discovery by Air** Amankora Journey of **11 nights** allows you to experience **all five valleys**. You will drive eastbound, from Thimphu to Punakha, Gangtey and Bumthang, from where you will take the domestic flight back to Paro. Please note that we cannot take responsibility for the operation of this outsourced service.

On the following pages we have compiled the most popular activities and hikes in each valley. For some of them we recommend that you pre-book them to ensure you can enjoy them on your preferred date and time.

| Days   | Activity / Valley                            | Overnight         |
|--------|--|-------------------|
| Day 1  | Arrival, Transfer to Thimphu                 | Amankora Thimphu  |
| Day 2  | Explore Thimphu Valley                       | Amankora Thimphu  |
| Day 3  | Transfer to Punakha Valley                   | Amankora Punakha  |
| Day 4  | Explore Punakha Valley                       | Amankora Punakha  |
| Day 5  | Transfer to Phobjikha                        | Amankora Gangtey  |
| Day 6  | Explore Phobjikha Valley                     | Amankora Gangtey  |
| Day 7  | Transfer to Bumthang                         | Amankora Bumthang |
| Day 8  | Explore Bumthang Valley                      | Amankora Bumthang |
| Day 9  | Explore Tang Valley                          | Amankora Bumthang |
| Day 10 | Transfer to Paro Valley – by domestic flight | Amankora Paro     |
| Day 11 | Explore Paro Valley                          | Amankora Paro     |
| Day 12 | International Departure                      |                   |

# Bhutan Map



# Day 1 – Arrival

Early this morning you will fly to Paro, Bhutan. Experience breathtaking views of the Himalayan peaks as you descend into this remote land. The flight into Paro is one of the most spectacular in the world. On arrival you are greeted by your local Amankora guide. Your itinerary has been tailored to remain as flexible as possible. As your guide will be with you throughout your journey, you will be able to discuss your itinerary in advance.

A 1.5 hour drive away, Thimphu lies in a steep valley at an altitude of 2,350m (7,709ft). Upon arrival at Amankora Thimphu, you settle in and have lunch. As the capital, Thimphu is home to many attractions and you may choose to visit the **Institute of Traditional Medicines, School of Arts and Crafts and the Folk Heritage Museum and Simply Bhutan**, museums depicting Bhutan's ancient cultural heritage. Other sights include the **National Library, the Textile Museum, the Weaving Center, Buddha Point** and the **National Memorial Chorten**.

Alternatively, if you wish to stretch your legs after the long journey, you can opt for a mild hike with a good view, such as the **Wangditse Leisure Forest trail**.

To end the day you can try a hot oil head massage, Amankora Thimphu Spa signature treatment which is based on the ancient healing system of Ayurveda.

*Overnight – Amankora Thimphu*



## Day 2 – Thimphu

This morning, a short hike will take you to **Cheri Goemba**, the monastery where the first monastic body was established in the Kingdom. On the way back you can pay a visit to **Pangri Zampa**, two 16th century buildings that now house a monastic training school for astrologers. Back in town you can visit a few of the capital's cottage industries ranging from traditional paper making to hand rolled incense and perhaps you can stroll the main street for some interesting Himalayan artefacts and make your own stamp at the post office. On weekends you can visit the **Craft Bazar** or **Vegetable markets**.

After lunch, you can head to the north end of the valley to visit the **Trashie Chhoe Dzong**, the seat of Bhutan's government and Royal offices, As the sun sets you can take a stroll via the **Takin animal sanctuary** for a beautiful view over the Thimphu valley. According to local legend the Takins are believed to be part cow and part goat.

Alternatively, you can visit the Thimphu Golf Club for nine holes of golf played amongst Chortens and beautiful landscapes. As this course is situated at 2,350 meters (over 7,700 ft) above sea level, it gives that extra mile as balls fly further in the thin mountain air (chargeable activity).

In the evening we can arrange a private meeting with the **Mynak Trulku** at the lodge to get your questions about Buddhism answered. He is the 12th reincarnate lama of the famous Mynak Rinpoche (chargeable activity).

*Overnight – Amankora Thimphu*



## Day 3 – Journey to Punakha

We opt for an early departure for 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 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. After a stop for a picnic lunch we continue on to Punakha which sits on an elevation of 1,250 m (4,100 ft) m in a fertile and warm valley at the junction of the Mo Chhu (Female River) and Pho Chhu (Male River). The sub-tropical environment allows the cultivation of rice and numerous fruits such as oranges, mangoes and bananas.

When entering Punakha valley, you can visit **Chimi Lhakhang**, the auspicious fertility monastery built in 1499 where numerous couples visit to pray to become pregnant and receive a *wang* (blessing) from the saint with the 'magic thunderbolt of wisdom'. Alternatively, if you feel like stretching your legs you can walk the short **Punakha Lodge Loop** to stretch your legs after the long drive.

Enjoy the evening in the courtyard of the Punakha lodge or unwind with a massage or a **facial**, Punakha's signature treatment.

*Overnight – Amankora Punakha*



# Day 4 – Punakha

Today you can start the morning with a **hike to** Khamsum Yuelley Namgyal Chorten, a stunning monument recently built by the Queens and consecrated in 1999. Following the hike you can visit the **Punakha Dzong**. The impressive Punakha Dzong is home to the remains of Bhutan's first ruler, Shabdrung Nawang Namgyal, and the winter residence of the monastic order's leader and his entourage of monks.

A popular option for a different lunch or dinner experience is the **Private Riverside BBQ**. Just below the lodge, you sit in the shade of pine trees and enjoy the views and sounds of the river, the rice fields and the Himalayan mountain peaks while smelling the charcoal of the food sizzling on the grill. The dinner experience is more romantic with candle light, lanterns and a bonfire (chargeable activity). As our BBQ is very popular, we recommend you to pre-book this experience.

In the afternoon you can try your skills in **archery**, the national sport of Bhutan, or sign up for a **Bhutanese cooking class** to learn how to make *Momos*, the traditional Bhutanese dumplings, and the famous *Ema Datse* (chargeable activity).

*Overnight – Amankora Punakha*



# Day 5 – Journey to Gangtey

Today's drive to Gangtey takes about 2.5 hours. You start this dramatic ride in the subtropical valley of Punakha driving along Mo Chhu river, then carrying on the highway eastbound following the scenic Dang Chhu river 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 Phobjikha Valley. Gangtey has an elevation of 3,000m (9,842ft) and is a place with natural beauty, untouched scenery, local traditions and culture, and unconstrained peacefulness.

On arrival you will have time for a casual stroll through the quaint **Gangtey village** before visiting the ancient altars and ramparts of the massive **Gangtey Goemba**, sitting at the head of the valley. Should the **Gangtey Trulku** be in residence then an audience for a highly revered blessing may be arranged.

*Overnight – Amankora Gangtey*



## Day 6 – Gangtey Valley

This morning will start with the pleasurable **Nature Trail** through flower meadows, pine forests and into the open valley.. If you are looking for a longer and more challenging hike, consider the majestic **Longtey Hike** which will offer you some breath-taking views and takes you through mystifying old-growth rhododendron forest. You can also visit the **Black Neck Crane Center** and dependent on the season, spend time in the center's nearby hide to view the breeding cranes which come in winter from Tibet.

A not to be missed activity in Gangtey is the traditional **Hot Stone Bath**. It is an unforgettable experience to soak in the wooden tub in a candle lit stone hut while you enjoy the open views of the magnificent Phobjikha Valley. Your body will benefit from the minerals in the heated stones and the healing effects of local herbs (chargeable activity).

Most guests combine the Hot Stone Bath with the romantic **Potato-Shed Dinner** for rounding up a truly Bhutanese evening. After the relaxing bath you will enjoy a delicious Bhutanese meal with hundreds of flickering candles while the *bhukari*, the traditional wood-burning oven, makes the shed comfortably warm (chargeable activity). Due to the popularity of the Hot Stone Bath and the Potato-Shed Dinner, we recommend to pre-book these experiences.

### *Overnight – Amankora Gangtey*



## Day 7 – Journey to Bumthang

Today's journey onward to Bumthang is 5 hours long, but certainly memorable with dramatic landscapes of terraced farmland, deep river valleys and precariously perched farmhouses viewed from the only east west highway. Following a brief stop at **Chendebji Chorten**, which according to belief was built to cover the remains of a demon spirit, you will carry on to Trongsa, the original home of the royal family. Reaching there, you may take time to stroll this quaint village, and perhaps visit the large **Trongsa Dzong**. The drive onward to Bumthang takes you over the picturesque **Yotong La** pass and down into the Chhume Valley, home of Bhutan's famous **Yathra weaving**. Here you will have a chance to browse the traditional textiles and perhaps see the weavers create their intricate handiwork.

Bumthang Valley at 2,580m (8,464ft) is covered with fields of buckwheat, millet and potato, with apple orchards climbing up the slopes to mix with the deep pine forest. Across the valley lie many of the Kingdom's most auspicious and highly revered houses of worship and ancient monasteries, many decorated with still vibrant wall paintings and richly adorned altars, all with colorful, mystical history. Upon arrival at the lodge, you have time to explore our neighboring palace, **Wangdichhoeling**, previously home to the second King, and the auspicious **prayer wheels**.

### *Overnight – Amankora Bumthang*



# Day 8 – Bumthang

Heading up valley, you will visit **Jambay Lhakhang**, home to the early winter festivals that draw thousands of Bhutanese for their annual blessings and then the grand **Kurjey Lhakhang**, considered one of Bhutan's most auspicious monuments, that was once the resting place of Guru Rimpoche.

Just a short walk away you can enjoy traditional **Bumthap Farmhouse Lunch** where you can experience traditional Bhutanese food in authentic surroundings including Bumthang specialties made from local products. Heading back into town and across the Bumthang Chhu, you will enjoy a visit to the sin alleviating **Tamshing Monastery**.

Don't miss a visit to the valley's unique cottage industries – **Red Panda Brewery, Cheese/Dairy Facility** and the **Distillery**, home to numerous distinctive spirits. We recommend you to try the local **beer and cheese tasting**(chargeable activity).

To unwind, relax with a **Zen Massage**, Bumthang's signature treatment where dynamic stretches and pressure point stimulation are followed by soothing oil massage techniques (chargeable activity).

*Overnight – Amankora Bumthang*



# Day 9 – Bumthang, Tang Valley

Today you will explore further the Bumthang district with an excursion to the stunningly beautiful **Tang Valley**. This seldom visited valley offers a treat in revealing some off the beaten track temples and monasteries. On the way, don't miss to stop at the **Burning Lake** (Membartsho), where the story has it that Pema Lingpa had a dream that he dove into the river pool carrying a burning butter lamp in his hand and returned with treasures and the lamp still burning. After, you can visit the **nunnery** as well as **Ta Rimochen Lhakhang** which was built by Pema Lingpa in the 14th century whose temple is dominated by an enormous rock at which Guru Rimpoche meditated.

Then, continue to the amazing museum at **Ugen Chhoeling Palace**. The exhibits offer a rare insight into Bhutanese culture, lifestyle, history and religion. A short hike takes you up to this well maintained palace and its cultural treasures inside. Along way you will stop for a traditional picnic with breathtaking views of the pristine surroundings.

Alternatively, for those who would like to explore the valley on foot, Tang Valley offers various hiking trails.

*Overnight – Amankora Bumthang*



## Day 10 – Flight to Paro

Today you will take the domestic flight from Bumthang to Paro. Amankora cannot take responsibility for the operation of this outsourced service and schedules and airfares are subject to change without prior notice. After a 45 minutes scenic flight you land in Paro. After crossing through Paro Town towards the north end of the valley you will find the Amankora Paro lodge set in a pine forest.

In the afternoon, there is time for a short stroll from the lodge, walking across open fields and past village houses. Before the sun sets, sit down by the big prayer wheel below the ruins of the Drukgyel Dzong, and relax whilst admiring the rural scenery and changing sky. Alternatively, there is an opportunity to try your hand at the ancient sport of **archery**. We have for you a set of traditional bows and arrows to enjoy our national game with reduced distance of about 70 meters between the two targets.

Evenings at Amankora Paro may include informative **lectures** on Gross National Happiness, **traditional cultural performances**, **prayer flag printing** or an intriguing **movie** on the Himalayas.

*Overnight – Amankora Paro*



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# Day 12 – Paro

Start your day with a visit to the **National Museum**. 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 you are then driven to the **town temple**, built in 1525, to view ancient wall paintings.

Paro lunch options include picturesque picnic spots or, perhaps, a visit to a traditional farmhouse. After lunch you will visit the uniquely shaped **Dumtse Lhakhang** to view the beautiful, well preserved wall paintings there.

If you would like to bring home some Bhutanese gifts, you can stroll the main street of Paro for some interesting Himalayan **artefacts** or **textiles**.

*Overnight – Amankora Paro*



# Day 13 – Paro

In the morning hike up to view one of Bhutan's most dramatic monuments, the Taktsang Goemba, more commonly referred to as the **Tiger's Nest**, built on a sheer cliff face at a height of 2,950 m (9,678 ft). The four-hour trek offers spectacular views of this sacred monastery perched on a cliff face 900m above the valley floor.

After **lunch** in the lodge, you can drive to the outskirts of Paro town where you will find the twin temples of 7th century **Kyichu Lhakhang**, one of the first Buddhist temples built in the country. Spend time **lighting 108 butter lamps** (chargeable activity) and learn about the ancient Buddhist traditions that are still practiced today.

As this is your last evening with us, soak in our **Hot Stone Bath** and relax your body with a **Tibetan Ku Nye massage** where warm oil is applied on specific points and joints to release energy blocks (chargeable activity).

*Overnight – Amankora Paro*



# Day 14 – International Departure

This morning you bid farewell to Bhutan. Your driver takes you to the Paro International Airport, a drive of approx. 30 minutes from the lodge. We recommend you to be there 2 hours prior to departure.

Have a safe journey home and we hope to welcome you back in the Land of the Thunder dragon!



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After **lunch in a local farmhouse** or in the lodge, you can drive to the outskirts of Paro town where you will find the twin temples of 7th century **Kyichu Lhakhang**, one of the first Buddhist temples built in the country. Spend time **lighting 108 butter lamps** (chargeable activity) and learn about the ancient Buddhist traditions that are still practiced today.

Alternatively, take an **excursion to the town of Paro**. Visit the **National Museum**, previously the watchtower of the valley that displays an intriguing collection of artefacts that illustrate the rich culture and heritage of the Kingdom. Just a short walk downhill lies the dominating **Paro Dzong**, a prime example of Bhutanese architecture.

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