

# Amankora Journey

## “The Short Loop”

Thimphu – Gangtey – Punakha – Paro

9 Nights

View from Amankora Gangtey into Phobjika valley

**AMANKORA**

# Amankora Journey: The Short Loop (9 Nights)

Our Short Loop Journey of 9 nights allows you to experience four valleys with two nights at the first 3 lodges and 3 nights at our Paro lodge. The loop starts in Thimphu, then takes you to Gangtey and from there back to Punakha and finally to Paro where you will end your journey.

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.

Day	Activity / Valley	Overnight
Day 1	Arrival, Transfer to Thimphu	Amankora Thimphu
Day 2	Explore Thimphu Valley	Amankora Thimphu
Day 3	Transfer to Phobjikha	Amankora Gangtey
Day 4	Explore Phobjikha Valley	Amankora Gangtey
Day 5	Transfer to Punakha Valley	Amankora Punakha
Day 6	Explore Punakha Valley	Amankora Punakha
Day 7	Transfer to Paro Valley	Amankora Paro
Day 8	Explore Paro Valley	Amankora Paro
Day 9	Tiger Nest Hike	Amankora Paro
Day 10	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 Gangtey

An early departure for a dramatic drive over the high mountain pass of the 3,050m mountain pass **Dochu La** where on a clear day, towering Himalayan peaks are visible. Sights on the way to Phobjikha Valley include one of Bhutan's first fortress monasteries, the 17th century **Simtokha Dzong**, and ancient wall paintings at the **Hongtsho Goemba** monastery. The descent down through the tropical Punakha Valley along the Kingdom's only east-west highway, continues on through the scenic villages of Wangdi. Carrying on 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 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 causal 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 4 – 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 5 – Journey to Punakha

Today's journey back to Punakha only takes about 2.5 hours. Punakha sits on an elevation of 1,250 m (4,100 ft) 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.

On the way 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'.

After lunch at the lodge, you have time to either do the short **Punakha Lodge Loop** to stretch your legs.

Enjoy evenings in our courtyard or unwind with a massage or a **facial**, Punakha's signature treatment using all locally sourced products.

*Overnight – Amankora Punakha*



# Day 6 – 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 7 – Journey to Paro

The four-hour journey to Paro takes you again across the impressive **Dochu La** pass. For lunch you can either stop at Thimphu lodge or enjoy picnic lunch at any beautiful spot on your way back along the dramatic Wang Chhu and Paro Chhu valleys. After crossing through Paro Town you will find the Amankora Paro lodge set in a pine forest towards the north end of the valley.

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*



# Day 8 – 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 9 – 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 10 – 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!

