

Black Necked Cranes and Royal Orchid Trek

Trip Code: BCO

Version:



WALK & TREK



GUIDED GROUP



MODERATE



HIGHLIGHTS

- Explore the Phobjika Valley, winter home of the rare Black Necked Cranes
- Camp in comfort and experience 'the last Shangri-La' on an easy paced 5 day trek
- Visit the Tiger's Nest, the beautiful Tang Valley and the monasteries of Bumthang

- Stay in remote villages few travellers get to see and get to know local communities
- Join the festivities at the Black Necked Cranes Festival

AT A GLANCE

- 6 days trekking
- 7 days touring
- Max altitude - 3460 metres
- Join at Kathmandu

ACCOMMODATIONS & MEALS

VIEW DATES, PRICES & BOOK YOUR HOLIDAY HERE

Introduction

Discover the beauty of the Phobjika Valley, visit the rare Black-necked Crane at Gangtey, enjoy a short trek through a beautiful and rarely visited part of rural Bhutan, and visit all the highlights of the Paro Valley on this walking and cultural [adventure holiday in Bhutan](#). Travelling via Kathmandu, the adventure begins with a flight across the Himalaya to Paro. Journeying east, the first part of this diverse adventure is a trek along the Mangde Chu (river) towards Gangkhar Puensum, the world's highest unclimbed peak. Following the moderately paced Royal Orchid Trek, we travel into an area known as 'the last Shangrila' on account of its isolation from the rest of the world and the sheer beauty of its scenery. Here we will stay as special guests of Drongthang Village, a wonderful way of learning all about Bhutanese life and culture.

In Drongthang rural life continues as it has for centuries. We will have the opportunity to interact with the local community, sharing their daily lives at work and play. Few tourists come here so this is a genuine opportunity to get under the skin of one of the most fascinating and least known countries in the world. In Drongthang rural life continues as it has for centuries. We will have the opportunity to interact with the local community, sharing their daily lives at work and play. Few tourists come here so this is a genuine opportunity to get under the skin of one of the most fascinating and least known countries in the world.

Our accommodation on trek will be in comfortable safari style tents. Our meals, prepared by our specially trained chefs, will be served in a dining tent with a view few restaurants can surpass! Next, we travel west to Gangtey in the Phobjika Valley, where we can view the famous Black-necked Cranes that make this particular valley their winter home. From Gangtey we continue westward, visiting the impressive Punakha Dzong before crossing the Dochu La to reach Thimphu.

We end our adventure with a hike up to the iconic, cliff-hanging Tigers' Nest monastery before we bid farewell to our Bhutanese hosts and return to Kathmandu.

BOOK EARLY for BHUTAN! With only two airlines operating flights into Paro from Kathmandu, seats are limited and in high demand. Book early to guarantee your place on your chosen departure. We strongly advise booking a year in advance where possible.

Is this holiday for you?

This is a cultural adventure, which includes a moderate trek that is suitable for anyone with some hill walking experience. The trek is fully supported and you will only be required to carry a small day pack each day.

The 5-day trek traces a route between villages and monasteries in the valley of the Mangde Chu to the north of the town of Jakar. Following paths used by local villagers, the conditions underfoot are nowhere difficult and the altitude attained is not extreme. This route presents a great variety of landscape type; ranging from terraced farmland, through some of the finest mixed forest in the world, to open, alpine pastureland.

Whilst on trek we will be well looked after, sleeping on comfortable mattresses in safari style tents, which you can stand up in.

There are some reasonable drives necessary to travel as far East as we do. We break the journeys as regularly as possible, which allows us to see all main sights of Western Bhutan.

Itinerary

Version:

Extensions

When booking your holiday, you will be able to 'add an extension option'. Once we have received your booking we will contact you to discuss additional services required for the extension and to take any additional deposit.



Chitwan Jungle Extension

The jungles of southern Nepal are an interesting counterpoint to trekking in the foothills or the high Himalaya. Tiger Tops Tharu Lodge provides a relaxing and comfortable base for a wildlife safari and cultural village experience. During two days of wildlife viewing in the Chitwan National Park 'buffer zone' - the interface area between visitors and the animals that live at Chitwan - you will be accompanied by expert guides on safaris by jeep by boat and on foot.

3 days from
US\$1,545 per person

Holiday Information

What's Included

- A professional and qualified tour leader plus support crew
- Bhutan visa fee
- Flights between Kathmandu and Paro
- All transfers and land transport involved in the itinerary
- All accommodation as described
- All meals
- Full service camping on trek including all camping equipment
- 'Thermarest' inflatable camping mats whilst camping
- FREE Sleeping bag and down jacket hire is available for this holiday on request

What's not Included

- Travel insurance
- Nepalese visa costs
- Tips for drivers and trek staff
- Miscellaneous expenses - beer and souvenirs etc

Joining Arrangements & Transfers

The holiday starts at the group hotel in Kathmandu.

Airport transfers are provided for all clients arriving Kathmandu on Day 1 and departing on the last day of the Land Only itinerary and all clients with additional nights booked through KE.

Hotel contact details and an emergency telephone number will be provided with your booking confirmation.

Meal Plan

All meals are included in the holiday price.

Food & Water

It is not recommended to drink untreated water from the taps. If you are on a trekking or cycling holiday, water is supplied to fill up your individual bottles. This will be boiled, filtered or provided in large jerry cans or 5 litre bottles. Additionally you should take purification tablets or a filter bottle (such as a [Water-To-Go bottle](#)) to treat your water when in towns or where water is not supplied. We do not encourage the purchasing of single use plastic bottles.

The Bhutanese love chillies; red, green, raw, cooked and flavouring their condiments – fans of spicy food will be in their element in Bhutan! Don't panic if spicy food is not for you, all the hotels and restaurants in Thimphu and Paro offer a range of delicious dishes suitable for all tastes. Breakfasts whilst in hotels will consist of choice of cereal or muesli, eggs, toast, beans, sausage or bacon with tea, coffee and juices.

You can expect to be fed very well during the trekking section of your holiday. Our trekking chefs are old hands at managing camps and meals whilst in the mountains. A senior trek cook and camp manager must have a minimum of five years of training and experience to qualify for the post! Our cooks have undergone training both on Bhutanese and continental dishes and can expect to be served a wide variety of delicious food on trek. Breakfast and dinner will be taken at the camp sites, whilst lunches will generally be carried on ponies and served mid-way on the trekking route for the day. Tea and hot drinks will be provided throughout the day and you will also usually also get a wakeup call from the camp crew with a nice cup of hot *Chai!* Whilst on trek drinking water will be purified by boiling and will be provided regularly.

Accommodation

This holiday includes 2 nights in Kathmandu, one en route to Bhutan and one on the return journey. In Kathmandu we use a comfortable, centrally located hotel.

In Bhutan, we use a good standard of hotel and lodge accommodation at Thimphu, Jakar, Gantey and Paro.

Whilst on trek we spend 4 nights staying in tented accommodation in a fixed camp with safari style tents. The tents we use are very spacious with traditional carpets and rugs for added comfort. We will sleep in beds raised off the floor and with a bedside cabinet.

In camp, as well as the tents used for sleeping, there will also be a mess tent, with chairs and tables, where the group will dine (and socialise into the evening), a toilet tent and even a shower tent where hot water can be provided for you to wash with. Our team will also bring bowls of hot water to your tent in the mornings and when you arrive at the camp each day. On cold nights, we'll even provide hot water bags/bottles when it is time for you to retreat to your tents for the evening.

All accommodation is twin share. If you are travelling by yourself you will be paired up with another traveller of the same sex. Single accommodation is available for a supplementary cost. If you are planning to extend your holiday, additional nights in Kathmandu are available on request.

Group Leader & Support Staff

The group will be met and escorted in Kathmandu by a local KE representative. Once in Bhutan the group will be accompanied throughout by a professional and qualified tour leader. During the trek the tour leader will be assisted by local guides and a crew including cooks, baggage animals and their handlers.

Altitude

This holiday involves going to moderately high altitude. During the course of your trip you will reach altitudes in excess of 2500 metres. Most people will have no difficulty with this level of altitude but before coming on the holiday, we recommend you read the advice on [trekking at high altitude](#). You can also talk to one of our trekking experts if you have any concerns about altitude.

Spending Money

Approximately £250 (or equivalent dollars, Euros etc.) changed to local currency, should be allowed for miscellaneous expenses including tips for local staff. We recommend that you carry your travel money in the form of cash, since you will exchange the majority of this on arrival. On arrival in Kathmandu you will only need a small amount of Nepalese rupees for drinks in the evening and we suggest that you change £10 or £20 at your hotel. When you arrive in Paro you will be able to change money at the airport into Bhutanese Ngultrum. Sterling, US Dollars and Euros are all equally acceptable for exchange in Nepal and in Bhutan. If you are intending to buy expensive souvenirs, you should budget accordingly (credit cards can be useful in this respect). Also, if you expect to buy considerable quantities of soft drinks or beer, you should make an allowance for this. You can withdraw cash from ATM's in Kathmandu. In Bhutan money can be easily exchanged but you cannot rely on withdrawing money from ATM's.

Guidance on Tipping

Tipping is the accepted way of saying thank you for good service.

Each group member can expect to pay tips of US\$150 (in local currency equivalent). On arrival in Paro, approx. \$30 per person of this should be handed to your Bhutanese tour leader, who will use this to pay tips to drivers, hotel porters and waiters.

Normally the trek staff are given their tips at the end of the trek. Your Bhutanese tour leader will advise the group on an appropriate level of tipping for each crew member. Most groups will mark the end of their trek by handing out the tips with a bit of a ceremony on the last evening.

A tip for your main Bhutanese tour leader is not included in the above. As a group you may want to make a separate collection to tip your tour leader separately during dinner on your final evening in Bhutan.

Baggage Allowance

For this holiday you should take one piece of luggage, which should be a soft duffel bag, and a daypack. Your bag on trek will be carried by pack animals and should not weigh more than 15kg. It is possible to leave extra baggage at the hotel in Kathmandu and also in Paro. Checked baggage allowance for the flight from Kathmandu to Paro is 30kg and for the domestic flight from Paro to Jakar it is 20kg. For other international flights please check your baggage allowance with your airline.

Group Size & Holiday Status

For each holiday there is a minimum number of participants required to enable it to go ahead. Once the minimum number is reached, the trip status will change from 'Available' to 'Guaranteed to run'. You can check the trip status for each departure in the 'Dates and Prices' table. Other than in exceptional circumstances, we will not cancel a trip once it has achieved this guaranteed to run status so you are free to proceed with your international flight booking and other travel arrangements.

General Information

Passport & Visas

The information that we provide is for UK passport holders. A passport with 6 months remaining validity at the end of your stay is generally required, and you should have at least 2 blank pages for each country that you visit.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you have the correct travel documents and visas for your holiday.

Please ensure that you check for the latest advice before travel. For the most up to date information on entry requirements, please visit the [UK Government website](#).

Visa Nepal

All nationalities require a visa. The visa process is partly automated and the fee is \$30 for 15 days, \$50 for 30 days, \$125 for 90 days. The visa is FREE for children under 10 years. The visa allows multiple re-entry. Payment must be made in cash and USD, GBP or Euros are accepted.

Part of this on-arrival visa process involves filling in a 'Tourist Visa Application Form' and you can simplify the procedure at Kathmandu Airport by filling this form in online (**within 15 days of travelling**) at [this link](#). This generates a receipt which you present (hard copy or saved on your phone) on arrival. This should allow you to go straight to the cashier to pay for your visa and has the potential to save you time in the visa queue.

Whilst these are not now needed for the visa process, we recommend that you travel with at least 2 spare passport photographs.

If you are travelling via India (Delhi or Calcutta) to your destination you may also require a visa for India. This may apply even if you are not leaving the airport unless your baggage has been checked all the way through to your destination. Generally, if you use the same carrier for both legs of your journey, you will not need an India Visa. Please download the detailed information document: [Visa PDF India](#).

Visa Bhutan

All nationalities require a visa. KE will apply for the visa for you and the visa fee is included in your holiday cost.

Your individual visas will be issued to you in Kathmandu prior to your check-in for the flight to Paro in Bhutan and your passport will be stamped on arrival in Paro.

To make the arrangements for your Bhutan Visa we need:

- 1). A clear and complete colour scan of the information page of your passport.
- 2). A colour scan of a recent passport style photo. Portrait orientation on a white background - with eyes open and forehead and ears clearly visible.

Please email these scans to us at the earliest opportunity.

Health & Vaccinations

If you have a severe allergy please inform the KE office before you travel. We will do all we can to help, but we cannot guarantee an allergy free environment on KE trips. You will need to carry your own treatment for the allergy with you, as 'adrenaline auto-injectors' are not carried as standard by KE leaders and staff. You should inform your leader on arrival of your allergy, and let them know where you keep your adrenaline pen.

Dengue fever is a known risk in places visited. It is a tropical viral disease spread by daytime biting mosquitoes. There is currently no vaccine or prophylaxis available and therefore the best form of prevention is to avoid being bitten. We recommend you [take precautions to avoid mosquito bites](#).

Preparing for your Holiday

Getting some additional exercise before coming on an active holiday makes a lot of sense. The fitter you are, after all, the more enjoyable you will find the experience.

You should be aerobically fit and comfortable with walking for around 5 hours for consecutive days. Hill walking, with a good amount of ascent and descent, is the best training. Running, cycling and swimming are also good for developing cardiovascular fitness and stamina.

Climate

In general the climate of Bhutan is colder and damper than one would expect to find in the Himalaya of India or Nepal. The monsoon usually arrives in June, and lasts until early September, bringing with it the heavy rainfall which is responsible for the lush vegetation which carpets much of Bhutan. March and April, as well as later September through to December are the best months to visit Bhutan. Pre-monsoon the weather is generally very good, with bright, sunny mornings and sometimes a moderate build up of cloud in the afternoons. Day-time highs of around 20°C can be expected at altitudes around 2000 metres with average daytime temperatures at 3000 metres around 10 to 15°C. Night-time temperatures at any time can reach or dip below freezing.

Travel Aware

As a reputable tour operator, KE supports the British Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office's '[Travel Aware](#)' campaign to enable British citizens to prepare for their journeys overseas. The 'Travel Aware' website provides a single, authoritative source of advice for all kinds of travellers and we recommend that before travel, all KE clients visit the official UK Government website at travelaware.campaign.gov.uk and read the FCDO Travel Advice for their chosen destination. North Americans can also check out the U.S. Department of State website: www.travel.state.gov for essential travel advice and tips.

KE treat the safety and security of all clients as the most important aspect of any trip we organise. We would not run any trip that we did not consider reasonably safe. Should the FCDO advise against travel for any reason, we will contact everyone booked to travel to discuss the situation. We receive regular updates directly from the FCDO and are in constant touch with our contacts on the ground. If you have any questions about government travel advice, please call our office.

Single Use Plastic

KE do not encourage the use of single use plastic items. We are ensuring that our agents all over the world are working together to reduce the problem and educate those around them. We are leading by example in our KE office by reducing our plastic use.

Books

- Bhutan. A Trekker's guide. Bart Jordans. Cicerone Press.
- Bhutan. (Lonely Planet Guide). Stan Armington.
- Bhutan, Land of the Thunder Dragon. Owen Edmunds.

Maps

Bhutan Himalaya. 1:380 000. ITMB Publishing

ITMB publish a general road map which also shows the general relief and has an index of towns and major villages. There are also sections for Thimpu and Paro with detailed street plans.

Travel Insurance

It is an essential condition of joining a holiday with KE Adventure Travel that you have a valid travel insurance policy to cover the cost of medical treatment and to protect the value of your holiday in the event of cancellation. When taking out insurance please ensure the policy you choose covers you for the activities and altitude included in your itinerary.

For appropriate insurance cover we recommend Campbell Irvine Direct. Please go to our [Travel Insurance](#) page for further information and to get a quote.

Equipment Information

Equipment List

Please try to keep the weight of your baggage to a minimum. See the 'baggage allowance' section for further details.

The packed weight of your kit bag while trekking should be no more than 15kg.

You SHOULD bring the following items:

- Sleeping bag (comfort rating to -10°C)*
- Warm jacket (down)*
- Hiking boots
- Socks
- Trekking trousers
- Lightweight waterproof overtrousers
- Underwear
- Baselayer shirts
- Casual shirt and/or T-shirts
- Fleece jacket or warm jumper
- Waterproof jacket
- Sunhat
- Warm hat
- Sunglasses
- Gloves or mittens
- Daypack 25 - 30 litres
- Headtorch with spare batteries
- Sun protection (including total bloc for lips, nose etc.)

- Water bottles 1 Litre x2 (we encourage re-filling water bottles rather than single use plastic)
- Water purification tablets
- Washbag and toiletries
- Antibacterial handwash
- Small towel
- Selection of dry bags (to keep bag contents dry)
- Basic First Aid Kit including: Antiseptic cream, throat lozenges, diarrhoea treatment (Imodium) painkillers, plasters and blister treatment, Insect repellent, and re-hydration salts (Dioralite).

The following items are optional:

- Trainers, shoes or similar
- Spare laces
- Scarf or neck buff
- Swimwear (for hotel pools)
- Travel clothes
- Trekking poles
- Repair kit - (eg. needle, thread, duct tape)
- Camera
- Reusable cloth bag for shopping (to avoid plastic bags)

NOTES

*FREE sleeping bag and down jacket hire is included in your KE holiday booking upon request.

Please make all requests at least 6 weeks prior to the trip departure date. Note all hire / rental equipment is issued in Bhutan. Please remember to allow room in your trek bag for these items.

'Thermarest' inflatable camping mats are provided whilst camping.

FESTIVAL DRESS CODE

The Bhutanese always come dressed in their finest clothing for a festival and so you may want to bring a smarter set of clothes with you to use on the days you are attending the festivals. Long sleeves and long trousers are best, women might want to bring a scarf. Dirty boots or open toed sandals should be avoided where possible. Hats and umbrellas should be avoided.

FESTIVAL ETIQUETTE

Bhutan's Tshechus (festivals) are religious events and the festival grounds are purified and consecrated by lamas. The dancers are in a state of meditation, they believe that they transform themselves into the deities they represent on the dance ground, generating a spiritual power, which purifies, enlightens and blesses the spectators. Out of respect, whilst watching the dances, you should not eat, drink, talk or laugh loudly at inappropriate times. You should not use flash photography and please be respectful when photographing dancers or onlookers. The festivals are not tourist attractions, they are manifestations of religious traditions thousands of year's old, which we are fortunate to be able to witness.

Cotswold Outdoor

Many of the equipment items listed above are available from [Cotswold Outdoor](#) - our '**Official Recommended Outdoor Retailer**'. When you book a holiday with KE you will receive a 12.5% discount with Cotswold Outdoor, Snow+Rock and Runners Need. The discount code can be downloaded from your MyKE account and you can use this code at the checkout, either in store or online.

Land Only Information

The LAND ONLY dates and prices are for joining at the hotel in Kathmandu. Transfers from Tribhuvan International (Kathmandu) Airport to/from the group hotel are provided on the first and last day of the holiday.

Flight Inclusive Information

The FLIGHT INCLUSIVE dates and prices are based on UK flights from London to Kathmandu. Outbound flights will usually depart from the UK in the evening, arriving mid afternoon the following day (day 1 of the itinerary). Return flights will depart Kathmandu usually in the morning of the last day of the itinerary, arriving in the UK later the same day.

Why Choose KE

Why KE

KE have been running holidays to Bhutan for over 20 years, and we are extremely proud of our long standing relationship with our good friends in Bhutan. Staying as guests of Drongthang Village, the home village of many of our Bhutanese colleagues, is a true celebration of this friendship and a wonderful way of learning all about Bhutanese life and culture. If you would like the chance to visit one of Bhutan's spectacular festivals then be sure to check out our special festival departure, which coincides with the Black-necked Cranes festival.

Please Note This document was downloaded on 03/12/2024 and the trip is subject to change