



# TRONGSA VILLAGE TREK

BHUTAN // APRIL 2020

## WELCOME TO PUDU PUDA

Thank you for your interest in our **Trongsa Village Trek!** This is a small-group itinerary which combines a 4-day cultural immersion glamping trek in Trongsa, a district in Central Bhutan, with the iconic highlights of Paro and Punakha valleys.

From gentle walking holidays and mountaineering adventures, Pudu Puda Travel curates unique itineraries in the great outdoors. We are committed to provide an experience which is authentic to the destination. We've done the homework, so that you can enjoy a hassle-free trip with insider access to the most qualified guides and beautiful lodges.

## TRIP HIGHLIGHTS

<b>Trip Dates</b>	10 to 19 April 2020
<b>Duration</b>	10 days
<b>Grading</b>	Grade II
<b>Capacity</b>	8 trekkers
<b>Cost</b>	USD4,000 per person *

\* Pudu Puda Travel does not require single travellers to pay a surcharge for travelling alone. We will arrange for you to share accommodation with another traveller of the same gender. If you prefer not to share, a single supplement of USD475 is payable to guarantee your own room / tent.

## THE EXPEDITION

Bhutan is a destination still shrouded in mystery. However, we have no doubts that the locals will impress you with their pride for their beautiful mountainous country, their rich culture and religion – both intertwined to create the country's unique Himalayan heritage, and their warm hospitality. This journey will take you to the heart of the country – Trongsa Valley. Here, we will travel deep into the Mangde Chhu River Basin on a 5-day trek, staying in villages nestled high above the banks of the river. You will experience life in the agricultural community and learn about their way of life through interaction with the villagers over a warm cup of homemade *suja* (butter tea) or *ara* (home-brewed alcohol made from grains). Most of the produce that our camp chef uses will be sourced locally, depending on what's available during the season. Each day, we will hike approximately 10 kilometres on gentle farm trails. Leaving Trongsa Valley, this itinerary will continue to the subtropical valleys of Punakha and the pine forests of Paro, and our local guide will fill your imagination of stories of Buddhist saints, heroes and demons as you visit iconic highlights of Bhutan such as Tiger's Nest (Taktsang) Monastery.

This expedition is for the trekker who is looking to explore the spectacular villages of Bhutan off the beaten path, without great physical exertion. The walking distance per day is 10 to 14 kilometres, for approximately 3 to 4 hours. The objective is to enjoy the surroundings at a leisurely pace!



## ITINERARY

---

### Day 1 **Arrival in Paro (PBH); Drive to Thimphu**

**10 April** There are flights available from Bangkok, Delhi and Kathmandu. Upon arrival in Paro, you will be transferred by private bus to Thimphu, the Bhutanese capital. The good thing about arriving by the late morning means that you will have most of the day to relax and acclimatise to the altitude (2,300m) and visit some sights. One of our personal favourites is the Textile Museum; weaving is a very important part of Bhutanese culture and every region has its unique patterns and materials. Since it is a Friday, you can visit the weekend vegetable market too. Overnight in Thimphu at Zhiwa Ling Ascent in a Double / Twin Room.  
Meals included: lunch and dinner

---

### Day 2 **Drive to Trongsa via Punakha**

**11 April** The drive from Thimphu to Trongsa is approximately 6 hours. On the way, you will pass Dochu La, a high mountain pass at 3,100m above sea level. Here you can enjoy the view of the Greater Himalayas on a clear day! To stretch your legs, we'll make a visit to Chimmi Lakhang, the infamous fertility temple dedicated to the Divine Madman, one of Tibetan Buddhism's most important saints. The hike to the temple will take you on a very gradual path through a village surrounded by rice terraces, and will take approximately an hour. Lunch will be served at a local restaurant before continuing our journey to Trongsa. Overnight at Yangkhil Resort in a Double / Twin Room.  
Meals included: breakfast, lunch and dinner

---

### Day 3 **Hike to Karzhong Temple (10.5km)**

**12 April** After breakfast, we will drive to the trailhead, which will take less than an hour. The trail will take us to a Buddhist retreat centre where monks spend more than 3 years at a time in silent contemplation. We will continue on highland trails surrounded by following rhododendron trees and views of the Black Mountain Range before descending to our lunch spot. Overnight in a deluxe tent at Karzhong Temple.  
Meals included: breakfast, lunch and dinner

---

### Day 4 **Hike to Jongthang Village (10.6km)**

**13 April** Following a farm road, we continue deeper into the Mangde Chhu River Basin, following the river upstream. The surrounding forest is full of birdlife, and our local guides will help identify the different residents during your hike. If you are lucky, you might come across deer and martens. Arriving at our next campsite, you will enjoy lunch next to the fields with views of the river valley and surrounding mountains. The afternoon can be spent with a visit to one of the local farmhouses for a cup of tea or local alcohol, while each member of the group takes turns to enjoy a private traditional hot stone bath in camp! Overnight in a deluxe tent in Jongthang Village.  
Meals included: breakfast, lunch and dinner

---

<b>Day 5</b>	<b>Hike to Mangde Phug Village (6.9km each way)</b>
<b>14 April</b>	Mangde Phug is the only village in this river basin located within the Jigme Singye Wangchuck National Park. There are only three houses here, all belonging to the family of our local friend. Here, we will enjoy a hearty lunch prepared by the family after experiencing milking their cow, tilling the land and churning fresh butter! Most of the vegetables you will enjoy is grown in their garden. Leisurely hike back to Jongthang Village. Overnight in a deluxe tent in Jongthang Village. Meals included: breakfast, lunch and dinner
<b>Day 6</b>	<b>Hike to Bemji Village (10.0km)</b>
<b>15 April</b>	We are anticipating a lazy start this morning. We will cross the Mangde Chhu River to the other side of the valley, making our way uphill through the forest before arriving at Bemji, the main village of the valley. For those with a lot of energy, there is an option to hike further uphill to some temples. Overnight at the Manor House in Bemji Village (if 4 guests or less) or in a deluxe tent. Meals included: breakfast, lunch and dinner
<b>Day 7</b>	<b>Drive to Punakha</b>
<b>16 April</b>	Leaving Trongsa behind, we head westwards to the subtropical valleys of Punakha, the ancient Bhutanese capital. The drive will take approximately 4 hours. We will visit Punakha Dzong, the valley's imposing fortress, which sits at the confluences of two important rivers in Bhutan – Mo Chhu (the mother river) and Po Chhu (the father river). This was once the seat of the government. Overnight in Punakha at Meri Puensum Resort. Meals included: breakfast, lunch and dinner
<b>Day 8</b>	<b>Drive to Paro</b>
<b>17 April</b>	The drive further westwards to Paro will take approximately 4 hours. After lunch at a local restaurant, we will visit the Bhutan National Museum. The museum showcases traditional masks from the religious dances, local traditional art, as well as flora and fauna of the country. You can then relax for the rest of the afternoon, exploring the hotel's extensive grounds, enjoy the spa or the teahouse. If there is time, you can even try your hand at archery, which is Bhutan's national sport. It's not as easy as it looks, but it is a lot of fun! Overnight in Paro at Zhiwa Ling Heritage in a Junior Suite. Meals included: breakfast, lunch and dinner
<b>Day 9</b>	<b>Pilgrimage to Taktsang Monastery</b>
<b>18 April</b>	This is one of the highlights of Bhutan, and rightfully so, because any monastery built into the face of a mountain should be awe inspiring! The uphill hike to the monastery should take approximately 3 to 4 hours, but there is no need to rush! There are different places along the trail where you can stop to catch your breath and enjoy the peaceful surroundings. Afternoon in Paro Town for some last-minute souvenir shopping. Overnight in Paro at Zhiwa Ling Heritage in a Junior Suite. Meals included: breakfast, lunch and dinner
<b>Day 10</b>	<b>Departure from Paro (PBH)</b>
<b>19 April</b>	Meals included: breakfast



## TREK ACCOMMODATION

During our trek in the Mangde Chhu River Basin, you will be spending 3 nights in a deluxe tent on a twin sharing basis. This will include a mattress, sleeping bag, pillow and blanket per person, as well as carpeted interiors. On the fourth night, we will be hosted by descendants of local aristocrats in their manor house.

## IN-TOWN ACCOMMODATION

You will be sleeping at a range of hotels, from local 4-star to 5-star hotels, depending on what is available in each town. These rooms are available in King or Twin configuration, depending on your preference. All hotel rooms have ensuite bathrooms and WiFi connectivity. One of the highlights of the trip is staying at Zhiwa Ling Heritage Hotel, a National Geographic Unique Lodge of the World while we are in Paro.





## WHAT'S INCLUDED

- Specialised bilingual trekking guide,
- Pack animals to carry personal gear, camp equipment and food,
- Meals as indicated in the itinerary,
- Mineral water while in the cities and boiled and filtered water while trekking,
- All transportation within Bhutan for activities listed as part of this expedition, including airport transfers,
- Accommodation on a twin sharing basis in Thimphu for 1 night (local 4-star hotel),
- Accommodation on a twin sharing basis in Trongsa for 1 night (local 4-star hotel),
- Accommodation on a twin sharing basis in Punakha for 1 night (local 3-star hotel),
- Accommodation on a twin sharing basis in Paro for 2 nights (5-star hotel / National Geographic Unique Lodge of the World),
- Accommodation on a twin sharing basis in deluxe tents for 3 nights,
- Accommodation in a homestay for 1 night,
- Camp equipment, including sleeping tent, sleeping bag, sleeping pad, dining tent, toilet tent, portable chairs and tables,
- First aid kit, portable oxygen cylinder, Gamoy bags and satellite phone in case of an emergency,
- Fees for park entrances and permits required,
- Tourism Development Fund fees for camp sites, and
- Government visa fees and royalties, service charge and sales tax.

## WHAT'S EXCLUDED

- Airfare to and from Paro and related taxes,
- Items of personal nature such as phone calls, laundry, drinks of any kind,
- Tips for the guides, camp staff and horsemen / yak herders,
- Comprehensive travel insurance, and
- Any trip extension.

To the best of our ability, we can also help you with any additional arrangements that you require, such as booking flights on Druk Air / Bhutan Airlines to and from Paro, pre- or post-trip accommodation or any trip extensions that you wish to take in conjunction with this expedition.

## WHAT YOU WILL CARRY

You will need to carry your own backpack, which should contain all the personal gear you would require during the day on the trail, e.g. wet weather gear and snacks. The pack animals (which may include mules and yaks, depending on the altitude) will carry the rest of your personal gear, camp equipment (e.g. tents, cooking utensils, gas) and food required for the entire trek. Your personal gear will be transported in individual duffle bags, and the weight of this backpack should not exceed 15kg (33lb). It is possible to leave a separate bag in the city, with items which you would not require while trekking, and our ground handling team will transport these to us after our expedition.

Once your expedition has been confirmed and initial deposit paid, our team will send you a comprehensive dossier which will include the gear checklist for your trek.

## OUR APPROACH

Our expeditions will take you to the mountains – mostly untouched, on paths less travelled. There will be days where there will be no network connectivity, most days spent camping and the ever-changing weather conditions in the mountains may result in alterations to the programme. This should not dampen the mood, but adds character to the expedition. What bonds our expedition team members is their spirit of adventure. We believe that you are choosing to embark on this adventure with us because you are ready to embrace the realities of being part of a trekking expedition!

## LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

At Pudu Puda Travel, we guarantee our guests that we have done the groundwork, trekked every trail we include in our itineraries and connected with locals who are seasoned guides and support locally-owned hotels.

## YOUR EXPEDITION LEADER

Xin Xin Loh is the founder of Pudu Puda Travel. Over the last four years, she has trekked more than 500 kilometres across mountain ranges in Bhutan, including the 24-day Snowman Trek (known as the toughest trek in the world). As a retired hotel investor, she has a passion for travel and eye for quality, and ensures that our expeditions are best-in-class and true to the local heritage of the destination.



## COMMITMENT TO COMMUNITIES

Pudu Puda Travel donates 10% of our profits to community projects in the destinations where we operate. In Bhutan, we work with a local non-profit organisation, **RENEW** (Respect, Educate, Nurture and Empower Women). As Bhutan continues to develop in its own unique ways, RENEW is dedicated to ensure that the rights of women and families are protected in this process. Our focus is to create and run art outreach programmes for children affected by domestic violence, as well as the youth network which supports this community. To date, we have personally conducted several art programmes, with the next one planned for July 2019. In Chile, we work with a public school in Puerto Natales by sponsoring excursions to the outdoors to encourage healthy living and healthy eating practices for children in the second grade.

## VISA REQUIREMENTS

You would require a visa for your visit to Bhutan, unless you are in possession of any SAARC passport. Pudu Puda and its local partners will obtain the Bhutanese visa on your behalf. It normally takes two to three weeks to process the visa, and an electronic copy will be sent to you a week before your arrival in Bhutan. Please ensure that your passport is valid for at least 6 months from your arrival date into Bhutan. You may require visas for the other countries that you are visiting on the same trip or transiting through. It is important that you check the visa requirements of all the countries you intend to visit, and it is your responsibility to obtain all the necessary visas.

## BOOKING YOUR EXPEDITION

We operate fixed-date departures with a maximum group size of 8 trekkers. If this expedition is what you are looking for, we encourage you to contact us at your earliest convenience to reserve your spot. In order to book, you will first need to complete a booking form. Our team will then be in touch with payment instructions for a 30% deposit. Your reservation will be secured upon payment confirmation by our team. All travellers must eventually sign and submit a Liability Waiver.

## PRIVATE DEPARTURES

If these dates do not suit your schedule, this itinerary is available as a private departure with a minimum of 1 guest. Our team is ready to assist you with curating tailor-made adventures to suit your needs for private group travel.



## PAYMENTS, CANCELLATIONS AND REFUNDS

Full payment of the trip balance is due 90 days prior to departure. If you must cancel for any reason before departure, the refund amount will be calculated after deducting Pudu Puda Travel's cancellation fees (see below), as well as any advance payments made to airlines, hotels and local operators. We recommend that you speak with our team in order to determine the best way forward.

Our cancellation fees are as follows:

- 91 or more days before departure – 30% of total price (i.e. initial deposit)
- 61-90 days before departure – 50% of total price
- 60 days or less before departure – no refund

Please note that we will charge a 3.4% processing fee for payments made by credit card.

## SOCIAL MEDIA

Please like our Facebook page [here](#) and follow us on Instagram (@pudupudatravel)!

## IMPORTANT NOTES

This information dossier represents the most current information available to Pudu Puda Travel for this itinerary, and should be seen as a guide only. We will make every effort to conduct this itinerary as described, but this may change at any time due to adverse weather conditions and any other circumstances beyond our control. We will defer to the expertise and experience of our local guides in determining any alterations to the itinerary as required. We require you purchase travel insurance to cover any extra, unforeseen costs such as trip delay, trip cancellation, lost baggage, sickness or accident.

If you are uncertain about your suitability for this trip, please contact us at [hello@pudupuda.com](mailto:hello@pudupuda.com) or call us at (+65) 9830 5045.