

amankora





Bhutan holds many surprises and wonders offering the discerning voyager much to discover and to do. Enjoy a gentle evening stroll to visit the Drukgyel Dzong or experience the stunning pilgrimage up to Tiger's Nest. Touch the spirit of Bhutan while spending a quiet moment in one of the *dzongs* or monasteries and expose yourself to the rich cultural traditions and customs the people of the Thunder Dragon have to offer.

In this Experience Guide, we present some of the best supplemental experiences from each valley that's home to Amankora (and even beyond) that you can add to your itineraries and journeys to Bhutan. Whether it's a unique dining destination to add a special touch to your meals or a once-in-a-lifetime treat, these experience will truly enhance and elevate your discoveries of the kingdom.

Because some activities, hikes and excursions require planning, we recommend that you discuss what you might be interested in doing with your guide or with one of our family members at least one day in advance.

We invite you to explore the Land of the Thunder Dragon further with us through these special activities.



Amankora Paro

Exploring Paro's Cultural Crossroads

A Cultural Tour of Paro should always start with a casual browse through the National Museum, housed in the Ta Dzong (Watch Tower) of the Rinpung Dzong, where an intriguing collection of artefacts serves as a great introduction to the rich culture and heritage of the Kingdom. Just a short stroll below lays the dominating Paro Dzong, a premier example of Bhutan's architecture. From the Dzong, a leisurely walk back into town crosses the scenic Nyamai Zampa (Bridge), a unique model of Bhutan's traditional cantilever bridge. Continue to the town temples, Tshongdue Lhakhang and Drukchholing Lhakhang, with its fascinating altar and paintings. The wall paintings and unique design of Duntse Lhakhang plus a visit to the revered Kyichu Lhakhang, which pins down the left foot of a treacherous Ogress, are a great finish to this day of cultural immersion.

Paro offers several attractive opportunities for shopping and experiencing the local fare. Among them, the Vajrayana Art Gallery offers an interesting collection of contemporary Bhutanese paintings. Here you can view the artistic talent of young Bhutanese contemporary artists. The gallery owner, Mr. Chimi Dorji, is an artist himself and will proudly display his collection of paintings depicting Bhutanese traditions and culture as well as modern artwork. (Currently, we are displaying some of his paintings in our Front Office. Please contact us if you are interested in making a purchase.) The gallery also features a small jewellery shop where you can find beautiful old and authentic Bhutanese jewellery.





108 Butter Lamps at Kyichu Lhakhang

Kyichu Lhakhang is one of the oldest and most sacred temples in the Kingdom, dating back to the 7th century when the seed of Buddhism was won in Bhutan. The Tibetan King, Songsten Gampo ordered the establishment of monasteries in the Himalayan region to subdue evil spirits and to spread Buddhism. Of the 108 monasteries which were to be built, two major ones were built in Bhutan and still stand to this day, namely the Kyichu Lhakhang and the Jambay Lhakhang in Bumthang.

Lighting of 108 butter lamp in one of the Bhutan's oldest temples dating back to the 7th century is an experience of a lifetime. The Butter Lamp or karme represents the dispelling of the darkness of ignorance. The lighting of butter lamps is an offering of light to the deities and is one of the most common means of increasing one's merit. It also helps to focus the mind and aid meditation. The sacred and incredibly beautiful Kyichu Lhakhang is located a 20-minute drive down the valley and is a tranquil and appropriate location for this ritual.

Butter lamp lighting can also be arranged in other temples, monasteries and in dzongs if Kyichu Lhakhang is unavailable on some occasions.



Morning Yoga

We all want to be healthy, look good and live a good life, both physically and spiritually. Join our experienced yoga buddy for an energising complimentary morning yoga session in our spa relaxation room between 7 am to 8 am that is suitable for all ability levels. There is no need to bring any equipment - just come as you are. You will enjoy a soothing program of breathing exercises followed by a series of poses. Our Yoga Buddy will be assisting you as needed. Please inform our team the evening before for a yoga session the following morning to confirm your participation.

Guests seeking more specialised instruction can arrange for a private yoga session at your convenience. Our Yoga Buddy will happily craft a program geared towards your ability level and/or yoga style of interest.



Body Polish and Wrap Rituals

Home to the largest Aman Spa in Bhutan, the spa in the Paro lodge boasts a two-story structure with a dedicated yoga and movement studio, steam room and treatment rooms with outdoor hot stone bath facilities. The spa's body polish and wrap rituals coupled with a Himalayan hot stone bath is an experience not to be missed.

Grounding Body Polish and Wrap Ritual

A key ingredient in this ritual is amethyst powder, known for its gently sedative energy that promotes peacefulness and emotional stability. The full-body polish gently exfoliates the skin, brighten tone and improving texture, while the cocooning wrap initiates a period of stillness, leaving skin radiant.

Purifying Body Polish and Wrap Ritual

This ritual revives the spirit, tones the skin and induces a state of peace. One of the key ingredients is quartz — known as a master healer for its amplification of energy levels. Seaweed Fucus oil, raw honey and essential oils are also applied, stimulating circulation and lymphatic drainage.

Nourishing Body Polish and Wrap Ritual

Encouraging the body to enter a phase of deep rest, this nutrient-rich treatment includes jade powder — known to hydrate, tone and rejuvenate — in both the scrub and wrap. The scrub also contains healing calendula oil, restorative amethyst powder, essential oils and Himalayan salts that soften the skin.

Himalayan Hot Stone Bath

Aman Spa Paro's own Himalayan hot stone bath is inspired by a traditional, therapeutic treatment, where natural river stones are heated and lowered into the bath to release beneficial minerals, while the local Khempa herb infuses the water with its healing properties.

It is recommended to begin any spa treatment with a 30-minute traditional Bhutanese Hot Stone Bath to release your tension, relax the body and open up your skin. Kindly give us few hours' notice to prepare the bath and the stones.



Gross National Happiness Lecture

Bhutan talks more about Gross National Happiness (GNH) than Gross National Product. Gross National Happiness is considered to be the measurement of performance for the wellbeing of all Bhutanese. This concept was introduced by the fourth Druk Gyalpo, His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck, in the early 1980s and has been considered revolutionary by the global leaders around the world. We can arrange for a private lecture with Khenpo Phuntsho Tashi, director of the National Museum, who is expert on the topic.



Blessings and Meditation

A private, one-on-one Meditation Session with a Lama can be arranged in the lodge or at a nearby temple.

Blessings can be arranged in any of the *dzongs* or *lhakhangs* around the Paro Lodge. The sacred and beautiful Kyichu Lhakhang (described on the preceding page) is one of the many locations to perform the ceremonies below.

Thrisel is a one-hour blessing using holy water to cleanse the mind, spirit and soul under the guidance of a revered lama. As an ample quantity of holy water is used, the warmer months may be preferable.

Tshewang is a one-hour ritual performed by 5 – 8 monks to promote a long life. This elaborate ceremony involves an abundance of prayers, mantras and final blessings using a Dorji (Thunderbolt) as well as sacred scriptures touched to the head.

Rimdo is an auspicious full day ceremony performed by 6 – 8 monks to grant long life, bestow prosperity, wellbeing and the fulfilment of any personal requests. To a symphony of drums, horns, cymbals and bells, the monks will chant the holy texts and mantras. Your actual presence is only required for a short duration as the blessing continues to flow from morning to night.



Culinary Journeys

With each valley offering distinct specialties and regional cuisine, the culinary journeys in all the five lodges offer a gastronomic glimpse to the culture and landscapes that helped shape these flavours.

Vegan, vegetarian and other culinary options are available in all the private dining experiences for those with dietary restrictions and food preferences. These options can be arranged upon request and can be designed into the private dining setting and experience.



Tiger's Nest Base BBQ Lunch

At the foot of the Tiger's Nest Monastery, in a clearing right beside the meandering Paro River past a corn field, Amankora arranges a BBQ lunch that is usually enjoyed right after a hike or a pilgrimage to the iconic monastery hanging on a cliff 900 meters above the ground.

Here, guests enjoy a feast of flavours, grilled fresh and served to the relaxing sound of the river, while drinks are concocted on request on the makeshift bar. Across the river, a village temple juts out of the lush landscape while the Tiger's Nest soars on the other side.

Traditional Tented Dinner

Amankora Paro Terrace, with its beautifully laid flagstone, serves as a majestic dinner venue with the backdrop of the white-washed facade of the Living Room and the fragrant pine forest beyond.

Dinner tables are set under a magically embroidered, traditional Bhutanese Ceremonial Tent. The tent is gently lit with fairy lights and numerous flickering lanterns across the terrace. Warmth and ambience is added with large wood burning fire bowl around the tent. Comfortable woolen shawls, cloth-wrapped hot water bottles, heaters hidden under table to keep guests warm on chillier evenings. A traditional dance performance can be arranged with cocktails and canapés around the bonfires prior to dinner.



Breakfast at Twin Lakes

Experience the morning sun kissing the peak of Bhutan's second highest peak and the 2nd highest unclimbed mountain in the world, Mount Jomolhari, as you enjoy a sumptuous continental breakfast. A short helicopter ride takes you up the Paro Valley and over beautiful pristine forests and remote hamlets, opening to stunning panoramic views of the Himalayas along the Bhutan – Tibet border. Your breakfast picnic spot sits adjacent to two turquoise lakes, above the Jomolhari Base Camp at Jangothang, offering dramatic views of the revered snow-capped Jomolhari. Mount Jomolhari, also known as “the Bridge of Kangchenjunga” straddles the border between Tibet, China and northwestern Bhutan. With altitude over 7,300 meters, Mount Jomolhari is sacred to Buddhists who believe that it is the abode of the female protector goddess, Jumo of Tibet and Bhutan.

After breakfast and time permitting, explore other sacred sites nearby the base camp, including Jomolhari Temple, the meditation caves of Milarepa and Gyalwa Lorepa and the Spirit Lake of Tsheringma. Your return flight will also take in stunning views of Lingzhi Yugyal Dzong (Bhutan's remotest fortress), the Lingzhi Village and a panorama of the Himalayan Range.



Private Dining

Amankora Paro offers a number of beautiful settings in which to dine in blissful seclusion. Whether you are seeking an intimate meal for two or a group celebration, we will tailor the menu to your individual preferences and ensure a dining experience to remember.

Courtyard

Surrounded by the living room structure and a pine forest on its fringes, the courtyard is an ideal setting for dining under the stars.

Pine Forest

In a small clearing at the lodge pine forest north of the suites, a stunning meal can be set-up with sweeping views of the terraced rice fields that lead up to the Drukgyel Dzong fortress, village and the peak of Jomolhari Mountain on clear days.

Fire-pit Terrace

Dine on a tailored five-course menu just metres not far from the dining room. The fire-pit terrace overlooks the stream, the pine forest and the nearby village farmhouses.



Amarkora Thimphu



Exploring Thimphu's Unique Urban Beats

Being the capital city of Bhutan, Thimphu offers unique opportunities to explore the Bhutanese culture and traditions in depth. Situated at an altitude of 8,200 ft / 2,500 m it is the home of 100,000 Bhutanese. Whether you are interested in spirituality, Buddhism, or astrology, experiencing different aspects of the local culture such as weaving, sacred paintings or the local markets, or would like to gain an insight into the abundant flora and fauna of Bhutan, we will help make arrangements to ensure that your curiosity and interests are satisfied.

When planning your tour we included the most important museums, galleries, places of historic interest and activities to give you a diverse experience of our unique country and its people. Bhutan's capital is a growing and bustling commercial centre contrary to the otherwise beautiful, natural and quiet Himalayan Kingdom, and has much to offer to those looking for something special and unique to add to their pilgrimage.



High Altitude Golf

Golfing on Bhutan's only genuine golf course offers a unique game amongst chortens and majestic landscapes with the Thimphu Dzong providing a dramatic backdrop. This challenging nine-hole course is situated at 7,700 ft / 2,350 m above sea level, giving the extra mile as balls fly further in the thin mountain air. Tee times can be arranged by calling a member of our family on extension 0. The Royal Thimphu Golf Club is located above Tashi Chho Dzong, north of town.

Fishing

Even though fishing and hunting is considered illegal in Bhutan as it conflicts with the beliefs of Buddhism, special permissions can be given for recreational catch and release in the waters of Thimphu on days that do not conflict with auspicious day of the Lunar calendar. The most common fish is the brown trout and the best seasons to catch them are spring and fall.

If you wish to try your luck, we would be happy to assist you with the arrangements. We will provide you with modern fishing equipment as well as an experienced fishing guide who will take you to the best spots. To make sure that we can arrange a fishing trip for you on an inauspicious day, we recommend that you give us at least three days notice.



Uncover Your Past and Future at the Astrology School – Pangri Zampa Lhakhang

Believed to be protected by a mermaid and powerful deities through the form of two giant trees, Pangri Zampa Lhakhang is idyllically located in the middle of a meadow by the river, a 20-minute drive from the lodge on the way to Tango and Cheri monasteries. The temple appeared in Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal's vision which directed him from Tibet to Bhutan. The temple was built by Ngawang Choegyel, the great-grandfather of the Zhabdrung, and was the Zhabdrung's residence when he arrived in Bhutan in 1616.

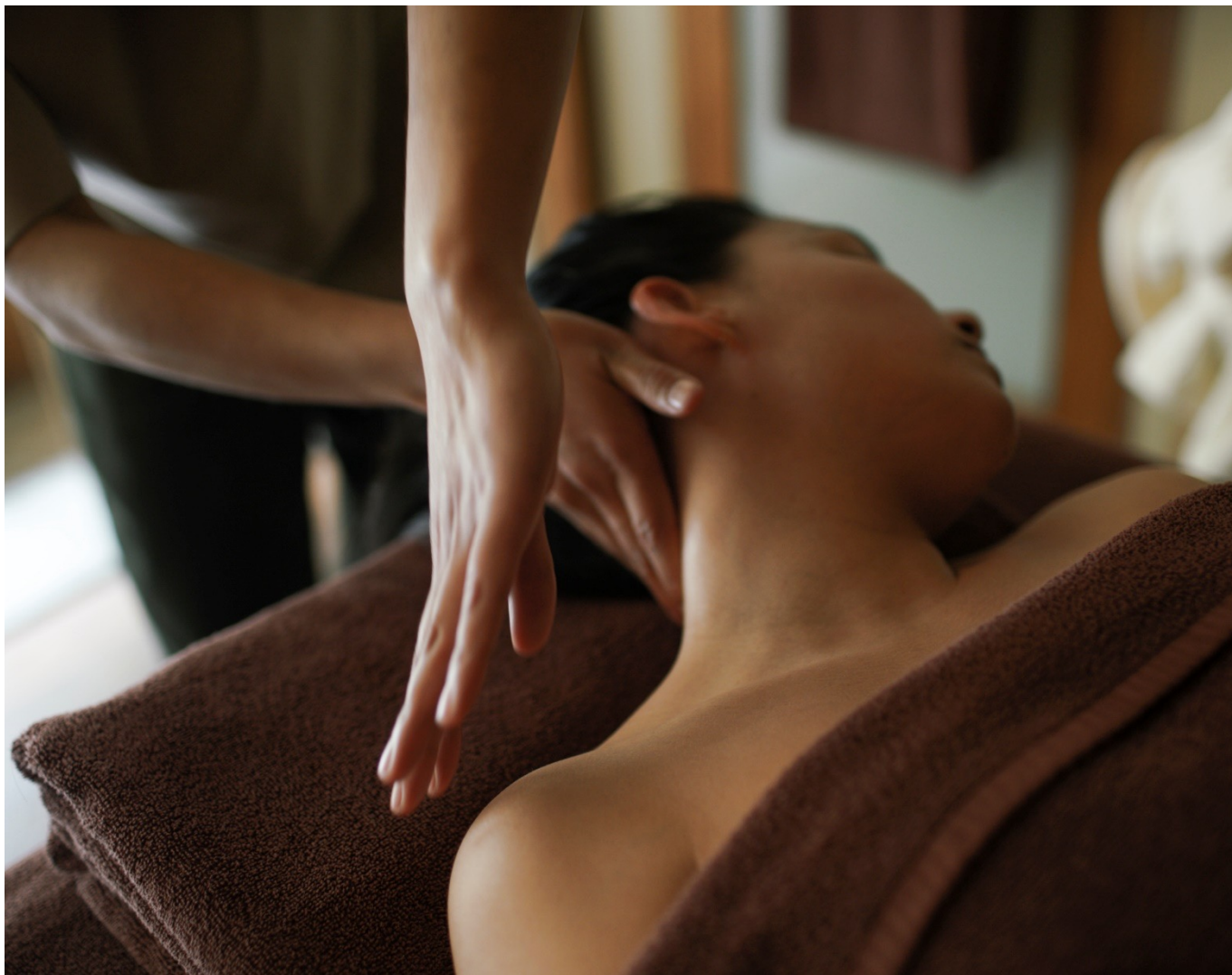
Today, the temple is used as an astrology centre of the state clergy and is the home to around 50 monks studying astrology. During a visit to Pangri Zampa you can learn more about astrology, and also have your personal reading done.



Morning Yoga

Join our experienced yoga buddy in the lodge library, just below the Dining Room Terrace. For an energising complimentary morning yoga session that is suitable for all ability levels, join us between 7 am to 8 am. There is no need to bring any equipment - just come as you are. You will enjoy a soothing program of breathing exercises followed by a series of poses. Our Yoga Buddy will be assisting you as needed. Please inform the team the evening before for a following morning yoga to confirm your participation.

Guests seeking more specialised instruction can arrange for a private yoga session at your convenience. Our Yoga Buddy will happily craft a program geared towards your ability level and/or yoga style of interest.



The Jet Lag Reviver

Whether you're recovering from an extensive travel or a hectic lifestyle, this signature ritual from Amankora Thimphu's Aman Spa will revive you from head to toe.

The treatment begins with a deeply relaxing hot stone massage focusing on deep pressure points. You will then enjoy a neck, shoulder, and scalp massage to reduce tension and promote relaxation. A nourishing facial massage will re-energize the skin and leave you refreshed and revitalized.

The treatment will be completed with a foot reflexology to promote circulation and reduce water retention. To cap it off, we will be doing a short session of breathing techniques to improve and stimulate your lymphatic system to help your skin flush out toxins, swelling, and inflammation to minimize breakouts and a dull, sallow appearance.



Learn Art with a Local Artist

Classically trained artist Gyempo Wangchuk finished his training at the Zurig Chusum Institute, Bhutan's most important art school focusing on the 13 traditional arts and crafts. Specialising on painting, Gyempo has done work on temples and sacred scrolls, but his artistic directions changed when he discovered contemporary art. Merging his classical training with modern sensibilities, Gyempo has done well-received solo and group exhibitions here and abroad. A private painting session with him can be arranged either at the lodge or in his artist's studio, for guests wanting to learn traditional Bhutanese painting with contemporary twists.

Discover the Secrets of Incense Making

Using a 350-year-old recipe known only by their family, the proprietors of Nado Poi is finally opening the doors of their workshop in Thimphu for Amankora guests to learn more about this ancient art. Using a wide selection of rare, foraged or homegrown herbs, spices and ingredients from all over the Himalayas, they create blends that are unique that the sacred smoke the incense creates is highly sought after by monastic bodies and temples all over the world. Nado Poi also creates exclusive incense sticks and powder blends for the Royal Family of Bhutan. The half-day class includes selection of raw materials, creating the dough, rolling and cutting of the incense.



Private Lecture on Bhutan and Buddhism with Mynak Trulku

Mynak Trulku is the 12th reincarnate lama of Mynak Rinpoche who is the spiritual leader of the Mynak province in the Eastern region of Tibet. Mynak Rinpoche has lived in Bhutan for over 30 years and worked in various capacities as the founder and director of the National Museum in Paro and the National Library in Thimphu. He has also represented Bhutan in various regional and international conferences lecturing on Bhutanese culture and spiritual affairs.



Culinary Journeys

With Thimphu's own organic garden and seasonal produce culled from the nearby farms, the culinary journeys in all the five lodges offer a gastronomic glimpse to the culture and landscapes that helped shape these flavours.

Vegan, vegetarian and other culinary options are available in all the private dining experiences for those with dietary restrictions and food preferences. These options can be arranged upon request and can be designed into the private dining setting and experience.



Dochula Pass Breakfast or Lunch

Enjoy a stunning breakfast at the top of the world, with sweeping views of the world's highest unclimbed peaks. Set at 3,100 meter above sea level, Dochu La is one of Bhutan's most iconic mountain passes, straddling the border between Thimphu and Punakha.

Your choice of breakfast or lunch will be set-up for you on the hill overlooking the Druk Wangyal Memorial Chortens, a collection of 108 stupas overlooking the panorama of the Himalayan peaks separating Bhutan from Tibet. On cloudy days, the mountain ranges are hardly visible, but a mountain mist puts on a veil of mystical aura to the chortens and the surrounding forests.



Amankora Punakha



Exploring Punakha's Sunny Sides

Punakha sits on an elevation of 4,100 ft/1,250 m in a fertile, warm, and beautiful 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. The valley and the surrounding mountain sides offer a large variety of attractive places to hike and bike. You can also explore monasteries and Bhutanese farming traditions as they have been carried out for centuries. Below we have listed some activities, outings, hikes, and bike trails that you might like to venture on whilst staying with us here in Punakha.

The paths throughout the valley have largely been created by the locals and animals wandering from pasture to pasture. These paths can become quite muddy and wet during the rainy season. For your own safety and convenience, we would suggest you keep to the recognizable footpaths and roads and always wear sturdy footwear or trekking boots.

Because some activities, hikes and excursions require planning, we recommend that you discuss what you might be interested in doing with your guide or with one of our family members a day or two in advance.



Long Life Blessing at the Sangchhen Dorji Lhuendrup Nunnery

The blessing for long life is called *Tshewang* and is a ritual blessing to extend the astrologers purported prophecies. This elaborate one hour ritual by six to eight monks involves ample prayers, mantras and a final Dorji (thunderbolt) or a sacred scripture blessing on the head. It takes place at the Sangchhen Dorji Lhuendrup Nunnery, 40 minutes' drive from the lodge. This buildings of the Shedra (Buddhist College) and meditation centre scatter the grass sites and is home to a small and friendly community of nuns, perched on a ridge amid pine trees overlooking the valleys of Punakha and Wangduephodrang

Prayer Flag Hoisting at Chorten Nyeabu

A short and peaceful hike to this special 15th century temple to see the largest statue of *Jowo Jampa*- the Future Buddha, and *Gum Shing*- 'the upside-down tree' can be combined with hoisting of prayer flags and lunch on the temple's scenic hilltop. Prayer flags are hoisted for happiness, long life, prosperity, luck and merit, to clear ones' sins, and to offer karmic merit to all sentient beings. When the wind blows, it is believed that it carries the prayers on the flags, blessing all beings. Find the spot where you want to hoist your prayer flags, a local monk will accompany you to consecrate the hoisting.



Morning Yoga

For a morning of grounding and balance, join our experienced yoga buddy. For an energising complimentary morning yoga session in our spa yoga and movement room between 7 am to 8 am that is suitable for all ability levels. There is no need to bring any equipment - just come as you are. You will enjoy a soothing program of breathing exercises followed by a series of poses. Our Yoga Buddy will be assisting you as needed. Please inform our team the evening before for a following morning yoga to confirm your participation.

Guests seeking more specialised instruction can arrange for a private yoga session at your convenience. Our Yoga Buddy will happily craft a program geared towards your ability level and/or yoga style of interest.



Grounding Face Ritual

Developed to promote emotional healing, inner peace and in return bring the body and mind to a state of harmony, Amankora Punakha's Grounding Face Ritual incorporate quartz to facilitate healing, frankincense to aid rejuvenation and hyaluronic acid to boost cell hydration.

Lymphatic and muscular massage techniques stimulate circulation and raise vibrational energy, while acupressure using heated Himalayan salt poultices leaves the skin radiant. The treatment ends with a Peruvian black mud together with amethyst crystal mask and Tibetan head massage.



Rafting or Kayaking

Spend a morning on the water and discover a whole new angle of Bhutan. If you are new to rafting and looking for an enjoyable and easy scenic float down the river and along with the view of Changyul valley where you can see the old monument, a Galem house, we recommend the Mo Chu (Female River) which is flowing below the lodge. The Pho Chu (Male River) on the other hand is for the more adventurous, who wish to tackle some of the kingdoms white water while enjoying the pristine forests and farmland on either side of the river. Rafting offers a more leisurely adventure with a private raft for your group of up to 8 people or if you wish to go solo, kayaking offers as much of a challenge as it does thrill.



Learn How to Make Sacred Torma Cakes

Torma is a sacred cake made mainly with butter and barley flour used to adorn altars during traditional Buddhist celebrations and ceremonies. Created primarily by monks as offerings during holy rituals and festivals, the colourful cake is dyed with colourful pigments, shaped by hand, blessed and finally offered in accordance to its specific creation - whether to represent a deity, consumed partially as part of a ritual in a feast, as a healing, medicinal symbol or even as a vessel to obstruct spirits.

In Amankora Punakha, torma making classes are held during auspicious dates and festivals by a monk, where guests are invited to partake in this unique heritage practiced all over the Buddhist realms of the Himalayas. Special private torma-making classes can be requested in advance.



Culinary Journeys

With Punakha's subtropical produce and year-round crops on highlight, the culinary journeys in all the five lodges offer a gastronomic glimpse to the culture and landscapes that helped shape these flavours.

Vegan, vegetarian and other culinary options are available in all the private dining experiences for those with dietary restrictions and food preferences. These options can be arranged upon request and can be designed into the private dining setting and experience.



Private BBQ Lunch or Dinner by the Riverside

This is a truly unique experience! Just below the lodge at the edge of the Mo Chhu (Female River) is our favourite spot for a peaceful private BBQ lunch or dinner. Our Chef will freshly prepare a tailor-made four course menu which will be served by your private server. During lunch, you sit in the shade of pine trees and enjoy the views and sounds of the river, the surrounding rice fields and the Himalayan mountain peaks in the background while smelling the charcoal and exotic aromas of the food sizzling on the grill. If you look for a more romantic experience, we recommend the BBQ dinner with white tablecloth, candlelight, lanterns and a bonfire where you watch dusk falling until a million stars rise.

Bhutanese Cooking Class

Master the art of Bhutanese cooking by signing up for a private cooking class with our chef. With many years of culinary experience, he is happy to share his knowledge and newfound passion for the Bhutanese cuisine. The location of the cooking class is the former farmhouse kitchen – where else could you better learn how to prepare Ema Datse and Momos? You can choose from a list of the most popular Bhutanese dishes what you are interested in to learn. After your hands-on cooking class in the afternoon, you can enjoy the exotic aromas of your newly acquired culinary skills during dinner. Best of all, take a taste of Bhutan home to impress your family and friends with!



Breakfast at Khamsum Chorten

After a good night's sleep, get an early start to witness how night slowly turns into day as you venture on your morning walk towards the extraordinary Khamsum Chorten. From the lodge the trail takes you through farmyards and rice paddies and offers a wonderful opportunity to experience the local farming traditions. While you enjoy the superb views of the valley from the chorten roof top, your guide will have found the perfect picnic spot in the gardens surrounding the chorten and laid out your continental breakfast for you to enjoy in the morning sun.

Khamsum Yuelley Namgyel Chorten is 100 ft / 30 m tall and can be seen in the distance when driving or walking up from the footbridge towards the lodge.

The three-leveled chorten took eight and a half years to build and was consecrated in 1999. Dedicated to the Fifth King, it was built to remove negative forces and to provide peace, stability, and harmony in an ever-changing world. It is therefore filled with every form of colourful protector imaginable.

From the Khamsum suspension bridge to the Chorten: 30 – 45 minutes. From the Chorten to the Lodge: 45 minutes–1 hour. We recommend starting as early as you feel comfortable.

Difficulty level – Moderate



Amankora Gangtey



Exploring Gangtey's Idyllic Charm

Gangtey and Phobjikha Valley are some of the most stunning areas in the country; the wide flat valley without any trees after the hard climb through dense forest is extremely rare in Bhutan. In contrast to some parts of Bhutan where modern development is already very apparent, Gangtey is a place with natural beauty, untouched scenery, local traditions and culture, and unconstrained peacefulness. Unlike the rest of Bhutan where you walk from one stunning viewpoint to the next, in Phobjikha Valley you will have constant breathtaking views wherever you venture. To assure that you get the most out of your time in Gangtey, we have gathered a variety of activities, experiences and horseback rides that will allow you to experience the natural splendour of the valley and its surroundings.

The paths throughout the valley have largely been created by the locals and the animals wandering from pasture to pasture. For your own safety and convenience, we would suggest you keep to the recognisable footpaths and roads and always wear sturdy footwear or trekking boots. The paths can be quite muddy and wet during the rainy season.

Because some activities, hikes and excursions require planning, we recommend that you discuss what you might be interested in doing with your guide or with one of our family members at least one day in advance.



Offering a Meal to the Monks at Gangtey Goempa

Ranging in age from 7 to 40, 270 monks reside in the Gangtey *Goemba/Shedra* (Monastic Schools). While many come for different reasons; religious and spiritual fulfilment, four, six- or nine-year courses in Nyingmapa Buddhism, most come because their families are too poor to keep them at home. The *shedra* is also the home of nine young reincarnates. The *Goemba/shedra* does not receive any financial support from the government, and therefore solely relies on different sponsors to operate. The meals for the monks are partly financed by the generous Gangtey Trulku Rinpoche, private sponsors, and the villagers with whom the *Goemba/Shedra* has a “barter-system” – in return for food donations, the monks will give daily prayers to the villagers for peace and protection.

The three daily meals mainly consist of rice. Breakfast includes rice with *ezay* (chilli dip) and *suja* (butter tea). Lunch and dinner consist of rice and one curry.

Donating a meal to the monks is a generous and very rewarding gesture that you can personally get involved in. Our Chef will gladly accompany you to the local shops in Gangtey where you can take part in purchasing rice and vegetables. You are also welcome to overlook the meal preparations in the kitchen before taking part in the meal service itself. Sometimes sponsors prefer to give a monetary donation and not take part in the meal service, which is also an option.

Breakfast is served at 06:30, lunch at 11:30 and dinner at 16:30. If, in addition to donating a meal, you also wish to participate in purchasing the food supplies, please give us at least one day's notice.



Spiritual Cleansing (Buddhist Fumigation)

It is a common belief that every place has its local protective deity or spirit. To please the spirit and keep the spirit happy, the Bhutanese fumigate every morning and during special *pujas* (religious ceremonies). It is also a ritual for self-cleansing of all bad spirits surrounding us, and to be blessed with good luck.

Spiritual cleansing involves the burning of selected herbs in a fumigation stupa. Here at the lodge, our *stupa* is located at the top of the hill in front of the main entrance of the lodge. Should you wish to perform your own cleansing ceremony, this should take place early in the morning in the presence of a monk who will assist you in the ritual.

Please give at least one day's notice to make the necessary arrangements.



Gangtey Horseback Riding Experience

Known for their mild temperament and impeccable sense of balance, Yuta horses are a distinct Himalayan breed unique to Bhutan descended from an ancient line of Mongolian, Tibetan and Indian hill breeds.

Experience these highly prized highland horses with an exploration of Gangtey's pristine corners, reliving the early days of Bhutan's wild frontiers when the hidden kingdom's rough and rugged terrain can only be accessed through these gentle creatures.

Begin your expedition from the lodge grounds, passing through scenic traditional farming villages, wooden bridges and charming farmhouses before completing the hour-long loop midway through the Bayta Community School and fields littered with prayer poles gently flowing with the breeze.

The guided horseback riding experience lasts approximately one-hour. Please give us at least one day's notice.



Morning Yoga

We all want to be healthy, look good and live a good life, both physically and spiritually. Join our experienced yoga buddy. For an energizing complimentary morning yoga session in our spa relaxation room between 7 am to 8 am that is suitable for all ability levels. There is no need to bring any equipment - just come as you are. You will enjoy a soothing program of breathing exercises followed by a series of poses. Our Yoga Buddy will be assisting you as needed. Please dial extension “0” the evening before for a following morning yoga to confirm your participation.

Guests seeking more specialized instruction can arrange for a private yoga session at your convenience. Our Yoga Buddy will happily craft a program geared towards your ability level and/or yoga style of interest.



Traditional Hot Stone Bath

The Amankora Hot Stone Bath is situated in a candle lit stone hut on a hill, a ten-minute walk from the Gangtey lodge. You have the unique opportunity to soak in a wooden tub out in the open and enjoy this traditional Bhutanese healing experience. The sliding bamboo doors allow full privacy yet offer open views of the magnificent Phobjikha Valley.

Your body will benefit from the minerals in the heated stones and the healing effects of the local Khempa herb. Sit back and unwind in the bath for as long as you wish while sipping on a cup of hot apple cider and watching the sun set.

Two people can fit in one tub at the same time.



Culinary Journeys

With Gangtey's homegrown potatoes, chillies and organic seasonal crops on focus, the culinary journeys in all the five lodges offer a gastronomic glimpse to the culture and landscapes that helped shape these flavours.

Vegan, vegetarian and other culinary options are available in all the private dining experiences for those with dietary restrictions and food preferences. These options can be arranged upon request and can be designed into the private dining setting and experience.



Candle-lit Potato Shed Dinner

Situated a ten-minute walk from our lodge is a stone-built potato shed which is built to house the local farmers' autumn potato harvest. In the midst of all the spuds, we have mounted a *bukhari*, the traditional wood-burning oven to make the shed comfortably warm. With Bhutanese wooden furniture and the flickering candles the perfect setting for a romantic dinner is created. Start your evening with some ara, the local wine, by the bonfire outside, before retiring to your seats amidst the potatoes. Enjoy your Bhutanese meal in the rural surroundings whilst a musician enriches the atmosphere with Bhutanese instruments and folk songs.

10-minute walk from the lodge on dirt road. The road is often very muddy during rain. We recommend good shoes and warm clothes. Please give us at least one day's notice.



Amankora Bumthang



Exploring Bumthang's Eastern Echoes

Bumthang, situated at 8462 ft / 2580 m above sea level, is the most eastern point of your pilgrimage with Amankora through the Land of the Thunder Dragon and is considered by the locals as the spiritual hub of the country. The valley and many connecting ones are steeped in history and the expression of deep spiritual beliefs. Bumthang also houses many of the spiritual tests, which if you dare, show you how free of sin you are or aren't, or whether you will (or have) lived up to the expectations of your parents. From chain mails that have to be carried around the altar room three times, to tunnels and holes in stones, that when found with closed eyes, will indicate whether you are honest - Bumthang has it all and more.

The four valleys of Bumthang - Choekhor, Tang, Ura and Chhume offer numerous experiences whether you want to hike, bike, discover temples, watch wildlife, or learn more about Bhutanese lifestyle and culture. We have discovered a number of exciting things to do in the area and gathered the following information for you so that you can get a better idea of all the possibilities. We hope that we can tempt you to discover the valley with us, and that this will help you get the most out of your time in Bumthang. We would be very happy to give more information or help tailor-make the experiences even further. We hope you will enjoy exploring the magical Bumthang Valley.

Because some activities, hikes and excursions require planning, we recommend that you discuss what you might be interested in doing with your guide or with one of our family members at least one day in advance.



Bhutanese Name Giving Ceremony at Sey Lhakhang

Our name giving ceremony is quite unique. Our names are given by Lamas and Rinpochhes from the temples. Bhutanese names have nothing to do with caste and we don't have a family name. The first name for both male and female will be same. It is only from the second name that we can distinguish between two genders. No matter what age you are, you can always get a new name. Coming to Bhutan is an enthralling experience and getting a Bhutanese name is a once in a lifetime opportunity.

Should you wish to have a Bhutanese Name from Sey Lhakhang, we can arrange a small ceremony followed by name giving by the Lama. You will have to provide your date of birth. After the Lama receives your date of birth he will perform a Buddhist name calculation and present you with a name and explain its meaning. With the new name and blessings you will light the butter lamps for well being. This blessing will take place in the private altar room of the monastery. Monks will serve you some milk tea with Bhutanese snacks.

One day advance notice is required for the preparation.

Astrology Reading by the Village Astrologer

Our gifted local astrologer tells the fortunes of the villagers and religious people in the valley. Some come from other valleys far and wide to learn their fortunes and uncover some connections with our past.

If you wish to have your fortune told, we will take you to his house in the nearby village, or we can invite him to meet you at the lodge.

Remember to have your birth date and time of birth ready for interpretation



Butter Lamp Lighting at Jambay Lhakhang

The Butter Lamp or karme represents the dispelling of the darkness of ignorance. The lighting of butter lamps is an offering of light to the deities and is one of the most common means of increasing one's merit. It also helps to focus the mind and aid meditation.

The Jambay Lhakhang or Temple of Maitreya is said to be one of the 108 temples that were built by Tibetan King Songtsen Gampo in 659 CE on a single day, to pin down the demon. Only the inner core of Jampa Lhakhang was built by Gyap Songtsen Gembo where we can still see the statue of Buddha Maitreya. In 8th Century when Ugyen Guru Rimpoche visited Bumthang on invitation of King Sindha Raja, it is said that Guru used Jambay Lhakhang as his residence where we can still see a small room above the entrance of main temple.

Every year Jambay Lhakhang hosts a festival where they perform a Fire Blessing (Mewang) and Naked Dance which is popular all over Bhutan and is the biggest attraction for tourists in Bumthang. The Naked Dance was introduced in the valley by Tertön Dorji Lingpa when he was extending the Jampa Lhakhang from Trongsa Nabji Korphu.

The temple caretaker will assist you in lighting your 108 butter lamps. It is said that this will protect you from evil and help you reach enlightenment.

Take time to sit down and relax to the sound of a caretaker spinning the prayer wheel as he chants, or to admire the old female resident who has dedicated 39 years of her life to the lhakhang.

10-minute drive or 25 Minute walk to Jambay Lhakhang from Lodge.



Talk on Birds, Flora and Fauna with Bird Specialist Ap Sherab

If you are interested in learning more about birds and/or the flora and fauna of our Kingdom, we would love you to meet our local specialist Sherab. Sherab has researched the topic for more than 15-years and is an award-winning specialist on birds. In addition to a giving you a lecture, Sherab can also take you on a early-morning bird watching tour around the valley or a hike through the forest to forage the local flora and fauna.

Please let us know a day in advance if you are interested.



Visit and Learn About Bhutan's Indigenous Honeybees and Apiculture or Beekeeping with Beekeepers

Spend a few hours to visit the Beekeeping Centre where they produce honey from beehives in areas surrounded by golden clovers, apple and wildflowers monitored by the Beekeepers' Association of Bhutan. The honey produced from the valley is very pure and a healthy gift of nature – truly one of Bumthang's culinary treasures.

The chairman of the cooperative Tul Bdr. Chhetri, will explain you the method of bee cultivation from beginning to end. This process involves several steps from farming, harvesting, bottling and labelling, to pressing the final product ready for the market. Beekeeping has been a seasonal job and an extra source of income for Bumthaps for years.

There are already more than 140 beekeepers in the district today with more than 10,000 hives and many more looking forward to take up the farming. During your visit, they will offer you Propolis Honey Wine, and honey ginger tea while you enjoy views in this beautiful and tranquil spot.



Relax with a Bumthang Herbal Compress

Bumthang herbal compress is a signature treatment at Amankora Bumthang. The treatment combines an ancient healing practice using benefit of local medicinal herbs together with full body oil massage and meridian point therapy. Hot herbal compress promotes deep relaxation, while soothing aching muscles and improving circulation.

Benefits:

- Reduces chronic pain, muscle tension and improves range of motion
- Eases restlessness and promotes relaxation
- Revives fatigued muscles



Culinary Journeys

With Bumthang's reputation as the "food basket of Bhutan", the culinary journeys in all the five lodges offer a gastronomic glimpse to the culture and landscapes that helped shape these flavours.

Vegan, vegetarian and other culinary options are available in all the private dining experiences for those with dietary restrictions and food preferences. These options can be arranged upon request and can be designed into the private dining setting and experience.



Enjoy a Private BBQ by the Fire Pit

Our fire-pit area is the perfect setting for a truly romantic dining experience, and while on holiday, every day is an occasion to celebrate. On a clear, starry night, we will set up a table by the fire and arrange a barbeque feast. Our chef will be very happy to create the menu with you. The chef will cook for you, the musician will play and you will have your own server who will make sure it will be an evening to remember.



Beer & Cheese Tasting at Red Panda Brewery

The Red Panda Brewery was started in 2006 by Fritz Maurer, originally Swiss but a Bhutanese citizen since 1976. His brewery was the first established beer brewery in the country, and he is still the sole producer of the specialty *Weiss bier*. A visit to the brewery includes a 30-minute tour of the premises to learn more about the production process of Red Panda, the beer ingredients, the history of the beer and the health benefits of this Bhutanese specialty. The tour will be concluded with Red Panda beer and local cheese tasting in the brewery garden. For those who prefer non-alcoholic beverages, Bumthang produced apple juice from the brewery across the road is also available.

15-minute drive to the Red Panda Brewery. Please notify us one day in advance if you wish to go for tour and tasting.



Making Khabzey Biscuits in a Farmhouse

Bhutanese biscuits are called khabzey and come in many different colours and patterns. Sometimes they are shaped like flowers, hearts, knots or the Bhutanese eight lucky signs. Making beautiful and tasty khabzey is an art, and our local farmhouse grandmother is an expert with many years experience in khabzey making. If you would like to learn how to master the art of making khabzey in authentic surroundings, we will gladly arrange for a lesson in a local farmhouse while you enjoy tea and some other snacks.

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