

amankora

Experience Guide





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 experiences will 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 artifacts 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 their fascinating altar and paintings. The wall paintings and unique design of Dungtse 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. The gallery also features a small jewellery shop where you can find beautiful old and authentic Bhutanese jewellery.





108 Butter Lamps

Lighting 108 butter lamps 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.



Morning Yoga

We all want to be healthy, look good and live a good life, both physically and spiritually. Join our 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.



Body Polish and Wrap Rituals

Home to the largest Aman Spa in Bhutan, the spa at 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, brightens tone and improves 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 a 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 well-being 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 global leaders around the world. We can arrange for a private lecture with Kinzang Lheundup, a lecturer from Paro College of Education, who is an expert on the topic.



Blessings and Meditation

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

Blessings can be arranged in any of the *lhakhangs* or temples around the Paro Lodge. Please ask your lodge host to suggest 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. A few drops of water from the Bumpa are used during the blessing ceremony.

Tshewang is a one-hour ritual performed by multiple 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, well-being 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 five lodges offer a gastronomic glimpse into the culture and landscapes that helped shape these flavours.

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

Forest and Fortress Dinner

Amidst the pine forest, overlooking the historic Drukgyel Dzong along calming sounds of the brooks and stream flowing through the forest, take this opportunity to dine under the stars. Dinner tables are set on a lush clearing beside moss-covered rocks, under the canopy of Himalayan blue pine trees - a fragrant pine species endemic to Bhutan. As an option, we can set the dinner under an intricately embroidered, traditional Bhutanese ceremonial tent. The Bhutanese dragon tent is gently lit with stringed lights and numerous flickering lanterns across the forest. Warmth and ambience are created with many candles and traditional Bhutanese music.

Comfortable woolen shawls, fabric-wrapped hot water bottles and heaters hidden under tables are arranged to keep you warm on chillier evenings. A traditional dance performance or musical troupe (extra charges apply) can be arranged with Amankora signature cocktails and canapés whilst enjoying a traditional Bhutanese dinner prepared by our in-house Bhutanese chef.



The Cabin Under the Tiger's Breath

Nestled in the foothills where pilgrims begin their journeys in the shadows of the iconic Tiger's Nest, Amankora's log cabin offers a breathtaking prelude or a cosy finale for hikes up to the legendary monastery. Accessible via a hidden path just moments from the main hiking trail, the quaint cabin is surrounded by a verdant pine forest which opens onto tranquil lawns with sweeping vistas of the monastery structures that appear to precariously cling onto the dramatic cliffside.

Originally constructed for its proximity to the monastery and the blessings it endows from the prayer flags that fly above, the cabin's original prayer room is still intact, making it an ideal place for meditation and self-reflection before or after visiting the Kingdom's holiest monument. Inside, the wooden abode provides space to relax and enjoy a refreshing drink or sumptuous meal warmed in the traditional *bukhari* stove. Meanwhile, outside on the terrace, a hot pot of tea can be enjoyed while under the gaze of the Tiger's Nest. Enhance your long-awaited visit to one of the world's most fascinating heritage sites with the following unique experiences in Amankora's cabin.

Restorative Lunch

Conclude your experience of Bhutan's holiest pilgrimage site with a rejuvenating lunch experience in the shadows of the Tiger's Nest. Upon arrival at the cabin, a refreshing drink awaits before a relaxing 30-minute foot massage to soothe tired limbs. Refreshed and recovered, a sumptuous lunch follows, with the Tiger's Nest in full view inviting a moment's reflection on the morning's adventures.

Memorable Milestones and Captivating Celebrations

Whether celebrating a wedding, anniversary or any personal milestone, Amankora's log cabin offers a unique and memorable backdrop. A serene setting for intimate events of up to ten guests, the cabin's interior makes for the perfect private dining spot, while its grounds can be configured to host up to 50 guests, with verdant lawns, cocooning forest, and panoramic views creating a fitting atmosphere worthy of any occasion.



Breakfast at Twin Lakes

Embark on a captivating culinary experience at the Twin Lakes with our breakfast picnic. Immerse yourself in the pristine beauty of the Twin Lakes and discover the magic of Mount Jomolhari. Savour a delectable spread of freshly baked pastries, seasonal fruits, and a variety of locally sourced delicacies. Enhance your experience with a glass of champagne and locally brewed coffee by the lakeside. Let the serene ambiance and breathtaking scenery create the perfect backdrop for a memorable morning adventure.

After breakfast and time permitting, explore other sacred sites near 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.



Outdoor Dining

Amankora Paro offers several beautiful settings 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 an affair to remember through our select premium dining experiences.

Patio

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

Fire-Pit Terrace

Indulge in 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.



Amankora 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, taking the extra mile as balls fly further in the thin mountain air. Tee times can be arranged by a member of our family. The Royal Thimphu Golf Club is located above Tashi Chho Dzong, north of town.

Fishing

Even though fishing and hunting are considered illegal in Bhutan as they conflict 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 the 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. It was built by Ngawang Choegyel, the great-grandfather of the Zhabdrung, and was the Zhabdrung's residence when he arrived in Bhutan in 1616.

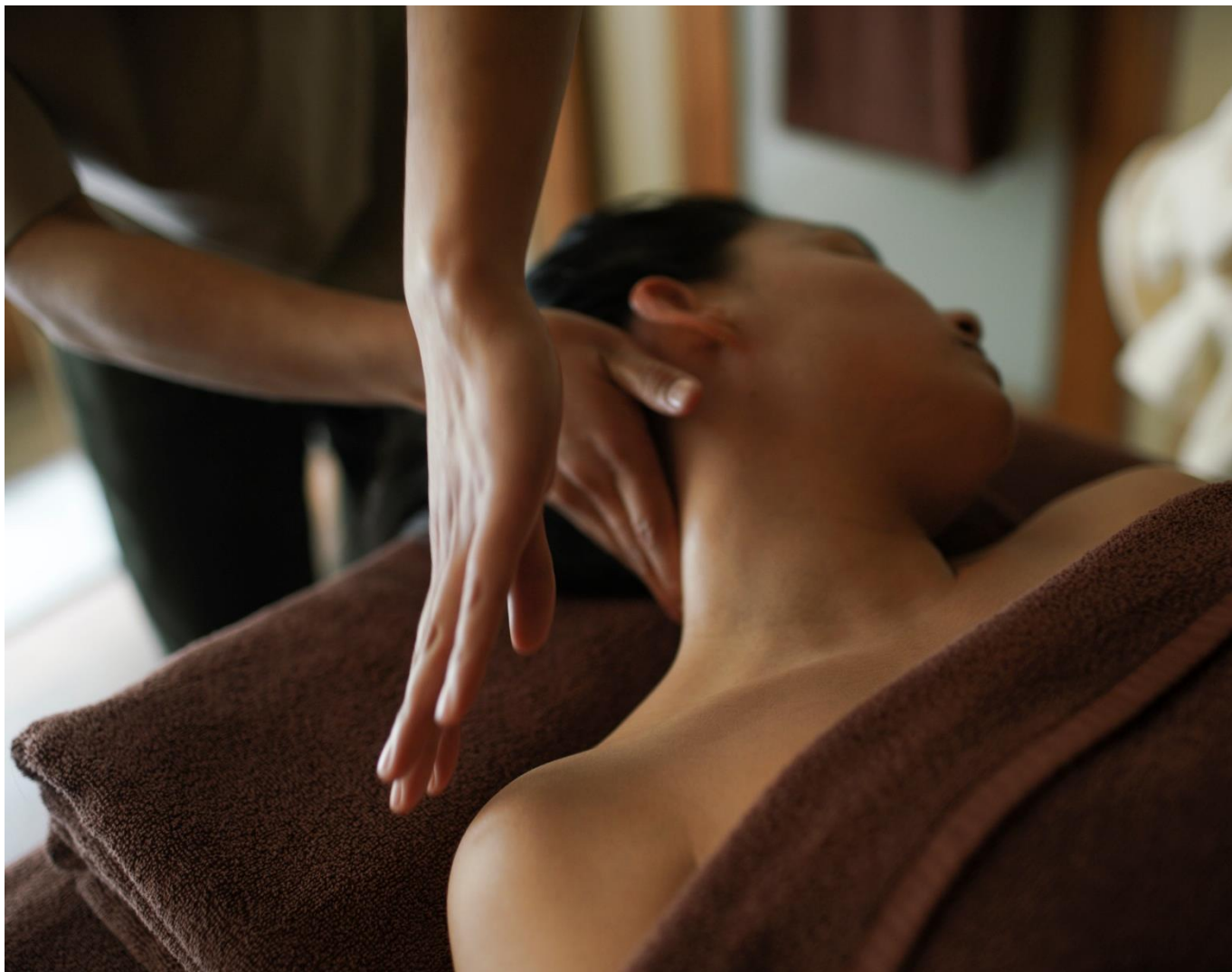
Today, the temple is used as an astrology centre of the state clergy and is the home to around 50 monks studying astrology. During a visit to Pangri Zampa, you can learn more about astrology and have your reading done upon request back at the lodge by one of the astrology graduates of the school.



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 their convenience. Our Yoga Buddy will craft a program geared toward your ability level and/or yoga style of interest.



The Jet Lag Reviver

Whether you're recovering from 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

Try your hands in local art with a traditionally trained group of artists from Zurig Chusum Institute, Bhutan's most important art school focusing on the 13 traditional arts and crafts. Specialising in traditional Bhutanese painting, the members have opened a very successful painting studio known as **High-Quality Painting** - an exclusive art gallery and studio that offers an opportunity to those keen to learn about traditional Bhutanese art. The founder himself is a keen artist who is also available to share the history of Bhutanese art as well as its significance in the everyday lives of local folks.

High-quality painting has done work on temples and sacred scrolls. The art studio specialises in traditional Bhutanese painting, traditional mask making and other traditional mediums. The paintings are based on strict iconographic rules and Buddhist texts.

A private painting session with one of the artists can be arranged either at the lodge or in his artist's studio, for guests wanting to learn traditional Bhutanese painting.



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 five lodges offer a gastronomic glimpse into 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.



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 mountainsides 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 safety and convenience, we 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 Dho Gaja Lam Temple

The blessing for long life is called *Tshewang* and is a ritual blessing to extend the astrologer's 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 Dho Gaja Lam Temple, 15-minute drive from the lodge founded by Drubthop Naggi Rinchen (1384-1468), an important master in the Kalachakra lineage. Originally from Bengal, He was one of the last great Indian Scholars to visit Bhutan. It is said that he liberated his mother who was born as a frog under a Hugh rock by splitting the boulder with lightning through his power. The rock is visible even today and is considered sacred and wish-fulfilling.



Morning Yoga

For a morning of grounding and balance, join our experienced yoga buddy for an energising complimentary 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 the 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 toward your ability level and/or yoga style of interest.



Grounding Face Ritual

Developed to promote emotional healing and inner peace and in return bring the body and mind to a state of harmony, Amankora Punakha's Grounding Face Ritual incorporates 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 acupuncture using heated Himalayan salt poultices leaves the skin radiant. The treatment ends with a Peruvian black mud together with an 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 Galem House, we recommend the Mo Chu (Female River) that flows below the lodge. On the other hand, the Pho Chu (Male River), is for the more adventurous who wish to tackle some of the kingdom's 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 five lodges offer a gastronomic glimpse into 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

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 are looking for a more romantic experience, we recommend the BBQ dinner with a 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 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 that you are interested in learning. 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 walking 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 rooftop, 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-levelled 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 your hike 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 ensure 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 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 parties 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.



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.



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 “o” 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 toward 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 sunset.



Culinary Journeys

With Gangtey's homegrown potatoes, chillies and organic seasonal crops on focus, the culinary journeys in all five lodges offer a gastronomic glimpse into 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. Amid all the spuds, we have mounted a *bukhari*, the traditional wood-burning oven to make the shed comfortably warm. With Bhutanese wooden furniture and 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.

A 10-minute walk from the lodge on a 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 several 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 unique. Our names are given by Lamas and Rinpoches from the temples. Bhutanese names have nothing to do with caste and we don't have a family name. The first names for both males and females will be the same. It is only from the second name that we can distinguish between the 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.

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.



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 the 8th Century, when Ugyen Guru Rimpoche visited Bumthang at the 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 the 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.



Talk about 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 giving you a lecture, Sherab can also take you on an early-morning bird-watching tour around the valley or a hike through the forest to forage the local flora and fauna.



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

Spend a few hours visiting the Beekeeping Centre where they produce honey from beehives in areas surrounded by golden clovers, apples 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 to 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 taking up 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.

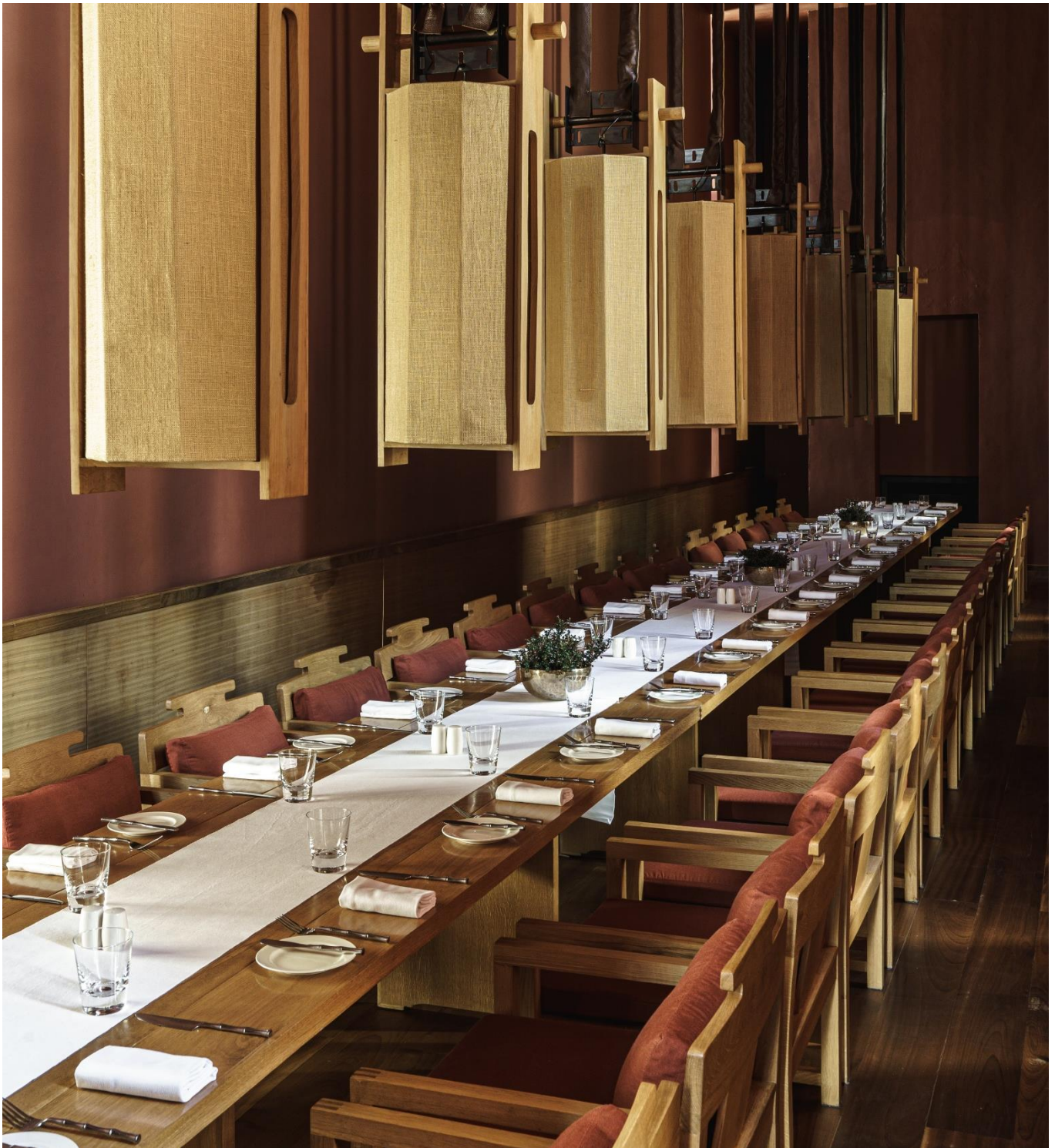


Relax with a Bumthang Zen Massage

A balance between dynamic stretches and pressure point stimulation, followed by soothing oil massage techniques to enhance blood circulation, release toxins and increase joint flexibility.

Benefits

- Reduces chronic pain and 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 five lodges offer a gastronomic glimpse into 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 and 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 *Weissbier*. 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 concludes 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 the 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 of experience. If you would like to learn how to master this art in authentic surroundings, we will gladly arrange for a lesson in a local farmhouse while you enjoy tea and other snacks.

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