

## A Unique Cycling Adventure Through Bhutan with Dharma Adventures & Greenrock



A bespoke cycling tour of Bhutan over 12 days (excluding your time to travel to and from Bhutan) on tarmac and MTB trails taking in high passes and Bhutan's beautiful scenery, architecture and culture.

The rugged, mountainous landscape of Bhutan lends itself well to both road cycling and mountain biking. With better roads replacing the old and with the increasing number of off-road trails, biking is the perfect way to experience the country, people and the Bhutanese environment.

Traffic on the roads is still relatively very light. Biking trails mostly meander through small towns, villages and rural areas; it's just you, your bike and the natural scenery.

Tours are fully supported by follow vehicles and support riders and we will be joined by the author of the guidebook 'Himalaya by Bike'.

## Itinerary Overview

Day	Destination	Accommodation
1	Arrive and staying Paro	Hotel
2	Paro local rides and acclimatisation	Hotel
3	Paro to Haa via Chelila pass	Farmhouse
4	Haa to Thimphu	Hotel
5	Thimphu to Punakha	Hotel
6	Punakha- ride the trails	Hotel
7	Punakha to Khotokha	Farmhouse or Camp
8	Khotokha to Gangtey	Hotel
9	Gangtey local riding	Hotel
10	Gangtey to Wangdue via Dangchu	Farmhouse or hotel
11	Wangdue to Thimphu end ride	Hotel
12	Departure	

### **Dates:**

2022 - Monday 21st November to Friday 2nd December

2023 - Monday 10th to 21st April

**Overall Distance (approx) - 600 km +**

**Detailed Itinerary** - (It is the individuals responsibility to reach Paro on the arrival date, so you must include your international flights times and transfers in your plans.)

**Day 1.**

**Paro arrival**

**Altitude: 2,300 m**



*Bhutan's National Museum in Paro*

Paro valley extends from the confluence of the Paro Chhu and the Wang Chhu rivers at Chuzom up to Mt. Jomolhari at the Tibetan border to the North. This picturesque region is one of the widest valleys in the kingdom and is covered in fertile rice fields and has a beautiful, crystalline river meandering down the valley.

Accentuating the natural beauty are the elegant, traditional-style houses that dot the valley and surrounding hills. One of the distinctive features of Paro town is that it is situated in a flat valley bottom and follows a grid-like pattern. The central plaza is adorned with a large prayer wheel and a small amphitheater where events are held throughout the year.

There are over 155 temples and monasteries in the area, some dating as far back as the 14th century. The country's first and only international airport is also located in the region. Its close proximity to the historical and religious sites in the region has resulted in the development of an array of luxurious, high-end tourist resorts making Paro one of the main destinations for visitors.



*Sangchen Choekor Shedra (Buddhist college) in Paro*

**Day 2.**

**Paro Local rides**

**Elevation gain approx.:500 m**



*Monks also at Choekor Shedra (Buddhist college) in Paro*

Local riding and acclimatisation ride around the valley. A good day to start riding around the Paro valley with its many farm roads around the valley.

At night you'll see the Sangchen Choekor Shedra spot lit up high on the top of a hill on the north side of the valley. The Shedra, a Buddhist college, is home to about 150 monks, studying for six years before they move on to Tango Monastery upon graduation. It's worth a visit mainly for the fine views from the switchbacking drive up.

To get here you'll have to ride 12 km up the north bank road and then 7 km up the switch backing mountainside road.

### **Day 3.**

**Paro – Haa via Chelila pass at 4,000 m**

**Elevation gain approx - 1,700 m**



*View from Chele La pass*

Today you will ride to the Chelila Pass. This is a 32 km uphill on an excellent road with very little traffic. The route travels through pristine alpine forests with magnificent mountain views. Reaching the pass, you will enjoy spectacular views of Mt. Jhomolhari weather permitting. A 29 km descent to the Haa Valley which borders Tibet follows. The Haa Valley is a unique area of Bhutan. In the evening, you will tour sites by either vehicle or bike.

Haa is one of the least developed and remote valley in western Bhutan though it is just about three hours drive away from the Paro International Airport. Bordering with Tibet and Sikkim, the picturesque and scenic Haa valley is often underrated and left out from the usual tourist itinerary. As the ride heads down from the Chelela Pass, you will notice

the air suddenly begins to feel fresher and clearer and the scattered settlements will indeed evoke a medieval Bhutan of a valley suspended in time and space.

Located at an altitude of 2,670 meters above the sea level, Haa is unmistakably a quiet and peaceful high altitude paradise of Bhutan least visited by tourists. As the quaint valley falls into darkness you will be treated to a stunning display of nature's own firework in the night sky (could permitting).

#### **Day 4.**

##### **Haa to Thimphu**

**Distance approx - 115 km**

Today the ride is through the many villages of Haa on the small narrow highway, traffic is sparse. The vegetation is mostly pine and cedar with panoramic views of the Himalayas and rolling hills.

The rides are mostly through similar gradient at heights of 2,300 m with occasional ascents and descents.

Thimphu, the Bhutanese capital (2,320 m), is situated on a broad green valley surrounded by terraced rice fields. Thimphu has a population about 90,000 people.



*Dzong in Thimphu*

#### **Day 5.**

##### **Thimphu to Punakha valley via the Dochula pass. 3,050 m**

**Distance approx - 80 km**

Elevation gain approx - 750 m



*Dzong in Punakha & Temples on Dochu La pass below*

We will start early to ride to the Dochula pass at 3,050 m. weather permitting we have great views of the eastern Himalayan range, from here we can see the 7,500 m peaks and the 108 stupas. The elevation gain from Thimphu to the pass is about 750 m in

about 24 km. This pass offers panoramic views of the Himalayan mountain ranges, as we descend along a series of hairpin bends to the fertile valley of Punakha (1,350 meters). Before proceeding further to Punakha town we will hike up to the Chimi Lhakhang (temple) on a small hilltop.



## **Day 6.**

### **Ride the Sewla Trail**

**Distance approx - 50 km**

SEWLA Trail in Punakha is one of our favourites! 10 kms of flowing single track on the famous ridge of Punakha that looks like a sleeping elephant. The trail winds through beautiful Rhododendron and Oak forests and down to Chirpine vegetation with some amazing views of the valley. The ride will be extended with a spectacular cross-country ride around the scenic Punakha valley.



*Sewla trail in Punakha*

## **Day 7.**

### **Ride from Punakha to Khotokha Valley (3,100 m)**

**Distance approx - 50 km**

**Elevation gain approx - 1,850 m**

Get right on the highway this morning and bike eastward for 16 kilometers to Chuzomza. From here the road diversion starts towards the Khotokha valley riding through the Jigme Dorji National park, the road is new and an uphill climb towards Tashila pass approx. 3200 m . Throughout this ride you are rewarded by panoramic views of villages and ride through rich nature. From the pass its about 100 m descent to the Khotokha valley.



### **Day 8.**

**Khotokha to Gogona 3200m to Gangtey valley. 2,800 m**

**Distance approx - 40 km**

**Elevation gain approx - 600 m**

Ride the offroad track to Gogona valley and then to the Gangtey valley. Ride from Khotokha to Gogona will involve reaching the high pass of Shobjula at 3,700 metres. From then its downhill on the dirtroad until you reach Gogona and again another pass to reach the broad Phobjikha valley.

### **Day 9.**

**Gangtey Local riding**



*Lobesa village in Wangdi*

Gangtey is a large glacial valley and there are lots of trails to explore and ride around the valley followed by the traditional Bhutanese hot stone bath in the evening.

**Day 10.**

**Gangtey to Wangdue via Samtengang and Dangchu village**

**Distance approx - 90 km.**

**Elevation gain approx - 500 m**



*View of Gangtey valley*

Today we ride some part on the highway and head back west. From there we ride for about 19 km towards the village of Dangchu. And then hit the ancient trails prior to when highways were mule tracks, now its perfect for cycling but certain places we might have to dismount and carry our bikes.

From there we ride to the village of Reda Goenpa and the head to Raja wo, and finally to Samtengang. The rides are all trails and farm roads – gravel until we reach Samtengang. The back drop are the Black Mountain ranges and the villages of Sha in Wanmgduephodrang one of the largest districts in Bhutan.

## Day 11.

Chudzomsa at Wangduephodrang to Thimphu

Distance approx - 80 km



*The Lateral Highway*

Ride on the lateral highway for about 20 km and on this highway from Messina to Thimphu is also a part of the Dragon's Fury race.

Dragon's Fury race was inaugurated in the year 2015 to celebrate the 60th Birth Anniversary of His Majesty, the 4th Druk Gyalpo (King), and therefore the distance of the race is 60 kms. The race starts in Messina at an altitude of 1,410 m, travels up to Dochula at 3,150 m, then is all downhill until the Changlingmethnag parking finish.

- Farewell dinner.

## Day 12.

Departure

- 45 minute transfer to the airport.



*Kinley from Dharma Adventures and his friends in front of Dobji Dzong in Paro*

**What is Included:**

- *Your visa for Bhutan*
- *Titanium 29" hardtail mountain bike*
- *All transfers*
- *Guides throughout your trip*
- *All accommodation - whether hotel or camping*
- *All meals*
- *Full support on the road - mechanical and medical*

**What is not Included:**

- *Flights to Bhutan*
- *Any meals or beverages over and above what is included*
- *Travel insurance*
- *Tips for your guides*

**FAQ**

- **How do I get to Paro?**

International flights via Bangkok, Kolkata, Delhi, Mumbai, Bangkok and Singapore need to be taken in order to transfer to either Drukair or Bhutan Airlines as these are the only carriers who fly into Paro.

- ***What type of bike is the loan bike and are there any costs involved?***

The loan bikes are titanium hardtail mountain bikes that run 29" wheels with high quality forks and Shimano XT group sets or similar.

The bikes have been designed and made by Greenrock for adventure cycling.

The cost of the loan bike is included in the trip, but there will be a refundable deposit payable for any damage to the bikes.

- ***Do I need to bring cycling kit for the loan bikes?***

Yes - helmet, pedals and shoes. Plus a saddle if you prefer to use your own.

- ***Can I bring my own bike?***

Yes - but you will need to pay all the associated costs for its carriage and we will need details of your group set and wheels to ensure we have parts for it.

- ***What is the plan with different road surfaces?***

We will change tyres on the loan bikes from a narrower to wider profile depending on the surface of the road/trail.

- ***Will I be provided with further information when I sign up?***

Yes - a detailed kit list and further information on your trip will be provided along with names, support emails and phone numbers so that you can discuss every aspect of the adventure.

- ***Cycling at altitude, will I be okay?***

We have many years experience looking after people at altitude so are aware of the signs and will be carrying what we need to deal with any cases.

Some initial acclimatisation has been built into the trip and the itinerary is designed so you descend after a long climb which is the ultimate cure for altitude sickness.

Over and above this we have dedicated support vehicles which can move people if needed.

- ***How experienced are the guides?***

The Bhutanese guides are very experienced and know their country extremely well.

They are also very fit and friendly, so you will be in good hands.

There will also be a member or two from Greenrock and the author of Himalaya by Bike on the trip for further support both to the cyclists and the Bhutanese guides.

- ***What is Bhutanese food like?***

The most distinctive characteristic of Bhutanese cuisine is its spiciness. Chillies are an essential part of nearly every dish and are considered so important that most Bhutanese people would not enjoy a meal that was not spicy.

Rice forms the main body of most Bhutanese meals. It is accompanied by one or two side dishes consisting of meat or vegetables. Pork, beef and chicken are the meats that are eaten most often. Vegetables commonly eaten include Spinach, pumpkins, turnips, radishes, tomatoes, river weed, onions and green beans. Grains such as rice, buckwheat and barley are also cultivated in various regions of the country depending on the local climate.

- ***What will the weather be like?***

The best time of year to visit Bhutan is either in the spring or the autumn to avoid monsoon weather and the winter.

Our trips are based in October and April and you can expect crisp sunny days with a temperature range from 7 to 26 degrees C in the autumn and 4 to 26 degrees C in the spring depending on where you are in the country.

As we will be cycling some high passes it could be much colder at times.

- ***What inoculations will I need?***

- A. Full Covid 19 vaccinations including a booster from a recognised brand such as Pfizer or Astra Zeneca.
- B. Hepatitis A
- C. Tetanus
- D. Typhoid

- ***Can I extend my trip?***

Yes, just let us know what you would like to do and we can quote for it.

- ***Can I have a single room/tent?***

Yes - but there will be a single supplement to pay.

- ***Who organises my visa?***

Dhrama Adventures will process your visa through the Tourism Council of Bhutan once your trip has been paid for.

- ***What medical and mechanical support will there be?***

There will be full on the road medical and mechanical support via trained guides and well equipped First Aid and tool kits.

- ***What will the support crew consist of?***

Depending on the group size there will be a minimum of 8 support crew who will drive vehicles and cycle.

Again depending on the group size there will be a minimum of 3 vehicles racked for bikes.

Amongst the support crew will be experienced bike mechanics and advanced First Aiders.

- ***How fit do I need to be?***

You need a good level of fitness and be used to spending all day on your bike several days in a row.

There is the option on this trip to jump in the van if you are suffering. The ride is not a race and the support crew will do their best to cover the needs and ability of the whole group.

- ***Will I experience Bhutan's culture?***

Yes - there is a lot of cultural value built into this itinerary so you really experience as much of the country as possible.

If there are some specific things you would like to see while we are en-route we will do our best to include them.

- ***What is the minimum and maximum group size?***

The minimum group size is 5 and the maximum 20.

- ***Who are Dharma Adventures & Greenrock?***

Dharma and Greenrock have been working together for years and are good friends as well as colleagues.

Dharma is an officially registered Bhutanese tour operator, which you have to be to run tours in Bhutan of any description. They have been in business since 1991 and are trusted throughout the Himalayas, with an enormous amount of experience in adventure tourism in particular - <https://www.dharmaadventures.com/>

Greenrock have been designing and leading bike rides around the world from the early 1990's before incorporating in the UK in 2000. Much of this has been at altitude in the Himalayas and the Andes and we are well versed in all the areas of this type of adventure cycling. Due to the pandemic we changed our business to the design and manufacture of titanium adventure bikes, which will be offered on this trip. We work in partnership with Dharma exclusively in Bhutan now as we believe this is the best country to experience the Himalayas and have an extraordinary travelling experience - <https://www.greenrockadventure.com/>

One of Greenrock's directors is also the author of 'Himalaya by Bike' and she will be on this trip to help support everyone and share her extensive knowledge of the Himalayas - <https://www.himalayabybike.com/>

- ***Is my money safe when I pay for this trip?***

Yes - payment for your trip stays in the National Bank of Bhutan until after your trip has finished and is not released to the tour operator until then.

The trip will be run by Dharma Adventures who are an official registered Bhutanese tour operator.

**Cost**

*£4,450.00 (land only) excluding international flights*

Please contact us via email with your:

- Name
- Age
- Email and phone
- Where you are based

[manager.bhutan@dharmadmc.com](mailto:manager.bhutan@dharmadmc.com)

Or

[joe@greenrockadventure.com](mailto:joe@greenrockadventure.com)