

# Bike Across Bhutan



## a 16 day Himalayan Bike Tour

Shangri-la, a land of secluded valleys and peaceful villages, hidden by towering snow capped mountains, ruled by a wise king and untouched by the outside world for centuries. Hollywood has presented this fantasy to us many a time, but this fabled land really does exist outside the world of Hollywood, in the Kingdom of Bhutan. Bhutan will enchant you with its wondrous landscapes, it's friendly peoples, it's delightful culture unscarred by outside influences. It's a country where the king led his people towards a greater GNH (Gross National Happiness) not a GNP.

Long isolated from the rest of the modern world by the Himalayas, the country preserves its traditions and values. Traditional dzongs (fortress like monasteries) dot the countryside, handing down centuries of Buddhist traditions. Thick primeval forests still cover much of the countryside, broken up by cascading rivers and small villages are surrounded by rice paddies and fruit orchards. Our ride through the Kingdom takes in all of this.

### Day by Day Itinerary

#### Day 1: Arrive Samdrupjongkhar from Guwahati

Be met at the Guwahati Airport by our Bhutanese team and transfer to Samdrupjongkhar. Your drive from the airport will take you through the city of Guwahati and the Brahmaputra river through the Assam tea gardens and then into the foothills of Bhutan as you approach Samdrupjongkhar, the Bhutanese border town. Evening assemble the bikes. Welcome dinner and overnight at hotel.

#### Day 2: Samdrupjongkhar – Morong

After leisurely breakfast depart your hotel and leave the foothills as you ascend through dense forest with an abundance of teak and bamboo. In about 4km you will come to a Bhutanese Frontier Check Point and then you bike pass the village of Dewathang where there is Bhutanese army camp. Lunch will be served on route. You will ride through temperate vegetation. Evening at leisure and overnight at fully catered camp.

#### Day 3: Morong – Khaling

Today you will bike some of the ridge leading to highest point of the day at 2450 meters after Wamrong village (2000m) where there is a check post. Unlike Western Bhutan where the road

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goes over passes between one valley and the next, the road here follows ridges almost the whole way and is marked throughout with stone choetens (Buddhist Monuments). You will campsite offers a wonderful sunset over the ridges of southeastern Bhutan. Overnight at camp above the road.

### **Day 4: Khaling – Tashigang**

Tashigang is the most easterly point of our journey. Today you will ride through the quaint village of Khaling, which is famous for its weaving and handicraft. Altitude of Khaling at 2100m. After Khaling you will ascend to Yonphula pass at 2450 m the first of the two minor passes before finally descending on to Tashigang via Kangluang college through rice paddies and bamboo plants. Overnight at hotel .

### **Day 5: Tashigang – Mongar**

After breakfast you ride pass Tashigang Dzong and then descend to Chazam before you turn left to enjoy a 30 km pleasant ride along the Gamri Chu to Sheri Chu before your climb to Yadi village (1500m) and then continue your climb through cornfields and banana groves to Korila Pass (2450 m). Picnic unch will be served on route. After the Korila pass you will then descend to Mongar. Evening at leisure. Overnight at hotel.

### **Day 6: Mongar to Ura**

Morning you will bike downhill from Mongar town to Lingmethang at 600 meters. You will then start your ascend to Thrumshingla Pass (3750 m). The scenery is stunning as you pass through dense forest of conifer and rhododendron. The climb is actually split into two parts, as there is a minor pass on after the Thrumshing La. The pass marks the boundary between Central and Eastern Bhutan and is the last of your high altitude climbs. Lunch will be served on route. The climb to the pass must rank as one of the most enjoyable and breathtakingly beautiful descents in the biking world. The climb is through dark conifers, then mixture of deciduous and conifer woodland after leaving the semi-tropical zone at an altitude of 1800 meters. Bamboo and an array of rare plant life line the sides of the road. The road between Sengor and Namling has the reputation for being the most hair-raising section of the road across Bhutan, but is just perfect for mountain bikes. Overnight at hotel.

### **Day 7: Ura – Bumthang (Jakar)**

You will do about 10 km downhill before your climb to Sheytang-La Pass (3450m) and before

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your final descend to Jakar. The Ura valley, on the far side, is the highest of the Bumthang valleys. Extensive sheep pastures line the road and just before the pass there is a panorama of the mountains including Mt. Gangkar Punsum (7219 m). Lunch will be served on route. Evening at leisure. Overnight at hotel.

### **Day 8: Bumthang**

Morning you will begin your day with visit to Jambay Lhakhang. It's one of the 108 temples built in a day across the Himalayas by King Songtsen Goenpo who was believed to be the reincarnation Buddha of compassion. Out of 108, two are in Bhutan - Kyichu Lhakhang. The Jo Khang of the Potala Palace is one of the 108 temples built to pin down an ogress who was causing hindrance to the spread of Buddhism in the Himalayas. Next you will visit the Kurjey Lhakhang, which consists of three temples. The first one is built on the site of a cave containing a rock with the body imprint of Guru Rinpoche and is considered the most holy. The first king of Bhutan, His Late Majesty Ugyen Wangchuck, built the second one. The third temple is the newest of all the three and is built by the present Royal Queen Mother, Her Majesty Azhi Kesang Choeden Wangchuck. These temples are surrounded by 108 small choetens (Buddhist Stupas) forming a retaining wall, symbolic of each joint of the human body. Back to hotel for lunch. After lunch you will explore the other side of Chamkhar valley on foot with visits to 15th Century Tamzhing Lhakhang and you will wrap up your day with visit to the Jakar Dzong. Evening at leisure. Overnight at Guest House.

### **Day 9: Bumthang - Trongsa**

In approximately about 10 miles after Jakar you will reach Chumey village , where you will stop to see the woollen hand woven textiles called 'Yathra' - the speciality of Bumthang valley. Then you will start your ascend to Yotongla Pass (3400m). After the pass descend to Trongsa. Its another beautiful ride. Check in and lunch at hotel. After lunch visit the Ta-Dzong (Watch Tower) in Trongsa, which once guarded the Trongsa Dzong from internal rebellions. The Ta Dzong stands impressive and provides an insight into historical significance of Trongsa in the country's history. It was renovated and converted into Musuem to showcase Bhutan rich cultural heritage and history. Evening at leisure. Overnight lodge/guest house.

### **Day 10: Trongsa - Gangtey Goenpa**

After breakfast you will do the easy to moderate biking to Chendebji Choeten where you will have lunch. Your climb to Pelela Pass (3300m) begins after Chendebji Choeten. Pelela Pass is the

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traditional boundary between the Western and Central Bhutan. On clear days you will enjoy the views of the Mt. Jhomolhari (7314m) rising in western Bhutan. After the pass 9 miles downhill to the interjection where you will take left and then uphill to the Lawala Pass (3400m). Then its all the downhill your hotel. Evening at leisure. Overnight at hotel/Guesthouse.

### **Day 11: Gangtey Goenpa – Punakha**

After breakfast you will tackle the short 1000 feet of ascent back to the small pass. From the pass it's downhill to the main road from where you will turn left and continue your descend to Nobding village. Lunch will be served on route. After lunch continue to Punakha through the rice paddies and broadleaf forests. From Tikke-Zam you will follow the Dangchu to Wangdue and then from Wangdue continue on to Punakha along the Punatshang Chu (River). Overnight at hotel.

### **Day 12: Punakha – Thimphu**

After breakfast you will tackle the 24 mile climb to Dochula Pass (3100m). The views from the pass are magnificent, offering a panorama of the eastern Himalayas. Hot lunch at the Cafeteria at the pass. Lunch will be served on route. Today's climb is through the semi-tropical and leafy temperate forests with abundant orange trees, bananas and bamboos. After Dochula Pass, you will be rewarded with 14 mile descent to Simtokha through forest of rhododendron, oak, pine and apple orchards. From Simtokha you have another 7 km to Thimphu. Evening explore Thimphu town. Overnight at hotel.

### **Day 13: Thimphu – Haa**

Back on the bikes today for a delightful ride downstream along the Thimphu Chhu (river). When we reach the confluence with the Paro River, we will switch to a small road on the other side of the Thimphu River and start the ride into Haa Valley. This hidden valley was only recently opened to tourism and offers pristine landscapes and quiet village during a dramatic ride along the Wang Chu River. The road into Haa climbs slowly through quaint villages and thick conifer forests before opening into a valley dotted with fields of millet, barley, potatoes and wheat, where the farmhouses are adorned with intricately painted cornices and frames. 115kms. Overnight at hotel

### **Day 14: Haa – Paro**

One last climb today, as we cross over to the Paro Valley. On clear days you can enjoy the

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stunning view of Mt. Jhomolhari (7314m) and Taktshang Goenpa (Tiger's Nest). Its a 26 km ascent to Chelela Pass through pine forests and alpine scenery, rewarded by a 35 km descent to Paro town. Lunch at the hotel. Upon checking into our hotel, we'll set out to explore town a bit before dinner. 61 kms, Pass: Chelela (3988 m). Overnight at hotel.

### **Day 15: Paro (Day Hike to Tiger's Nest Monastery)**

Day Excursion to Taktshang Monastery literally known as Tiger's Nest. This is one of Bhutan's most sacred places, and an important pilgrimage destination. You will walk along a trail that slowly rises above the valley, taking you through fields and past four large prayer wheels turned by a stream. Continuing across an open meadow, you hike up a section of trail to a ridge where prayer flags rustle in the wind next to a massive prayer wheel. Just beyond is the Taktshang Cafeteria at 9,200 feet, where you stop to enjoy a hot drink and the striking views of the Monastery across the valley. Depending on your energy level, you may relax in the pleasant atmosphere of the cafeteria until lunch or continue on for a mile of steep climbing to another dramatic viewpoint. You return to the cafeteria for a delicious buffet of typical Bhutanese food. You may want to try Emadatsi (A chili cheese dish), vegetables with cheese sauce and other dishes. Overnight in Paro at hotel.

### **Day 16: Departure**

Early morning breakfast and drive to the airport for departure. Your guide team will help with check-in formalities and bid you farewell.

### **Prices:**

Please check our website for the currently available dates and the applicable pricing.

<https://pedalers.travel/bhutan-cycling-tours-himalaya-bicycle-tour-bike-across-bhutan.htm>

### **At Your Request:**

Private departures can be arranged pretty much year round. December and January can see snow at the higher altitudes, but still good cycling weather in the valleys. The rest of the year is great for riding, with more chance of rain during the summer months. Get your wheels rolling and request your At Your Request date today. Plan a trip for your bike club or corporate incentive, contact us for more details.

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## Lodging:

Hotels, Inns & Resorts, 2 nights camping

## What's Included:

- 13 nights Accommodation in the area's better hotels (double occupancy)
- 2 nights camping (camping gear provided and set up)
- All meals from Dinner on Day 1 until Breakfast on Day 16
- Water, sodas and beer included at dinner
- Service of bilingual Team Pedalers Guide(s)
- Full Van Support
- Sightseeing and cultural activities
- Visa fees and airport taxes
- Airport pick up & drop off

## Meeting & Flights:

Arrive at Guwahati Airport on Day 1

Departure Paro Airport in the morning on Day 16

Druk Air is the only carrier serving Bhutan, with flights from Paro to Bangkok, Delhi, Kathmandu and Calcutta.

Flights to Guwahati are available from Bangkok on Druk Air or from Delhi and Calcutta on various India airlines.

## Route Conditions:

The entire ride is on paved roads, narrow but with little or no traffic. Pavement is a bit coarse and suitable for touring, sport road and also performance road bikes with wider tires (25 or wider). Terrain is quite mountainous and hilly, most days involve a moderate to long alpine style climb.

## Visas & Travel Documents:

Passports are required for all guests. Your passport should have at least 6 months validity past your

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intended travel dates. Visas fees and processing for your Bhutan visa are included within the tour price. Visas are sent via email prior to departure.

Visas necessary for transiting India must be obtained by guests from the nearest India Embassy or Consulate General, Pedalers can not obtain these visa on your behalf.

## **Payment Dates & Cancellations:**

This tour has a 60 Day Prior to Departure deadline for balance due and cancellations. All bookings must be paid in full on or before 60 days prior to departure (not the 45 day deadline listed in our general booking conditions). In addition the cancellation deadline for receiving a partial refund or transferring to another date is also 60 days prior to departure. Festival departure dates require an advance payment of 20% at least 120 days prior to departure to cover advance purchase of airfare (this is in addition to the standard deposit paid at the time of booking).