



# CULTURE OF BHUTAN

COMO UMA PARO: FIVE NIGHTS

This itinerary allows you to get fully acquainted with Bhutanese life at a relaxed pace. In five nights, you will both traverse the wilderness and explore the hub of their government, religion and commerce. After days exploring dzongs, visiting national museums, walking through farmlands and soaking in mountain views, return to COMO Uma Paro – where soothing wellness treatments and elegant accommodation await you.

Nyamai Zam Footbridge



The National Museum of Bhutan



## KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- Visit the Taktsang ‘Tiger’s Nest’ Monastery, one of Bhutan’s architectural highlights
- Drive to the highest pass in Bhutan – Chele La – to enjoy views of Mount Jhomolhari (7,314m) and make a mountain bike descent
- Be privy to the rich collection at Ta Dzong, the national museum of Bhutan
- Pay respects at Kyichu Lhakhang, one of the oldest temples in Bhutan
- Spend a day exploring the bustling capital Thimphu, including major attractions like the Buddha Dordenma, the National Memorial chorten and more
- Visit the Rinpung Dzong, where the Monastic body and government office of Paro is housed



COMO Uma Paro's ornate entrance



A thrilling mountain bike ride in the Bhutanese wilderness

## CULTURAL NOTES

- If the air seems fresher in Bhutan, it's because it is. Bhutan is the first country in the world that has environmental protection built into its constitution. It's stipulated that at least 60 per cent of the nation must remain under forest cover at all times, making Bhutan the world's only carbon-negative nation, as it absorbs more carbon dioxide than it produces.
- Forgetting birthdays doesn't happen in Bhutan, as the majority of citizens turn one year older on New Year's Day. It originally began as most people did not record their own birth date due to illiteracy, and was maintained as it became easier to share a communal celebration of the year rather than a month and day.
- Bhutan's borders were not opened until 1974, when international media was allowed to cover the coronation of its former king. Previously, Bhutan had been in self-imposed isolation to protect their Buddhist culture and unspoiled landscape from globalisation. It also only lifted a ban on television and the internet in 1999.
- Contrary to inheritance law almost anywhere else, Bhutanese families pass property onto the eldest daughter rather than the son. After marriage, a man moves into the home of his new wife rather than the other way around.



Paddy field in Paro Valley



A traditional Bhutanese spread

- Ignoring global metrics of economic growth, Bhutan developed the concept of Gross National Happiness (GNH). It is often ranked as the happiest nation in South Asia and among the top ten happiest places in the world.
- Spice-lovers rejoice and the spice-sensitive beware – chilli is not a condiment in Bhutan, but an essential vegetable. Their cuisine is heavily spiced by default, and it is said that locals will not eat a dish until it is spicy enough.
- Bhutan's capital, Thimphu, does not have a single traffic light. People drive slowly and carefully through the precarious roads and it hasn't failed them yet. Local officials tried to install a light but it roused such public outcry that it was quickly removed and a traffic officer assigned to the intersection instead.
- Only eight pilots have been trained to navigate landing in Paro Airport. Situated in a deep valley, flying to Paro involves avoiding high peaks and strong winds in specific meteorological conditions. The flight itself is an exclusive privilege.
- You will likely see a number of colourful phallus drawings on the walls of traditional houses in Bhutan. These aren't graffiti, but rather a tradition that symbolises good luck and fertility. Phalluses are believed to ward off evil spirits and are often used in place of a scarecrow.



A temple mural amidst Bhutanese red chillies



A storefront in Paro Town

## DAY-BY-DAY SCHEDULE

This itinerary is customisable. Please speak to us about your needs and requirements and we will do our utmost to accommodate you.

### **DAY 1 ARRIVAL, CHECK-IN AND LOCAL SIGHTSEEING**

Upon arrival you will be greeted by staff from COMO Uma Paro before embarking on the 10-minute transfer to the property.

After checking in and spending some time settling into your new surroundings, we will take you on the first foray into the Himalayan kingdom, with sightseeing in Paro town and a temple visit.

This afternoon trip allows you to acclimatise to the rarefied air at this altitude as well as the chance to get to know your guide.

Overnight: COMO Uma Paro

**DAY 2**  
**WALK TO ZURIG DZONG, RINPUNG DZONG, TA DZONG, PARO TOWN, KYICHU LHAKHANG AND DRUKGYEL DZONG**

**Morning**

Wind through pine forests high above COMO Uma Paro to the pretty grounds of the fortress-like monastery of **Zurig Dzong**. Traverse across to **Ta Dzong**, home to Bhutan's **National Museum**, with magnificent views over Paro, then on down to **Rinpung Dzong** (Fortress on a Heap of Jewels).

The trail then leads across the **Paro Chhu river** via the traditional covered bridge **Nyamai Zam**, past the main archery ground, **Ugyen Pelri Palace**, and into Paro town.

**Afternoon**

Driving a few kilometres north of Paro, we pay our respects at **Kyichu Lhakhang**, one of the oldest temples in Bhutan with its magical orange tree that bears fruit all year round. Time permitting, we drive further up the valley to **Drukgyel Dzong**, built in 1648 by Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal to control the northern route to Tibet.

If you choose to, your guide will also arrange to bring you to a nearby monastery for a butter lamp ceremony – as a spiritual blessing and welcome to the kingdom – before you return to our resort. During this symbolic Buddhist ceremony, you will witness monks lighting lamps filled with ghee, in place of the originally used yak butter. The ceremony is meant to dispel ignorance, celebrate the fluidity of life and acknowledge the interdependency of nature.

Duration: 5 to 7 hours  
(subject to time spent in National Museum and Paro)  
Difficulty: Easy to moderate  
Overnight: COMO Uma Paro

Top: Rinpung Dzong  
Bottom: Bhutanese prayer flags





Red-robed Buddhist monks, a familiar sight throughout your trip in Bhutan

A religious dance performance in Thimphu



### DAY 3

#### THIMPHU DAY OUT

We've curated a list of places to see and things to do in Thimphu, the capital of Bhutan – spend your day with what interests you.

- **Thimphu's markets** take place on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays. Spend a few hours wandering through the colourful stalls before heading into town for more exploration.
- The **Kuensel Phodrang** ruins were the palace of Sherab Wangchuck – the thirteenth Druk Desi – and overlooks the southern side of Thimphu. Today, they are home to the Buddha Dordenma, a gargantuan 51.5m statue of Buddha Shakyamuni. It is made out of bronze, gilded in gold and one of the largest statues of Buddha in the world.

- Witness rows of young Bhutanese students at **Zorig Chusum (National Institute of 13 Arts and Crafts)** learning the national crafts of carpentry, masonry, carving, painting, sculpture, casting, weaving, bamboo work, embroidery, woodturning, papermaking, blacksmithing, and gold and silver crafting.
- Stop at the **Royal Takin Preserve**, home of Bhutan's national animal, and meet the Takin - a strange looking animal which has been described as looking like a beesting moose.
- With both sentimental and political value, the **National Memorial Chorten** is a monument to world peace and prosperity was erected by the Royal Family and Cabinet to honour the wishes of Bhutan's third king, H.M. Jigme Dorji Wangchuck, who passed away before it could be completed.

- The original building of **Trashi Chhoe Dzong**, called the 'Fortress of the Glorious Religion' was built in 1641 and rebuilt in the 1960s. It is now home to government ministries, His Majesty's secretariat and the central monastic body. Entrance is granted only after 5.00pm.
- For those with an eye for design and a passion for ceremony, peruse the **Royal Textile Academy Museum's** royal collection, comprising of the Raven Crown (Bhutan's royal wedding crown) and its accompanying royal wedding dresses. You can also learn more about the national art of weaving and its changing styles of 'Gho' and 'Kira', demonstrated by weavers on traditional looms.
- Venture back in time as you explore the **Folk Heritage Museum**; this religious museum is a replica of a traditional Bhutanese house with care taken to detail it exactly as it would have looked a century ago.

Thimphu sprawls up the wooded, western hillside of the **Wang Chhu River**, and is one hour away from COMO Uma Paro by car. It is important to note that museum, monastery, temple and Dzong opening times vary with national holidays, auspicious ceremonies and events such as Royal Family visits.

Duration: 7 to 10 hours

Difficulty: Easy (guided with picnic or sample typical Bhutanese fare in local restaurant)

Overnight: COMO Uma Paro

Bhutanese schoolchildren on their way home



## DAY 4

### CHELE LA PASS AND HIKE TO KILA NUNNERY SHEDRA (OPTIONAL BIKE DESCENTS)

#### Morning

We start early for the drive to **Chele La Pass** which, at 3,988m, is the highest road pass in Bhutan, snaking upwards through blue pine and rhododendron forests for 35km. Striding out along the Edelweiss-covered ridge, we pass a sky burial site and we then descend down through dense rhododendron forest, possibly sighting shaggy yaks.

On a clear day the view sweeps away to the snow-dome of Bhutan's second highest peak, **Mt. Jhomolhari** (7,314m), and down to the **Haa Valley**, which only opened to foreigners in 2002 due to its proximity to the border with Sikkim and Tibet. This unspoiled valley harks back to a simpler, more traditional time.

**Kila Nunnery Shedra** is an ancient nunnery nestled in a craggy patch on the mountainside below – one of the seven oldest nunneries in the Kingdom. **Dupthob Chhoeje Norbu** and **Dupthob Temba** initially established in the early ninth century as places for meditation.

#### Afternoon

Having made our offerings and perhaps been blessed, it is time to descend further. An hour later, we are back at the road where we can saddle up on a mountain bike and freewheel down to Paro Valley.

For those who prefer a leisurely sightseeing day there is the option to drive from Chele La Pass down the other side to the Haa Valley. If Chele La Pass is not accessible during the winter months, your guide will propose an alternative for this day excursion.

Duration: 7 to 9 hours

Difficulty: Moderate (guided with picnic, Kona Cinder mountain bike, helmet, gloves)

Overnight: COMO Uma Paro

Chele La Pass



## DAY 5

### PARO VALLEY-TAKTSANG WALK

#### Morning

The historical **Paro Valley** is the focus of today's activities, culminating in a visit to the **Taktsang 'Tiger's Nest' Monastery**, one of Bhutan's most important pieces of architecture. According to legend, this cliffside is where Guru Rinpoche (Padmasambhava) landed on the back of a flying tigress, bringing Buddhism to Bhutan from Tibet.

The trip starts early in order to avoid the hot sun during the two-hour climb – a steep hike passing a waterfall and ending among beautiful murals at the monastery's main entrance. If time allows, there is the possibility of heading further up to visit remote temples.

#### Afternoon

After lunch – either a prepared picnic or from the charming Taktsang cafeteria – you return to COMO Uma Paro, where you can recharge on your final night, enjoying the steam rooms, gym and swimming pool or indulging in one of our COMO Shambhala treatments.

Duration: 6 to 8 hours

Difficulty: Moderate to hard

Overnight: COMO Uma Paro

## DAY 6

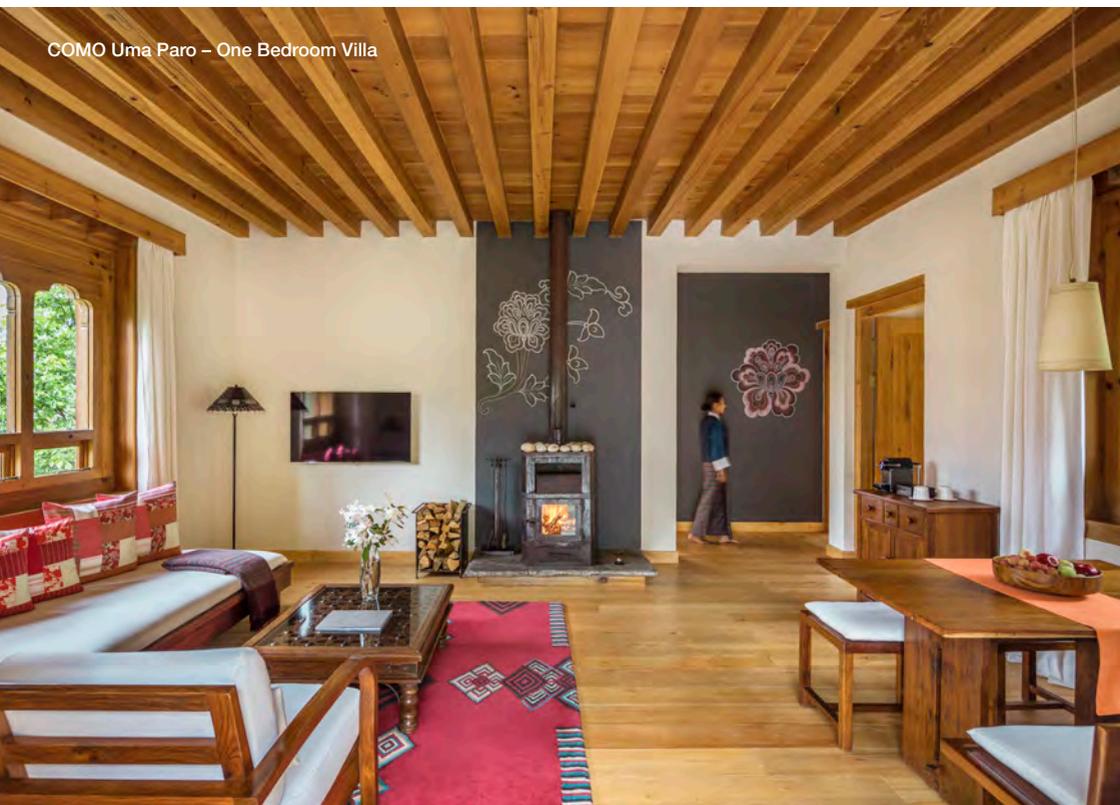
### DEPART BHUTAN

Your 10-minute transfer to Paro International Airport will be arranged according to your flight schedule.

## YOUR ACCOMMODATION

With COMO Uma Bhutan, the Himalayan Kingdom's splendour is revealed to you daily through drives, walks and enchanting heritage sites. Each night, you will return safely to the sleek comfort of our COMO lodge.

COMO Uma Paro – One Bedroom Villa



COMO Uma Paro – Bukhari Restaurant



## COMO UMA PARO

COMO Uma Paro is nestled above the emerald Paro Valley, on a hill overlooking rice paddies, mountains and monasteries. Sequester yourself in our private rooms that combine traditional Bhutanese colour and craftsmanship with modern amenities. The location immerses you in the country's rich cultural tapestry, making it easy to explore the rest of the valley, including the precarious Tiger's Nest Monastery perched 3,100m above the valley floor. As always, you can expect pin-sharp service and world-class cuisine, with food inspired by the country's local flavours.



## KEY DETAILS

### INCLUSIONS

- Accommodation on a full-board basis for five nights at COMO Uma Paro including picnic lunches during excursion days (excluding beverages)
- Four-and-a-half days of privately guided walks taking in the highlights of the Paro and Thimphu Valleys
- The private services of an experienced English-speaking Bhutanese guide
- One 60-minute COMO Shambhala body treatment
- Complimentary use of the library, swimming pool, steam room and gym at COMO Uma Paro
- Complimentary wireless internet at COMO Uma Paro
- Private airport transfers and transport around Bhutan
- All Bhutanese government visa and royalty fees, service charge and sales tax
- All museum and visitor centre entry fees and road permits
- Complimentary one-hour daily yoga class whilst at COMO Uma Paro (except Sundays)



Bhutanese locals in traditional dress



View across Paro Valley

### TRAVEL INSURANCE

We strongly recommend that you take out travel insurance against medical and personal accident risks (including repatriation costs, air ambulance and helicopter rescue services), as well as cancellation insurance. You should be aware that some policies may not cover travel to Bhutan and may not cover activities such as trekking, mountain biking and rafting. Please ensure that your policy provides a sufficient level of protection and covers you for the activities involved in this package. You must carry proof of insurance (e.g. your insurance certificate) with you in Bhutan.

### PLEASE NOTE

This itinerary is intended as a guide only. Routes and weather conditions may mean variations to the programme, which may affect the availability of views and panoramas described. Please be aware that all times stated are approximate, and may vary with individual and group fitness and interest levels.

COMO Uma Bhutan provides complimentary drinking water for all guided itineraries. If you have any special dietary requirements, please advise us in advance. Where stated, trips include lunch picnics prepared by our chefs. Please place your picnic order the day before departure through your guide or at the Activity Desk.

Throughout your stay, you have the option to participate in a range of extra outdoor activities at an additional fee.

## TRAVEL TO BHUTAN

COMO Uma Bhutan handles the whole booking process on your behalf, including flights via Druk Air or Bhutan Airlines. However, the price of flights is not included in the package and it is advisable to book well in advance to secure seats. We also handle visa application processing (included in the package). It normally takes two to three weeks to process the visa.

Please read this document in conjunction with your confirmation letter and pre-departure information.

For more information on COMO Uma Bhutan, including the full range of itineraries and services we offer – from tailor-made adventures, overnight treks and biking itineraries to provisions for groups and the hosting of special events – please refer to the website: [comohotels.com/uma/bhutan](http://comohotels.com/uma/bhutan).

Guests can choose to combine their break in Bhutan with a stay in Thailand at COMO Metropolitan Bangkok. For special rates when combining a stay in the city with one of our COMO Uma Bhutan itineraries, please email [res.uma.bhutan@comohotels.com](mailto:res.uma.bhutan@comohotels.com) or call +975 8 279 999.



Top: A COMO Uma Paro guide  
Bottom: Thimphu festival performers

A Bhutanese hot stone bath



## TERMS AND CONDITIONS

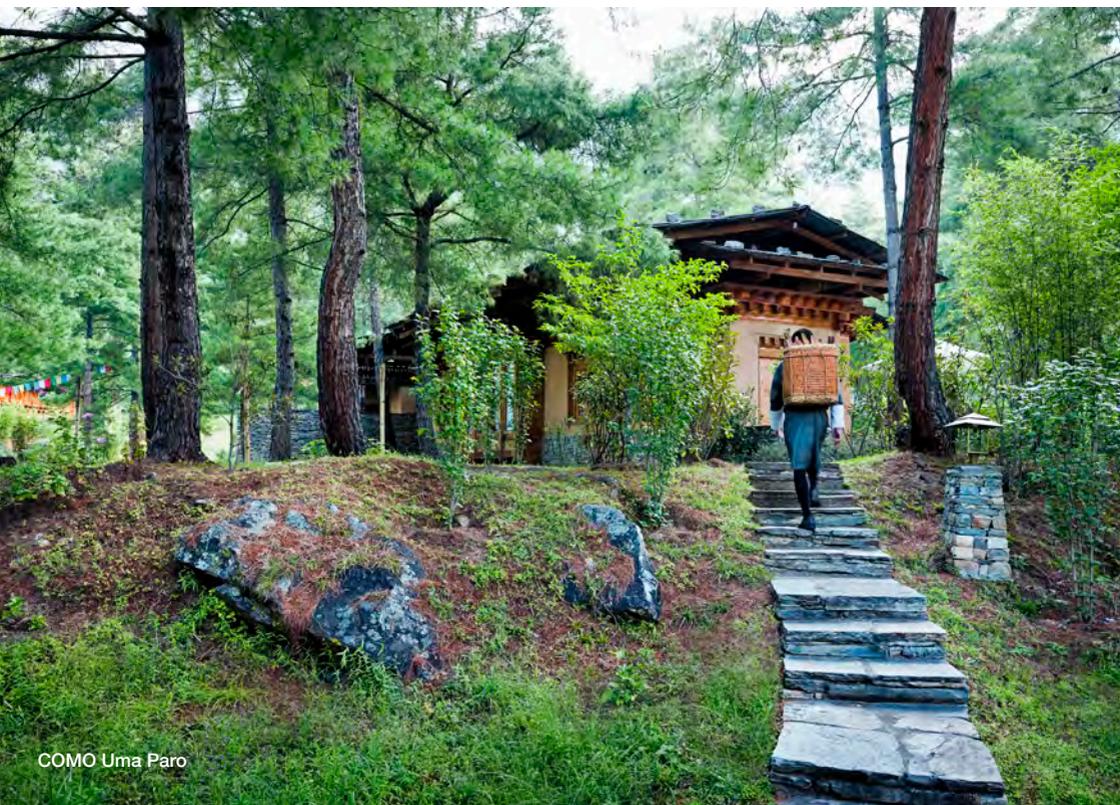
### Deposits

- The hotel reserves the right to release a reservation if the required deposit amount is not received within the mentioned cut off period as stipulated in the pro forma invoice.

Cancellation Date	Deposit	Deposit amount
Season 1 Season 2 Season 3	Initial deposit	Deposit of 30 per cent required at the time of booking
Season 1	Balance deposit	Deposit of 70 per cent required 30 days prior to arrival date
Season 2 and 3	Balance deposit	Deposit of 70 per cent required 45 days prior to arrival date



Welcoming a guest with a traditional white scarf



### Cancellations for COVID

- All cancellations of confirmed bookings must be received in writing by the hotel or by its representative.
- Late arrivals, no shows and early departures will be charged in full.
- Separate reservation, deposit and cancellation conditions will apply for group bookings of five rooms or more.
- Separate cancellation policies apply for flights.

Cancellation Date	Notice Prior to Arrival	Late Cancellation Penalty Charge
Season 1 Season 2 Season 3	30 days to 22 days	Bookings can be postponed for one year at the same rate
Season 1	21 days to 15 days	Charge of 50 per cent of the invoice amount
Season 1	14 days	Charge of the full invoice amount
Season 2 and 3	21 days	Charge of the full invoice amount

*For non-Covid related cancellations, please contact us for our full policy.*



Uma  
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For further information, please contact COMO Uma Bhutan:

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