

HIMALAYAN WILDS

WITH BUMDRA MONASTERY CAMP

COMO UMA PARO: FOUR NIGHTS

BUMDRA MONASTERY CAMP: ONE NIGHT



Spend five nights in the heart of Bhutan, fully immersed in its culture and natural beauty. You will make day trips to key Bhutanese landmarks as well as trek through remote paths in the wilderness that climb to heights where you can soak in panoramas of the Kingdom. This itinerary encompasses one overnight stay at the Bumdra Monastery Camp and four nights at COMO Uma Paro, our comfortable base in the valley, giving you ample time to enjoy luxurious facilities and a range of holistic treatments as well.

Nyamai Zam Footbridge



The National Museum of Bhutan



KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- Visit the Taktsang 'Tiger's Nest' Monastery, one of Bhutan's architectural highlights
- Climb through prayer flags with a view of the snow-capped Himalayas on the way to the Bumdra Monastery, where you'll spend a night at our private camp
- Drive to the highest pass in Bhutan – Chele La – to enjoy views of Mount Jhomolhari (7,314m) and make a mountain bike descent
- Explore Drukgyel Dzong, a fortress ruin that was originally built in 1648 to commemorate victory over an invasion of Tibet
- Be privy to the rich collection at Ta Dzong, the national museum of Bhutan
- Visit the Rinpung Dzong, where the Monastic body and government office of Paro is housed



COMO Uma Paro's ornate entrance



Taktsang 'Tiger's Nest' Monastery

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 certain 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.

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



DAY 3

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.

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 – any time on this day. 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: 7 to 9 hours

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

Overnight: COMO Uma Paro

A thrilling mountain bike ride in the Bhutanese wilderness





Top: Taktsang 'Tiger's Nest' Monastery
Bottom: Chele La Pass



DAY 4 COMO UMA PARO CHECK-OUT, HIKE FROM SANG CHOEKHOR BUDDHIST COLLEGE (2,800M) TO YAK PASTURE BELOW BUMDRA MONASTERY (3,800M)

Morning

Today's adventure begins with an early morning drive to **Sang Choekhor Buddhist College** to meet our ponies.

While they are loaded up, we should have time to pay our respects at the **Buddhist College**, with outstanding views of the valley below. Striding out on foot from here, we make the one to two-hour ascent of the ridge, which is steep at times but in cool shade. This brings us to a clearing with prayer flags and views down into the Paro and Do Chhu Valleys.

Above us, the **Chhoe Tse Lhakhang** temple nestles in the mountainside – a further two-hour walk, where we will stop for lunch.

Afternoon

The trail undulates for a while before a steep pull up. From here, you can soak up the dramatic views south over Paro and north to the snow-capped Himalayas. After a final climb through fluttering prayer flags, we plunge back into the ancient forest, coming out on a high wide meadow dotted with sacred chorten and white flags.

Our wild camp for the night is tucked under Bumdra Monastery (Cliff of a Hundred Thousand Prayers) with incredible views of the Himalayan range.

If time permits, we can visit the monastery and also climb the peak to the sky burial site (about 4,000m) for even better views, returning in time for a hearty dinner.

Duration: 4 to 6 hours to camp, 2 to 3 hours optional return trek to peak
Difficulty: Moderate to hard (guided with picnic lunch)
Overnight: Bumdra Wilderness Camp (3,800m)

DAY 5 HIKE FROM YAK PASTURE BELOW BUMDRA MONASTERY (3,800M), VIA ZANGTOKPELRI MONASTERY, TO TAKTSANG MONASTERY (2,900M) AND COMO UMA PARO CHECK-IN

Morning

After a filling breakfast, we can either head back into the valley or linger a while to soak up the view and perhaps hang some prayer flags of our own. Eventually we drop back into the ancient pine and rhododendron forest on the zig-zag trail. During our descent, we catch glimpses of temples below.

The path snakes across the mountainside between the temples, before reaching the gardens of **Zangtopelri**, from where we can see straight down onto the ornate rooftops of **Taktsang Monastery**, perched against the cliff-face far below.

An hour later and we are at the gates of Taktsang, looking across the gorge; a steep descent to a waterfall then up some steps to pass into Tiger's Nest itself.

Retracing our steps we begin the final descent to reach our vehicle and drive back to COMO Uma Paro – not forgetting to stop on the other side of the valley and look back at all that we have achieved.

Duration: 5 to 7 hours depending on time taken in monasteries

Difficulty: Moderate (guided with lunch)

Overnight: COMO Uma Paro

DAY 6 DEPART BHUTAN

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

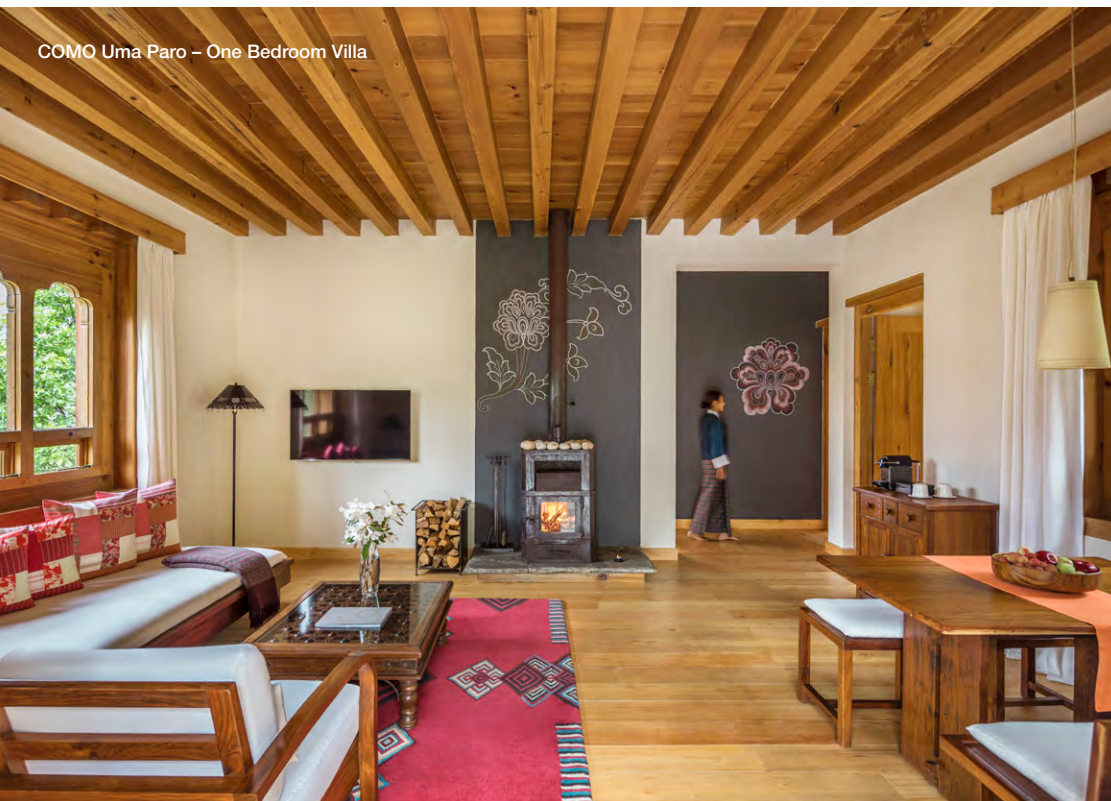
YOUR ACCOMMODATION

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 – Bukhari Restaurant

COMO Uma Paro – One Bedroom Villa



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.

Zurig Hike in Paro valley



KEY DETAILS

INCLUSIONS

- Accommodation for four nights at COMO Uma Paro on a full board basis, including picnic lunches during excursion days (excluding beverages) and one fully serviced overnight camp
- Four-and-a-half days of privately guided excursions, taking in the highlights of the Paro Valley
- 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
- Complimentary Wi-Fi throughout 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 (except Sundays)

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS

To make the most of this expedition, we recommend booking from March to May or from mid-September to November. It requires a minimum of two people. COMO Uma Paro requires guests to check out during the overnight camping (we will store luggage during this time).

TREKKING INFORMATION

For a trek at this level, you may wish to optimise your fitness to get the most out of the experience. A detailed pre-departure information sheet designed to help prepare for your adventure will be sent out with your booking confirmation.

- Packing essentials: Warm jacket, leather or waterproof fabric boots or shoes with good soles, waterproof jacket, sunglasses, warm hat, sunhat, sunscreen, torch, backpack (small day sack, 20-30 litres), duffle bag (30-40 litres to be carried by ponies).
- Packing recommendations: Trekking pole, binoculars, gloves, tracksuit or thermal underwear, lip balm and moisturiser, sufficient supply of any medication required, and spare batteries or portable chargers.
- What COMO Uma Paro provides: Camping picnic lunch, dinner and breakfast, mineral water, the services of an experienced English-speaking Uma guide, cooks, ponies for carrying luggage and a first-aid kit. Tentage including one bathroom tent, one toilet tent with toilet paper, one kitchen tent, one dining tent and one sleeping tent for two people with sleeping bags, fleece blanket, hand towels, hot water bags and torches for each guest, camping beds and armchairs.
- To get the most from this experience you should be reasonably fit and ready to enjoy the great outdoors.

For more details please refer to our pre-departure information sheet for trekking.



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.



Top: A COMO Uma Paro guide
Bottom: View of Rinpung Dzong and Paro Valley from Zurig Hike



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.

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 or call +975 8 279 999.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

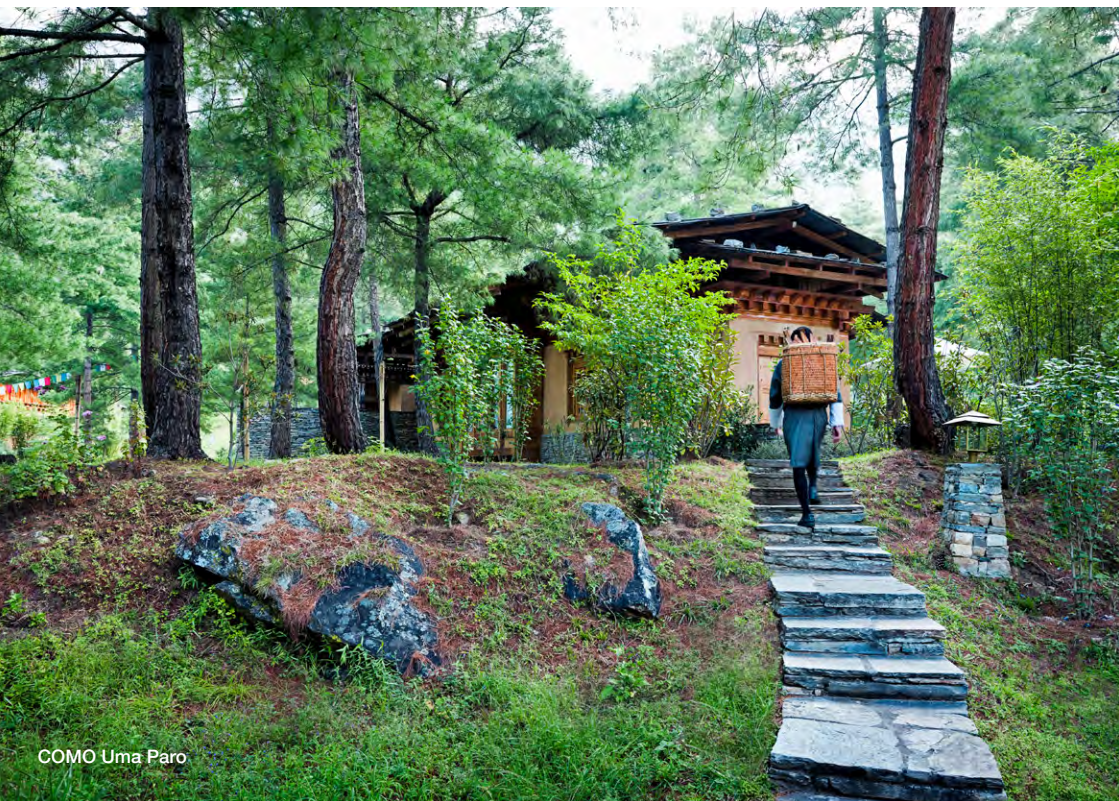
Deposits

- 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.

| Cancel 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 Guest with 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.

| Cancel date | Prior arrival date | 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.



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