

WELLNESS IN THE HIMALAYAS

FIVE NIGHTS: COMO UMA PARO
THREE NIGHTS: COMO UMA PUNAKHA
TWO NIGHTS: GANGTEY LODGE PHOBJIKHA



Move your body and indulge your senses in this ten-night itinerary that incorporates COMO's wellness principles into an itinerary that explores the natural beauty of Bhutan. Time has been carved out of each day – of spectacular drives, unique walks and fascinating cultural visits – for mindfulness that takes place anywhere from the tranquil grounds of our mountainside resort to a cliffside monastery. This itinerary encompasses stays at COMO Uma Paro, COMO Uma Punakha and the luxurious Gangtey Lodge – the best of Bhutan's luxury accommodation.

Nyamai Zam Footbridge



The National Museum of Bhutan



KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- Engage in mindful practices of yoga and meditation with COMO resident yoga teacher
- Soothe and balance your body daily with a series of Asian-inspired wellness therapies and experiences
- Go 'mountain bathing' surrounded by snow-capped peaks and crisp Himalayan air
- Enjoy spectacular views of the Himalayas from the Dochu La mountain pass
- Drive through Gangtey Valley, the famous seasonal home of the rare black-necked cranes
- Be privy to the rich collection at Ta Dzong, the national museum of Bhutan
- Visit the 300 year old Punakha Dzong: the winter residence of the Central Monastic Body and where many major Royal events take place
- Hike to Chimmi Lakhang – a 15th century fertility temple – a popular pilgrimage for those starting a family
- Pay respects at Kyichu Lhakhang, one of the oldest temples in Bhutan



COMO Uma Paro's ornate entrance



Bumthang

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 Fields 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.



Red-robed young monk



A Bhutanese Hot Stone Bath and Massage at
COMO Shambhala Retreat in COMO Uma Paro

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, PROPERTY SHOW-ROUND, LOCAL SIGHTSEEING, INTRODUCTION TO OUR RESIDENT YOGA INSTRUCTOR AND A WELCOME COMO SHAMBHALA MASSAGE

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, you will meet your yoga teacher for the week. Your first private yoga practice will take place in the late afternoon.

Then, 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.

We then return to the hotel, where our experienced therapists will rejuvenate you with COMO Shambhala's signature massage.

Yoga class: Private 60-minute session
COMO Shambhala treatment: 60-minute COMO Shambhala Massage
Overnight: COMO Uma Paro

DAY 2
MORNING YOGA PRACTICE,
MEDITATION AT ZURIG DZONG,
RINPUNG DZONG, KYICHU LHA KHANG
AND A DEEP TISSUE MASSAGE

Morning

The morning will begin with a Hatha Vinyasa yoga practice. Following that, we will wind through pine forests high above COMO Uma Paro to the pretty grounds of the fortress-like monastery of **Zurig Dzong** where we will meditate. We 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.

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.

After a healthy lunch of COMO Shambhala cuisine back at COMO Uma Paro, relax with a deep tissue massage. This massage uses deep muscle compression and cross-fibre friction to create a prolonged state of reduced muscular tension, as well as increasing lymphatic flow.

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
Yoga Class: Private 60-minute session
COMO Shambhala Treatment: 60-minute Deep Tissue Massage
Overnight: COMO Uma Paro

Top: Rinpung Dzong
Bottom: Yoga at COMO Uma Paro





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



Khamsum Yulley Namgyal Chorten in Punakha Valley

DAY 3

PARO TO PUNAKHA VALLEY VIA THIMPHU AND DOCHU LA WITH A REFLEXOLOGY MASSAGE

Morning

During the journey from COMO Uma Paro to COMO Uma Punakha, you can stop off in the nation's largest city, Thimphu, with an immersive tour taking in some of the major attractions, including the Buddha Dordenma statue, the National Memorial Chorten, a view of Trashi Chhoe Dzong and the Folk Heritage Museum (exact tour itinerary varies).

The capital city sprawls across the wooded western hillside of the Wang Chhu River, surrounded by verdant rice paddies and towering peaks.

Afternoon

After leaving Thimphu, the drive to Punakha is spectacular, winding snake-like up the 3,000m-high mountain pass of Dochu La, offering views to 108 chortens (Buddhist shrines), forests of cluttering prayer flags and, on a clear day, sweeping views of the Himalayan range.

In the evening, our experienced therapists will apply gentle pressure to the reflex points in your feet to rejuvenate you for the evening.

DAY 4

CHIMMI LHAKHANG, PUNAKHA DZONG, KHAMSUM YULLEY NAMGYAL CHORTEN WITH AN INDIAN HEAD MASSAGE

Morning

The morning starts with a short walk across farmhouses and rice paddies to reach **Chimmi Lhakhang**, a 15th-century fertility temple dedicated to Drukpa Kuenley, a Tibetan Buddhist saint, perhaps better known as the 'Divine Madman'. This site has long been a pilgrimage for couples hoping to start a family, adorned with colourful fertility symbols and bold statues.

Heading further down the valley, the 300-year-old **Punakha Dzong** comes into view. Built in the 17th century by Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal (who founded the Kingdom

of Bhutan), the fortress once housed the country's government. It is now the winter home of Je Khenpo, the head abbot of Bhutan, along with a retinue of 1,000 red-robed monks.

Afternoon

After lunch, we will take you on a walk through homesteads and farmland to Khamsum Yulley Namgyal Chorten, a hilltop shrine built by the royal family. This is a full day of exploration through the lush Punakha Valley, which at 1,200m, is low enough for bananas and oranges to grow beside the footpaths.

Later in the evening, relax with an Indian head massage for reducing and relieving tension in the head, neck and shoulder areas.

Duration: 6 to 7 hours

Difficulty: Easy to moderate

COMO Shambhala treatment: 60-minute Indian head massage Overnight: COMO Uma Punakha



Indian Head Massage

DAY 5

CHORTEN NINGPO AND Khabasa Village with an invigorating Como Shambhala Detoxifying Skin Treatment

Morning

After-breakfast we will drive to **Chorten Ningpo**, which dates back to the 17th century. The chorten is home to a magnificent statue of Maitreya (the future Buddha) and images of the great lamas of the Drukpa lineage. According to legend, this magical spot was once a dense forest inhabited by evil spirits. The great oak tree outside the monastery is said to have grown out of the blazing log that the 'Divine

Madman' threw (the tree's bark is still black from where it was burnt).

In 2005 the monastery began to house orphans from the nearby village, and founded a small Buddhist educational institution where the children can study traditional Buddhist scriptures and texts, as well as Western subjects. The hike back to COMO Uma Punakha is around 45 minutes, going past local temple **Thodrup Lhakhang**.



The rolling Punakha Valley



COMO Shambhala Detoxifying Skin Treatment

Afternoon

After lunch, you have a choice of either:

A detoxifying skin treatment designed to revive tired skin by improving circulation. Using our signature products to exfoliate and moisturize, this refreshing therapy stimulates lymph flow to restore a healthy glow.

Duration: 3 to 4 hours

Difficulty: Easy to moderate

COMO Shambhala treatment: 60-minute COMO Shambhala Detoxifying Skin Treatment

Overnight: COMO Uma Punakha

Option 1: White Water Rafting at Mo Chhu or Po Chhu River. Most rivers in Bhutan are very steep and remote, making them too dangerous for rafting. However, the Mo Chhu

and Po Chhu rivers in the Punakha Valley are easy to access, with fast but safe waters. This makes them the two most popular rafting courses in Bhutan, with around 9-10 rapid sections each. As you raft, it's also a great opportunity to watch the countryside glide by from a new perspective.

Duration: 2 to 4 hours on the water, depending on river state (up to 45 minutes shorter during monsoon season, July to August)

Difficulty: Easy

Additional Cost: US\$350 plus taxes per boat (up to five people)

Please note: Rafting is subject to availability. While our outfitter takes all possible precautions to ensure a safe journey, all white water trips entail an element of risk. It is recommended that all participants are able to swim and are in good health. All safety equipment – including life jackets, splash jackets and trousers, helmets, dry bags for valuables – is supplied.





Gangtay Lodge Dining Lounge
Image provided by Gangtay Lodge



DAY 6

PUNAKHA TO PHOBJIKHA VALLEY VIA WANGDUEPHODRANG

Morning

We cross the river downwards from our hillside hotel, towards the confluence of the Puna Tsang Chhu and Dang Chhu rivers, to make a short stop at the **Wangduephodrang Dzong** which is under restoration after being completely razed by a fire in 2012.

We then drive steadily through semi-tropical vegetation on the way to **Phobjikha Valley**, which is famous as the seasonal home of the rare black-necked cranes. The birds spend the winter months – the last week in October to mid-February – in this alpine setting on the western slope of the Black Mountains.

On your first day at Gangtey Lodge we invite you to experience Aromatherapy Massage which discovers the ancient art of aromatherapy and experience the therapeutic properties of pure, plant-based essential oils in a relaxing, restorative massage, combining the sense of smell with the healing powers of touch.

Duration of drive: 3 to 4 hours (88km)

Difficulty: Easy

Gangtey treatment: 60-minute aromatherapy massage

Overnight: Gangtey Lodge, Phobjikha

DAY 7

INTRODUCTION TO FOREST BATHING IN GANGTEY, KHEWANG TEMPLE AND NATURE STUDY CENTRE VISIT WITH A BHUTANESE HOT STONE BATH

Morning

After breakfast, experience 'Forest Bathing' in the natural beauty of **Goenpa** before beginning our hike. We

will walk through the forest towards the Phobjikha Valley, one of the best hiking locations for nature-lovers. The path we take provides a beautiful view of the vast, U-shaped valley – bring a camera to capture a snapshot for yourself.

We will then arrive at Khewang Temple, a three-storey structure with each storey featuring present, past and future Buddha's. It was built in the 15th century by Trulku Penjor Gyeltshen, who was believed to be an incarnation of the great Tibetan Nyingmapa master Kuenkhen Longchen Rabjampa (1308-1364).

Afternoon

After lunch we head to the Nature Study Centre for a visit, a centre dedicated to conservation research and workshops for local farmers and students, funded by the Bhutanese government with assistance from the World Wildlife Fund (WWF).

We then visit the 16th century Gangtey Goemba which includes a school, meditation facilities and living quarters for monks. It overlooks the valley from its commanding position on a hillcrest, and is known to be home to the reincarnation of Pema Lingpa, one of the most historically important Bhutanese discoverers.

In the evening you can experience a traditional Bhutanese hot stone bath that uses river rocks to heat the water, releasing key minerals that relieve aches and pains in the body from the day.

Duration: 5 to 7 hours including a 1 to 2-hour Nature

Trail walk or a longer option

Difficulty: Easy to moderate

Gangtey treatment: Forest bathing, Bhutanese hot stone bath

Overnight: Gangtey Lodge, Phobjikha

DAY 8

PHOBJIKHA TO PARO VALLEY VIA CHUZOM AND A RELAXING ABHYANGA TREATMENT AT COMO UMA PARO

Morning

Retrace your steps back over the Dochu La pass for a second chance to view the Himalayan mountain range. Returning to the Chuzom (the confluence of the rivers Wang Chhu and Paro Chhu), you can glimpse the three nearby shrines, built to ward off evil spirits – each with a different style of architecture: Nepali, Tibetan and Bhutanese.

Time-permitting, there will be a visit to Tamchog Lhakhang, a temple built by Thangtong Gyalpo, a pioneering engineer who introduced the

construction of suspension bridges into Bhutan and Tibet (several of which are still in use today).

The final part of the drive to COMO Uma Paro is through apple orchards and rice paddies back to our mountain home, where you can spend the rest of the day in this calming setting.

Back at the resort, we've prepared abhyanga: a rhythmic Ayurvedic massage that uses warm herbal oils to help energise the body and improve circulation.

Duration of drive (Phobjikha to Paro): 5 to 6 hours (168 km)
Difficulty: Easy
COMO Shambhala treatment: 90-minute abhyanga treatment
Overnight: COMO Uma Paro

DAY 9

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

Morning

We will reach **Chele La Pass** in the late morning, 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 19th 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.

Towards the end of the afternoon, engage in the final stage of Ayurvedic massage therapy – pizichili. Warm herbal oil is poured over the body in a Pizichili treatment, along with gentle massage strokes.

Duration: 6 to 7 hours
Difficulty: Moderate, Guided with picnic, Kona Cinder mountain bike, helmet, gloves
COMO Shambhala treatment: 90-minute pizichili treatment
Overnight: COMO Uma Paro



View of Paro Valley from Zurig Hike



Bhutanese Hot Stone Bath

DAY 10

WALK TO TAKTSANG MONASTERY (2,900M) AND A BHUTANESE HOT STONE BATH AND COMO SHAMBHALA MASSAGE

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 and energy levels allow, we can retrace our steps or head further up to more remote temples and monasteries.

Afternoon

After a lunch of either a prepared picnic or food from the charming Taktsang cafeteria, we return to COMO Uma Paro to enjoy a traditional Bhutanese hot stone bath and massage. This powerful, stress-relieving therapy uses hot river rocks that have been placed in water where they crack and steam, releasing minerals.

The treatment concludes with the long calming strokes of our COMO Shambhala Massage to invoke an even deeper sense of relaxation.

Duration: 6 to 8 hours

Difficulty: Moderate to hard

COMO Shambhala treatment: 90-minute traditional Bhutanese hot stone bath and COMO Shambhala massage

Overnight: COMO Uma Paro

DAY 11 DEPART BHUTAN

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



Taktsang 'Tiger's Nest' Monastery

KEY DETAILS

INCLUSIONS

- Accommodation for five nights at COMO Uma Paro and three nights at COMO Uma Punakha on a full board basis (excluding beverages)
- Accommodation for two nights at Gangtey Lodge at Phobjikha full board basis (excluding beverages)
- Nine-and-a-half days of privately guided excursions, taking in the highlights of the Paro, Thimphu, Punakha and Phobjikha Valleys
- Private yoga sessions with resident yoga instructor (as per itinerary)
- Meditation sessions with resident yoga instructor (as per itinerary)
- The private services of an experienced English-speaking Bhutanese guide
- COMO Shambhala and Gangtey lodge SPA treatments as mentioned in the itinerary
- Complimentary use of the library, swimming pool, steam room and gym at COMO Uma Paro
- Complimentary wireless internet 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)

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.



Bhutanese locals in traditional dress



View across Paro Valley

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.



A COMO Uma Paro guide

Zomlingthang Forest in Punakha Valley



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

Cancellations for COVID

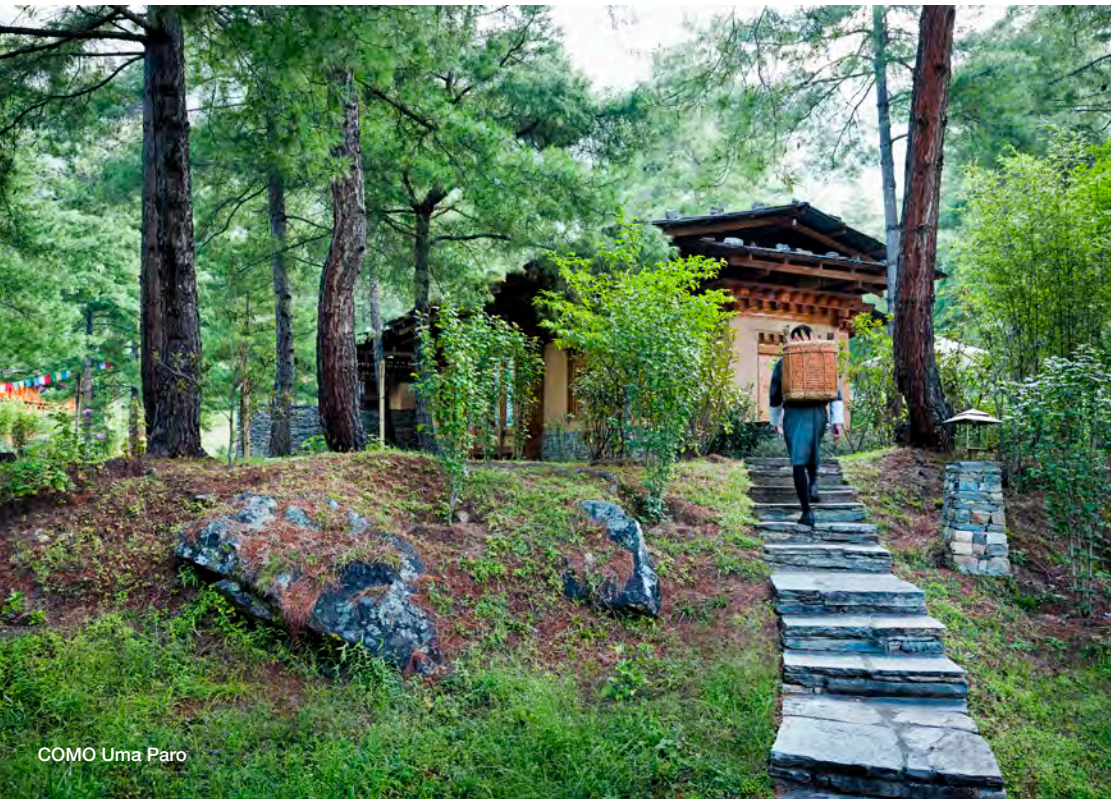
- All cancellations of confirmed bookings must be received in writing by the hotel or by its representative.
- Late arrivals, no shows and early departures will be charged in full.
- Separate reservation, deposit and cancellation conditions will apply for group bookings of five rooms or more.
- Separate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



Welcoming Guest with Traditional White Scarf





Uma
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