



AMANKORA

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The Amankora Experience

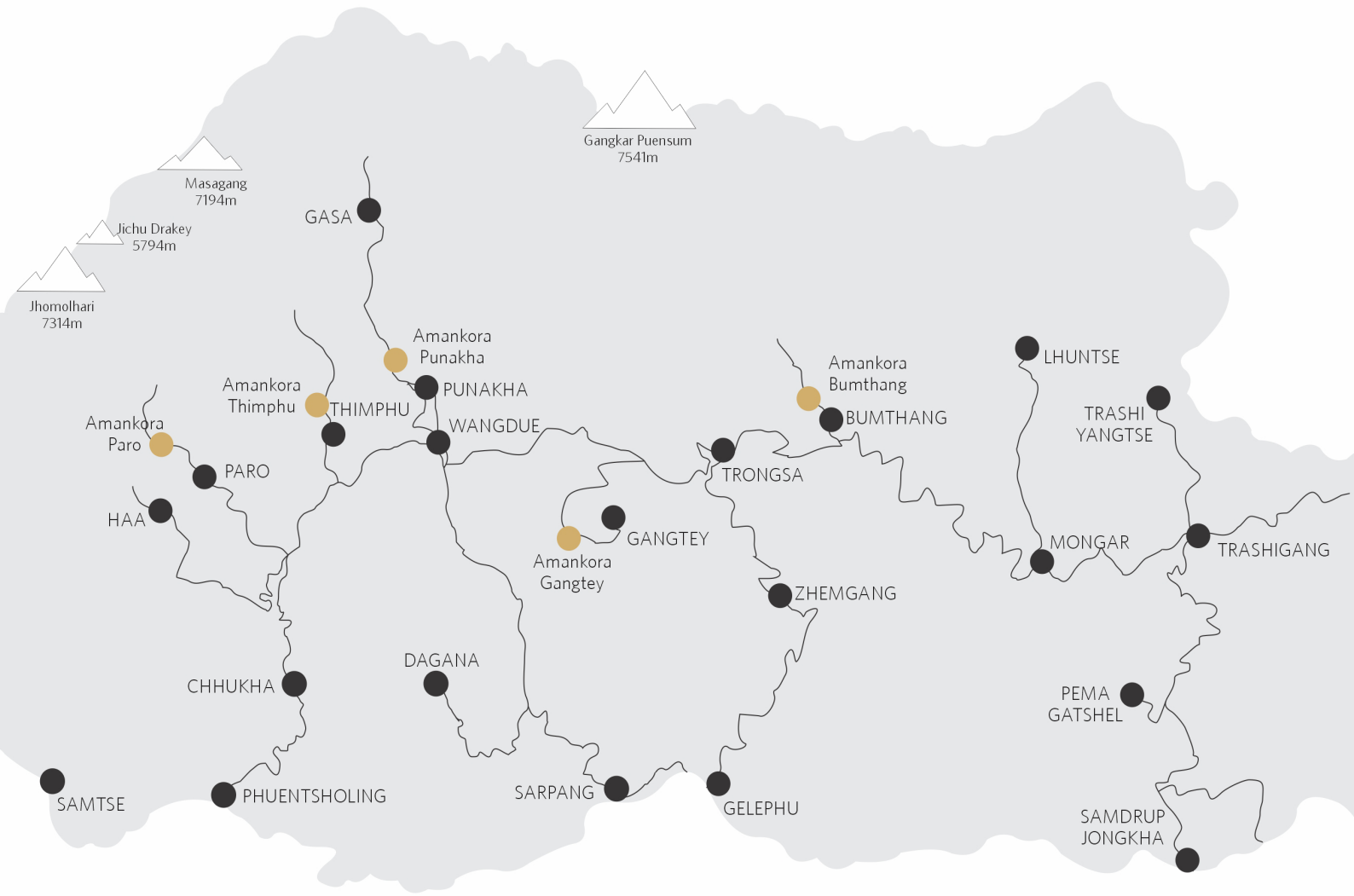
Amankora's five lodges across Bhutan's spectacular western and central valleys are perfectly placed to offer unique journeys of discovery through the Himalaya's sole surviving Buddhist kingdom.

From Amankora Paro with its dramatic views of snow-capped Jhomolhari, take an evening stroll to the fortress of Drukgyel Dzong or scale Paro's cliffs to the famous Tiger's Nest. Amankora Thimphu is a tranquil gateway to the capital's many attractions, while Amankora Punakha lies east of the Dochula Pass near the resplendent Punakha Dzong. Spot rare black-necked cranes from Amankora Gangtey and spend a quiet moment in the magnificent Goemba (monastery) it overlooks. Then explore the rich cottage industries that thrive in Amankora Bumthang's fertile valley.

In this guide, we present each valley's finest experiences, from immersive cultural, spiritual and culinary encounters to outdoor adventures making the most of the Kingdom's breathtaking scenery.

Some activities and excursions require planning, so we recommend discussing your interests with your guide a day in advance.

We look forward to introducing you to the Land of the Thunder Dragon and its people through these special activities.





In-house Guest Activities

Archery Lessons at all Lodges

While in Bhutan, we urge you to have a go at the country's national sport: archery. In the past, the hunting bows were made of long single pieces of bamboo, bound with leather. Now they have been replaced by modern versions and are solely used for sporting events. However, a version of the original bow is still used in local archery contests. We have several available and the team will be happy to offer you instructions – or challenge you to a competition – any time you wish.

Complimentary for resident guests

Bhutanese Cultural Programme at all Lodges

In the mellow warmth of the evenings, traditional rituals are performed at Amankora. The vivid cultural performances unfold animating folk tales and myths of Bhutan through a hypnotic blend of music and dance.

Sound Bath at Thimphu

Lie down and absorb the resonant frequencies, a therapeutic practice rooted in ancient healing traditions where participants are surrounded by soothing sounds and vibrations from instruments like Tibetan singing bowls. The vibrations aim to induce relaxation, alleviate stress and enhance emotional well-being by balancing the body's energy centres.

8 to 8:30 am daily

Prayer Flag Printing in Paro

Traditionally, Bhutanese prayer flags have been used to promote peace, compassion, strength and wisdom. Hanging them in high places sanctifies the air and carries the blessings depicted on the flags to all beings. At the Paro Lodge, a local monk will help you print these flags using different printing blocks: 'Wind Horse' (Lungta) – a symbol of strength and the transformation of bad fortune to good, 'Tara' (Mother of Liberation) – depicting compassion for living beings, and 'Amitayus' (God of Longevity) – who is worshipped to increase life span.

In-house activity in our Living Room
6 to 9 pm on alternate evenings

Calligraphy Sessions in Paro

Calligraphy is an important art in the Himalayas and the first of the thirteen arts and crafts that were promoted by the Bhutanese state since the 17th century. Enjoy a personalised calligraphy session with a local monk at the Paro Lodge.

Buddhism Talk Hosted by a Local Monk in Thimphu

Mynak Trulku is the 12th reincarnate lama of Mynak Rinpoche, the spiritual leader of the Mynak province in the Eastern region of Tibet. He has lived in Bhutan for over 30 years and worked in various capacities as the founder and director of the National Museum in Paro and the National Library in Thimphu. He has also represented Bhutan in various regional and international conferences lecturing on Bhutanese culture and spiritual affairs.



Spiritual Immersion

Bhutanese Name-Giving Ceremony at Sey Lhakhang, Bumthang

Held in the private altar room at the monastery of Sey Lhakhang, this unique ceremony will see you receive your own Bhutanese name. After you provide your date of birth, the Lama will perform a Buddhist name calculation and present you with a name, explaining its meaning. Bhutanese names are not caste-related or gender specific and there is no such thing as a family name. This reflects Bhutan's cultural emphasis on the equality of all individuals.

Fire Blessing Ceremony at Jambay Lhakhang, Bumthang

A ten-minute drive from the lodge, Jambay Lhakhang is a beautiful temple dating back to the 7th century. The ceremony starts with the temple's Lamas performing mesmerising rituals with sacred chanting believed to invoke divine energies and shower participants with blessings of abundant good health. The ceremonial fire holds immense significance, serving as a conduit for divine energy and dispelling negativity and symbolising rebirth.

Traditional Thrisel Cleansing Ceremony

Thrisel is a one-hour blessing by a Lama using holy water sprinkled from a Bumpa to cleanse the mind, spirit and soul.

Spiritual Cleansing (Buddhist Fumigation) in Gangtey

It is a common belief in the Kingdom that every place has its local protective deity or spirit. To please the spirit, the Bhutanese fumigate every morning and during special pujas (religious ceremonies). It is also a ritual for removing bad spirits and being blessed with good luck.

Spiritual cleansing involves the burning of selected herbs in a fumigation stupa. Our stupa is located at the top of the hill in front of the main entrance of the lodge. Should you wish to perform your own cleansing ceremony, this should take place early in the morning in the presence of a monk who will assist you in the ritual.

Offering a Meal to the Monks at Gangtey Goemba

Nearly 270 monks reside in the Gangtey Goemba/Shedra (Monastic Schools). While many come for religious and spiritual fulfilment or to complete the four, six or nine-year courses in Nyingmapa Buddhism, others come because their families are unable to support them at home. The meals for monks are financed by the generous Gangtey Trulku Rinpoche, private sponsors and the villagers with whom the Shedra has a reciprocal arrangement – food donations in return for daily prayers for peace.

Donating a meal to the monks is a generous and rewarding gesture that you can get involved in. Our chef will accompany you to the local shops in Gangtey where you can take part in purchasing ingredients. You are also welcome to overlook the meal preparations in the kitchen before taking part in the meal service itself. Sometimes sponsors prefer to give a monetary donation and not take part in the meal service, which is also an option.

Spiritual Immersion

Traditional Bhutanese Wedding Vow Renewal in Paro

This ceremony takes place at the auspicious 7th-century Kyichu Lhakhang, one of the country's oldest and most sacred sites.

On arrival at the temple, the groom and bride exchange the traditional white scarves or khadar. Emblematic of the purity of the giver's heart, these scarves feature symbols of the Buddhist lucky signs, meant to bring good fortune.

This is followed by lighting a series of butter lamps to offer light to the deities. The lamps or karme are intended to dispel darkness and bring wisdom and compassion into your shared lives.

Inside the temple, a spiritual cleansing, lhabsang will be performed by monks, along with a holy water blessing – or thrisel ceremony to cleanse the mind, spirit and soul.

Private Meditation and Blessing Ceremonies

Private, one-on-one meditation sessions with a local Lama can be arranged in the lodges. Blessings can be arranged in any of the lhakhangs or temples nearby.

Butter Lamp Lighting

This beautiful ceremony representing the dispelling of the darkness of ignorance can be experienced in several temples, monasteries and dzongs. Lighting 108 butter lamps is also a deeply meditative experience, aiding focus and reflection.



Wellness Experiences

Himalayan Hot Stone Bath at Paro and Gangtey

Aman Spa's own hot stone bath is inspired by a traditional therapeutic treatment where natural river stones are heated and lowered into the bath to release beneficial minerals, while the local Khempa herb infuses the water with its healing properties.

Grounding Body Polish and Wrap Ritual

A key ingredient in this ritual is amethyst powder, known for its gently sedative energy that promotes peacefulness and emotional stability. The full-body polish gently exfoliates the skin, brightens tone and improves texture, while the cocooning wrap initiates a period of stillness, leaving skin radiant.

Purifying Body Polish and Wrap Ritual

This ritual revives the spirit, tones the skin and induces a state of peace. One of the key ingredients is quartz, known as a master healer for its amplification of energy levels. Seaweed fucus oil, raw honey and essential oils are also applied, stimulating circulation and lymphatic drainage.

Nourishing Body Polish and Wrap Ritual

Encouraging the body to enter a phase of deep rest, this nutrient-rich treatment includes jade powder - known to hydrate, tone and rejuvenate - in both the scrub and wrap. The scrub also contains healing calendula oil, restorative amethyst powder, essential oils and Himalayan salts that soften the skin.

Morning Yoga at all Lodges

All lodges offer a complimentary morning yoga session hosted by an experienced yoga teacher, suitable for all ability levels. There is no need to bring any equipment. The session will include guided breathing followed by a series of asanas (yoga poses).

The Jet Lag Reviver at Thimphu

Whether you're recovering from extensive travel or a hectic lifestyle, this signature ritual from Amankora Thimphu's Aman Spa will revive you from head to toe.

The treatment begins with a deeply relaxing hot stone massage focusing on deep pressure points. You will then enjoy a neck, shoulder and scalp massage to reduce tension. A nourishing facial massage will re-energise the skin and leave you revitalised, followed by foot reflexology to promote circulation and reduce any water retention. The finishing touch is a short session of guided breathing to stimulate your lymphatic system, help your skin flush out toxins, reduce inflammation and minimise breakouts while promoting a healthy glow.



Amankora Paro



Tiger's Nest Hike and Recovery Lunch at Amankora Log Cabin

After a four-hour hike to the iconic 7th-century Tiger's Nest Monastery that clings to a mountainside cliff face, conclude your experience of Bhutan's holiest pilgrimage site with a rejuvenating lunch to help you refresh and recover, with the Tiger's Nest in full view inviting a moment of personal reflection on the morning's adventure. Our exclusive Amankora Log Cabin offers a unique and memorable retreat. A serene setting for an intimate lunch, the cabin's verdant lawns, cocooning forest and panoramic views create a fitting atmosphere worthy of any occasion.



Forest and Fortress Dinner

Dine under the stars within a pine forest overlooking the historic Drukgyel Dzong. To the soothing soundtrack of a gurgling stream, dinner tables are set in a clearing beside moss-covered rocks, under the canopy of fragrant Himalayan blue pine. Tables can also be set under a traditional Bhutanese dragon tent, gently lit with strings of lights and flickering lanterns.

Comfortable woolen shawls, fabric-wrapped hot water bottles and heaters will keep you warm on chillier evenings as you savour Amankora signature cocktails and canapés before a traditional Bhutanese dinner. A traditional dance performance or musical troupe can be arranged (additional charges apply).

Amankora Thimphu





Thimphu City and Valley Tour

Explore the charming streets of Thimphu, adorned with traditional Bhutanese architecture, arts and crafts. We also visit the spectacular Tashichho Dzong, the majestic fortress and seat of the Bhutanese government, a vital religious and administrative center that showcases stunning traditional architecture. This attraction is set against picturesque landscapes along the Wang Chhu River, offering a serene cultural experience.

The Wangditse Hike

The Wangditse Hike is a comfortable one-hour hike starting from Sangaygang, a hill festooned with bright and colorful prayer flags. The hike takes you through a thick pine forest occasionally opening to a commanding view of the renowned Thimphu Tashichho Dzong (Thimphu Fortress) and Thimphu city below. The hike leads to the spectacular 300-year-old Wangditse Monastery.

The Hidden Monk Village in Dodeydrak

This half-day hike to Dodeydrak offers breathtaking scenic beauty with insights into Buddhist architecture, craftsmanship and mysticism. Explore the magical monk village around a mysterious 12th-century temple. Discover original 900-year-old paintings and intricate Mandalas and be mesmerised by Dodeydrak's history depicted on a painted stone wall. We'll join local monks for lunch, before returning to Thimphu Lodge.

Distance: 8.9km, Ascent: 480m, Time: 3 to 4 hours

The Buddha Dordenma

A monumental Shakyamuni Buddha statue, stands amidst the picturesque ruins of Kuensel Phodrang, commanding a panoramic view of the valley. One of the world's largest Buddha stupas, at 169 feet (52 m) high, it is adorned with 100,000 8-inch-tall and 25,000 12-inch-tall gilded bronze Buddha statues, making it a breathtaking marvel of both scale and artistry.



Amankora Punakha



Rafting and Kayaking

Spend a morning on the water and discover Bhutan from a whole new angle. If you are looking for an enjoyable and easy scenic float down the river with views of Changyul Valley and the old monument, Galem House, we recommend rafting on the Mo Chhu (Female River) that flows below the lodge. Kayaking is a swifter option but involves a little more individual effort!

The Pho Chhu (Male River) is for the more adventurous who wish to tackle some of the Kingdom's white water - either rafting or kayaking - while enjoying the pristine forests and farmland on its banks.

Rafting offers a more leisurely adventure, with a private raft accommodating up to 8 guests. Kayaking is for those looking for a solo challenge while still being part of a group.

Private BBQ Lunch or Dinner by the Riverside

Just below the lodge at the edge of the Mo Chhu River is our favourite spot for a private BBQ lunch or dinner. Our Chef will prepare a tailor-made four-course menu while you sit in the shade of pine trees savouring the mountain views, the sounds of the river and the aromas emitting from the charcoal grill.

For an even more romantic experience, we recommend the BBQ dinner by candlelight, with lanterns and a bonfire lit as dusk falls and a million stars light up the sky.

Breakfast at Khamsum Chorten

Get an early start to witness night become day as you venture on your morning walk towards the extraordinary Khamsum Chorten. From the lodge, the walking trail takes you through farmyards and rice paddies and offers a wonderful opportunity to witness local farming traditions.

Consecrated in 1999 and dedicated to the Fifth King, the three-level chorten is 30m (100ft) high and can be seen in the distance when approaching the lodge. Built over 8.5 years to remove negative forces and encourage harmony in an ever-changing world, it is filled with colourful symbols of protection.

While you enjoy the superb views of the valley from the chorten rooftop, your guide will have found the perfect picnic spot in the gardens for your continental breakfast in the morning sun.

Khamsum suspension bridge to Chorten: 30-45 minutes

Chorten to lodge: 45-60 minutes

We recommend starting as early as you feel comfortable.

Difficulty level: Moderate



Punakha Dzong

A highlight of any visit to this valley is a tour of the spectacular and renowned Punakha Dzong, built at the confluence of the Mother (Mo) and Father (Pho) Chhu. The architecture and artwork of this historic landmark are astounding and will leave lasting and lifelong memories. The wedding location of the current King, His Majesty Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck, Dzong is a breathtaking experience as you navigate your way through passages that link several courtyards to the Great Assembly Hall.



Amankora Gangtey



Candlelit Potato Shed Dinner

Situated a 10-minute walk from the lodge is a stone potato shed, built to house the local farmers' autumn potato harvest. A bukhari, traditional wood-burning oven, makes the shed comfortably warm. With Bhutanese wooden furniture and flickering candles, it makes the perfect setting for a romantic dinner.

Start your evening with some ara, the local wine, by the bonfire outside. Then savour a traditional Bhutanese meal inside to the accompaniment of a local musician.

We recommend wearing good shoes and warm clothes for this culinary journey, as the dirt road to the shed can become muddy in the rainy season. Please give us at least one day's notice.



Traditional Hot Stone Bath

Amankora Gangtey's Hot Stone Bath is situated in a candlelit stone hut on a hill, a 10-minute walk from the lodge. Bamboo doors allow full privacy or open to frame magnificent views of the Phobjikha Valley.

The wooden tub is filled with water, heated river stones which release beneficial minerals and the local healing Khempa herb. Sit back and unwind in the bath for as long as you wish while sipping on a cup of hot apple cider and watching the sunset or the stars.



Amankora Bumthang

Private BBQ by the Firepit

Our courtyard firepit is the perfect setting for a truly romantic dining experience. On a clear, starry night, we will set up a table by the fire and arrange a barbeque feast. The chef will cook for you, the musician will play, and you will have your own server who will make sure it will be an evening to remember.

Making Khabzey Biscuits in a Farmhouse

Bhutanese biscuits are called Khabzey and come in many shapes and forms – flowers, hearts, knots, even the Bhutanese eight lucky signs. Making beautiful and tasty Khabzey is an artform and our local farmhouse grandmother is an expert with many years of experience.

If you would like to learn how to master this art in authentic surroundings, we will gladly arrange for a lesson in a local farmhouse while you enjoy tea and other snacks.

Beer and Cheese Tasting at Red Panda Brewery

The Red Panda Brewery was started in 2006 by Fritz Maurer, originally Swiss, but a Bhutanese citizen since 1976. His brewery was the first established beer brewery in the country, and he is still the sole producer of the specialty Weissbier. A visit to the brewery includes a 30-minute tour of the premises to learn more about the production process of Red Panda, the beer ingredients, the history of the beer and the health benefits of this Bhutanese specialty. The tour concludes with a Red Panda beer and local cheese tasting in the brewery garden. For those who prefer non-alcoholic beverages, Bumthang-produced apple juice from the brewery across the road is also available.

The Red Panda Brewery is a 15-minute drive from the lodge. Please notify us one day in advance if you wish to go for the tour and tasting.

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