

# Wild & Ancient Himalaya: Nepal & Bhutan

Exploring Nature & Culture in Two Historic Mountain Kingdoms



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#### **Trip Details:**

**Days** 12 Days / Mar–Apr & Nov–Dec

**Price** From \$14195 (+Air)

# Wild & Ancient Himalaya: Nepal & Bhutan

#### Exploring Nature & Culture in Two Historic Mountain Kingdoms

Geographically diverse Nepal holds the world's highest mountains and lowland jungle plains. Safaris in the Terai reveal its captivating wildlife as we search for rhinos, sloth bears and leopards roaming the subtropical forests. In neighboring Bhutan, quality of life is measured in terms of Gross National Happiness, not merely material measures. Though Bhutan is a tiny country, it is a global conservation leader, proud to be not only carbon-neutral, but carbon-negative. The "Land of the Thunder Dragon" remains dedicated to preserving its deep Buddhist traditions and pristine landscapes. Visitor presence is still light, and a journey among its serene monasteries, Himalayan peaks, glacial rivers and peaceable villages reveals Bhutan's singular beauty. Combine an adventure in these two ancient kingdoms for a nature sojourn that will move your spirit.

# **Trip Highlights**

On this insider's discovery of two neighboring countries, find a distinctive focus on nature, scenery, wildlife and varied ecosystems, from tropical lowlands to subalpine heights

Explore the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Chitwan, home to Asian elephants, one-horned rhinoceros, sloth bear, spotted deer, golden jackal, profuse birdlife and more

Visit the temples of the Kathmandu Valley, and hike to Taktsang Monastery, Bhutan's famous "Tiger's Nest" temple perched half a mile up on a sheer mountain cliff



#### **Itinerary At A Glance**

**Day 1** Kathmandu, Nepal

**Day 2** Fly to Bharatpur / Chitwan National Park

**Days 3 & 4** On Safari in Chitwan National Park

**Day 5** Bharatpur / Kathmandu—Patan Durbar Square

**Day 6** Fly to Paro, Bhutan / Thimphu

**Day 7** Exploring the Thimphu Valley— Temple Hike & Takin Preserve

**Day 8** Dochula Pass / Punakha

# Wild & Ancient Himalaya: Nepal & Bhutan Itinerary

Exploring Nature & Culture in Two Historic Mountain Kingdoms

#### Day 1: Kathmandu, Nepal

Arrive in Kathmandu, the ancient and storied capital of Nepal. For centuries, this city backdropped by the world's highest mountain range has been a center of religious art and architecture in both Hindu and Buddhist traditions, and it is renowned for its intricate temples and public squares. Settle in at Dwarika's, a luxurious heritage lodge that evokes the palaces of Nepal's Newar kings, where we stay among artifacts dating back to the 14th century. This evening, gather with our Expedition Leader for a welcome dinner in a private room at our hotel.





#### **Itinerary At A Glance**

#### Day 9

Punakha Valley—Temple Hike / Punakha Dzong

**Day 10** Royal Botanical Gardens / Paro Valley—Archery Lesson

**Day 11** Paro—Tiger's Nest Monastery

**Day 12** Paro / Bangkok, Thailand / Depart

#### Day 2: Fly to Bharatpur / Chitwan National Park

Fly this morning to Bharatpur on the Terai plains of southern Nepal and transfer to our luxury ecolodge, Meghauli Serai, for the next three nights. This serene safari base is ideally situated on the edge of the Rapti River with immediate access to Chitwan National Park. Located in the largest area of undisturbed subtropical wilderness along the base of the Himalaya, the lodge is optimally situated for the best wildlife viewing in the Chitwan region, which we take full advantage of during our stay. The area around the lodge has a consistently high sighting rate for one-horned rhinoceros, crocodile and gharial, and other species abound, too.

#### Days 3 & 4: On Safari in Chitwan National Park

Chitwan National Park, established in 1973, is Nepal's first national park and was named a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1984. It encompasses 360 square miles of subtropical lowlands and is home to about 50 mammal species and more than 500 species of birds. We spend our days exploring the park on 4x4 safari drives, anticipating views of Chitwan's most famous wild residents. While sightings are never guaranteed, we have good chances to observe one-horned rhinoceros, Asian elephant, crocodile, leopard, sloth bear, sambar deer, wild boar, monkeys and jungle fowl, all in their natural habitat. River safaris are also an option. Conditions permitting, a chance to track tigers is a special highlight, as we join our Expedition Leader and a local guide to search for footprints and pugmarks that mark the tigers' hidden presence in the park.

#### Day 5: Bharatpur / Kathmandu—Patan Durbar Square

Return to Bharatpur airport this morning for our flight back to Kathmandu. This afternoon, visit Patan Durbar Square, one of seven designated cultural sites in the Kathmandu Valley that have earned the region UNESCO World Heritage status. Patan lies a few miles outside Kathmandu and is home to the valley's finest craftsmen who have preserved ancient techniques used in exquisite sculptures and carvings. The city retains much of its old charm with its narrow streets, brick houses and multitude of well-preserved Hindu temples, Buddhist monasteries and monuments. As in Kathmandu, Hinduism and Buddhism have co-existed here for centuries, and the cultural and religious harmony are evident. At the city's heart lies Patan Durbar Square, where the kings of Patan resided. On a guided tour, we wander among the melange of palace buildings, artistic courtyards, graceful pagoda temples and shrines—a display of Newari architecture that reached its pinnacle during the reign of the Malla kings in the 17th and 18th centuries. Continue to our hotel in Kathmandu to spend the night.



#### Day 6: Fly to Paro, Bhutan / Thimphu

Fly this morning to the "Land of the Thunder Dragon"—the tiny Himalayan kingdom of Bhutan. If the skies are clear on our flight to Paro, we'll see the highest peaks on the planet visible below in a serrated white spine, setting a striking backdrop as we approach the green trough of the Paro Valley. Rich in culture, lush in scenic beauty, and steeped in history and legend, Paro offers a bucolic welcome to the kingdom. From Paro we drive to Thimphu, Bhutan's idyllic capital and a stronghold of traditional Bhutanese art, architecture and culture. Surrounded by mountains and monasteries, this seat of government and commerce on the Wang Chuu River is a harmonious mix of modern development and ancient traditions. It's also the only national capital without traffic lights.

As we arrive in Thimphu, we visit the Iron Bridge of Tachogang Lhakhang, built 600 years ago by legendary bridge builder Thangtong Gyalpo, a renowned engineer believed to be the first to use heavy iron chains in the construction of suspension bridges, which influenced building methods in Europe and Asia. Late this afternoon, we visit Thimphu Dzong. This striking Buddhist monastery and fortress was built in the 13th century, reconstructed over the years, and has served as the office of the king and seat of civil government for the country since 1952.

#### Day 7: Exploring the Thimphu Valley—Temple Hike & Takin Preserve

Our encounter with the heritage of Thimphu begins with a visit to the capital's new Buddha statue, one of the tallest in the world at 170 feet. The structure houses more than 100,000 smaller Buddha statues inside, each made of bronze and gilded in gold like the larger icon. Then we head outside town to hike through a serene forest to a temple complex on the edge of a ridge. The trail offers magnificent views of the Thimphu Valley and is often used by His Majesty the fourth king for mountain biking. After lunch, tour a handmade paper factory and a traditional arts school. We also visit the Motithang Takin Preserve on the edge of the city. The takin, a large, shaggy hoofed mammal closely related to the muskox, is the national animal of Bhutan, so designated due to its prominent place in a popular Bhutanese myth from the 15th century. The preserve is also home to a few sambar and barking deer. On a hike through verdant meadows near the preserve, admire the landscape marked by colorful prayer flags fluttering from nearby homes and small temples.



#### Day 8: Dochula Pass / Punakha

En route to Punakha, cross Dochula Pass, a 10,171-foot saddle marked by 108 chortens, fluttering prayer flags and a panorama of the entire eastern Himalaya. The road drops dramatically into the Punakha Valley, descending through evergreen oak and rhododendron forests into fertile lowlands lush with rice, oranges, bananas and guavas. Punakha is the former capital of Bhutan and the winter residence of the monastic body. After lunch at a traditional local restaurant, set off for a short hike to Chimi Lhakhang Temple, a small shrine dedicated to one of Bhutan's favorite saints, the 15th-century Lama Drukpa Kunley. A rag-clad lotharian who used humor, songs and outrageous behavior to dramatize his teachings, he became known as the "Divine Madman" and is still beloved as such today. The peace of the Bhutanese landscape is palpable as our path to the temple ambles through green pastures and rice paddies, passing farmers and livestock in the terraced fields.

#### Day 9: Punakha Valley—Temple Hike / Punakha Dzong

This morning we visit Khamsun Yuelley Namgyal Chorten, a temple dedicated to the wellbeing of the kingdom, its people and all sentient beings. Built atop a high ridge, the temple offers magnificent views of the Punakha Valley. After a picnic lunch, explore the massive Punakha Dzong, known as the "Palace of Great Happiness." Straddling the confluence of the Po (Father) and Mo (Mother) rivers, the monastery is Bhutan's best-known fortress. Built in 1637, it was the seat of government until 1955 and home to Bhutan's religious establishment. The palace occupies one of the most scenic dzong sites in Bhutan; maroonrobed monks and guests must cross a wooden footbridge over the river to reach it.

#### Day 10: Royal Botanical Gardens / Paro Valley—Archery Lesson

A half-day drive returns us to Paro, though we stop en route for a visit to the Royal Botanical Gardens at Lampelri on top of Dochula Pass. Opened in 2008, this is the first botanical garden in Bhutan, encompassing 125 acres of lush forest, flowers, a lake, and walking paths that lead to striking mountain viewpoints. A highlight is the park's 46 species of rhododendron, which thrive in the Himalayas, including 18 species native to the park they bloom in a profuse show starting in mid-spring. We may also see musk deer roaming the misty woods. Continue to the Paro Valley in the mountainous northwest of Bhutan, a region rich in natural beauty and culture and abounding with myths and legends. Visit a local farmhouse where we'll participate in a traditional archery lesson. Archery is the national sport of the kingdom, and tournaments and competitions are held throughout the country, often during public holidays and local festivals called *tsechu*. Though archery historically is a martial art, it is practiced by the peace-loving Bhutanese for physical exercise and to hone concentration.



#### Day 11: Paro—Tiger's Nest Monastery

Our final morning in Bhutan holds a most impressive sight: Taktsang Monastery, also known as the "Tiger's Nest." The famous subject of many photographs, this complex of 17th-century temples clings to the side of a precipitous cliff nearly 3,000 feet above the valley floor. Its name is derived from myth, which holds that Guru Rinpoche, the tantric mystic who brought Buddhism from India to Bhutan in the 8th century, landed here on the back of a flying tigress and stayed to meditate in a cave for three months. Gain an initial vista as we hike to a viewpoint opposite the monastery, while those who choose to tackle the entire challenging journey will have their effort well rewarded with unsurpassed views of the temples, surrounding peaks and valley below. Afterward, there may be time to do some last-minute shopping before saying farewell to this most captivating country.

#### Day 12: Paro / Bangkok, Thailand / Depart

Our Himalayan sojourn concludes as we depart from the Paro airport on a group flight to Bangkok, where we connect with onward flights.





#### **Accommodation Details:**

Dwarika's Hotel

Meghauli Serai

The Postcard Dewa

Dhensa Boutique Resort

#### COMO Uma Paro

For detailed descriptions, visit nathab.com/asia-adventuretravel/natural-jewels-of-bhutannepal/accommodation

# Wild & Ancient Himalaya: Nepal & Bhutan Accommodations

Exploring Nature & Culture in Two Historic Mountain Kingdoms



#### **Dwarika's Hotel**

This award-winning heritage hotel in Kathmandu is modeled on the grand palaces of Nepal's Newar kings, featuring intricate carved wood and terracotta, antiques and contemporary amenities.



#### Meghauli Serai

At this elegant safari lodge on the edge of Chitwan National Park, 16 luxury riverside villas with private plunge pools provide a soothing and secluded jungle sanctuary.



#### **The Postcard Dewa**

Located in the forest on the outskirts of Bhutan's capital city, the Postcard Dewa Hotel is a quiet and secluded retreat with views of the Khasadraphchu Valley and Wangchu River.





#### **Dhensa Boutique Resort**

In the heart of the Punakha Valley, enjoy modern design and peaceable ambience with private balconies, a glass-enclosed dining area, and a broad stone terrace to drink in the fresh mountain air.



#### **COMO Uma Paro**

A luxurious retreat set in the peaceful Paro Valley of Bhutan. Blending modern comfort with traditional Bhutanese design, COMO Uma Paro provides a serene escape immersed in nature at the base of Bhutan's dramatic trails and iconic Himalayan landmarks.



# A Two-Country Combo with A Unique Itinerary

Most trips to the Himalayas tend to be somewhat singularly focused: you'll spend most of your time exploring museums and monasteries, or you'll sign on for a taxing trek between high-altitude camps. What about an alternative for the traveler who's fascinated by both nature and culture, who values a genuine immersion in nature but also appreciates creature comforts? We think we have created your ideal adventure:



#### A Unique Nature-Intensive Focus

Our itinerary combines highlights of two countries and offers an unusual combination of nature and culture rarely presented together. We search for native wildlife, such as Asian elephant and rhinos, in Nepal and cross alpine passes in Bhutan—and we also experience each country's Buddhist and Hindu heritage expressed in rich architectural and religious sites.



#### Spend Three Days Tracking Wildlife in the Jungles of Nepal

Nepal is known for its Himalayan heights, but its lowlands—called the Terai—are where its most abundant wildlife resides. We stay at a secluded luxury ecolodge near Chitwan National Park, Nepal's premier wildlife reserve, and the lodge boasts high sightings of one-horned rhinoceros, crocodile and gharial. We may also see wild Asian elephant, leopard, sloth bear, wild boar, crocodile, sambar deer and monkeys—and, if we're extremely lucky, the elusive Bengal tiger.

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#### A Diverse Itinerary Filled with Varied Activities

This unusual trip includes an engaging mix of activities: wildlife drives, guided nature walks and canoe rides, plus cultural experiences in Kathmandu and Bhutan. Bhutan is known for its dramatic landscapes and serene Buddhist culture, and we'll have ample opportunity to experience both as we visit temples adorned with fluttering prayer flags and its architecturally unique dzongs (massive fortified monasteries). If you're the kind of traveler who finds everything interesting, this trip is for you!

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#### **Enjoy Outstanding Birdwatching**

In addition to the varied mammals we may spot, Chitwan abounds in bird species—more than 500 are found in the vicinity of our lodge—and we're sure to see plenty in Bhutan as well. Even casual birdwatchers will enjoy the avian elements of our adventure. Bring your binoculars!



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#### Visit Bhutan's Motithang Takin Reserve

While stunning mountainscapes and a rich Buddhist heritage are Bhutan's greatest draws for most travelers, a visit to this wildlife reserve is also a highlight for those interested in Bhutan's native wildlife species. The takin, a large, shaggy ungulate related to the muskox, is Bhutan's national animal, and we'll enjoy close-up views at this sanctuary, as well as sightings of sambar and barking deer.

#### A Small Group for More Meaningful Experiences

Because we know that both wildlife and cultural encounters are best enjoyed in intimate settings, we travel with no more than 11 guests—ensuring quiet moments with wildlife and personal interaction with the people we will meet.

#### Travel with Outstanding Guides

At Nat Hab, we've developed a global reputation for the world's best guides, because we know guides are the key to making a good trip truly great. In Bhutan, our own Expedition Leader is paired with an outstanding local Bhutanese guide, ensuring the ideal complement of trip management expertise, attentive personal service and insider insight. And in Nepal's Chitwan National Park, we are joined by expert local naturalists from our jungle lodge who are highly adept wildlife spotters. Our highly trained Expedition Leader oversees your trip from start to finish, while our knowledgeable local guides add in-depth understanding of local culture and wildlife. Our Expedition Leaders average 15 years of guiding experience—**read our Expedition Leader bios** and traveler comments regarding the quality of our leaders.

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#### **Our Quality-Value Guarantee Ensures Your Outstanding Himalayan Adventure**

With Natural Habitat Adventures, you receive our exclusive guarantee, which clearly states that we will meet the high expectations we set forth in our promotional materials. To our knowledge, this is the most ambitious guarantee made by any adventure travel company.

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#### Feel Good About Your Carbon-Neutral Journey

We care deeply about our planet, as we know you do. When you travel with us, the carbon emissions from your trip are 100% offset—including your round-trip flights from home. Natural Habitat Adventures has been the world's first carbon-neutral travel company since 2007.

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#### Natural Habitat Adventures is WWF's Travel Partner

Because of our commitment to environmentally friendly travel, as well as the exceptional quality of our small-group nature adventures, World Wildlife Fund, the world's leading environmental conservation organization, has named Natural Habitat Adventures its worldwide travel partner—a designation that makes us exceedingly proud!





# Dates & Pricing Summary:

Prices: From \$14195 (+Air)

**Group Size:** Limited to 12 Travelers

Physical Requirements:

# Wild & Ancient Himalaya: Nepal & Bhutan Dates, Pricing & Info

Exploring Nature & Culture in Two Historic Mountain Kingdoms

#### 2025 Departures

Departure	Return	Notes
Nov 23, 2025	Dec 4, 2025	Pair with our Snow Leopard trip*
Nov 30, 2025	Dec 11, 2025	
Dec 4, 2025	Dec 17, 2025	Photo Expedition
Dec 8, 2025	Dec 19, 2025	Pair with our Grand India trip*

#### 2026 Departures

Departure	Return	Notes
Feb 13, 2026	Feb 26, 2026	Photo Expedition
Feb 20, 2026	Mar 5, 2026	Photo Expedition
Mar 14, 2026	Mar 25, 2026	Pair with our Snow Leopard, Snow Leopard Photo Expedition, Grand India, or Tiger Quest trip*



### Dates & Pricing Summary:

#### Prices: From \$14195 (+Air)

**Group Size:** Limited to 12 Travelers

Physical Requirements:

Departure	Return	Notes
Mar 22, 2026	Apr 2, 2026	Pair with our Snow Leopard, Snow Leopard Photo Expedition, Grand India, or India Tiger Photo Expedition trip*
Mar 30, 2026	Apr 10, 2026	Pair with our Snow Leopard, Grand India, Tiger Quest, or India Tiger Photo Expedition trip*
Apr 13, 2026	Apr 24, 2026	Pair with our Snow Leopard, Snow Leopard Photo Expedition, Grand India, Tiger Quest, or India Tiger Photo Expedition trip*
Apr 20, 2026	May 1, 2026	Habitat Club Pricing Available   Pair with our Grand India or Tiger Quest trip*
Nov 9, 2026	Nov 20, 2026	
Nov 9, 2026	Nov 22, 2026	Photo Expedition
Nov 17, 2026	Nov 28, 2026	
Nov 30, 2026	Dec 13, 2026	Photo Expedition
Dec 1, 2026	Dec 12, 2026	
Dec 9, 2026	Dec 20, 2026	

#### 2027 Departures

Departure	Return	Notes
Feb 14, 2027	Feb 27, 2027	Photo Expedition
Feb 21, 2027	Mar 6, 2027	Photo Expedition
Mar 2, 2027	Mar 13, 2027	
Mar 15, 2027	Mar 26, 2027	
Mar 23, 2027	Apr 3, 2027	
Mar 31, 2027	Apr 11, 2027	
Apr 14, 2027	Apr 25, 2027	
Apr 21, 2027	May 2, 2027	
Nov 9, 2027	Nov 20, 2027	
Nov 15, 2027	Nov 26, 2027	
Dec 1, 2027	Dec 14, 2027	Photo Expedition



Departure	Return	Notes
Dec 7, 2027	Dec 20, 2027	Photo Expedition



## Pricing

2025 Prices

Trip Price \$13895 to \$14195 (+internal air)

Internal Air Cost: \$2147 per person (this will be listed separately on our invoicing).
Single Occupancy: For a single room add \$3295. Click here to learn how you can avoid the single supplement.
Deposit: \$1000 per person (nonrefundable).



Prices listed are per person based on double occupancy and are given in U.S. dollars. **Please read our Payment & Refund Policy here.** 

2026 Prices

Mouse over or tap dates above to view prices for specific departure dates.

Trip Price \$14795 to \$15095 (+internal air)

**Internal Air Cost:** \$1997 per person (this will be listed separately on our invoicing). **Single Occupancy:** For a single room add \$2995. **Click here**to learn how you can avoid the single supplement.

Deposit: \$1000 per person (nonrefundable).

Make It Private: View pricing to take this trip privately with just you and your select travel companions.

Prices listed are per person based on double occupancy and are given in U.S. dollars. **Please read our Payment & Refund Policy here.** 

#### 2027 Prices

We're still in the process of confirming 2027 pricing. Please contact an Adventure Specialist for more details: 800-543-8917.

## Included

Trip price includes: Accommodations, services of Nat Hab's professional Expedition Leader(s) and local guides, all meals from dinner on Day 1 through breakfast on final day, some gratuities, airport transfers on Day 1 and final day (in Bhutan only), all activities and entrance fees, all taxes, permits and service fees.

> Internal air cost includes: All flights within the itinerary (this will be listed separately on our invoicing).

# **Not Included**

Travel to and from the start and end point of your trip, alcoholic beverages, some gratuities, passport and Nepal visa fees, optional activities, items of a personal nature (phone calls, laundry and internet, etc.), airline baggage fees, required medical evacuation insurance, optional travel protection insurance.



# **Important Information About This Trip**

Most of our guests travel to Nepal for encounters with the country's wildlife. **While nature experiences in this part of the world are indeed remarkable, there is a fundamental difference between a safari in the Nepal jungle and a typical African safari.** At times, guests lured to Nepal by tourist brochures promising "wildlife safaris" can be disappointed to see fewer animals than they expected, or at least fewer than they might normally see in Africa. It is not that Nepal's surviving jungle habitat is thinly populated with wildlife, but, similarly to places like Costa Rica where the forest vegetation is very dense, and here, the elephant grass is also very tall, animals have mastered the art of camouflage and can be difficult to spot. That said, we have carefully designed our itineraries to capitalize on the best conditions to spot wildlife. But various factors can affect potential sightings, including inclement weather, which creates small pockets of water that allow the animals to remain hidden in the forest, rather than being forced into the open to frequent waterholes. The secret to a successful nature adventure lies with the expertise of our Expedition Leaders and park rangers, as well as your knowing what to expect as a traveler, and in understanding that the privilege of stepping into a wild and untouched natural realm is a reward in itself.

A note about departure dates: Nat Hab cannot finalize confirmed dates for any given Nepal & Bhutan departure until the airlines publish their schedule for our internal flights on tour in the unlikely event that their schedule may force us to shift our itinerary dates. The airlines typically release this information in June of each year. Please do not book your international flights until departure dates have been confirmed by Nat Hab.

## **Mandatory Insurance**

Since the areas we travel to on this trip are remote and wild (that's why we go there!), we require medical evacuation insurance for our guests' safety. If you decline the medical evacuation insurance coverage offered by Natural Habitat, we request that you send us documentation of the independent coverage you have selected. We will add the cost of a medical evacuation policy to your tour invoice until you provide our office with proof of coverage including your insurance company's name, contact number and your individual policy number. Thank you for understanding that our policy exists exclusively in the interest of our guests' safety.

## **Getting There & Getting Home**

You should plan to arrive in Kathmandu, Nepal by 3 pm on Day 1 of the trip in order to participate in an orientation and group welcome dinner beginning at 6:30 pm. For trips in February-April, you are free to schedule your departing flight from Bangkok, Thailand after 9 pm on the final day. For trips in November & December, you are free to schedule your departing flight from Bangkok, Thailand after 11 pm on the final day. In either case, we recommend that you stay an extra night in Bangkok to account for any flight delays.

We can best serve you if our Natural Habitat Adventures Travel Desk makes your reservations, as we are intimately familiar with the special requirements of this program and can arrange the most efficient travel. Please call us at 800-543-8917. Note that while we offer you the best possible rates available to us on airfare and additional nights' accommodations, you may find better fares online.





#### **Extension Details:**

**The Grand India Wildlife Adventure** \$12795

Land of the Snow Leopard \$10995

# Wild & Ancient Himalaya: Nepal & Bhutan Extensions

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#### The Grand India Wildlife Adventure

Look for rare Bengal tigers, one-horned rhinos and other endangered animals as we discover India's wild side on an exploration of three premier national parks. You won't find a richer Indian nature safari! **\$12795** (+air)



#### Land of the Snow Leopard

On a winter adventure in far-north India, join a quest to view one of the world's most elusive cats. Stay in the very midst of its high alpine habitat at our private, deluxe ecolodge in a small village in Ladakh.

**\$10995** (+air)



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