



GANGTEY LODGE

AUTHENTIC LUXURY IN UNDISCOVERED BHUTAN

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EXPERIENCES AND ACTIVITIES OFFERED

BY GANGTEY LODGE

At Gangtey Lodge our authentic experiences immerse guests into the culture and natural environment of our Valley, enabling our guests to re-connect with themselves and their loved ones.

Gangtey Lodge is committed to sustainable tourism and providing benefits to our local community. We have a very positive relationship with the local Shedra (*Buddhist College*), which is a short 5 minute walk from the lodge. Many of our activities are in relation with the Shedra, with a percentage of the funds being donated to support the school, its projects and the monks themselves. The Shedra is very open to visitors, which is why we highly encourage our guests to experience it through our activities. All Experiences related to the Monastery and Shedra are subject to availability of the monks' daily and seasonal schedule.



SPIRITUAL

EXPERIENCES AT THE SHEDRA AND MONASTERY

The Gangtey Shedra and Monastery are working institutions and we are their honored guests. As such, all our spiritual experiences are subject to availability and the seasonal & daily schedule of the Shedra and Monastery. Kindly note the monks at the Shedra and the Monastery are away for their winter break from December to February.

MORNING & EVENING PRAYER SERVICE AT THE SHEDRA

(05:15 & 18:30)

The Shedra, located a 5 minute walk above Gangtey Lodge, is home to approximately 300 monk students. The students range in age from 12-40 years old. Mainly Buddhist religious studies as well as Basic English courses are taught. The monk students are also responsible for the day-to-day housekeeping tasks such as cooking, cleaning and laundry.

The **Morning Prayer** takes place every morning from 05:15-06:30 (*except Sundays*). The day starts very early at 05:15, to get ready for the morning prayers; these prayers are referred to as the Tara Prayers. Prayers are offered in the early morning as Buddhists consider the body and mind to be most pure at this time of day. After the prayer session, you are invited to accompany one of the lama (*teacher of Dharma*) in their morning rounds. This will offer you the opportunity to converse with the lama while the monk students are getting ready for their studies.

The **Evening Prayer** takes place every evening from 18:30-19:30 (*except Saturdays*). It is possible to combine the **17:30 meditation class** with the evening prayer. After the prayer session, you are invited to discuss any topics you wish with the monks.

- **USD 20 per person** – kindly advise us 2 hours ahead, so that we may arrange this for you. Gangtey Lodge donates this entire charge to the Shedra.

DONATE A MEAL TO THE MONKS

Offering a meal to the monastic community of Gangtey Valley is a generous and rewarding gesture. It supports the Gangtey Trulku Rimpoche in his mission to preserve, promote and propagate Buddhism for peace, prosperity and harmony in the world.

His foundation, Padling Choeki Gatshal, supports over 33 Goenpas, Shedras and Dubdras, with the aim to preserve Bhutanese tradition and provide religious education and retreat facilities. By donating a meal to the monks of Gangtey, the monks will offer special prayers and blessings to the generous donators and you are welcomed to participate in the ceremony and meal.

- **USD 250** - this will feed all the monks at the Shedra for breakfast, lunch, afternoon tea and dinner. Kindly advise us one day ahead so that we may coordinate this special event for you.

EVENING MEDITATION CLASS AT THE SHEDRA

(17:30)

It is with great pleasure that we have worked together with the Shedra for our guests to experience a Buddhist meditation class. The Shedra is an institute where the monks learn about Buddhist philosophy, poetry, logic, meditation and debate. In addition to the regular academic practice and classes for monks, the Shedra provides a meditation class for our guests, mainly on Compassion and Shamata (*tranquility and calm abiding meditation*) by highly qualified lamas (or Khenpos), with English or Hindi translations. This meditation practice will help you overcome stress, develop a peaceful mind and to generate kindness. Prior to the meditation class, there will be time for a discussion with the instructor on meditation or any other aspect of Buddhism.

A ROBE FOR A MONK

- **Complimentary service** – all donations to the Shedra are very welcome.

Ranging from 12 to 40 years old, approximately 300 monks reside in the Gangtey Shedra Monastic School. While most come for religious and spiritual fulfillment courses in Nyingmapa Buddhism, some students come because their families are too poor to keep them at home. The Shedra does not receive any financial aid from the government and solely relies on sponsorship and support from the Gangtey Trulku Rimpoche, the 9th body reincarnate of Pema Lingpa. Monks receive only 2 robes a year and donating robes will allow the Shedra to re-allocate funds to other needs for the students. Gangtey Lodge stocks new robes for our guests to purchase and donate to the monks while visiting the Shedra or Goenpa.

- **USD 35++ per robe.**

SPIRITUAL CLEANSING (THRUSEL)

Buddhist fumigation is a ritual practiced by the Bhutanese every morning and during special pujas (*religious ceremonies*). It is a common belief that every place has its local protective deity or spirit and the fumigation is to please the spirit and keep the spirit happy. The ritual is also used for self-cleansing of all the bad spirits surrounding us and to be blessed with good luck. Spiritual cleansing involves the burning of selected herbs and pouring of holy water (thru-chhu) over one's head for purification. This normally takes place in the early morning hours and is in the presence of a senior monk from the Shedra.

- **USD 70++ per ceremony** – kindly advise us the evening before, so we may arrange this for you. Gangtey Lodge donates USD 35 to the Monastery. All donations to the Shedra are very welcome. The ceremony is normally arranged between **07:30-08:00** and lasts around 30 minutes.



BUTTER LAMP
(KHAR-MA)
CEREMONY AT
THE GOENPA

The lighting of butter lamps accompanied by prayers has a special significance in Buddhism. Lighting butter lamps represents relief from suffering and provides you with a guiding light to find enlightenment. A lama at the Gangtey Goenpa (*monastery*) will be happy to lead this significant ritual for you personally.

- **USD 50++ per ceremony** – kindly advise us at the time of booking so that we can arrange this for you. Gangtey Lodge donates USD 25 to the Gangtey Monastery.

HOISTING OF
PRAYER FLAG
(LUNG DHAR)

For centuries, prayer flags have been a major part of Bhutanese tradition, symbolizing the reality and pervasiveness of their belief. Prayer flags are hoisted for happiness, long life, prosperity, luck and merit and to offer karmic merit to all sentient beings. Prayer flags are raised outside homes, hung on hilltops, bridges and places of spiritual importance. Hoisting a prayer flag is considered to bring good luck and merit to all sentient beings. Gangtey Lodge has an area behind the local Shedra where the ceremony is performed.

- **Complimentary service** – the raising of a prayer flag is a complimentary service arranged by the lodge and can be integrated into an itinerary.

Kindly note that all Experiences related to the Monastery and Shedra are subject to availability of the monks' daily and seasonal schedule.

KUMBU
LHAKHANG

In the nearby village of Kumbu, located approximately 2 kilometres to the north east of the Lodge, the small and almost forgotten Kumbu Lhakhang (meaning 'Kumbu Temple'), can be found. The history of this quaint temple goes back far in time and was built by

the Tibetan Lama Tshenden Dawa in the 17th Century. It is a relatively easy and pleasant hike up the hill to Kumbu Lhakang; alternatively it is also possible to cycle along the feeder road located just beside the Lodge.

The Kumbu Lhakhang offers several interesting statues, as well as many historical artifacts and scriptures. On the main floor you may visit the statue of "Sangay Menla", the Medicine Buddha. The Bhutanese people believe that when they suffer from an illness, they should pray to the Medicine Buddha and chant his mantra prior to taking traditional medicine. They believe the Medicine Buddha will bless them and they will recover from their illness. Climbing up the traditional Bhutanese staircase (*a steep wooden ladder*) to the second floor, you may visit statues of "Duesum Sangay" and the temple of "Goenkhang".

"Duesum Sangay" represents the Buddha of the past (*Amitabha*), the Buddha of the present (*Sakyamuni*) and the Buddha of the future (*Maitreya*). "Goenkhang" is the temple of the protective female deity called Sipey Gyelmo. The deity is a friendly spirit, looking after the local people. Females are not allowed to enter the "Goenkhang" temple. On the 29th day of the 8th month of the Bhutanese calendar, Kumbu Lhakhang performs a special ritual known as "Kumbu Tsham Choe," to commemorate the death of Lama Tshenden Dawa who built the Kumbu Lhakang.

- **USD 15 ++ per person** – kindly advise us at time of booking so we can make arrangements with the caretaker of the temple. Water and snacks included. All donations are very welcome.



CULTURE

FARMHOUSE VISIT

Phobjikha Valley is rich in culture and traditions, its origins shrouded in myths and legends that have been passed down through the ages in the oral tradition. The valley covers most of Phobji and Gangteng (Gangtey) 'Gewogs' (groups of villages).

Two main ethnic groups reside in the valley. The Phobjibs, who reside in Phoji 'Gewong', speak Henka, also known as Nyenkha, or 'ancient language'. The Phobjibs are said to have originated from two classes; a nobility and an ordinary class.

The Gangteps, who reside in the valley below the monastery, served the lamas in ancient times. Some now serve as priests in the monastery. Gangteps speak Shakha. Today, the people of Gangtey Valley predominantly farm potatoes, plus wheat, buckwheat, and barley.

Visit a traditional farmhouse in Gangtey Valley, where you will be able to immerse yourself in the local community and learn more about their culture. Join the family and experience how they make homemade traditional butter and cheese, or help them harvest potatoes.

- **USD 30 ++ per person** – kindly advise us at the time of booking, so we may arrange this for you. For our farmhouse visits Gangtey Lodge pays a fee to the family to help supplement their income.

ARCHERY & DARTS: TRADITIONAL GAMES OF BHUTAN

Bhutan's national sport is Dha (*archery*), which together with Khuru (darts), are the most popular sports for the Bhutanese. We have several traditional bows and sets of darts available in case you are inclined to challenge any of the team. There are some very accomplished archers within our family members, who are happy to teach you the basics.

- **Complimentary Service.**

BHUTANESE DRESS

One of the most distinctive aspects of the Bhutanese is the traditional dress, unique garments that have evolved over thousands of years. Men wear the "Gho", a knee-length robe that is tied at the waist by a traditional belt known as a "Kera". Women wear the "Kira", a long, ankle-length dress accompanied by a light outer jacket known as a "Tego", with an inner layer known as a "Wonju".

Wearing a Bhutanese Kira or Gho is a wonderful way to dress up for dinner or to visit the monastery.

- **Complimentary service.**

NATURE

GANGTEY VALLEY HIKES AND MOUNTAIN BIKE RIDES

Immerse yourself in the pristine surroundings of our Valley by hiking the ancient trails through the blue pine forests, or meander past the crane roosting grounds to visit our neighbours. Alternatively, take one of our mountain bikes to visit traditional villages throughout the valley.

There are numerous trails for both hiking and mountain bike riding, which range from easy to strenuous and from 2 to 6 hours, or longer if you wish. Please contact any of our Lodge family members for suggestions on a trail or route that may best suit your liking and fitness level.

Our mountain bikes are Complimentary for our in-house guests. Guests can advise us 4 hours ahead, so we may arrange this for you.

**EVENING WITH
BLACK-NECK
CRANE VISITOR
CENTRE (RSPN)
STAFF**

Bhutan is one of four countries with the highest species density on earth. The Royal Society for the Protection of Nature was established in 1987, as a citizen based NGO, to preserve Bhutan's unique environment.

The Phobjikha (*Gangtey*) Valley, possesses one of the largest high-altitude wet lands in Bhutan, rich in flora and fauna. Wetlands are among the most productive ecosystems in the world and the valley floor and surrounding forests of Phobjikha Valley are home to 14 globally threatened species, including wild boar, barking deer, Himalayan black bear and leopards.

Of these, the Black-necked Cranes are the most mysterious and the last to be discovered of the 15 species of cranes in the world. Revered in Bhutan, they are endemic to the Tibetan Plateau and migrate to lower altitudes, such as Gangtey Valley, in autumn and winter (*usually from end of October – February / March*).

The Phobjikha Valley was established as a nature reserve in 2003 by the Royal Society for the Protection of Nature (*RSPN*), for the protection of the black-necked cranes and thirteen other vulnerable species. The RSPN's Black-necked Crane Center performs invaluable work in ensuring the protection of their roosting areas, educating both locals & tourists of the importance of the cranes to the valley



and in providing care & shelter for an injured black-necked cranes, Karma and Pema. If you would like to learn more about the black-necked crane and the work the center does on a daily basis, we will happily invite the staff up for evening drinks and further discussion.

TREE PLANTING AND PICNIC

Here in Bhutan, we are immensely proud to be the only carbon negative country in the World. Environmental conservation is one of the Four Pillars of our Gross National Happiness manifest. As such, it is enshrined in our constitution that we preserve 60 percent of the land under forest.

It is a Gangtey Lodge Family tradition to support and embrace this idea. Every year on the 2nd June, to celebrate the coronation of His Majesty the Fourth King of Bhutan Jigme Singye Wangchuck, the creator of the Gross National Happiness concept, our Family strives to plant more than 100 trees a year.

We would also love for you to join us outside of this date. From June to August, when the conditions are just right, we would be delighted to escort you to our Forest and help to restore the quality and balance of Mother Earth by planting your trees next to ours.

A short hike passing by our neighbouring villages will bring you to a meadow at the edge of the forest. After giving back to Nature, we will celebrate the event with an afternoon tea picnic in this beautiful spot, before returning to the Lodge at your leisure.

- **USD 40++ per person.**

OUTDOOR DINING EXPERIENCES

BREAKFAST OR LUNCH AND BLESSING EXPERIENCE AT GANGTEY MONASTERY

The experience starts from the lodge, when guests are escorted to the Monastery to participate with the monks and lamas in the Tshewang prayer (*a prayer for personal empowerment, wish fulfillment and a healthy life*). The prayer will last approximately 30 minutes, during which guests participate in the lighting of butter lamps. At the end of the prayer, guests will receive a personal blessing from the Tulku (*a reincarnated Master*) and an exclusive tour of the Monastery. Afterwards, guests will be able to enjoy an exceptional private breakfast or lunch experience within the monastery.

- **USD 115++ per breakfast & blessing** (*for two people*) – kindly advise us 1 day ahead so we may coordinate this special event for you.
- **USD 155 ++per lunch & blessing** (*for two people*) – kindly advise us 1 day ahead so we may coordinate this special event for you.
- Gangtey Lodge donates USD 80 to the Monastery for all breakfast or lunch and blessing experiences.

WOODSHED DINING EXPERIENCE

A short step below our main lodge sits our cozy and traditional woodshed, with sweeping views over the valley. Exclusive and private, it is the perfect space for an intimate and highly personalized dining experience.



Our team will happily serve a lazy late morning brunch, or an atmospheric candle lit dinner by the warm Bukhari to reignite the romance in your life as you gaze upon the star studded sky.

- **USD 65++ per person** – Brunch; Our Woodshed Brunch Experience should be pre-booked in advance, 1 day ahead.

Kindly note that the Woodshed Brunch Experience is subject to a 100% cancellation charge should they be pre-booked/prepaid and cancelled on the event day. If cancelled by 8.00 pm on the day preceding the event, no cancellation fee will be applied.

- **USD 110++ per person** – Dinner; Our Woodshed Dining Experience should be pre-booked in advance, 1 day latest.

Kindly note that the Woodshed Dining Experience is subject to a 50% cancellation charge should they be pre-booked/prepaid and cancelled by 12.00 noon on event day. They are subject to a 100% cancellation charge should they be pre-booked/prepaid and cancelled after 12.00, noon on the event day.

COOKING CLASS

At Gangtey Lodge, food has always been key to a greater understanding of the history, customs, and traditions. Join us in exploring and preparing a culinary journey of Bhutan. Perfect to combine with other experiences, collect ingredients such as homemade cheese and butter from a visit to a village house, or join our chefs shopping at the local market. Finally, dine in our Woodshed and enjoy your creations.

- **USD 35 ++ per person**

Kindly advise us on booking so we may coordinate this special event for you.

GANGTEY 360° HIKE AND PICNIC

This breathtaking hike, Gangtey 360°, begins with a 15 minute drive back up towards Lawa La Pass. From here you will set off on a 30-40 minute hike up towards the meditation cliff at 3,400m. The hike takes you up a sloping lined pathway, through towering bushes of jade-hued bamboo. During the spring months, the woodlands on either side of the valley look particularly stunning, with an array of colored rhododendrons. In the winter months, the views from the top offer up the snow-capped Himalayas to the north.

When you reach the top you are rewarded with unobstructed 360° views on all sides; Gangtey Valley as far as the eye can see and the Himalayas. Walk along the ridge line to see the secluded meditation huts before enjoying a breakfast or lunch with the spectacular views. Afterwards head down the ridge towards the Shedra (*monk college*) arriving back at the lodge approx. 1 hour later.

- **USD 220++ per breakfast/lunch** setup (*for two people*) – kindly advise us at the time of booking, so we may arrange this for you.

Kindly note that all Outdoor Experiences are subject to availability, weather and lodge schedule. All activities are subject to a 100% cancellation charge should they be pre booked/prepaid and cancelled on the event day. If canceled by 6.00 pm on the day preceding the event, no cancellation fee will apply.





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