

DRANGME CHHU



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TRIP PLANNER

Please use this Trip Planner as a resource for general information on your Drangme Chhu adventure. The information enclosed covers most everything you'll need to know before your trip. Of course, if you have questions that are not answered in this packet, we are happy to help! Just call 1-800-346-6277 in the USA or Canada or 1-209-736-4677 if outside the USA or Canada to speak with an adventure consultant, or e-mail us at info@oars.com.

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TRIP PREPARATION CHECK LIST

- ☐ **Purchase Travel Insurance:** For your protection, we require that all participants have evacuation insurance. If you don't have proof of insurance at the start of the trip, you cannot take part in the expedition. A policy including trip cancellation insurance is highly recommended to cover your non-refundable payments, in most cases, should you have to cancel your trip due to illness or injury. As with most major travel arrangements, there are cancellation fees that will apply regardless of why or when you might need to cancel.
- ☐ **Trip Forms:** Everyone will need to complete the required trip forms. Refer to your confirmation e-mail for details. Forms must be filled out no later than 90 days prior to your trip. If you are reserving your trip within 90 days, please complete the forms immediately.
- ☐ **Reserve flights, shuttles and lodging:** Confirm travel arrangements to and from your departure and return cities. Verify with your adventure consultant that your trip has met minimum numbers prior to booking flights. Reserve pre-trip and/or post-trip lodging, if required or extending your visit. Please let us know if you need additional pre- or post-tour nights in Paro or Guwahati.
- ☐ **Whitewater Orientation:** To increase your safety, we expect everyone to watch our 23-minute Whitewater Orientation video before joining us. Check out the 5-minute animated CROA Safety Video on the same webpage. Watch at <http://www.oars.com/videos/oars-whitewater-orientation> or call 800-346-6277 to request a free DVD. Please don't leave home without watching.
- ☐ **Physical Conditioning:** Your outdoor adventure will be an active participatory trip. Regular exercise prior to your departure will certainly add to your enjoyment. Take the time to get into shape with a consistent fitness routine.
- ☐ **Payments:** Final payment is due in our office 90 days prior to your trip (refer to your invoice for final payment date). Please let us know if you would like us to automatically charge your credit card on file when final payment is due.

TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS

Meeting Place & Time

Paro International Airport (PBH), Bhutan. Flights into Paro arrive from 8:00 AM through 3:00 PM daily. Clearing customs takes about 30 minutes. An O.A.R.S. representative will meet you outside the customs area and transfer you to our hotel in Paro. The drive takes about 20 minutes and you may check-in immediately.

We will meet at 6:00PM in the lobby of our hotel for a pre-departure meeting, followed by a “welcome dinner.”



Getting to Paro, Bhutan

Druk Air is the only airline servicing Paro, Bhutan. Druk Air offers flights from Bangkok, Thailand; Kathmandu, Nepal; Delhi, Kolkata, Guwahati, Bagdogra, Gaya and Mumbai, India; Dhaka, Bangladesh; and Singapore. You will need to purchase a flight to one of these connecting cities and then purchase your flight to Paro with Druk Air separately. Druk Air does not work with consolidators. With the time changes, this can be tricky, so pay special attention to your Druk Air connecting time. For specific details see www.drukair.com.

We highly recommend spending one night in your connecting city to recover from jet-lag so you can better enjoy and take advantage of your first day in Paro, Bhutan.

Many airlines offer both direct and indirect service to these destinations from the US. They include, but are not limited to: United, Air India, American, Delta, Lufthansa, Cathay Pacific, Emirates, Qatar, Singapore Airlines, British Airways, KLM, and Virgin Atlantic.

Please do not purchase airfare until your departure has been confirmed by O.A.R.S., ensuring the minimum number of required guests. It is also suggested that you arrange your visa for India prior to flights.

The domestic flight, from Bumthang to Yongphula on day 7, will be purchased for you. The cost of this flight is not included in your trip price and will be added to your invoice once purchased. *The cost is subject to change, but will likely range from \$175 to \$200.*

After Your Trip/Departing India

The tour ends in Guwahati, India, on day 13. We will reach Guwahati International Airport (GAU) between 11AM and 12 noon, in time to catch afternoon connecting flights. To be safe, it is best if your flight does not depart before 2:00 PM. Your guide will be checking your flight details the day before, to ensure everyone can be accommodated. The group will leave the hotel to accommodate the earliest flight on this day. Flights depart Guwahati throughout the day for multiple destinations around the world.

Your Air Itinerary

Once you or your travel agent have made your airline reservations, please send us a copy of your air itinerary **at least 60 days before departure**. This will allow our O.A.R.S. trip leader to ensure a smooth arrival and departure for you.

Departure Tax

When you leave India, there is currently a departure tax of \$1500 rupees (~US\$24). This has to be paid in Indian currency at the airport. In view of this, it is wise to keep this amount handy when you leave for the airport. In some cases this may be included in the cost of your ticket so please check your invoice for confirmation of this. *Airport taxes are subject to change without notice.*

ESSENTIAL TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

Passports

If you don't have a passport, apply for one immediately as the process can be lengthy. If you do have a passport, check the expiration date to ensure it is valid for at least 6 months from your planned entry into Bhutan/India. Also, if you do not have at least two blank pages in your passport, we recommend that you apply to have extra pages added.

Do not pack your passport in your checked luggage. You may be asked for your papers at various times during the trip. If you are carrying a customs form, please keep it in a safe place at all times. We do not recommend carrying it in the passport, because you often must submit the passport at hotels, where reception clerks can easily lose the form.

Bhutanese Visa

Our Bhutanese partner will process all of our visas. We will send them a copy of your passport to begin the processing. It takes 7-14 days to process your visa. When your visa has been approved, you will receive a visa clearance letter. *You must have the letter in hand to check-in and board your Druk Air flight.* You will receive your visa upon landing in Paro.

Indian Visa

We will be in India for 2 nights. *If you are a U.S. citizen, you need to obtain a visa prior to your arrival.* Indian visas may be obtained in the United States through BLS International (<http://www.visa.blsindia-usa.com/>), a visa contractor for the government of India. Full details of visa requirements and application instructions can be found at the website. Be aware that the timeline on an Indian visa starts from the date of issue. *Please do not purchase non-refundable tickets until your visa is secured and in your possession.*

Citizens of countries other than the U.S. should check with the consulate of India for entry requirements.

Document Copies

Make copies of the photo page of your passport and of your Bhutanese and Indian visas. Obtain two spare passport photos. Carry these items separately from your passport in case they are lost or stolen. It is also a good idea to leave a copy of your passport and Bhutanese and Indian visas with your emergency contact at home. If

your documents are lost or stolen, a photocopy will help the local U.S. consulate speed up replacement authorization.

Mandatory Evacuation Insurance

Medical emergency evacuation insurance is mandatory in order for you to take part in this expedition. You must provide proof of purchase of evacuation insurance prior to the trip. Coverage for baggage loss, medical protection, trip cancellation, and trip interruption is highly recommended. A recommended full service travel insurance policy can be found at: www.travelinsure.com/cobrand/select/oars. For a minimal policy, that fulfills the insurance requirement, see: www.travelinsure.com/what/imedhigh.htm?32635. If you don't have proof of insurance at the start of your adventure, we regret that you cannot take part in the trip. When selecting a policy please make sure you are very clear about what it will and will not cover. No travel insurance covers all scenarios.

TRIP DESCRIPTION

Accommodations/Meals

Our accommodations throughout Bhutan are clean and basic government-standard 3-star hotels or lodges. There are few 4-star facilities outside of Paro. Most of the lodges have central heating and a few heat using wood stoves. While on the Lower Mangde Chhu we will camp at riverside, beach wilderness sites.

All meals are hot and savory, with lots of choices of dishes. We will enjoy most of our meals in restaurants, with a picnic lunch or two before we do our river run.

Transportation

We will fly our last leg to Paro on Druk Air. Please note that the checked baggage allowance is a maximum of 20 kilos or 44 lbs. The weight of your unchecked baggage/carry-on *is part of your baggage allowance*. There are also articles that may be carried free of charge over and above the free baggage allowance, such as a handbag, purse, book, overcoat. For a complete list, see www.drukair.com.

Ground transportation on this trip will be in Toyota Coaster buses.

Camp Life

We will be camping the nights of days 3 and 7 and three nights riverside on the Lower Drangme Chhu. After each active day on the river, we pull ashore to camp for the night. Upon arrival, our first task is to unload the boats using a fire line of crew and passengers to expedite the process. Individuals then collect their waterproof bag and locate an area on the beach to camp for the night. On the first night in camp, a crew member will give a demonstration on setting up a tent, which you'll see is quick and easy. The guides will set up the kitchen and central dining area. They will also locate a secluded area away from camp to set up the toilet, a discrete distance from tent sites. As dinner is cooked by the guides, you will have an opportunity to relax and reflect on the day with your fellow traveling companions.

In the morning, the first wake-up call will let you know that hot beverages are ready. You can fill your mug and then begin to pack up your personal belongings and sleep gear as the guides prepare breakfast. After breakfast, the entire camp will be broken down and packing will be completed. The gear will then be loaded onto the boats and we'll head downstream to see what new adventures await us.

Meals

We provide a great variety of Bhutanese, Indian, Chinese, and Western cuisine... and plenty of it! There are always hot drinks, and lots of vegetables. A day's menu may include multiple choice hot breakfasts at camp,

later pulling over to a beach for a cold lunch with prepared salads and sometimes hot soups. In the afternoons, we relax with hot tea and snack. Dinners promise a feast of soup and several main entrees followed by dessert.

Dietary Restrictions

We need to know as soon as possible about any dietary requirements we should consider in planning your trip. If you have food allergies or restrictions, we will do our best to accommodate your needs. **However, some specific needs can only be met if we charge you a supplemental menu fee to cover our increased costs.** If you are a vegetarian or vegan and you let us know in advance, we can provide meals for you without additional cost. We cannot always provide for the same diversity or sophistication as our regular menu for dietary requests.

Beverages/Alcohol

Bottled water will be provided during the land-based portion of our tour and filtered/treated water on the river trip. Sodas and alcohol will be available for purchase along the way and prior to the trip. Please note that there is a limited selection. Beer, wine and spirits/hard alcohol are of moderate quality. Beverages need to be in plastic or metal containers on the river trip. For your safety and the safety of others, alcoholic beverages are limited to camp during the river trip.

Drinking Water

We recommend you drink only bottled or previously boiled water and that you bring a refillable water bottle or similar device, especially when traveling away from major cities.

Boat Type (see photos at www.oars.com/our_adventures/river_ratings.html)

Our journey down the Pho Chhu and Lower Drangme Chhu will be in self-bailing oar rafts and paddle rafts, 15–18 feet in length. A guide calls commands and guide and guests paddle the raft as a team. The Lower Drangme Chhu will be supported by equipment rafts and safety kayakers. You will need to have the stamina to paddle each day.

The Portable Toilet

While the idea of a river trip is appealing to most people, many are inhibited or reluctant because of modesty or uncertainty. To minimize our impacts, we carry out all solid human waste and use a portable toilet system that is set up each day at camp in a secluded location a discrete distance from tent sites. It is essentially a toilet without plumbing and is available from the time you pull into camp each afternoon until you leave camp the next day. Toilet paper and a convenient hand-washing station are provided.

Bathing

Bathing is allowed in the river. We recommend using a liquid, biodegradable soap such as Campsuds or Dr. Bronner's (www.drbronner.com) which can be purchased in most stores that have a camping section. It can also be used to wash clothes. You may also find a good selection at your local health food store. Disposable anti-bacterial towelettes (Coleman Swash Cloths, baby wipes, etc.) are also a good idea.

For Women Only

Even if you aren't anticipating your menstrual period, come prepared for it. We recommend you bring some sandwich-size zip-lock bags. They can be used during the day while you are on the river and can be disposed of when you reach camp. (For tampon users: o.b.® tampons are ⅓ the size of regular tampons, tuck discreetly into pockets and have less paper wrapping). Many women suggest bringing a small supply of baby wipes.

A number of our female guests have found a feminine urinary device (F.U.D.) very helpful on rafting trips and for camping in general. A F.U.D. allows women to urinate while standing and requires minimal undressing for discreet bathroom use. Previous guests recommend practicing with the device at home to maximize the benefits on your outdoor adventure. For additional information, see Accessories and Unique Items for the Pee Pod

Feminine Funnel in the OARStore at www.oars.com/OARStore. For interesting and informative reviews, search for FUD at www.rei.com.

Electricity

Bhutan/India is on the 220-240 V AC, 50 cycles system. Power surges and blackouts aren't uncommon. Sockets are usually the three-pin variety, but can vary. Plan to bring a converter for 110V devices and a selection of plug adapters available at drugstores or travel specialty stores for your electronic devices.

Cameras

In addition to your regular camera case, we recommend using extra protection such as Ziploc plastic bags, a waterproof camera case or a small dry bag while on the river. Water and dust can be a problem and it is a good idea to clean your camera every night with tissue, a brush and lens paper. We strongly recommend you take out a rider on your homeowner's policy to cover your camera, especially if it's fine equipment. Don't forget media cards, batteries and chargers. Disposable waterproof and panorama cameras are also a fun option.

We are not able to provide a power source for recharging camera batteries while on the river. A small solar charger is a good option if you think you'll need to recharge your camera battery during our river days.

Electronics & Technology

The use of electronic devices, especially music players, on your trip may represent an intrusion into the wilderness experience of your fellow guests. We ask that you please be mindful of the impacts to others and respect the wilderness nature of the trip. Please bring headphones if you intend to listen to music during the trip.

Many of our guests travel with their smartphone even though there is no cell service while on the river. On a trip like this, there is always the risk of water damage to smartphones and other electronic devices, even when they are stowed in a dry bag. If you intend to take your phone with you on the river, consider investing in a small, waterproof container just for your phone.

Common Courtesies

We request that you do not smoke in vehicles, at meals or in group situations. We have asked our guides, drivers, and staff who smoke to follow the same consideration. If a smoker and a non-smoker are sharing a hotel room, we ask that the smoker not smoke in the room.

Communication

Fax machines and telephones are available at the hotels, but can be expensive. Internet is available periodically in the lodges and hotels. The service is not great, but usually sufficient to check email.

If you are planning on taking your cell or smart phone, please check with your carrier regarding service in Bhutan. In the towns, cell coverage is reasonable. Everywhere else, it could be described as "hit or miss." Once we are on the river there is limited communication with the "outside world." Cell phone service is sporadic at best. Satellite phones are permitted. If you have someone that needs to contact you about an emergency at home, they should call our office at 800-346-6277. If possible, we will relay the message to you. Keep in mind it could be several days or longer before the message actually reaches you. For your family at home you should define for them what you consider an emergency and provide them with instructions to call our office in the event one occurs during your vacation.

Environmental Responsibility

We pride ourselves on being an environmentally responsible company. On the trip, we carry out whatever we carry in, including non-biodegradable items such as batteries and empty plastic containers. Many areas of

Bhutan where we will be visiting do not have the proper facilities to process this kind of waste, and your throwaways will end up in the river or tossed down a hillside. We suggest that you carry a large Ziploc bag in your pocket for daily accumulations, and empty it in our group trash bag on the nights we are away from civilization. As you pack for your trip, think about ways to minimize the trash that you will have to bring home. For example, take film out of paper containers, and take such things as your powdered drink mixes and “wash and dry” towelettes out of their foil packets and put them into reusable plastic containers like a wide-mouth Nalgene bottle.

Giving Gifts

We discourage handouts of candy and toys to the children you meet. “Junk food” is dangerous because dental care is almost non-existent in Bhutan, especially away from the towns. Handouts also encourage children to beg.

Money Matters

The official currency in Bhutan is the Ngultrum (BTN) and the current exchange rate is ~BTN\$65 to US\$1. In India, it is the Rupee (INR) and the current exchange rate is ~INR\$65 to US\$1. You will not need to take a great deal of money on the trip, just enough for any souvenirs you may buy, beverages, and any meals that are not covered in the cost of the trip. Anywhere from US\$200-\$500 should be enough, depending on how much shopping you like to do, plus an amount for any tips you may want to give the river staff or trip leader (see the Gratuities section).

Cash, ATM & Traveler’s Checks

We recommend exchanging cash for the local currency at the airport in Paro. There are a few ATM services that dispense local currency, but they are not reliable. Traveler’s checks can be awkward to exchange and are generally not the easiest way to carry money in Bhutan/India.

Credit Cards

You can often use credit cards in hotels, restaurants and stores in Bhutan/India. American Express, Visa and MasterCard are commonly accepted.

Shopping

Bhutan boasts talented indigenous artisans! Bhutan’s 13 traditional visual arts and crafts include paintings, wood carvings, sculptures, calligraphy, carpentry, gold, silver and blacksmithing, bamboo work, weaving and embroidering, pottery, masonry, paper making and incense. There is a lot of pride in their work and not a lot of bargaining done in Bhutan. Do not buy expensive items such as hand-woven silk fabrics without doing some comparative shopping and speaking with our Bhutanese partners.

Weather & Climate

Bhutan is the same latitude as Miami, Florida. The climate varies widely with elevation, from tropical in the southern border areas, temperate in the inner central valleys, to alpine in the high Himalaya.

Average Temperatures in Fahrenheit for Nov (High/Low)

Paro (13,900 ft.)	Punakha (15,125 ft.)	Trongsa (7210 ft.)	Assam region
57°/34°	72°/55°	67°/43°	82°/60°

Average Temperatures in Fahrenheit for Feb (High/Low)

Paro (13,900 ft.)	Punakha (15,125 ft.)	Trongsa (7210 ft.)	Assam region
56°/34°	67°/41°	57°/32°	78°/53°

We will be passing through these cities from west to east. Temperatures should be relatively moderate and skies are usually brilliantly clear. As a general guideline, days will usually be sunny, cool to warm, and pleasant.

Nights will be considerably cooler after the sun has set. Rain or snow is possible. The temperature drops about 3.5°F for every 1,000 feet you gain in elevation, so daytime temperatures as we drive over the high passes will get chilly!

You may want to check one week prior to your trip for an up-to-date weather forecast. We recommend you check the following web site: www.wunderground.com.

Language

The three most common languages of Bhutan are English, Dzongkha and Nepali. Most people related to the tourism industry will speak English.

Laundry

Laundry service is available at the hotels and lodges. However it will be difficult to take advantage of the service due to our schedule. Many lodges do not have dryers and line dry all laundry. Your laundry may not be dry by the time we leave a lodge. There may be a time or two during the trip where we may get some laundry done. On the river, washbasins are available at camp for laundry you want to do yourself; however it may be too chilly for things to dry very fast. Synthetic fabrics are easier to wash and dry quickly.

Health/Medical Information

It's important that we have your medical information for use by the leader in the field, and he or she may evacuate or disqualify you if necessary. No refunds are given if you have to leave the trip.

Please be aware that hospital facilities for serious medical problems may, at times, be a long way away, a doctor may not always be available, and evacuation can be prolonged, difficult, and expensive. ***Your trip leader does not carry prescription medications. Emergency evacuation insurance coverage is mandatory for this trip.***

Despite the many precautions we all take to stay healthy, occasionally one may experience diarrhea. The major problem associated with this is fluid loss leading to severe dehydration, so it is important to maintain plentiful fluid intake. Avoid milk and caffeine, as it will only further dehydrate you. The best drinks are weak tea, mineral water and caffeine-free soft drinks. Ideally it is best to let diarrhea run its course. However you may want to bring over-the-counter medication to minimize your potential discomfort.

Staying Healthy

Never drink tap water in Bhutan or India. Drink bottled water only. Use this water to brush your teeth as well. Also, ask for *no ice* in your drinks because you can't be sure it was made with boiled water. When eating at a restaurant, you're probably safe eating thoroughly cooked items served to you while they're still hot, but avoid raw vegetables, salads, and shellfish to be extra cautious. You may eat fresh fruit that you peel yourself. The trip leader will provide you with more detailed guidelines.

On the river, the food served in our camps is prepared hygienically by trained, experienced camp staff. We provide boiled water at every meal.

High Altitude

If you have traveled at or above 10,000 feet before, you will probably find that activity at altitudes higher than that is similar to your previous experience. At first you'll move more slowly, rest more frequently, have some restlessness at night, and be subject to headaches. If your previous reaction to altitude has been nausea or other unpleasant symptoms, rafting in the Bhutan Himalaya may not be for you.

We design each of our trips for adequate altitude conditioning in the early part of the journey. However, be forewarned that there are no guarantees that your body will acclimatize properly. Any trip member who, in the opinion of the trip leader, shows signs of potential acute altitude sickness, such as HAPE (High Altitude

Pulmonary Edema) will have no choice but to descend and remain at comfortable altitudes. The decision of the trip leader or trip doctor is final.

Immunizations

Although we do not require any immunizations to participate on the Drangme Chhu adventure, it is important that you be up-to-date on several standard immunizations and that you check with your physician prior to departure. The CDC also is a good resource for recommendations pertaining to international travel immunizations at www.cdc.gov.

Time Zones

Bhutan is GMT +6 hours. 5:00 PM PST is 8:00 PM EST is 7:00 AM a day ahead in Bhutan (outside DST.)

GETTING READY

Physical Requirements

Our primary goal is for you to have an enjoyable experience. The nature of the trip is such that it involves some physical exertion and potential exposure to the elements, including cold water, heat, sun, wind and rain. We will be crossing passes as high as 10,000 feet and 12,400 feet. The highest elevation we sleep is 9000 feet. Activities include paddling, walking, and hiking to monasteries, dzongs and villages. Exercise at high altitude compounds physical stress. In addition, high altitude may create discomfort and symptoms of illness that you do not experience while exercising at lower elevations, such as shortness of breath, headaches, restlessness or sleeplessness at night. You need to be in good health and physical condition to enjoy such an experience, with adequate cardiovascular endurance, muscular strength and excellent balance.

We have experience accommodating people with a wide range of physical disabilities and/or health conditions. However, individuals who are overweight or lack conditioning can endanger themselves, other guests and the guides. Please consult your doctor if you have medical or health conditions that could impact your ability to participate in this outdoor adventure. In general, trip participants must be able to:

- Wear a Type V Coast Guard approved personal floatation devices (maximum chest size of 56 inches)
- Climb on and off the boats multiple times each day
- Navigate uneven terrain
- Carry your own dry bags (20–30 lbs) from the boats to your camping location and back
- Self-rescue by swimming to a boat or to shore in the event of an involuntary swim in a whitewater rapid
- Self-rescue by climbing into a boat with the help of another person in the event of an involuntary swim in a whitewater rapid

Physical Preparation

Due to the physical nature of this trip, we highly recommend that you engage in regular exercise for at least 3 months prior to departure to ensure preparedness. No gym membership required! Simple exercises like push-ups, sit-ups and squats go a long way to improving core fitness. Start with these exercises and do three sets of ten repetitions each, three to four times per week. Aerobic training is also easy to accomplish without expensive equipment. Take 30 – 40 minutes, two to three times a week, and go for a brisk walk, easy jog or bike ride around town. If you have access to a pool, lake or the ocean, swimming is obviously an ideal choice for aerobic exercise. It provides a full-body workout and is training that may come in handy in the event of an involuntary swim in a whitewater rapid. It is important to push yourself in the months leading up to your trip by increasing your strength training repetitions and the pace of your aerobic training. **Getting in shape will certainly add to your enjoyment of the trip.** Remember, our Bhutan/India adventure will be the trip of a lifetime. You should optimize your chances of enjoying it, so please take your training seriously—it'll be worth it!

We Provide

- Skilled, professional guide service
- 7 nights accommodation in hotels and lodges in cities and villages
- 5 nights comfortable, catered camping (based on double occupancy)
- All arrangements in the field including camp meals and cook staff
- All meals as outlined in the itinerary (B-breakfast, L-lunch, D-dinner)
- Expedition equipment, including 2-person shared tent and waterproof bags for personal gear on the rafting trip
- High-quality inflatable rafts and related river equipment including paddle, helmet, wetsuit and personal flotation device
- Airport transfers – Ground transportation for individual flights upon arrival, Group transportation for departure flight in Guwahati (coach will leave to accommodate earliest flight)
- Sightseeing and activities as noted in the itinerary
- Ground transportation with certified, professional drivers
- Monastery and monument entrance fees

PACKING FOR YOUR TRIP

Your Bags

It's always easier to travel light! Bring only what you need, and you will have less to haul around and load on and off the rafts. *There is a 20 kg (44 lb) weight limit for the flights on Druk Air.*

Attire is very casual with comfort, convenience and space taking precedence over style. Bring only what is necessary to save time packing and repacking. Extra baggage can be an unwanted burden for yourself and others. Bhutan and India are conservative countries. Skimp, revealing clothing is inappropriate for both sexes and only attracts unwelcome attention. Please bring loose, comfortable clothing.

For your main bag, bring a good quality duffel or other soft-sided luggage. For the river trip, we will give you a large dry bag for the gear that you pack away each day. You'll need to bring a medium-sized backpack for hiking on the trip and as your carry-on for the flights.

On the river, you'll want a heavy plastic bag to line the backpack to keep its contents dry from splashing. It is convenient to bring extra stuff sacks and Ziplocs to make it easier to keep things organized. A money belt or passport pouch to keep your valuables safe and padlocks for your duffel and backpack are also good ideas. Better safe than sorry!

Additional Baggage

You may leave a bag with our ground crew while you are on the rafting trip. This bag will be available to you when you get off the river.

Clothing

You'll need warm clothing for cold weather as it may get down to freezing at night. Pack warm weather things for the lower elevations and lower river portions, where daytime temperatures reach into the 70's. Expect mostly clear days and cold nights. The Drangme Chhu could be ~75°F during the day and down to ~55°F at night. Bring layers of synthetic or merino wool fabrics that insulate well, dry quickly and wick the perspiration away from your body. Avoid cotton except for hiking or walking days.

During the day on the river – Start with a swimsuit and/or swim trunks and synthetic shirt as a base layer. You will be offered a wetsuit and splash jacket. Additional layers, like long underwear, fleece and rain gear, can be added and subtracted depending on the weather, temperature and how wet you’re getting in the rapids.

In camp — When the weather is warm, lightweight cotton pants/skirt or shorts and shirt make great camp wear. Those so inclined may enjoy wearing a cotton skirt or sarong on warmer evenings. For cooler evenings, a dry set of synthetic or merino wool long underwear is the perfect base layer under long pants and a fleece sweater.

Footwear

During the day on the river—The best choice is an amphibious shoe that drains water, protects your toes and won’t come off in swirling current. A retired pair of athletic shoes can work well, too. Sport sandals with a heel strap are a good option, especially on rivers with sandy beaches.

In camp—We recommend wearing shoes in camp due to risk of kicking a rock buried in the sand, or stepping on a sharp stick. The athletic shoes or light hikers you bring for hiking can double as your camp shoes. It’s nice to put on dry socks and shoes after a day on the water. Flip-flops or “Crocs” are OK for wearing in camp only.

Please note: If you buy new shoes or sandals for the trip, make sure you break them in first!

Headwear

During the day—Wide-brimmed hats, caps or visors are a good choice for sun protection. Ball caps are useful since they fit under helmets, which are required attire when paddling our whitewater rivers.

In camp—When the weather is cool, you’ll want a beanie-style hat to wear in camp. They are the perfect remedy for bed-head as you rise from your sleeping bag to secure your morning hot beverage, or for retaining warmth in the evening hours after the sun has set.

To Avoid Being Cold

Synthetic or merino wool long underwear is a must-have on river trips. It can be worn under shorts, rain gear, T-shirts, etc., then stripped off when the chill of the morning has worn off. It keeps you warm even if it’s wet, dries quickly, and it’s compact enough to be stuffed into your small waterproof bag or daypack after you take it off. It can be layered under your **waterproof** rain jacket and pants. *Be aware that cotton items, once wet, do not insulate; only synthetic and wool materials will keep you warm during cool, wet weather.*

Something Warm for your Top & Bottom: Although the weather will probably be delightful, you need to be prepared for inclement weather. Bring a good fleece or wool top and bottom, along with a warm hat and gloves. You’ll want to double up on your synthetic or merino wool layers so that you’ll have a set to wear in the boat and a set of warm, dry clothes for camp.

Sun Protection

Protecting yourself from the sun should be taken very seriously! A sun hat, sunscreen, lip balm and sunglasses are a must. Also, it’s a good idea to have a long-sleeve shirt and lightweight long pants (preferably light colors) to cover up if you need a break from the sun. At the end of each day, you will want to have some good moisturizing lotion or cream to replenish your skin from the drying effects of the sun and water.

Bugs & Mosquitoes

Bugs and mosquitoes are generally not a problem on this trip; however we may see a few. We recommend bringing a small amount of insect repellent

Sleeping Gear

We provide sleeping bags and mats, but you may bring your own if you prefer. We recommend a synthetic-fill bag rated to 20°F, the normal range for an all-around, "three-season" bag. You may find it helpful to put your sleeping bag into a compression sack so that it takes less room in your duffle bag while on tour, and in the waterproof bag on the river. We can provide small pillows if you like.

SUGGESTED PACKING LIST**Equipment and Personal Items:**

- ☐ Sleeping bag: three season rated to 20°F (We provide, but you may bring your own)
- ☐ Thermarest or back-packing style sleep mat (We provide, but you may bring your own)
- ☐ Water bottle: 1 heavy-duty, min 1-liter capacity with a carabiner to attach it to the boat
- ☐ Headlamp or flashlight
- ☐ Day pack
- ☐ Plastic bags: heavy-duty trash bag (for lining your day pack on the river trip) and assorted zip-loc bags. You may also want to bring additional trash bags to separate your clean clothes.
- ☐ Sunglasses (preferably polarized) with securing strap and a spare
- ☐ Small, quick-drying towel
- ☐ Toiletries (including hand sanitizer)
- ☐ Sunscreen: waterproof & SPF 30 or higher
- ☐ Lip protection: SPF 30 or higher
- ☐ Moisturizing lotion or cream
- ☐ Personal first aid kit (bandages, antibiotic ointment, ibuprofen, moleskin, eye drops, etc.)
- ☐ Small waterproof bag or case for your camera and other belongings while rafting (we do not provide)
- ☐ Spare pair of glasses and/or contacts
- ☐ Cash for gratuities

Footwear:

- ☐ River shoes or sandals
- ☐ Athletic Shoes or light hikers
- ☐ Extra pair of dry shoes/sandals for camp (optional)
- ☐ Wetsuit booties and/or neoprene socks (optional)
- ☐ Hiking socks

Clothing:

- ☐ One set dressier casual clothes for Paro and travel
- ☐ Long pants and shirt good for hiking, touring or city wear
- ☐ Long-sleeved shirt: lightweight and light color for sun protection
- ☐ Long pants: lightweight and light color for sun protection
- ☐ Shade hat or visor with securing strap and a spare
- ☐ Waterproof Rain jacket & pants
- ☐ Underwear: quick-drying
- ☐ Quick-Dry Shorts
- ☐ Quick-Dry T-shirts/tops
- ☐ Socks: for hiking, general touring, and wool/synthetic socks for on the river
- ☐ Synthetic long underwear top & bottom: we recommend a minimum of 2 sets light to mid-weight
- ☐ Fleece Jacket (or down/synthetic fill jacket)
- ☐ Fleece pants
- ☐ Warm hat and gloves: synthetic or wool
- ☐ Bandana

Optional Items:

- ☐ Sarong: useful for sun protection/changing clothes
- ☐ Bathing wipes: pre-moistened disposable towels
- ☐ Binoculars
- ☐ Camera and accessories
- ☐ Sketchbook, Notebook and pen, paperback book
- ☐ A pocket knife (do not pack in your carry-on luggage)
- ☐ Paddling gloves if you need them (for cold or hand protection)
- ☐ Extra set of synthetic long underwear top and bottom (especially if you get cold easily)
- ☐ Extra fleece top and down booties for camp for the cold-sensitive
- ☐ Fleece or down/synthetic filled vest
- ☐ Swimsuit / Swim Trunks

Valuables

We recommend that you leave valuables at home. For personal items like passport, wallet, purses and cell phones, we recommend putting them in a Ziploc bag at the bottom of your waterproof bag with your clothing.

Security While You're In Bhutan

Bhutan boasts very little crime; however, it is always wise to follow some simple safety precautions. When walking around towns, carry only a reasonable amount of spending money and a credit card. We recommend carrying a money belt or neck pouch as bags and purses attract attention.

Emergency Contact Information

If someone needs to contact you about an emergency, they should call our office (800) 346-6277. If possible, we will relay the message to you. Keep in mind it could be several days or longer before the message actually reaches you. For your family at home you should define for them what you consider an emergency and provide them with instructions to call our office in the event one occurs during your vacation.

Gratuities

Guests often ask whether gratuities are appropriate, and in what amount. If you feel your guides have provided a very special trip for you, a gratuity may be left with the trip leader who will divide the amount among the other guides, drivers, and camp staff. Hotel employees appreciate a token of a few dollars for their services along the way. Entirely discretionary, a suggestion of between \$400-\$600 is a general tipping guideline for this trip. If you plan to tip, remember to bring cash for easy distribution.

Something Voluntary

In reviewing your statement, you'll notice a \$1/person/day donation to International Rivers; a non-profit conservation organization dedicated protecting rivers and defending the rights of communities that depend on them. Their work helps stop destructive dams and promotes water and energy solutions for a just and sustainable world. One-hundred percent of these funds go directly to International Rivers and your contribution is tax-deductible. This donation is voluntary and may be removed from your invoice if you choose not to participate. *Please notify our office to delete the donation from your balance.*

The O.A.R.S. Foundation is a not-for-profit 501 (c) 3 organization with the express goal of providing opportunities for young people to experience the magic of a river trip. Visit www.oarsfoundation.org to learn more about how your tax deductible donation can change young lives for the better.

HELPFUL LINKS

Shop for the latest in top-quality gear for your trip
O.A.R.S. practices Leave No Trace outdoor ethics

www.oars.com/OARStore
www.lnt.org

Watch our “How To Pack For A River Trip” video
Watch our Whitewater Orientation video
Recommended reading list

www.oars.com/videos/how-to-pack
www.oars.com/videos/oars-whitewater-orientation
www.reading.longitudebooks.com/O32826

Terms & Conditions

Reservations and Deposits

- A \$800/person non-refundable deposit is required at the time of reservation. The balance is due 90 days prior to departure.

Cancellations and Refunds

- If you find it necessary to cancel your trip, please notify us as soon as possible. The cancellation fee after you’ve made your deposit can range up to the entire trip cost, based upon the number of days prior to your trip that we receive your cancellation notice. We regret we cannot make exceptions for personal emergencies. For this reason, **we strongly urge you to investigate trip insurance** (see Insurance).

<u>Date of Cancellation</u>	<u>Cancellation Fee</u>
90 days or more prior to your trip	\$250/person
89 - 60 days prior to your trip	\$500/person
59 - 30 days prior to your trip	50% of the trip price/person
29 – 0 days prior to your trip	100% of the trip price/person

Medical

- Under most circumstances, if you are of an adventurous spirit and in reasonably good health, you should have no problem enjoying this trip. People with medical conditions, including pregnancy, should have a physician’s approval before taking an adventure travel trip.

Insurance

- We require that you purchase medical evacuation insurance to participate in this expedition. Call Travel Insurance Services at 800-937-1387 or visit their website at www.travelinsure.com/what/imedhigh.htm?32635 for inexpensive options that cover this requirement. We also strongly recommend that you protect yourself, your belongings, and your vacation through the purchase of a travel insurance plan. A travel insurance plan covers your non-refundable payments in most cases, should you have to cancel your trip due to illness or injury—yours or that of an extended family member—even at the last minute. Check that the plan you choose includes the required medical evacuation coverage mentioned above. Evacuations can be prolonged, difficult, and expensive. Personal belongings and cameras are carried entirely at the owner’s risk, and O.A.R.S. International accepts no responsibility for lost, damaged, delayed or stolen property.

Liability Release

- Everyone is required to sign a standard liability release form before the trip, acknowledging awareness that there are inherent risks associated with the trip. Due to the nature of the activities, a condition of your participation is that you will sign this form and return it to our office before the trip begins. Anyone who refuses to sign the form will not be allowed to participate, and consistent with O.A.R.S. Internationals, cancellation policy, there will be no refund of the trip fees at that time.

Responsibility – An Important Notice

- O.A.R.S International, Inc. and Xplore, Bhutan, act only in the capacity of agent for the participants in all matters relating to transportation and/or all other related travel services, and assume no responsibility however caused for injury, loss or damage to person or property in connection with any service, including but not limited to that resulting directly or indirectly from acts of God, detention, annoyance, delays and expenses arising from quarantine, strikes, theft, pilferage, force majeure, failure of any means of conveyance to arrive or depart as scheduled, civil disturbances, government restrictions or regulations, and discrepancies or change in transit over which it has no control. Reasonable changes in itinerary may be made where deemed advisable for the comfort and well being of the participants, including cancellation due to water fluctuation, insufficient bookings, (this trip requires a minimum of 7 guests), and other factors. There is risk in whitewater rafting, particularly during high-water conditions. Rafts, dories and kayaks do capsize. You could be swept overboard. Your guide will make every attempt to assist, but you must be strong and agile enough to “self-help” and “float-it-out” without further endangering yourself or others. We reserve the right not to accept passengers weighing more than 260 pounds or with a waist/chest size exceeding 56 inches. We may decide, at any time, to exclude any person or group for any reason we feel is related to the safety of our trips. We are experienced at accommodating people with various disabilities. Please give us an opportunity to make you feel welcome. We need to discuss any special requirements ahead of time. On advancement of deposit the depositor agrees to be bound by the above recited terms and conditions. Prices subject to change without notice.

Affiliates

- Xplore, Bhutan, a travel partner of O.A.R.S. International, will provide services including transportation and equipment on this trip. These international staff members are the very best and will strive to ensure your complete satisfaction.

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