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&BEYOND FOCUSES ON WELLNESS WITH BHUTAN YOGA RETREAT SMALL GROUP JOURNEY

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Focusing ever more heavily on wellness and combining it with some of the world's most spectacular landscapes, luxury tour operator &Beyond has launched its Bhutan Yoga Retreat Small Group Journey.

“More and more people are looking for an element of wellness when they travel. Rather than just providing this through hotel fitness centres and spas, we wanted to create an itinerary where the natural setting contributed towards a sense of spiritual and physical wellbeing,” explains Mark Wheeler, &Beyond Regional Managing Director East Africa, South Asia and South America. “With its grand landscapes, Buddhist culture and focus on overall happiness, Bhutan was the natural choice for this journey.”

Set in a land where productivity is measured in Gross National Happiness, the tour combines meditation and yoga with the opportunity to explore the landscapes and culture of the tiny Himalayan kingdom of Bhutan, also known as The Last Shangri-La.

The 10-day journey is led by Tashi Phuntsho, an English-speaking &Beyond guide, assisted by specialist wellness facilitator Zoe Nash. In addition to sightseeing and cultural experiences, it incorporates meditation sessions, as well as various types of yoga, many of which take place in breathtakingly beautiful or spiritually significant natural locations.

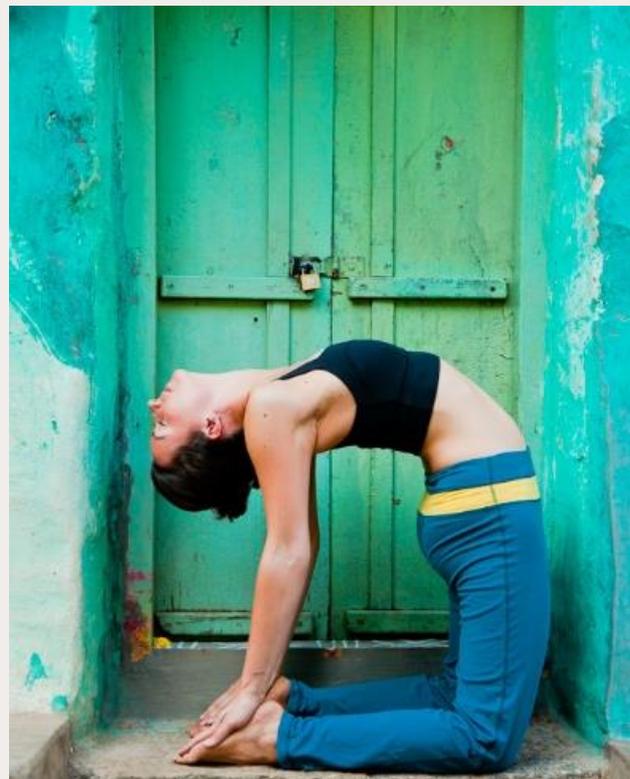
The adventure kicks off in the capital city of Thimphu, a stronghold of traditional Bhutanese art, architecture and culture. Travellers are immediately immersed in local sights and sounds as they tour the National Memorial Chorten, shop at a Farmers' Market and visit the Takin Preserve to view Bhutan's national animal. A stop at the massive statue of Buddha that looks over the city allows guests to soak in the atmosphere of this peaceful and deeply spiritual kingdom. Travellers continue to steep themselves in Bhutanese tradition with a cultural evening programme and authentic dinner.

The next day begins with a scenic hike to the Tango Goenpa monastery, a Buddhist university that dates back to the 12th century. A guided meditation session follows before descending back into town to interact with the artisans at a local artists' studio, the Textile Museum and the Jungshi paper-making factory. The day ends with a relaxing Yin Yang yoga session.

From Thimphu, the Journey takes travellers through the spectacular Dochu La Pass, stopping for a gentle flow yoga session within sight of the 108 stupas, or monuments, built to commemorate the country's fallen soldiers.



Guests will enjoy the opportunity to marvel at the views of the Himalaya Mountains and explore the site before continuing on to Gangtey, set in the beautiful glacial valley of Phobjikha. Here they will visit the local monastery before joining the mediation and prayer service at the Shedra monastic school, where they can listen in awe as 300 monks chant their evening prayers.



The following morning begins with an early hike from Longteng village, stopping in a beautiful setting for a morning mediation session of Anapana Sati. The afternoon can be spent indulging in the traditional pursuits of archery or darts before the day ends with a calming Yin yoga session set in the fresh air.

Before leaving for Punakha the next morning, the group will participate in an invigorating Vinyasa yoga session. On the way, they will visit the famous Chimi Lhakhang, also known as the Temple of the Divine Madman and dedicated to a famous 14th century yogi. In Punakha, the afternoon will be spent in the Sangchen Dorji Lhendrup Lhakhang Nunnery, a temple complex that functions as a higher learning and meditation centre, as well as teaching life skills like embroidery and Thangka painting. A mindfulness meditation session will be held in the courtyard of the nunnery, looking out onto a magnificent view of the valley.

Yet another early hike awaits the next morning, as the travellers walk through farmlands and forests to the Khamsum Yuelley, dedicated to the protection of the country. A traditional Hatha yoga session with sun salutations will be held in the temple courtyard before a picnic breakfast and the hike back. The afternoon brings an opportunity to visit the Punakha Dzong, one of Bhutan's oldest and most scenic buildings, set at the confluence of two rivers on the valley floor. A session of deep meditation will round off the day.



The tour begins the new day with a Hatha yoga session, after which the group sets off for the historical town of Paro. The remainder of the day is spent getting an insight into Bhutanese culture, from the fascinating exhibits at the National Museum to a visit to a traditional farmhouse. The day winds down with a yoga session followed by meditation.

The next day the group sets off on a two-day hike, enjoying magnificent views of the Paro and Dochhu valleys. The trail alternates between steep climbs and gentle trails through quaint ruins, through lush forest or along open meadows, all adorned with prayer flags and monuments known as chortens. A hike of four to five takes the travellers to their overnight destination, the Bumdra Camp, scenically tucked in below the Bumdra monastery, site of the Cave of a Thousand Prayers. The hikers will have time to explore the monastery and climb the high peak to its north to enjoy the sensational views.

A morning meditation session prepares the group for the final hike to the famous Tiger's Nest Monastery, one of Buddhism's most sacred sites. The trail captivates with its beauty as the hikers near the monastery, renowned for its spectacular setting carved into a cliff. The shortened trek from



Bundra Camp allows the group to arrive at the monastery earlier than most other visitors, who hike from the valley from, allowing for a more private experience.

Once guests have explored the temple complex, they will hike back to Paro, where they can relax before a final gentle session of Yin yoga.

Guided by both a Bhutanese guide and a yoga and wellness expert, a group of eight to ten guests can enjoy flexibility and privacy on this wellness journey through one of the world's most untouched destinations. The first departure date for the group journey is 11 May 2019 and the cost is USD 11 720 per person.

For more information or to book, visit www.andBeyond.com or contact your preferred travel specialist.

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ABOUT &BEYOND

&Beyond designs personalised high-end tours in 15 countries in Africa, five in Asia and four in South America, offering discerning travellers a rare and exclusive experience of the world as it should be. We own and operate 29 extraordinary lodges and camps in iconic safari, scenic and island destinations in Africa and South America. This enables us to positively impact more than 9 million acres of wildlife land and 3 000 kilometres of coastline.

Established in 1991, &Beyond strives to leave our world a better place than we found it through our care of the land, wildlife and people, and the delivery of extraordinary guest experiences. We have established an intimate relationship with some of the world's last remaining unspoiled natural places and the communities that surround them. In combination with our highly-skilled guides and rangers, this allows us to deliver extraordinary guest experiences that feel profoundly meaningful.

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