

Himalayan Kingdoms (☎ 0845-3308579; www.himalayankingdoms.com)

World Expeditions (☎ 0800-074 4135; www.worldexpedition.co.uk)

USA & Canada

Above the Clouds (☎ 802-482-4444; www.aboveclouds.com)

Adventure Center (☎ 800-227 8747; www.adventure-center.com)

Asian Pacific Adventures (☎ 1800-825 1680; www.asianpacificadventures.com)

Bhutan Travel (☎ 800-950 9908; www.bhutantravel.com)

Far Fung Places (☎ 415-386 8306; www.farfungplaces.com)

Geographic Expeditions (☎ 1800-777 8183; www.geonex.com)

Journeys International (☎ 1800 255 8735; www.journeys-intl.com)

Mountain Travel Sobek (☎ 1888 687 6235; www.mtsobek.com)

Wilderness Travel (☎ 1800 368 2794; www.wildernesstravel.com)

Thailand

Oriole Travel & Tours (☎ 02-237 9201; oriole@smart.co.th)

Specialised Tours

Guided mountain-bike tours are arranged by **Bicycle Sambhava** (www.bicyclesambhava.com). Motorcycle trips can be arranged through **Himalayan Roadrunners** (www.ridehigh.com) and **Saffron Road Motorcycle Tours** (www.saffronroad.com).

The only overseas company specialising in river trips in Bhutan is **Needmore Adventures** (☎ 888-900 9091; www.excellent-adventures.net).

Photography enthusiasts should check out the expert-guided itineraries of **Rainbow Photo Tours** (☎ 1800 685 9992; www.rainbowphototours.com).

The following companies specialise in tours for twitchers (bird-watchers).

Sunbird (☎ 01767-262522; www.sunbirdtours.co.uk)

Wings (☎ 888-293 6443, 520-320 9868; www.wingsbirds.com)

Bhutan-Based Tour Operators

It is relatively easy to make your own arrangements if you choose to use a Bhutanese operator. When tourism was privatised the state-run Bhutan Tourism Corporation was disbanded. Many of the ex-employees used their expertise to set up their own operations, and there are now more than 200 licensed

tour companies. They range from one-person operations to large and professional organisations such as Etho Metho Tours and Treks and Bhutan Tourism Corporation Limited (BTCL), which have fleets of vehicles and, in some places, their own hotel facilities.

The following list includes a selection of the largest companies. For a complete list see the DOT website at www.tourism.gov.bt and the Association of Bhutanese Tour Operators website at www.abto.org.bt.

Bae-Yul Excursions (☎ 02-324335; fax 323728; www.baeyul.com.bt; PO Box 437, Thimphu)

Bara Lynka Tours and Travels (☎ 02-271 698; fax 272 447; baralynka@druknet.bt; www.baralynka.com; PO Box 1010, Thimphu)

Bhutan Footprints Travel (☎ 02-334960; fax 334961; www.tourbhutantravel.com; PO Box 732, Thimphu)

Bhutan Kaze Tours and Treks (☎ 02-326623; fax 323178; wings@druknet.bt; PO Box 715, Thimphu)

Bhutan Mandala Tours and Treks (☎ 02-323676; fax 323675; www.bhutanmandala.com; PO Box 397, Thimphu)

Bhutan Tourism Corporation Limited (BTCL) (☎ 02-324045, 322647; fax 323292; www.kingdomofbhutan.com; PO Box 159, Thimphu)

Bhutan Travel Bureau (☎ 02-321749; fax 325100; www.btbc.com.bt; PO Box 959, Thimphu)

Bhutan Travel Service (☎ 02-325785; fax 325786; www.bhutantravel.com.bt; PO Box 919, Thimphu)

Chhundu Travels and Tours (☎ 02-322592; fax 322645; www.chhundu.com.bt; PO Box 149, Thimphu)

Dechen Cultural Tours and Trekking Co. (☎ 02-321358; fax 324408; dechen@druknet.bt; PO Box 818, Thimphu)

Diethelm Travel Bhutan (☎ 02-324063; fax 323894; dwpn@jor@druknet.bt; PO Box 666, Thimphu)

Dragon Trekkers and Tours (☎ 02-323599; fax 323314; dragon@druknet.bt; PO Box 452, Thimphu)

Etho Metho Tours and Treks (☎ 02-323162; fax 322884; www.ethometho.com; PO Box 360, Thimphu)

Gangri Tours and Trekking (☎ 02-323556; fax 323322; www.gangri.com; PO Box 607, Thimphu)

International Treks and Tours (☎ 02-326847; fax 323675; www.intrekasia.com/bhutan.htm)

Jamphel Tours and Travels (☎ /fax 02-321111; jamphel@druknet.bt; PO Box 289, Thimphu)

Jojo's Adventure Tours (☎ 1711 0305; fax 02-333940; www.jojos.com.bt; PO Box 816, Thimphu)

Lhomen Tours and Trekking (☎ 02-324148; fax 323243; www.lhomen.com.bt; PO Box 341, Thimphu)

Lingkor Tours and Treks (☎ 02-323417; fax 323402; www.lingkor.com; PO Box 202, Thimphu)

Lotus Adventures (☎ 02-322191; fax 325678; equbhu@druknet.bt; PO Box 706, Thimphu) Whitewater rafting specialist.

Lonely Planet's 2007 guide to Bhutan, noted under Specialized Tours on page 263 .

Masagang Tours (☎ 02-323206; fax 02-323718; masagang@druknet.bt; www.masagang.com) Tours based in the Ura Valley.

Namsey Adventure (☎ 02-325616; fax 324297; namsay@druknet.bt; PO Box 549, Thimphu)

Passage to Himalayas (☎ 02-321726; fax 321727; lekid@druknet.net.bt; PO Box 1068, Thimphu)

Rainbow Tours and Treks (☎ 02-323270; fax 322960; rainbow@druknet.bt; PO Box 641, Thimphu)

Sakten Tours and Treks (☎ 02-323899; fax 323543; sakten@druknet.bt; PO Box 532, Thimphu)

Snow Leopard Trekking Co. (☎ 02-321822; fax 325684; www.snowleopardtreks.com; PO Box 953, Thimphu)

Snow White Treks and Tours (☎ 02-323028; fax 321696; www.snowwhitetours.com.bt; PO Box 112, Thimphu)

Tashi Tours and Travels (☎ 02-323027; fax 323666; bhutantashitours.com; PO Box 423, Thimphu)

Thoesam Tours and Trekking (☎ 02-365101; fax 365073; thoesam@druknet.bt; PO Box 629, Thimphu)

Thunder Dragon Treks (☎ 02-321999; fax 321963; www.thunderdragontreks.com; PO Box 303, Thimphu)

White Tara Tours and Treks (☎ 02-333224; fax 326942; wtara@druknet.net.bt; PO Box 467, Thimphu)

Windhorse Tours (☎ 02-326026; fax 326025; www.windhorsetours.com; PO Box 1021, Thimphu)

Yangphel Adventure Travel (☎ 02-323293; fax 322897; www.yangphel.com; PO Box 236, Thimphu) One of the largest, also specialising in fishing tours.

Yu Druk Tours and Treks (☎ 02-323461; fax 322116; www.yudruk.com; PO Box 140, Thimphu) Bicycling and trekking specialists.

Zhidey Bhutan Tours and Treks (☎ 02-328324; fax 327511; zhidey@druknet.bt; PO Box 841, Thimphu)

All operators in Bhutan are subject to government regulations that specify services, standards and rates. You are quite safe no matter which company you choose, though the large companies do have more clout to obtain reservations in hotels and on Druk Air.

In addition to Etho Metho and BTCL, the largest operators are Yangphel, International Treks and Tours, Rainbow and Gangri.

There are both advantages and disadvantages in dealing with the largest companies. One Bhutanese hotelier suggested that the following companies would be large enough to handle overseas queries, but still small enough that the owner would pay personal attention to your program: Bae-yul, Bhutan Kaze, Bhutan Mandala, Chhundu, Sakten, Tashi, Thunder Dragon, Windhorse, Yodsel and Yu Druk.

Chhundu is renowned for its high-quality personal service, and it's responsible for looking after many VIP clients. Other companies

known for their personal attention and quality service are Lhomen, Namsey, Yu Druk and Bhutan Travel Bureau. Bhutan Kaze and Bhutan Mandala specialise in service to Japanese clients.

If you are planning to go trekking, you might consider one of the companies that specialises in this area. The biggest trek operators are Yangphel, International, Yu Druk and Namsey.

Our associate tour company in Bhutan, Rainbow Tours & Treks of Bhutan.

AROUND

Because Bhutan has no domestic air service, doesn't yet possess any helicopters and does not have a centimetre of railway track, the only way to see the country is either by foot or by road.

There is one main road: the National Highway, a 3.5m-wide stretch of tarmac that winds its way up and down mountains, across clattering bridges, along the side of cliffs and over high mountain passes. Rivers, mudflows and rockfalls present continual hazards, especially when it rains. The road can easily become blocked due to snow or landslides and can take anywhere from an hour to several days to clear. Take plenty of reading material.

Unless you want to walk, the only way to travel between towns in the south of Bhutan is via India, because there are no roads. Currently this is impractical for foreigners since the only road entry point that foreigners are allowed to use is Phuentsholing.

Tour operators use Japanese-made buses, minivans and cars, depending on the size of the group. These vehicles can take you almost anywhere in the country, but for trips to central and eastern Bhutan during winter (December to February) or the monsoon (June to September) a 4WD vehicle is an advantage, and often a necessity.

If you are travelling on a tourist visa, the cost of all transport is included in the price of your trip and you'll have a vehicle available for both short- and long-distance travel. You'll only have to rely on public transport if you are an Indian national or if you are working with a project that does not provide you with a vehicle.

BICYCLE

Some travellers have ridden mountain bikes in Bhutan, and DOT (Department of Tourism) are promoting this kind of travel. Good



Robin Smillie

Bhutan Adventure
2009

This heavily forested and sparsely populated Himalayan kingdom truly rates as the last Shangri-La. Bordered to the north by Tibet and south by India, the terrain ranges from some of the highest snowcapped mountains in the world to lush subtropical jungles—the altitude difference is nearly 24,000 feet. By national law, three quarters of the country is under forest cover. To protect this living Eden, Bhutan is approaching modernization and tourism cautiously, allowing access to less than 23,000 foreign visitors in 2007. Join award-winning photographer and Bhutan specialist Robin Smillie on one of two unique itineraries that has participants traveling in cars, not a bus, with each traveler assigned a personal Bhutanese “fixer.”

For more information, contact: Rainbow Photo Tours, (800) 685-9992, www.rainbowphototours.com.

Yellowstone in Winter
2009

Nature Photo Tours is pleased to announce the addition of a number of workshops for 2009: two Yellowstone in Winter Workshops with Tom Murphy, Death Valley and Bryce-Zion with Jay and Varina Patel, the Canadian Rockies with John Marriott and Glacier National Park with Andy Cook. Its Loon Workshops also have expanded to two offerings in June 2009. Other popular workshop offerings are still available: New England Lighthouses, Bluebirds, Colorado Wildflowers and Colorado Fall

Color. Whether you are a beginner or an advanced photographer, Nature Photo Tours offers the skills of its...
For more information, contact: Nature Photo Tours, (800) 685-9992, info@naturephototours.com, www.naturephototours.com.

Read about us in the October 2008 Issue of Outdoor Photography. Photo above by Robin Smillie.

Outdoor Photographer & PCPhoto Seminars
September-December 2008

Sponsored in part by Nikon and Epson and co-sponsored by Bogen and Lowepro, these two-day seminars bring top-caliber names in the field of photography to five different U.S. cities: San Francisco, Calif. (Sept. 13-14); Los Angeles, Calif. (Sept. 20-21); Milwaukee, Wisc. (Nov. 15-16); Columbus, Ohio (Nov. 22-23); and Raleigh, N.C. (Dec. 6-7). Learn top techniques in outdoor and digital photography from photography pros Bruce Dale, Bob Krist, Frans Lanting and David Middleton. Advanced amateurs are encouraged to attend one or both days of these exciting, informative seminars. On Saturday, hear the stories behind the pros' outdoor, landscape and wildlife photography, benefit from their equipment tips and discover the elements of their success. On Sunday, get answers on what cameras to buy, how to judge digital quality and how to manage workflow from capture to print. No camera equipment required. Programs run from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. daily. Registration fees are \$79 for one day and \$99 for two days.

For more information, visit: www.opseminar.com.

Wyoming: Mountain Man Country
Year-Round

The Upper Green River Valley has long been a favorite destination for fall travelers, but today's adventurers come packing cameras, not beaver traps. Early fur trappers valued the pristine streams and mountains for their wealth of wildlife, much as the outdoor photographer does now. Willow-lined rivers and creeks in the Wyoming and Wind River Ranges are home to moose and deer, while the high plains provide a home to pronghorn and sage grouse. Elk, bear and bighorn sheep range high up in the hills this time of year, but can be spotted by the early riser. With aspen slopes turning to gold and crisp mornings often showing the first dusting of snow on the mountains, is a picture-perfect time to visit Mountain Man Country. Stop in at the Mountain Man Visitor Center in downtown Pinedale for the latest news on fall colors, fish reports and area activities. Visit the museum of the Mountain Man for a look at those colorful early adventurers. For more information, visit: Mountain Man Country, www.mountainmancountry.com.

Ultimate Guide To Workshop Listings Online

Visit outdoorphotographer.com and click on the Locations tab to view the ultimate guide to Travel & Workshops, plus photos. This directory will help you pick your next workshop from a listing that includes some of the best programs in the world!



Mark Condit