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# Travel with The Met

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September 7–21, 2023

**Buddhism & the Himalayas:  
Ladakh, Nepal & Bhutan**  
with Christopher Noey, Lecturer



THE  
MET

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# Buddhism & the Himalayas: Ladakh, Nepal & Bhutan

Dear Members and Friends of The Metropolitan Museum of Art,

Join me in September 2023 for an unforgettable two-week adventure, discovering vibrant cultures and ancient religious traditions in the heavenly heights of the Himalayas. As a passionate scholar of Asian art, I am delighted to lead you through three spellbinding lands—mystical Ladakh, colorful Nepal, and peaceful Bhutan—in one trip. Together, we will delve into the region’s rich artistic traditions and spectacular natural landscapes. We will also delight in exclusive meetings with thought leaders who are shaping these devout societies in a modern era.

From Delhi, we will fly to Ladakh, an Indian territory bordering Tibet, with its white *stupas* (dome-shaped shrines) and fluttering prayer flags amid a breathtaking mountainous terrain. In the capital of Leh, many treasures await our appreciation, including a colossal 17th-century palace and Tibetan Buddhist monasteries adorned with exquisite ancient murals and golden Buddha statues.

Our next stop is Kathmandu, capital of Nepal, where Hindu and Buddhist temples, shrines, and *stupas* housing relics are extraordinary highlights. As we venture through this city nestled in a sacred valley, we will explore its monuments—from an enormous “floating” statue of Vishnu at a revered shrine to a 1,500-year-old hilltop *stupa* displaying four sets of “all-seeing” painted eyes—and discover Nepal’s preservation of this legacy through cutting-edge conservation work.

Finally, we will be among the few travelers admitted each year to tiny Bhutan, where leaders measure national success in GNH (“Gross National Happiness”), not GDP. We will make our way to an astonishing 17th-century mountain fortress, tour an 18th-century monastery housing 105 monks, and roam a 15th-century temple with exceptional murals. Those who opt for a half-day hike will be richly rewarded with a visit to the legendary cliffside Tiger’s Nest, one of the holiest sites in the Himalayas.

I hope you will join me on an awe-inspiring journey steeped in artistic and spiritual traditions dating back millennia.

Sincerely,

Christopher Noey

Lecturer

The Metropolitan Museum of Art

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## Traveling with You

Christopher Noey

Christopher Noey is an art historian, author, and Emmy Award-winning producer of films on art and culture. At The Met, he created video installations for a diverse array of exhibitions including *Jerusalem 1000-1400: Every People Under Heaven*, and he was series director of the innovative online features *82nd & Fifth* and *The Artist Project*, in which he interviewed 120 contemporary artists on how they are inspired by The Met and its collections. An expert in Asian and Islamic art, Mr. Noey has taught at Williams College and the City College of New York.

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## Trip Highlights

- Gain special access to the kingdom of **Bhutan**, which offers entry to a limited number of travelers each year, and stand atop the spectacular fortress of **Punakha**, the former capital
- Venture on an optional scenic hike to the 17th-century **Tiger’s Nest monastery**, one of the world’s most sacred Buddhist sites, perched impressively on a steep, rocky cliff and accessible only by foot
- Delight in private tours and discussions with the conservators and artisans keeping the artistic traditions of **Nepal** alive
- Take a curator-led tour of the traditional sacred art in Kathmandu’s **Patan Museum**, with a special lunch there with Anil Chitrakar, a pioneering social entrepreneur named one of 100 “Global Leaders for Tomorrow” by the World Economic Forum
- Discover the little-known Indian territory of **Ladakh**, exploring its magnificent monasteries and otherworldly landscapes, and enjoy an audience with the village oracle in the Tibetan settlement of **Choglamsar** (*pending confirmation*)
- Admire Nepal’s exquisite *stupas*, temples, and monasteries, including **Swayambhunath**, a gleaming 1,500-year-old *stupa* with four sets of painted eyes, representing the all-seeing presence of Buddha



Monks at Punakha Dzong, Bhutan



Photos clockwise from top right: Changu Narayan Temple, Kathmandu, Nepal; Indus River; Pilgrim in Kathmandu, Nepal; Shanti Stupa, Leh, Ladakh; Hemis Monastery, Leh, Ladakh; Regional map. Front cover: Swayambhunath, Kathmandu, Nepal. Back cover: Maitreya Buddha statue at Likir Monastery, Leh, Ladakh (top); Taksang (Tiger's Nest) (bottom).

# Buddhism & the Himalayas: Ladakh, Nepal & Bhutan

September 7–21, 2023

## Departure

Thursday, September 7

Depart on an overnight flight to Delhi, India.

## Delhi, India

Friday, September 8

Arrive in Delhi, where we spend a night at the luxurious Trident Gurgaon Hotel, which is surrounded by sprawling gardens, courtyards, and fountains. Gather for a welcome reception tonight at the hotel. R

## Delhi / Leh, Ladakh

Saturday, September 9

Take a morning flight from Delhi to Leh, the capital of the beautiful region of Ladakh, India. The landscape is dotted with white *stupas* flanked by rugged mountains. The afternoon and early evening are free to rest and acclimate to the 11,000-foot elevation. If time and energy permit, in the afternoon, enjoy a lecture or a gentle orientation tour of Leh, followed by a short drive to Shanti Stupa for spectacular views of the town. This evening, attend a welcome dinner. B, L, D

## Leh

Sunday, September 10

Travel to Sham Valley in Lower Ladakh, passing through the picturesque orchards along the Indus River to the fabled Alchi Monastery, with its 1,000-year-old murals. After lunch at a famed local restaurant, visit Likir Monastery to view the great seated statue of Maitreya Buddha. B, L, D

## Leh

Monday, September 11

This morning, take a heritage walking tour exploring the Old Town with its bustling bazaar, dominated by the imposing 17th-century Leh Palace and its museum. Continue to one of Ladakh's most breathtaking monasteries: Shey Palace and Monastery, with its colossal gilded statue of a seated Shakyamuni Buddha, considered to be the second-largest Buddha statue in Ladakh. Also visit Thiksey Gumpa, a Buddhist monastery with beautiful prayer rooms and temples. After a picnic lunch, drive east to a secluded valley and the Hemis Monastery, one of Ladakh's wealthiest monasteries. Return to the hotel, or opt for a drive to the village of Choglamsar for a séance session with the village Oracle. B, L, D



Ritual bathing pool, Hanuman Dhoka, Kathmandu

## Leh / Kathmandu, Nepal

Tuesday, September 12

Fly to Kathmandu via Delhi for an afternoon arrival, and check in at the intimate and luxurious Dwarika's Hotel for a four-night stay. Lunch is at leisure. Before dinner, you may wish to explore the hotel's grounds and admire the centuries-old carved wood and intricate terra-cotta brickwork of the buildings within the property. Gather for dinner tonight at the hotel's Toran Restaurant. B, D

## Kathmandu

Wednesday, September 13

Begin the day at Patan Durbar Square, and stroll among ancient palaces, pagodas, shrines, and terra-cotta stone carvings. Step inside the Patan Museum for a curator-led tour of its beautiful religious art treasures, housed within a spectacular palace. Later, gather for lunch at the museum's café, and meet with social entrepreneur Anil Chitrakar, who has worked for more than two decades to bring awareness to Nepal's conservation and sustainability efforts. After lunch, explore Kathmandu's Durbar Square. Visit Hanuman Dhoka, the ancient palace and historic seat of royalty, and other nearby highlights, including the Taleju Temple and the Kumari Temple, the residence of the Living Goddess. Continue to the old market areas of Ason and Indra Chowk. Ason is famous for the Annapurna Temple, which is surrounded by Kathmandu's oldest market. Continue to Indra Chowk, the center for fabric merchants. Dinner is at leisure. B, L

## Kathmandu

Thursday, September 14

This morning, drive to the hilltop Changu Narayan Temple, which dates to the fourth century and was reconstructed after a 2015 earthquake. Later, drive to Bhaktapur for lunch at the Heritage Hotel. In the afternoon, explore Bhaktapur, one of the "royal cities" in the Kathmandu Valley and deemed Nepal's cultural gem. Called the "City of Devotees," Bhaktapur is renowned for its elegant art, colorful festivals, and traditional dances. The city's three squares also feature some of Nepal's most extraordinary sacred architecture, including the five-tiered Nyatapola Temple and other tall opulent structures. Return to the hotel for dinner. B, L, D

## Kathmandu

Friday, September 15

After breakfast, visit the holy site of Boudhanath. This graceful and perfectly proportioned *stupa* is a three-dimensional symbol of Buddha's path towards enlightenment. Then, travel north to the foothills of Shivapuri to Budhanilkantha Temple, which is dedicated to the Hindu Lord Vishnu. Here, view one of the most revered Vishnu shrines in the valley: the massive reclining statue of Vishnu as Narayan, the creator of all life. Carved from a single block of black basalt, it appears to "float" in a pond signifying the cosmic sea. After lunch, continue to Swayambhunath, a 1,500-year-old hilltop *stupa* displaying four sets of painted eyes, representing the all-seeing presence of Buddha. Before returning to the hotel for dinner at leisure, explore the National Museum of Nepal at Chhauni. B, L

## Kathmandu / Paro, Bhutan / Punakha

Saturday, September 16

Take a morning flight to Paro, Bhutan. Upon arrival, drive along Dochula Pass to the fertile valley of Punakha. Stop to admire the chortens and prayer flags that decorate the highest point of the pass. Opt for a short hike to Chimi Lhakhang, a Buddhist monastery dedicated to a 14th-century yogi known as the "Divine Madman," who taught Buddhist lessons using songs. B, L, D

## Punakha

Sunday, September 17

Discover the awe-inspiring Punakha Dzong, Bhutan's largest fortress. This massive structure was built in 1637 and was for many years the district's seat of government. Return to the hotel for lunch. In the afternoon, visit Nobgang Lhakhang to admire this small temple's centuries-old artwork and murals. Continue to the village of Talo to visit the monastery, founded in 1767. Today, Talo Goenpa contains a monastic school with 105 monks in residence. B, L, D

## Punakha / Paro

Monday, September 18

From Punakha, take a morning drive to Paro, and stop at Thimphu en route to meet with a *Rimpoche* (Tibetan Buddhist spiritual leader). After lunch, continue to Paro, and check in at the COMO Uma for a three-night stay. On the way back to the hotel, discover the Dungtse Lhakhang, a 15th-century temple with murals representing heaven, hell, and earth, which are some of Bhutan's finest artworks. B, L, D

## Paro / Tiger's Nest (Taktsang)

Tuesday, September 19

At nearby Ramthangka, gather for an optional half-day hike to the legendary Taktsang (Tiger's Nest), a breathtaking Buddhist monastery perched on a cliff 10,000 feet above the Paro Valley and one of the most sacred Buddhist sites. A less strenuous option will offer views of Tiger's Nest and a visit to view the ruins of Drukgyel Dzong, which was destroyed by a fire in 1951 but remains an impressive sight. B, L, D



Prayer wheels, Thimphu

## Paro

Wednesday, September 20

Attend a morning lecture by a local historian before visiting Ta Dzong, a former watchtower that now houses the National Museum. In the rotunda view exhibitions of the country's art, relics, and intricate *thangkhas* (Tibetan Buddhist paintings depicting deities or religious scenes). Continue to Puna Lhakhang, one of Bhutan's oldest temples. After a picnic lunch by the river, visit the Kyichu Lhakhang temple and partake in a traditional Buddhist lamp-lighting ceremony. Also, stop at a local farmhouse to learn how these traditional and colorful homes are built without the use of a single nail. This evening, enjoy a special performance followed by a farewell dinner at the hotel's courtyard. B, L, D

## Paro / Delhi, India / Return

Thursday, September 21

Fly to Delhi in the morning. Day rooms will be provided in Delhi at the Trident Gurgaon Hotel prior to international flights this evening.

Transfer to the airport for return flights, arriving home on September 22. B, L

**Walking Activities Note:** On this journey to the Himalayas, you will visit high-altitude historical sites with unevenly paved pathways and steep staircases without handrails. Guests should be in good health, be able to stand unassisted for more than an hour at a time, and be capable of walking up to a mile without stopping. Broken-in walking shoes are a must.

This itinerary is subject to change at the discretion of The Metropolitan Museum of Art and Arrangements Abroad. For complete details, please carefully read the terms and conditions at [www.arrangementsabroad.com/terms](http://www.arrangementsabroad.com/terms).

## Program Rate

**\$16,999 per person, double rate**

**\$21,499 single rate**

## Rate Includes

- Thirteen nights accommodations as per itinerary
- Meals as indicated in the itinerary (B=Breakfast, L=Lunch, R=Reception, D=Dinner). Bottled water, soft drinks, juices, and coffee/tea with all meals; special cocktails and local beer at welcome and farewell dinners
- Enrichment program of lectures and talks
- Internal economy-class flights (Delhi-Leh-Delhi-Kathmandu / Kathmandu-Paro-Delhi)
- Escorted sightseeing, transportation, and entrance fees for all included visits
- Airport/hotel/airport group transfers for all participants on suggested flights
- Taxes, service, and portage charges; gratuities to local guides and drivers

## Not included in rates

International airfare; passport fees; visa fees for India, Nepal, and Bhutan; meals not specified; alcoholic beverages other than noted in inclusions; personal items and expenses; airport transfers other than for those on suggested flights; baggage in excess of one suitcase for the internal flights; trip insurance; any other items not specifically mentioned as included.

## Buddhism & the Himalayas: September 7–21, 2023

### Reservation Form

To secure your reservation, please call Arrangements Abroad at 844-TRVLMET (844-878-5638); email: [met@arrangementsabroad.com](mailto:met@arrangementsabroad.com); or complete this form and return it with your deposit of \$1,000 per person (of which \$500 is non-refundable for administrative fees), to be paid by debit card, credit card, wire transfer, or check payable to *Arrangements Abroad*. Mail to: Arrangements Abroad, 260 West 39th Street, 17th Floor, New York, NY 10018-4424.

Names in full as on passports. Please print.

Address

City State Zip

Telephone (home) (business)

Fax Email

### Accommodations

Hotel room preference  One bed  Two beds  Single

I wish to share a room with \_\_\_\_\_

### Form of payment

Enclosed is my check (payable to Arrangements Abroad)  Debit card  Credit card

Name on debit/credit card

Debit/credit card number

3- or 4-digit security code

Expiration date

**Each participant must sign below. I/We have read, understand and agree to the Terms & Conditions at [www.arrangementsabroad.com/terms](http://www.arrangementsabroad.com/terms) and detailed in program documents. I/We agree to full payment 120 days prior to departure.**

Signature (required)

Date

Signature (required)

Date

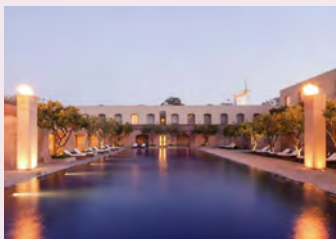
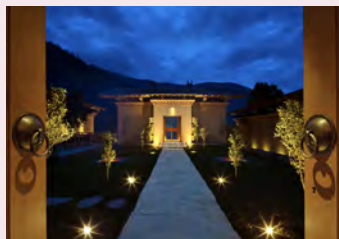
For additional information, please call 844-TRVLMET (844-878-5638) or to opt out from receiving mail, email [travelwiththemet@metmuseum.org](mailto:travelwiththemet@metmuseum.org)



Photos from top: Temple carving, Patan Durbar Square, Kathmandu; Colorful thangka at the Hemis Monastery in Leh, Ladakh; Thiksey Monastery, Leh, Ladakh

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## Accommodations



Photos clockwise from top: Trident Gurgaon, Delhi; TUTC Camp, Leh; Dwarika's Hotel, Kathmandu; COMO Uma, Punakha; COMO Uma, Paro

### **Trident Gurgaon Hotel, Delhi**

Designed by Thai architect Lek Bunag, this magnificent oasis is spread over seven acres with gardens, courtyards, and reflecting pools. The hotel has 136 rooms and suites furnished with modern amenities, a spa, a swimming pool, and several restaurants.

### **TUTC Camp, Leh**

Short for The Ultimate Travel Camp, luxurious tents are set up in Chamba Camp Thiksey in Leh. The tents are kitted out with all the modern amenities of a five-star hotel, but unlike a hotel, the campsite allows for sleeping amidst Leh's starry sky overlooking the magnificent Thiksey Monastery. The tents have climate control, hot showers, jasmine-scented toiletries, a mini-bar, and 24-hour butler service.

### **Dwarika's Hotel, Kathmandu**

Rooms are designed with terra-cotta floors, comfortable sitting areas, intricately carved woodwork, and fabrics hand-woven by local artisans. Other amenities include a swimming pool, yoga/fitness center, spa, business center, library, shops, Wi-Fi, and five restaurants.

### **COMO Uma, Punakha**

This intimate luxury lodge is located at the far western end of the lush Punakha Valley. The hotel overlooks the Mo Chu river with every room commanding sweeping views of the Punakha Valley and the river as it winds its way through the rice fields and orchards.

### **COMO Uma, Paro**

Perched on a breathtaking tree-clad hill overlooking the town of Paro, this hotel features luxurious rooms combining the colorful accents of traditional Bhutanese craftsmanship with contemporary design. Other amenities include a fitness center, spa, and award-winning cuisine.

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**The Metropolitan  
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New York, NY 10028

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