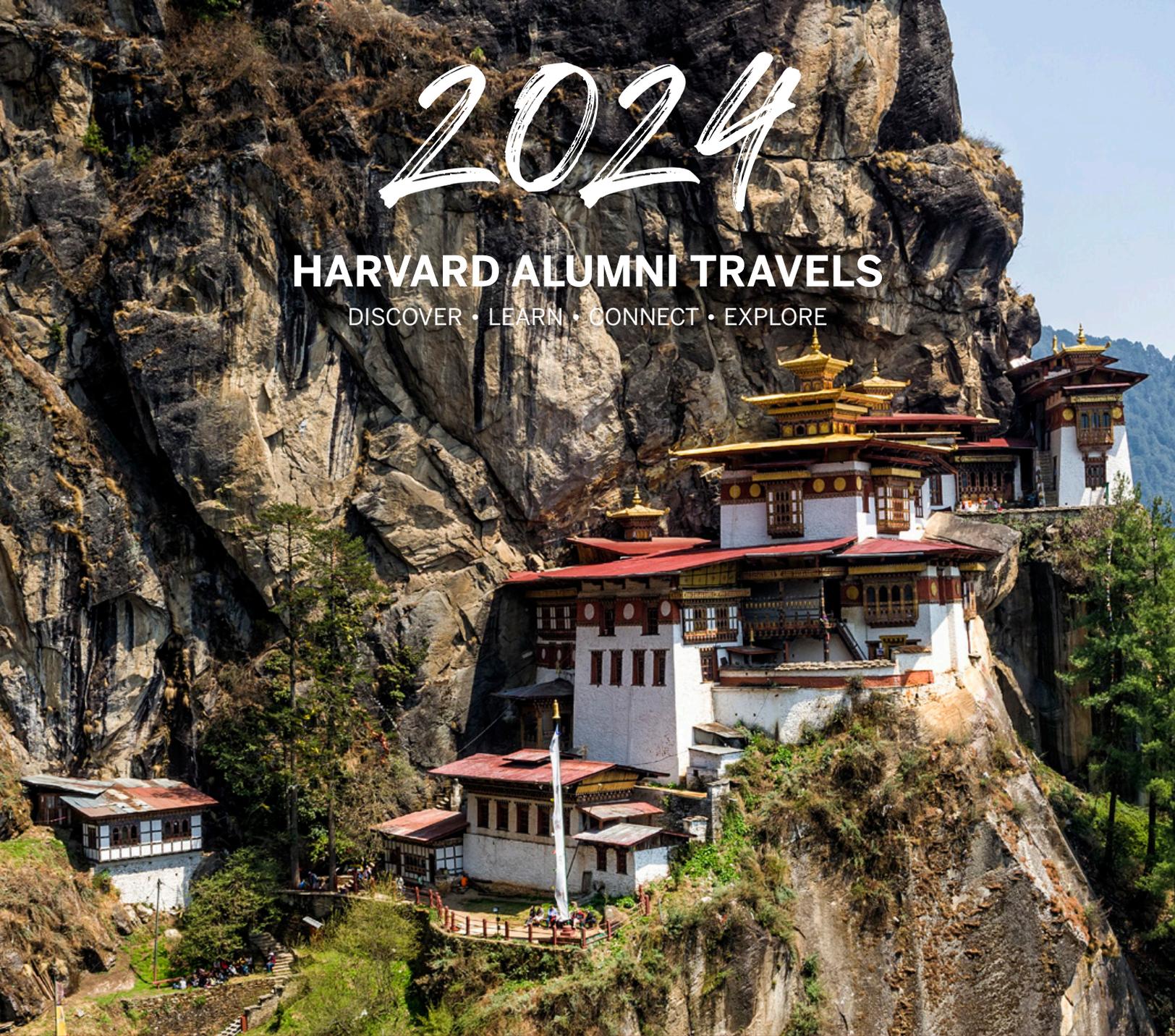


# 2024

## HARVARD ALUMNI TRAVELS

DISCOVER • LEARN • CONNECT • EXPLORE



### HIMALAYAN KINGDOMS

A Journey through Nepal and Bhutan

May 25—June 9, 2024

with **L. Mahadevan**



HARVARD

Alumni Travels



Punakha Dzong, one of Bhutan's oldest, largest, and most striking fortified monasteries

## Himalayan Kingdoms A Journey Through Nepal and Bhutan

Venture to the “Rooftop of the World” to explore the majestic Himalayas and the ancient kingdoms of Nepal and Bhutan. Until the 1960s, the Himalayan Kingdoms were virtually cut off from one another and the outside world. These starkly beautiful countries have flourished in the isolation of the Himalayas, offering visitors a richness of religious and cultural traditions and an amazing diversity of art and architecture. This journey provides rare insight into the beauty and cultural diversity of the Himalayan Mountain range and its people.

Begin the journey in Kathmandu, the capital city of Nepal set in a mountain valley that serves as a crossroads of ancient Asian civilizations. View the magnificent Himalayas during a flightseeing excursion (weather permitting) and experience the most imposing mountain range in the world from a bird's eye view, including views of Mount Everest, rising more than 29,000 feet above sea level. While exploring Nepal, see many UNESCO World Heritage Sites highlighted in Patan and Bhaktapur.

Continue to Bhutan, a country that strictly limits the number of visitors allowed each year, and enjoy ten days of exploration. Bhutan's culture is warmly hospitable, and the scenery is astonishingly beautiful. Fascinating dzongs (fortresses), breathtaking chortens (religious structures), and the incomparable Tiger's Nest Monastery provide a truly unforgettable cap to the adventure.

Throughout this unique educational program, your Harvard study leader will provide special insight into the awe-inspiring worlds of the Himalayan Kingdoms.

## Study Leader



**L. Mahadevan** is the Lola England de Valpine Professor of Applied Mathematics, Organismic and Evolutionary Biology, and Physics at Harvard University. He grew up in India, where he studied as an undergraduate. Following graduate

school (at Stanford) and postdoctoral work in Urbana and Chicago, he joined the faculty at MIT. Wanderlust and opportunity led to a move across the Atlantic when he was a fellow of Trinity College and the Schlumberger Chair in Complex Physical Systems at Cambridge University. In 2003, inspired by the hope of new intellectual adventures at the interface of the physical and biological sciences, he moved back to Cambridge, MA, but slightly further up the river.

Mahadevan seeks to understand the patterns of shape and flow in matter. A particular joy is to uncover explanations of natural phenomena that are easy to observe, often not so well understood, and of relevance far beyond what might be first envisaged, “looking for the sublime in the mundane.” He has also designed methods for engineering shape using origami, algorithms for detecting structure in networks, and invented a few toys, including a coin that lands on its edge one-third of the time. For a study on how sheets wrinkle, he shared the Ig Nobel Prize in Physics in 2007 for “research that first makes people laugh, and then makes them think” and celebrated it with a ditty. At Harvard, Mahadevan has taught over 20 different courses in mathematics, physics, biology and engineering, and advised more than 50 students and postdoctoral fellows. He is a MacArthur Fellow, and a Fellow of the Royal Society of London. When he is not thinking about new problems, Mahadevan enjoys swimming and hiking.

Front Cover: Taktsang Monastery, also known as Tiger's Nest, near Paro, Bhutan

REGISTER  
[alumni.harvard.edu/travel](https://alumni.harvard.edu/travel)

CALL US  
800-422-1636

EMAIL US  
[haatravels@harvard.edu](mailto:haatravels@harvard.edu)

TERMS AND CONDITIONS  
[alumni.harvard.edu/](https://alumni.harvard.edu/)



Kathmandu, Nepal

## Activity Level 4:

Most of this itinerary takes place at moderately high altitude (in Kathmandu, approximately 4,600 feet; in Bhutan, approximately 7,000 feet). Altitude sickness is most common above 8,000 feet, but some participants may experience some symptoms of altitude sickness, including headache, fatigue, and insomnia. In addition, higher altitudes can exacerbate health issues you already have. This will be a fast-paced, active program covering rugged terrain, with considerable walking and several rigorous travel days with early departures. Daily excursions involve one to three miles of walking, including stairs without handrails, high thresholds, and cobbled uneven paths. The optional excursion to Taktsang Monastery (Tiger's Nest) in Bhutan is a rigorous 4–6-hour hike on a sometimes steep and rocky trail with several hundred steps – it's around 4 miles roundtrip and is at an altitude of 10,240 ft. There is an option to ride a mule or horse up to the halfway point. Participants can opt out of this excursion if preferred. Motorcoach rides to remote locations are sometimes long and over bumpy roads, occasionally lasting up to seven hours, and briefly reaching an altitude of 12,000 feet. Any physical condition requiring special attention, diet, or treatment must be reported. All reasonable efforts will be made to

accommodate special diets and treatment, but medical treatment is not at Western standards, and we cannot guarantee special arrangements. Meals will be basic, and restaurants may not offer the kind of variety or service one finds in larger cities. Not all hotels have elevators; you may have to walk up several flights of stairs to your room. Restrooms outside the hotels and restaurants are often quite rustic (including some squat toilets) and may not supply toilet paper. In Bhutan, "bush stops" will be made during the longer bus rides, as public toilets are not available in remote areas. You should be prepared to handle your own luggage at Customs points where porters are not permitted. Anyone with a serious medical problem, whose medical situation might be adversely affected by active travel at high altitude, or who might have difficulty walking, should not consider this program. This promises to be a memorable journey, but as with all travel, a flexible attitude, a spirit of adventure, and a willingness to explore new areas will enhance your enjoyment of this program. You do not have to participate in all the scheduled activities, except when traveling to the next destination. We are sure you will be pleased with the exciting educational program provided, but we want you to be aware of the pace and activity level.



Left photo: Boudhanath Stupa in Kathmandu / Right photo: Thangka (Tibetan Buddhist painting on silk or cotton fabric)

## Schedule by Day

SATURDAY–SUNDAY, MAY 25-26

### Depart U.S.

Flights to Kathmandu, Nepal.

MONDAY, MAY 27

### Kathmandu, Nepal

Arrive in Nepal and transfer to Dwarika's Hotel, considered one of the finest hotels in Asia. Upon arrival enjoy a welcome reception and dinner featuring a Nepali Folk Dance performance.

Dwarika's Hotel (R,D)

TUESDAY, MAY 28

### Kathmandu

Begin the journey with a morning flightseeing of the magnificent Himalayas, including Mount Everest (weather permitting), followed by the first lecture of the educational program. Visit Bhaktapur, the City of Devotees, and wander Durbar Square and the five-tiered Navatapola Temple. In the afternoon visit Boudhanath, one of the largest spherical stupas in the world, established in the 7th century.

Dwarika's Hotel (B,L,D)

WEDNESDAY, MAY 29

### Kathmandu

Today visit Patan, referred to as the City of Fine Arts. After exploring the temples and museum, meet Patan's Living Goddess in a private audience. Continue to a Thangka painting school and marvel at Tibetan Buddhist paintings on cotton or silk applique, usually depicting a deity, an event, or a mandala. Next, ride aboard trishaws through the narrow lanes of the old city to Thamel, Kathmandu's hip street.

Dwarika's Hotel (B,L,D)

THURSDAY, MAY 30

### Paro/Thimphu, Bhutan

This morning fly to Paro, Bhutan and continue to Thimphu, the capital and largest city of Bhutan. See the magnificent Giant Buddha statue sitting atop a gilded meditation hall perched on a hilltop overlooking the valley. This impressive statue was built to celebrate the 60th anniversary of fourth king Jigme Singye Wangchuck and is said to bestow peace, happiness, and prosperity upon the world.

Le Meridien Thimphu (B,L,D)

FRIDAY, MAY 31

### Thimphu

Experience a school assembly, then continue to Cheri Monastery, a sacred site that has been visited by revered saints for centuries. Today it is used as a monastic school and

retreat center and is situated in the lush upper Thimphu Valley. Later visit the School of Arts and Crafts, which offers students instruction in Bhutan's 13 traditional arts, specializing in carving, painting and sculpting. Meet and converse with local dignitaries this evening.

Le Meridien Thimphu (B,L,D)

SATURDAY, JUNE 1

### Punakha

Journey through scenic countryside to Punakha. En route, stop at Dochula Pass (10,200 feet) with its 108 memorial chortens and admire spectacular views of the Himalayas. Next, visit Chimi Lhakhang, a 15th-century fertility pilgrimage shrine before arriving in Punakha.

Dhensa Boutique Resort (B,L,D)

SUNDAY, JUNE 2

### Punakha

This morning walk to Khamsum Yulley Namgyal Chorten for superb views of Punakha Valley. This stupa was built to ward off evil spirits and to usher in harmony and peace across the world. Next, take a short rafting trip on the Mochu River, known for its gentle flow and calm rapids. In the afternoon, visit the majestic 17th-century Punakha Dzong, Bhutan's former winter capital.

Dhensa Boutique Resort (B,L,D)

REGISTER

[alumni.harvard.edu/travel](https://alumni.harvard.edu/travel)

CALL US

800-422-1636

EMAIL US

[haatravels@harvard.edu](mailto:haatravels@harvard.edu)

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

[alumni.harvard.edu/](https://alumni.harvard.edu/)



Left photo: Trongsang Dzong / Right photo: Prayer wheels at the Trongsang Dzong

MONDAY, JUNE 3

**Trongsang**

Drive to Trongsang, the ancestral home of the Bhutanese Royal Family. Ascend the Pele La Pass and visit Chendebji Chorten, built in the 18th century by the Buddhist Lama Ngesup Tshering Wangchuk to subdue evil spirits. Continue to Trongsang Dzong, the largest dzong in Bhutan.

Yangkhill Resort or Norbu Lingkha Resort (B,L,D)

TUESDAY, JUNE 4

**Bumthang**

Visit Ta Dzong National Museum, then depart for Bumthang, considered one of the most historic districts in Bhutan. Learn about Yatha weaving at Zukney, and at Jakar, visit a private monastery founded by renowned reincarnated Namkhey Pimpoche. Later wander the Chamkar bazaar at leisure.

Ghonkhar Hotel or Valley Resort (B,L,D)

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 5

**Bumthang**

Hike alongside the azure waters of the Chamkhar River to visit Thangbi Temple. Explore Ngalakhang village and visit the fascinating Tamshing and Kencho Sum monasteries. This evening, visit a farmhouse for local delicacies.

Ghonkhar Hotel or Valley Resort (B,L,D)

THURSDAY, JUNE 6

**Paro**

Take a short flight to Paro, and see the 17th-century Paro Dzong, the center of civil and religious authority in the valley. If time permits, visit Dzongdrakha Monastery (smaller Tiger's Nest), built in the 16th century, and admire its crystal stupa and sacred monument.

Le Meridien Paro (B,L,D)

FRIDAY, JUNE 7

**Paro**

Today, embark on a rewarding 4-6 hour hike to the famous Taktsang Monastery, also known as Tiger's Nest. This sacred Buddhist site clings to a cliff's edge, offering a dramatic setting amid breathtaking natural beauty. The trail winds through dense forests, across scenic landscapes, and up steep inclines, rewarding hikers with stunning panoramic views along the way. The monastery's awe-inspiring location, the challenging trek involved, and the rich Buddhist heritage it embodies make it a must-visit destination for those seeking adventure, cultural immersion, and a profound spiritual experience. Alternatively, spend the day exploring Paro independently.

Le Meridien Paro (B,L,D)

SATURDAY, JUNE 8

**Kathmandu, Nepal**

Fly to Kathmandu, and then drive to Pashupatinath, one of the most sacred Hindu temples. This site houses a major pilgrimage place dedicated to the god Shiva. Here witness the Aarti ceremony, a daily prayer ritual in which light is waved in reverence to deities. This evening, enjoy a farewell reception and dinner.

Dwarika's Hotel (B,L,R,D)

SUNDAY, JUNE 9

**Return to U.S.**

Transfer to Kathmandu airport for return flights to the U.S. (B)



Great Buddha Dordenma in Thimphu, Bhutan

## Rates per Person

<b>Per person, sharing accommodations</b> .....	<b>\$14,995</b>
<b>Single Supplement</b> .....	<b>\$5,000</b>

Fees and services are based on current exchange rates and are subject to change.

**PROGRAM RATES INCLUDE** Accommodations, meals, and excursions as specified in the itinerary • On-tour flights Kathmandu/Paro, Bumthang/Paro, Paro/Kathmandu • Comprehensive program of briefings, lectures and presentations • Visas for Nepal and Bhutan • Transfers for all participants on group arrival and departure dates • Baggage handling • Gratuities to porters, waitstaff, guides and drivers • Entrance fees • Welcome and farewell wine receptions • House wine, beer, and soft drinks with welcome and farewell dinners • Filtered water on motorcoaches • Criterion Tour Manager throughout the program.

**NOT INCLUDED:** U.S. domestic and international airfare • Passport expenses • Medical expenses, immunizations, and Covid-19 testing if required at the time of travel • Private airport transfers or airport transfers outside of group arrival and departure days • Travel and trip cancellation insurance • Excursions that deviate from the scheduled tour options • Airline baggage charges • Meals not specified in the itinerary; dishes and beverages not part of the included meals; liquor or soft drinks except as noted • Laundry or dry cleaning • Telephone, fax, Internet and email charges • Room service • Other items of a personal nature.



**AIR ARRANGEMENTS** U.S. domestic and international airfare is not included in the program rates. Valerie Wilson Travel, Inc., can help with airline arrangements for this trip and can be reached at 877-376-1754. You are also welcome to book your air transportation through your local travel agent, an online travel site, or the airline of your choice. Further information about making flight arrangements will be sent to confirmed participants.



**BOOK ONLINE  
TO REGISTER**



# Trip Registration is Easy

## Step 1

Visit: <https://alumni.harvard.edu/travel/trips/himalayan-kingdoms-2024>

## Step 2

Click the Blue “**Register Today**” button and fill out the online form with your contact information and payment details.

## Step 3

Look for an **email confirmation** from Harvard Alumni Travels.

*All bookings are conducted online only.*

*Find complete trip-specific terms and conditions on the trip web page (link above).*

Left photo: Colorful wooden masks at Durbar Square shop in Bhaktapur, Kathmandu, Nepal  
Bottom photo: Memorial chortens or stupas at Dochula Pass on the road between Thimphu and Punakha, Bhutan

