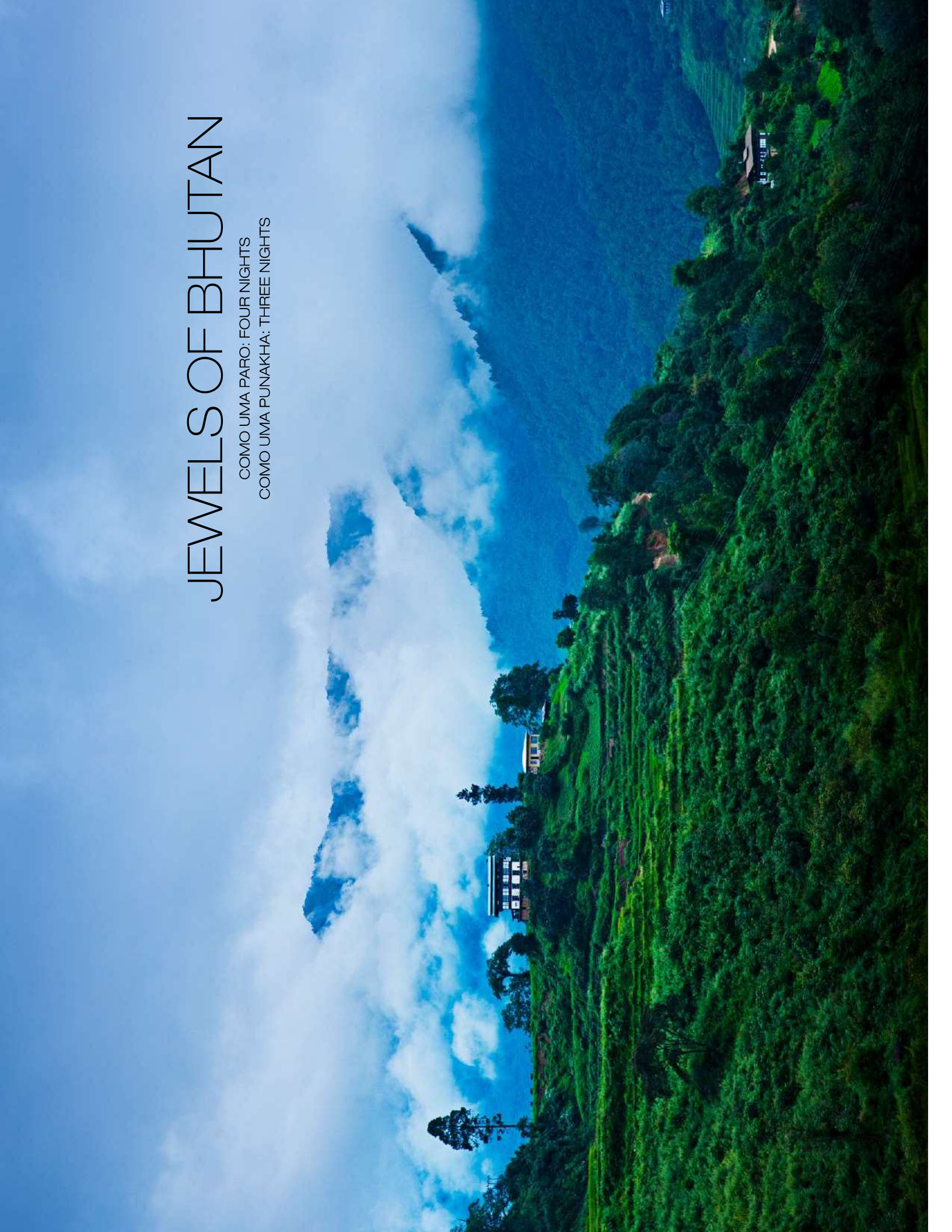
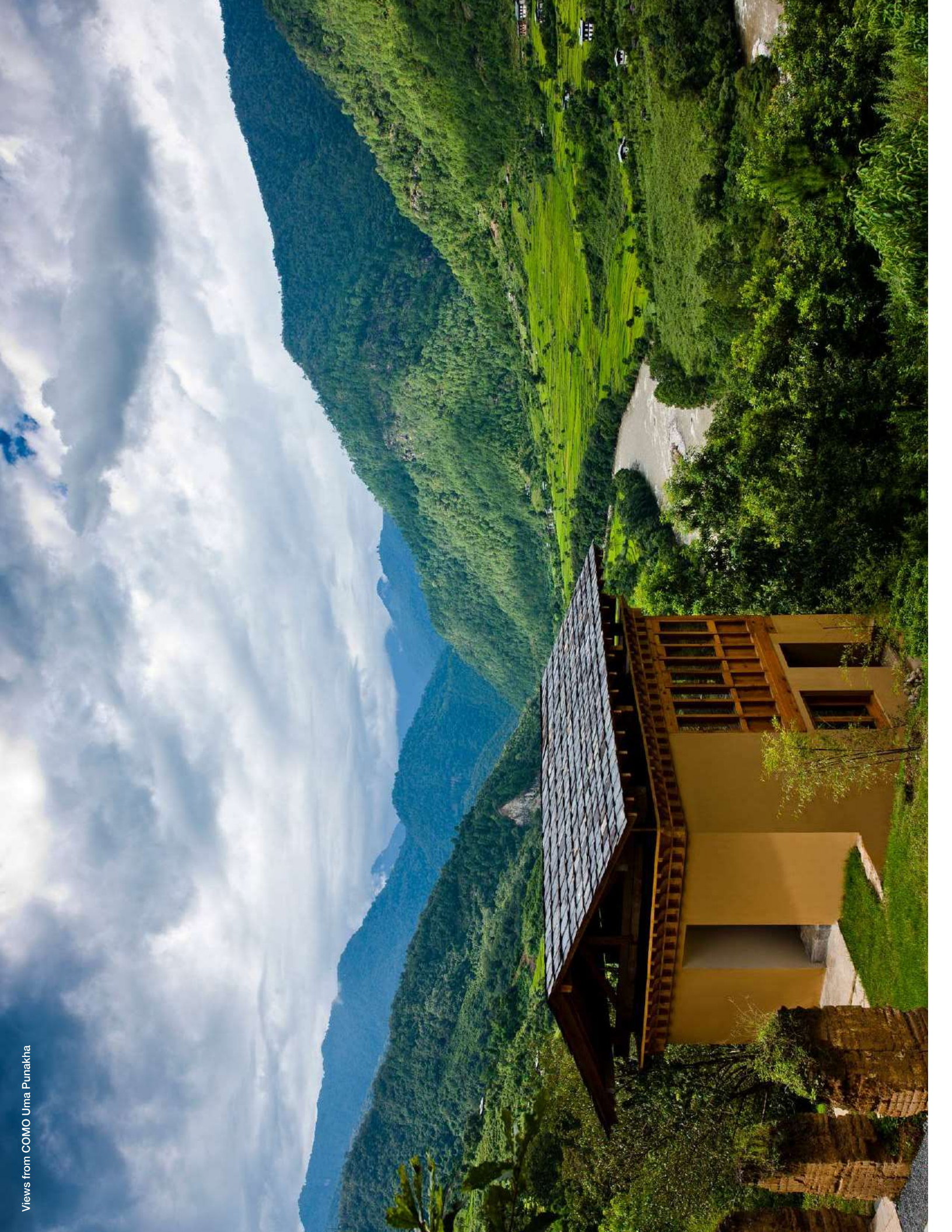


# JEWELS OF BHUTAN

COMO UMA PARO: FOUR NIGHTS  
COMO UMA PUNAKHA: THREE NIGHTS









This seven-night trip takes you to the heart of the ethereal Himalayan Kingdom of Bhutan. This itinerary combines spectacular drives, unique nature walks and fascinating monastery visits. You spend four nights at COMO Uma Paro and three nights at COMO Uma Punakha.



Paddy fields in the Paro Valley



## KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- Engage with young monks at Chorten Ningpo, a Buddhist educational institution built on spirited ground that dates back to the 17th century
- Pay respects at Kyichu Lhakhang, one of the oldest temples in Bhutan
- Visit the Taktsang 'Tiger's Nest' Monastery, one of Bhutan's architectural highlights
- Walk across farmhouses to reach Chimmi Lhakhang, a 15th-century fertility temple
- Enjoy spectacular views of the Himalayas from the Dochu La mountain pass
- Visit the 300-year old Punakha Dzong: the winter residence of the Central Monastic Body and where many major Royal events take place
- Spend a day exploring the bustling capital Thimphu, including sights like the Buddha Dordenma, the National Memorial chorten and more



## CULTURAL NOTES

- If the air seems fresher in Bhutan, it's because it is. Bhutan is the first country in the world that has environmental protection built into its constitution. It's stipulated that at least 60 per cent of the nation must remain under forest cover at all times, making Bhutan the world's only carbon-negative nation, as it absorbs more carbon dioxide than it produces.
- Forgetting birthdays doesn't happen in Bhutan, as all citizens turn one year older on New Year's Day. It originally began as most people did not record their own birth date due to illiteracy, and was maintained as it became easier to share a communal celebration of the year rather than a month and day.
- Bhutan's borders were not open until 1974, when international media was allowed to cover the coronation of its former king. Previously, Bhutan had been in self-imposed isolation to protect their Buddhist culture and unspoiled landscape from globalisation. It also only lifted a ban on television and the internet in 1999.
- Contrary to inheritance law almost anywhere else, Bhutanese families pass property onto the eldest daughter rather than the son. After marriage, a man moves into the home of his new wife rather than the other way around.



Taktsang Tiger's Nest Monastery



Druk Choeding Temple



A typical culinary spread in Bhutan



- Ignoring global metrics of economic growth, Bhutan developed the concept of Gross National Happiness (GNH). It is often ranked as the happiest nation in South Asia and among the top ten happiest places in the world.
- Spice-lovers rejoice, and the spice-sensitive beware – chilli is not a condiment in Bhutan, but an essential vegetable. Their cuisine is heavily spiced by default, and it is said that they will not eat a dish until it is spicy enough.
- Bhutan's capital, Thimphu, does not have a single traffic light. People drive slowly and carefully through the precarious roads and it hasn't failed them yet. Local officials tried to install a light but roused such public outcry that it was quickly removed and a traffic officer assigned to the intersection instead.
- Only eight pilots have been trained to navigate landing in Paro Airport. Situated in a deep valley, flying to Paro involves avoiding high peaks and strong winds in specific meteorological conditions. The flight itself is an exclusive privilege.
- You will likely see a number of colourful phallus drawings on the walls of certain houses in Bhutan. These aren't graffiti, but rather a tradition that symbolises good luck and fertility. Phalluses are believed to ward off evil spirits and are often used in place of a scarecrow.

Views from Chele La Pass







Khamsum Yulley Nam  
Chorten In Punakha

## DAY-BY-DAY SCHEDULE

This itinerary is customisable. Please speak to us about your needs and requirements and we will do our utmost to accommodate you.

### DAY 1 ARRIVAL, CHECK-IN AND LOCAL SIGHTSEEING

Upon arrival at the airport, you will be greeted by staff from COMO Uma Paro who will assist with the 10-minute transfer to the property. After checking in and spending some time settling into your new surroundings, we will take you on your first foray into

the Himalayan Kingdom, with sightseeing in Paro town and a temple visit. The afternoon trip allows you to acclimatise to the rarefied air at this altitude and to get to know your guide.

Overnight: COMO Uma Paro



Top: Punakha Dzong  
Bottom: Red-robed Buddhist monks, a familiar sight throughout your trip in Bhutan

### DAY 2 PARO TO PUNAKHA VALLEY VIA THIMPHU AND DOCHU LA

#### Morning

If you choose to, your guide will arrange to bring you to a nearby monastery for a butter lamp ceremony – as a spiritual blessing and welcome to the kingdom – before embarking on your day. During this symbolic Buddhist ceremony, you will witness monks lighting lamps filled with ghee, in place of the originally used yak butter. The ceremony is meant to dispel ignorance, celebrate the fluidity of life and acknowledge the interdependency of nature.

During the journey from COMO Uma Paro to COMO Uma Punakha, you can stop off in the nation's largest city, Thimphu, with an immersive tour taking in some of the major attractions, including the **Buddha Dordenma** statue, the **National Memorial Chorten**, a view of **Trashi Chhoe Dzong** and the **Folk Heritage Museum** (exact tour itinerary varies).

The capital city sprawls across the wooded western hillside of the Wang Chhu River, surrounded by verdant rice paddies and towering peaks.

After leaving Thimphu, the drive to Punakha is spectacular, winding snake-like up the 3,000m-high mountain pass of **Dochu La**, offering views to 108 chortens (Buddhist shrines), forests of cluttering prayer flags and, on a clear day, sweeping views of the Himalayan range.

Duration of drive: 3 to 4 hours (126km)

Overnight: COMO Uma Punakha

### DAY 3 CHIMMI LHAKHANG, PUNAKHA DZONG AND KHAMSUM YULLEY NAMGYAL CHORTEN

#### Morning

The morning starts with a short walk across farmhouses and rice paddies to reach **Chimmi Lhakhang**, a 15th-century fertility temple dedicated to Drukpa Kuenley, a Tibetan Buddhist saint, perhaps better known as the 'Divine Madman'. This site has long been a pilgrimage for couples hoping to start a family, adorned with colourful fertility symbols and bold statues.

Heading further down the valley, the 300-year-old **Punakha Dzong** comes into view. Built in the 17th century by Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal (who founded the Kingdom of Bhutan), the fortress once housed the country's government. It is now the winter home of Je Khenpo, the head abbot of Bhutan, along with a retinue of 1,000 red-robed monks.

#### Afternoon

After lunch, we will take you on a walk through homesteads and farmland to **Khamsum Yulley Namgyal Chorten**, a hilltop shrine built by the royal family. This is a full day of exploration through the lush **Punakha Valley** which, at 1,200m, is low enough for bananas and oranges to grow beside the footpaths.

Duration: 6 to 7 hours

Difficulty: Easy to moderate

Overnight: COMO Uma Punakha





## DAY 4 CHORTEN NINGPO AND KHABASA VILLAGE

### Morning

After-breakfast we will drive to **Chorten Ningpo**, which dates back to the 17th century. The chorten is home to a magnificent statue of Maitreya (the future Buddha) and images of the great lamas of the Drukpa lineage.

According to legend, this magical spot was once a dense forest inhabited by evil spirits. The great oak tree outside the monastery is said to have grown out of the blazing log that the **'Divine Madman'** threw (the tree's bark is still black from where it was burnt).

In 2005 the monastery began to house orphans from the nearby village, and founded a small Buddhist educational institution where the children can study traditional Buddhist scriptures and texts, as well as Western subjects.

The hike back to COMO Uma Punakha is around 45 minutes, going past local temple **Thodrup Lhakhang**.

Duration: 3 to 4 hours / Difficulty: Easy to moderate

### Afternoon

#### Option 1: Hike to Sangchhen Dorji Lhendrup Nunnery and Talo Nobgang

Today you can visit the **Sangchhen Dorji Lhendrup Nunnery**, home to one of the largest bronze statues of Avalokiteshvara – a bodhisattva embodying infinite compassion – in Bhutan, created entirely by local Bhutanese artisans. The temple complex also houses a permanent 'higher learning and meditation centre' for nuns, for both religious training and life skills. **Nobgang monastery**, dating back to the 17th century, was built as the residence for Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal, a Tibetan Buddhist lama.

## DAY 5 PUNAKHA VALLEY TO PARO, CHUZOM AND TAMCHOG LHA KHANG

### Morning

Retrace your steps back over the Dochu La pass for a second chance to view the Himalayan mountain range. Returning to the **Chuzom** (the confluence of the rivers Wang Chhu and Paro Chhu), you can glimpse the three nearby shrines, built to ward off evil spirits – each with a different style of architecture: Nepali, Tibetan and Bhutanese.

Time-permitting, there will be a visit to **Tamchog Lhakhang**, a temple built by Thangtong Gyalpo, a pioneering engineer who introduced the construction of suspension bridges into Bhutan and Tibet (several of which are still in use today).

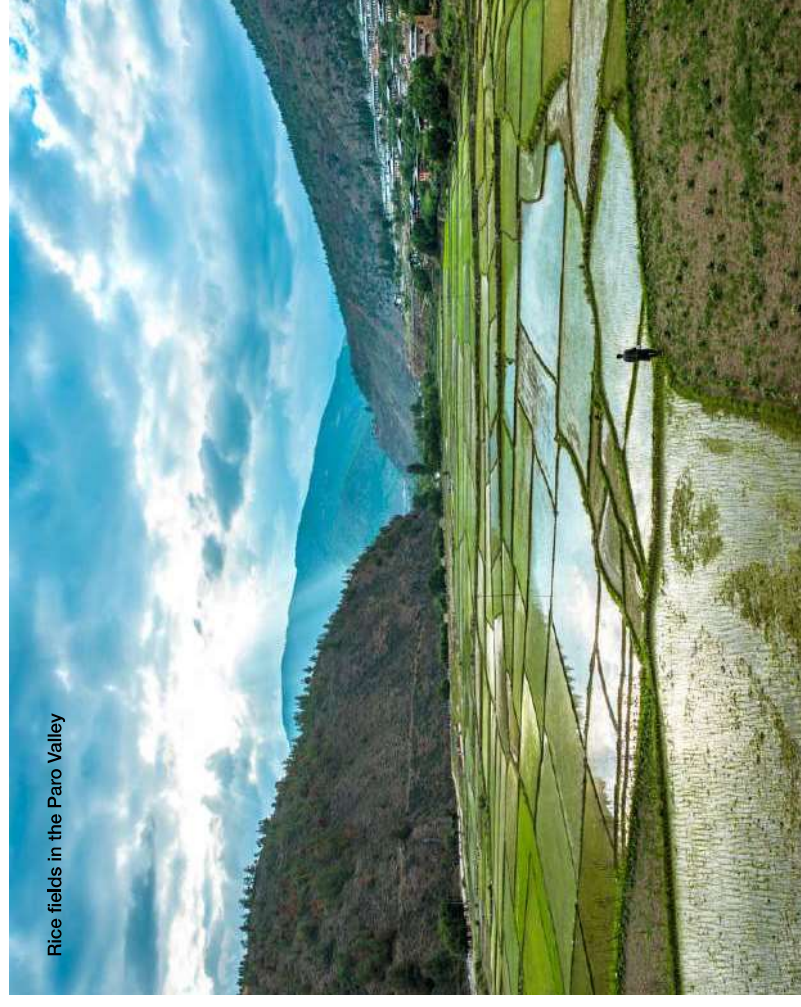
Spend the rest of the day in our calming mountain home after a drive through apple orchards and rice paddies. One popular option is to try your hand at archery, Bhutan's national sport.

If you choose to, your guide will also arrange to bring you to a nearby monastery for a butter lamp ceremony – as a spiritual blessing and welcome to the kingdom – any time on this day. During this symbolic Buddhist ceremony, you will witness monks lighting lamps filled with ghee, in place of the originally used yak butter. The ceremony is meant to dispel ignorance, celebrate the fluidity of life and acknowledge the interdependency of nature.

Duration of drive: 3 to 4 hours (126km)

Difficulty: Easy

Overnight: COMO Uma Paro



Rice fields in the Paro Valley





Nyamai Zam Footbridge

## DAY 7 PARO VALLEY – TAKTSANG WALK

### Morning

The historical **Paro Valley** is the focus of today's activities, culminating in a visit to the **Taksang 'Tiger's Nest' Monastery**, one of Bhutan's most important pieces of architecture. According to legend, this cliffside is where Guru Rinpoche (Padmasambhava) landed on the back of a flying tigress, bringing Buddhism to Bhutan from Tibet. The trip starts early in order to avoid the hot sun during the two-hour climb – a steep hike passing a waterfall and ending among beautiful murals at the monastery's main entrance. If time allows, there is the possibility of heading further up to visit remote temples.

### Afternoon

After lunch – either a prepared picnic or from the charming Taksang cafeteria – you return to COMO Uma Paro, where you can recharge on your final night, enjoying the steam rooms, gym and swimming pool or indulging in one of our COMO Shambhala treatments.

Duration: 6 to 8 hours

Difficulty: Moderate to hard

Overnight: COMO Uma Paro

## DAY 8 DEPART BHUTAN

Your 10-minute transfer to Paro International Airport will be arranged according to your flight schedule.

## DAY 6 WALK TO ZURIG DZONG, RINPUNG DZONG, TA DZONG, PARO TOWN, KYICHU LHA KHANG AND DRUKGYEL DZONG

### Morning

Wind through pine forests high above COMO Uma Paro to the pretty grounds of the fortress-like monastery of **Zurig Dzong**. Traverse across to **Ta Dzong**, home to Bhutan's **National Museum**, with magnificent views over Paro, then on down to **Rinpung Dzong** (Fortress on a Heap of Jewels).

The trail then leads across the Paro Chhu river via the traditional covered bridge **Nyamai Zam**, past the main archery ground, **Ugyen Peiri Palace**, and into Paro town.

### Afternoon

Driving a few kilometres north of Paro, we pay our respects at **Kyichu Lhakhang**, one of the oldest temples in Bhutan with its magical orange tree that bears fruit all year round.

Time permitting, we drive further up the valley to **Drukgyel Dzong**, built in 1648 by Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal to control the northern route to Tibet.

Duration: 5 to 7 hours (subject to time spent in National Museum and Paro)

Difficulty: Easy to moderate

Overnight: COMO Uma Paro



Bhutanese archers taking part in the national sport



## YOUR ACCOMMODATION

With COMO Uma Bhutan, the Himalayan Kingdom's splendour is revealed to you daily through drives, walks and enchanting heritage sites. Each night, you will return safely to the sleek comfort of our two COMO lodges.

COMO Uma Paro – Bukhari Restaurant



COMO Uma Paro – One Bed Villa



## COMO UMA PARO

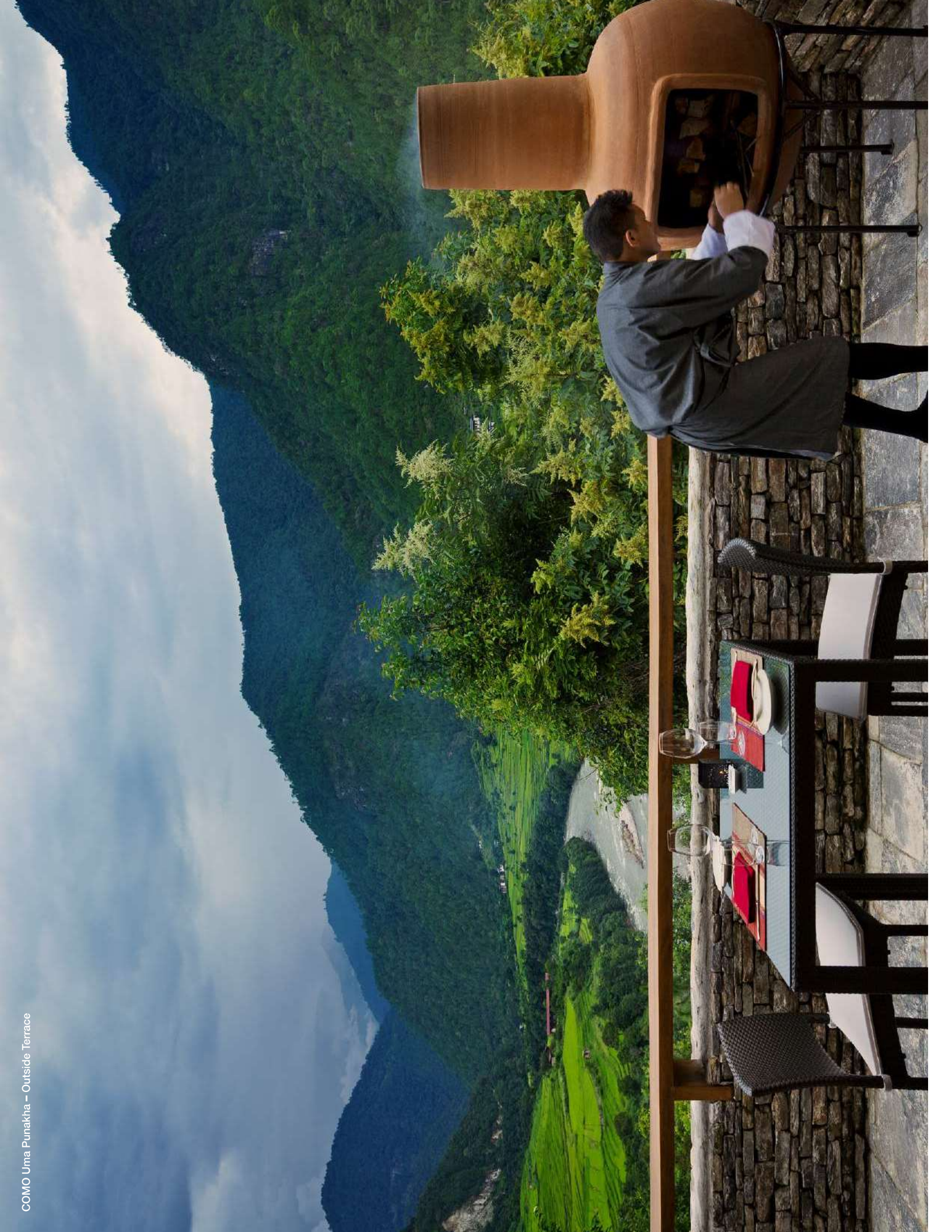
COMO Uma Paro is nestled above the emerald Paro Valley, on a hill overlooking the rice paddies and ancient monasteries. Sequester yourself in our private rooms that combine traditional Bhutanese colour and craftsmanship with modern amenities. The location immerses you in the country's rich cultural tapestry, making it easy to explore the rest of the valley, including the precarious Tiger's Nest Monastery perched 3,100m above the valley floor. As always, you can expect pin-sharp service and world-class cuisine, with food inspired by the country's local flavours.





Outside dining at COMO Uma Patro





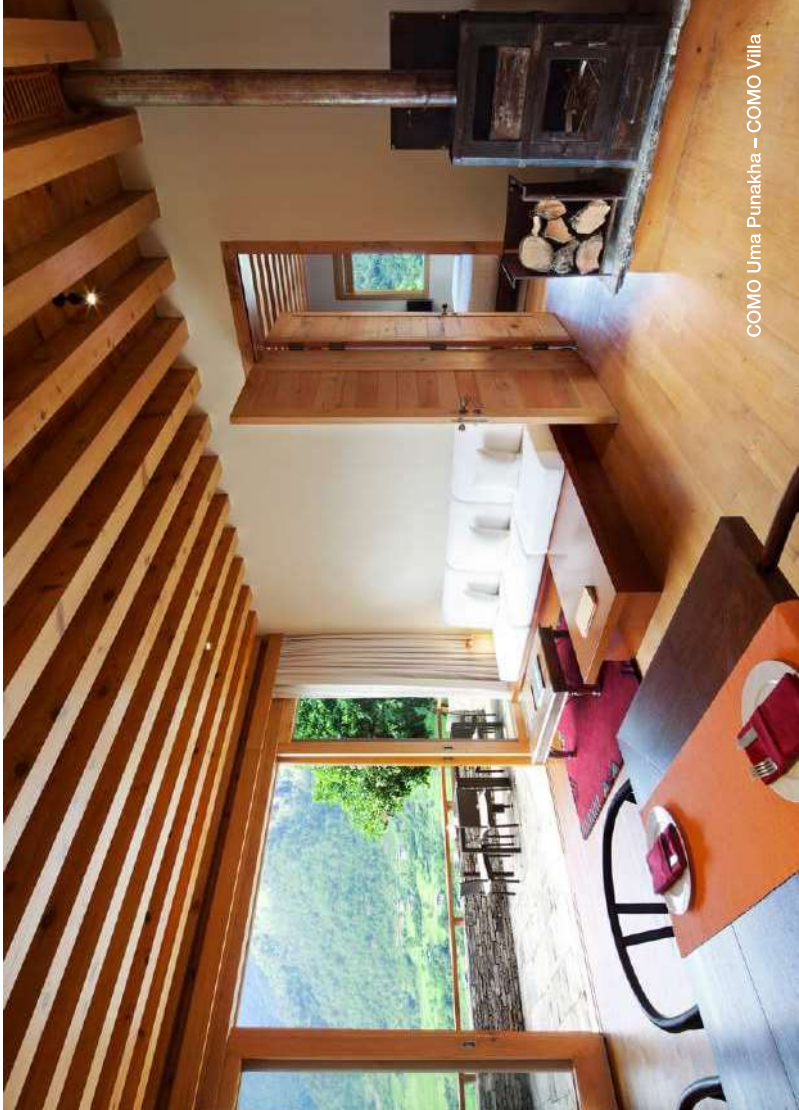
COMO Uma Punakha – Outside Terrace



## COMO UMA PUNAKHA

Five hours from Paro by car, over a mountain pass dotted with prayer flags, COMO Uma Punakha stands high above a serpentine bend in the Mo Chhu River – just west of the lesser-visited Punakha Valley. Amidst the alpine serenity, you can hike, white-water raft and explore temples like the Punakha Dzong, home to a retinue of 1,000 red-robed monks. After full days of excursions through Bhutan's heartlands, you'll stay in one of just 10 rooms at the lodge – each with sweeping views of the lush wilderness and an iconic, locally-inspired design.

Top: COMO Uma Punakha - Hot Stone Bath  
Bottom: Views of COMO Uma Punakha



COMO Uma Punakha – COMO Villa





## KEY DETAILS

### INCLUSIONS

- Accommodation for four nights at COMO Uma Paro and three nights at COMO Uma Punakha on a full board basis, including picnic lunches during excursion days (excluding beverages)
- Six-and-a-half days of privately guided excursions, taking in the highlights of the Paro, Thimphu and Punakha valleys
- The private services of an experienced English-speaking Bhutanese guide
- One 60-minute COMO Shambhala body treatment
- Complimentary use of the library, swimming pool, steam room and gym at COMO Uma Paro
- Complimentary wireless internet throughout COMO Uma Paro and COMO Uma Punakha
- Private airport transfers and transport around Bhutan
- All Bhutanese government visa and royalty fees, service charge and sales tax
- All museum and visitor centre entry fees and road permits
- Complimentary one-hour daily yoga class whilst at COMO Uma Paro (except Sundays)



Bhutanese locals in traditional dress



The lush Paro Valley

### TRAVEL INSURANCE

We strongly recommend that you take out travel insurance against medical and personal accident risks (including repatriation costs, air ambulance and helicopter rescue services), as well as cancellation insurance. You should be aware that some policies may not cover travel to Bhutan and may not cover activities such as trekking, mountain biking and rafting. Please ensure that your policy provides a sufficient level of protection and covers you for the activities involved in this package. You must carry proof of insurance (e.g. your insurance certificate) with you in Bhutan.

### PLEASE NOTE

This itinerary is intended as a guide only. Routes and weather conditions may mean variations to the programme, which may affect the availability of the views and panoramas described. Please be aware that all times stated are approximate, and may vary with individual/group fitness and interest levels.

COMO Uma Bhutan provides complimentary drinking water for all guided itineraries. You have any special dietary requirements, please advise us in advance. Where stated, trips include picnic lunches prepared by our chefs. Please place your picnic order the day before departure through your guide or at the Activity Desk.

Throughout your stay, you have the option to participate in a range of extra outdoor activities at an additional fee.



## TRAVEL TO BHUTAN

COMO Uma Bhutan handles the whole booking process on your behalf, including flights via Druk Air or Bhutan Airlines. However, the price of flights is not included in the package and it is advisable to book well in advance to secure seats. We also handle visa application processing which is included in the package. It normally takes two to three weeks to process the visa.

Please read this document in conjunction with your confirmation letter and pre-departure information.

For more information on COMO Uma Bhutan, including the full range of itineraries and services we offer – from tailor-made adventures, overnight treks and biking itineraries to provisions for groups and the hosting of special events – please refer to our website: [comohotels.com/uma/bhutan](http://comohotels.com/uma/bhutan).

Guests can choose to combine their break in Bhutan with a stay in Bangkok at COMO Metropolitan Bangkok. For special rates when combining a stay in the city with one of our COMO Uma Bhutan itineraries, please email [res.uma.bhutan@comohotels.com](mailto:res.uma.bhutan@comohotels.com) or call +975 8 279 999.



Top: A COMO Uma Bhutan guide  
Bottom: Thimphu Festival Performers



COMO Uma Paro's entrance

