



MUSEUM TRAVEL
— ALLIANCE —

BY ARRANGEMENTS ABROAD



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

October 5 – 19, 2025



IS THE MUSEUM TRAVEL ALLIANCE NEW TO YOU?

MTA trips offer exclusive cultural experiences to members from over 100 of America's leading museums. These art-filled programs feature all your favorite lecturers from past trips, with the same expert guidance and behind-the-scenes access you have come to expect.

TRIP HIGHLIGHTS

TRAVEL with Asian art scholar **Christopher Noey** for an inspiring look at Buddhist treasures in **Ladakh, Nepal, and Bhutan**, encountering monasteries, temples, and living traditions across three distinct Himalayan cultures

GAIN rare access to the kingdom of **Bhutan**, which permits entry to a limited number of visitors annually, allowing for deeper connections with its people and sacred spaces

EXPERIENCE a sacred dawn ceremony at Ladakh's **Thiksey Monastery** and join experts to behold 900-year-old murals painted in precious lapis lazuli and gold at **Alchi Monastery**

MEET exclusively with the **National Museum of Nepal's** chief curator to view recently repatriated artifacts and learn about efforts to reclaim the country's cultural heritage

TAKE a curator-led tour of Nepal's **Patan Museum**, exploring one of South Asia's finest collections of religious art within restored medieval palace courtyards

SHARE an exclusive lunch at the Patan Museum with social entrepreneur **Anil Chitrakar**, named among the World Economic Forum's 100 "Global Leaders for Tomorrow"

JOIN an expert guide at Nepal's **Swayambhunath**, a gleaming, 1,500-year-old *stupa* displaying four sets of painted eyes that represent Buddha's all-seeing presence

PARTICIPATE in a private traditional butter lamp ceremony at Bhutan's **Kyichu Lhakhang**, one of the country's oldest temples, dating to the seventh century A.D.

ENJOY an optional trek with expert guides to one of Buddhism's holiest sites—Bhutan's 17th-century **Tiger's Nest Monastery**, which clings to a sheer cliff face 3,000 feet above the Paro Valley

STAY in unique accommodations, from luxury tents beneath Ladakh's star-filled skies at **TUTC Camp** to Bhutan's intimate **&Beyond Punakha River Lodge** nestled among ancient rice terraces

DINE privately at **the ancestral estate of a noble Bhutanese family** known for preparing sumptuous meals for royalty over many generations



MUSEUM TRAVEL — ALLIANCE —

BY ARRANGEMENTS ABROAD

Dear Travelers and Friends,

From **October 5–19, 2025**, please join me for a rewarding two-week sojourn amid the heavenly Himalayas. As Tibet's Buddhist heritage teetered on extinction in the mid-20th century, three mountain kingdoms—**Ladakh, Nepal, and Bhutan**—became guardians of Tibet's ancient Buddhist traditions. Together, we'll experience how these regions have preserved this inspiring spiritual and cultural legacy.

As a specialist in Asian art, I'm particularly excited to show you how these cultures transformed the visual language of Buddhism as well as its rich ritual practice. We'll also enjoy exclusive meetings and meals with the local conservators, spiritual and cultural leaders, noble families, and skilled artisans who protect and shape these devout societies in a modern era.

Our journey begins in Ladakh, a breathtaking, otherworldly region in northern India known as the "Land of High Passes." Experts will take us behind the scenes of majestic palaces and monasteries, introducing us to their pristine, 11th-century murals—their mineral pigments radiant after nine centuries. In Nepal's **Kathmandu Valley**, long the artistic capital of the Himalayas, we will have insider looks at its magnificent Hindu and Buddhist temples—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.

Finally, in Bhutan, we'll be **among the few travelers admitted** to this tiny kingdom each year. Bhutan offers a living laboratory where prosperity is measured by Gross National Happiness (GNH) rather than GDP. Experts will take us behind the scenes of Bhutan's sacred sites and monasteries ranging from a massive 17th-century fortress whose walls rise between converging rivers to remote meditation caves tucked beneath the Dochula Pass.

We'll share illuminating conversations with young Bhutanese monks in training and experience Bhutanese arts firsthand through a demonstration of traditional pigment-making techniques by an acclaimed contemporary painter. An optional guided trek to Bhutan's cliffside **Tiger's Nest Monastery—one of Buddhism's holiest sites**—will be a memorable highlight.

TRAVELING WITH YOU



Christopher Noey is an art historian, author, and Emmy Award-winning producer of films on art and culture. At The Metropolitan Museum of Art, he created video installations for diverse exhibitions and served as series director for 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.

To reserve your place, please contact the Museum Travel Alliance at 212-514-8921 or email trips@museumtravelalliance.com. I hope you join me this October in these spectacular mountain landscapes for a behind-the-scenes look at some of Buddhism's greatest artistic treasures.

Sincerely,
Christopher Noey
Lecturer

Activity Level:



Pace Level:



Visit Arrangements Abroad's website for more information about Activity and Pace Levels at www.arrangementsabroad.com/faqs.

Buddhism & the Himalayas

Ladakh, Nepal & Bhutan

October 5 – 19, 2025



SUNDAY, OCTOBER 5: DEPARTURE

Depart on an overnight flight to Delhi, India.

MONDAY, OCTOBER 6: DELHI, INDIA

Arrive in **Delhi** and transfer to the **Trident Gurgaon Hotel**, a serene retreat surrounded by sprawling gardens, courtyards, and fountains. Gather for a welcome reception tonight at the hotel.

R

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 7: DELHI / LEH (LADAKH)

Take a morning flight from Delhi to **Leh**, the capital of Ladakh, the picturesque region of India near Tibet. The landscape is adorned with white *stupas* and flawless *gompas* (Tibetan Buddhist monasteries) framed by rugged mountains. Inside the *gompas*, golden Buddhas and intricately colorful murals create spiritual havens, home to red-robed monks.

The afternoon and early evening are free to rest and acclimate to the 11,000-foot elevation. This evening, enjoy a welcome dinner.

B,L,D

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 8: LEH

Travel to Sham Valley in Lower Ladakh, passing through the stunning orchards along the Indus River to the fabled **Alchi Monastery**, which houses artwork so impeccably preserved it offers an unparalleled glimpse into medieval Buddhist artistry.

Admire Alchi's rare **thousand-year-old murals** painted with gold and lapis lazuli, which reveal a fascinating interplay between Indian Buddhist imagery and Tibetan interpretations. The monastery's three main temples showcase what scholars consider the world's finest surviving examples of Kashmiri-style painting.

After lunch at a local favorite, visit **Likir Monastery**, which dates back to the 11th century and contains assembly halls adorned with richly colored *thangkas* (Buddhist paintings) and murals of protective deities. The monastery's crown jewel is its 75-foot gilded statue of Maitreya Buddha. Rising from the monastery's roof, this gleaming symbol of the future Buddha is visible for miles across the valley at an elevation of 12,000 feet.

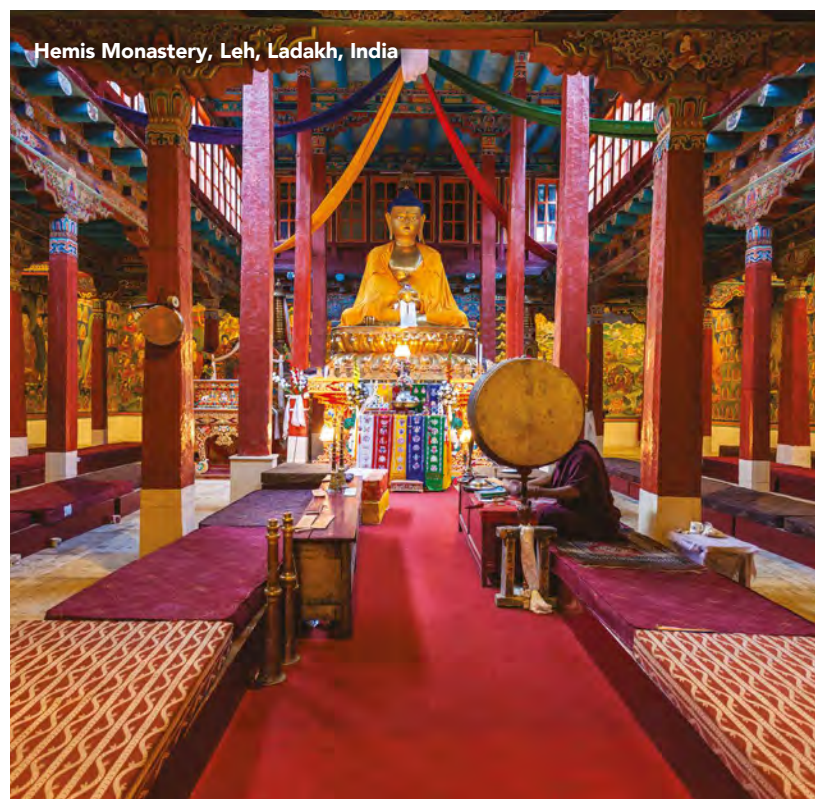
B,L,D

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 9: LEH

Experience a tranquil sunrise ceremony at **Thiksey Monastery**, perched high on a hilltop. Following the service, visit **Hemis Monastery**, established in 1672, with a setting above the Indus Valley. Behold what scholars believe are the finest 18th-century Tibetan Buddhist murals, featuring scenes of the Buddha's life and various deities.

After lunch, enjoy a free afternoon to explore Leh at your own pace. Gain insight into this crucial Silk Road trading post where Indian, Tibetan, and Central Asian cultures converged. Stop to view ancient Ladakhi artifacts and handwritten Qu'rans at the **Central Asian Museum**.

You may also ascend to the nine-story medieval **Leh Palace**, where 450 years of Buddhist relics and royal artifacts illuminate the kingdom's layered history, before walking the narrow lanes of the **Old Town (Kharyog)**, with its mud-brick homes once occupied by royal ministers. Gather for dinner this evening. B,L,D



FRIDAY, OCTOBER 10: LEH / DELHI /**KATHMANDU, NEPAL**

Fly to **Kathmandu** via Delhi and check into the intimate, luxurious **Dwarika's Hotel** for a four-night stay. Lunch is at leisure. Take time to explore the hotel's grounds and admire the centuries-old carved wood and terracotta brickwork of the property's historic buildings. Gather for dinner tonight at the hotel's **Toran Restaurant**. B,D

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 11: KATHMANDU

Stroll among ancient palaces, pagodas, shrines, and terracotta stone carvings in Patan Durbar Square. Join a curator-led exploration of the **Patan Museum**, housed in a 17th-century royal courtyard, with an extensive collection of cast bronze deities, gilt copper *repoussé* embellished with precious stones, and rare ceremonial objects from Nepal's Malla dynasty (10th–18th century).

Gather for lunch at the museum's café and meet with social entrepreneur **Anil Chitrakar**, who has spent more than two decades championing Nepal's conservation and sustainability efforts.

After lunch, visit **Hanuman Dhoka Palace**, a vast complex dating to the third century A.D. where intricately carved wooden windows and ceremonial courtyards tell the story of Nepal's ancient kingdoms. Then visit the 16th-century **Taleju Temple**, designed in the shape of a mystical *yantra* (geometric diagram) and housing golden deities.

Proceed to the **Kumari Temple**, home to Nepal's "Living Goddess," an exquisitely carved three-story palace where stone lions guard centuries of tradition. Conclude in **Ason**, a vibrant market since the sixth century A.D. Here, spice merchants and fabric traders conduct business beneath the gaze of the **Annapurna Temple**, just as their predecessors did along the ancient trade routes. Dinner is at leisure. B,L

**SUNDAY, OCTOBER 12: KATHMANDU / BHAKTAPUR**

Ascend to the Kathmandu Valley's oldest active Hindu temple. Take a guided look at the UNESCO-listed **Changu Narayan Temple**, where a two-tiered pagoda shelters masterworks of early Hindu art. Later, drive to **Bhaktapur**, one of the "royal cities" in the Kathmandu Valley, for lunch at the Heritage Hotel.

Explore Bhaktapur, Nepal's cultural gem, renowned for its elegant art, colorful festivals, and traditional dances. The city's three squares feature some of the country's most extraordinary sacred architecture, including the five-tiered **Nyatapola Temple** and other tall opulent structures. Gather for dinner this evening. B,L,D

Temple carving, Patan Durbar Square, Kathmandu, Nepal



Nyatapola Temple, Kathmandu, Nepal



MONDAY, OCTOBER 13: KATHMANDU

Visit the holy site of **Boudhanath**. This graceful and perfectly proportioned *stupa* is a three-dimensional symbol of Buddha's path towards enlightenment. Travel north to the foothills of Shivapuri to **Budhanilkantha Temple** and view one of the most revered Vishnu shrines in the valley: the massive reclining statue of Vishnu as Narayan, the creator of all life.

After lunch, continue to **Swayambhunath**, a 1,500-year-old hilltop *stupa* displaying four sets of painted eyes, representing the Buddha's all-seeing presence. Then join the chief of the **National Museum of Nepal** before exploring its remarkable military arms collection spanning the nation's history, including a rare leather cannon from the 1792 Tibetan War and a sword presented by Napoleon III. Return to the hotel for dinner at leisure. B,L

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 14: KATHMANDU / PARO, BHUTAN / PUNAKHA

Take a morning flight to **Paro**, Bhutan, to receive a welcome blessing and spiritual cleansing from the high lama at the local monastery. Drive scenic **Dochula Pass** en route to the fertile valley of **Punakha**. Admire the *chortens* and prayer flags that decorate the highest point of the pass. Afterwards, check into the luxurious **Punakha River Lodge** and enjoy dinner on site. B,L,D

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 15: PUNAKHA

This morning, meet with the young monks in training at **Chorten Nyingo**, a monastic school founded in the 18th century, where carved wooden beams and sacred murals frame the prayer hall, which houses an ancient Buddha statue. Exchange ideas with these students as they practice their English and share insights about their daily spiritual studies.



Reclining Buddha, Budhanilkantha Temple, Nepal

Then transfer to Khamsum Yulley to enjoy a hike to the **Khamsum Yulley Lhakhang**, a four-story temple commissioned in 2004 to promote peace across Bhutan and beyond. Inside this pagoda-style sanctuary, behold the 15-foot statue of the wrathful deity Vajrakilaya and *mandalas* painted over nine years by master craftsmen.

Following a local lunch, explore **Punakha Dzong**, a government building built in 1637 at the meeting point of the Pho Chhu and Mo Chhu rivers by Bhutan's founder Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal, where massive walls constructed without nails house sacred Buddhist relics.

Cross Bhutan's longest suspension bridge to dinner at the **Happiness Field Village Farmstay**, the ancestral estate of a noble family that has served the royal family for generations. Savor an authentic Bhutanese meal with ingredients grown in the estate's organic gardens. B,L,D

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 16: PUNAKHA / THIMPU / PARO

After checking out of the hotel in Punakha, we'll transfer to Paro, with some fascinating stops en route. Venture first to the **Chimi Lhakhang** fertility temple, a sacred site dedicated to the unconventional 15th-century Buddhist saint, Lama Drukpa Kunley, known as the Divine Madman.



Punakha Dzong, Bhutan

Receive a blessing from monks and engage in a demonstration with a well-regarded local painter and artisan. Learn about the natural pigments and techniques used while sampling cordyceps-infused local *ara* (rice wine).

Make your way to **Thimphu**, Bhutan's capital and largest city, for lunch. Then meet a curator at the **Royal Textile Museum**, admiring its collections of royal wedding garments and religious ceremonial robes while watching master weavers demonstrate their craft in the conservation center.

Nearby, visit the 177-foot-high **Buddha Dordenma**, completed in 2015 and one of the world's largest sitting Buddha statues. Upon arrival in **Paro**, check into your hotel, the **COMO Uma**, and enjoy dinner. B,L,D

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 17: PARO

Admire the Paro Valley from above during a visit to **Rinpung Dzong**, a 17th-century fortress and monastery combination that exemplifies Bhutan's defense and spiritual unity.

Then enjoy a guided tour of Bhutan's **National Museum**, housed in a 17th-century *ta dzong* (watchtower), gaining insight into the four schools of Tibetan Buddhism through a comprehensive collection of Bhutanese historical relics and *thangkas*.

Arrive at **Kyichu Lhakhang**, one of Bhutan's oldest temples in Bhutan, dating to the seventh century A.D. Participate in a private butter-lamp lighting ceremony, in which 108 flames illuminate precious stones embedded in wooden floors as their light symbolizes the path from darkness to enlightenment.

The afternoon is free to meander through Paro's lanes, where modern cafés and traditional artisan workshops mingle beneath snow-capped peaks. B,L,D

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 18: PARO / PARO TAKTSANG (TIGER'S NEST MONASTERY)

Adventurous participants can make the optional yet rewarding trek to the mountains to one of Buddhism's holiest sites, **Tiger's Nest Monastery (Paro Taktsang)**, perched 3,000 feet on a cliff above the Paro Valley, built in 1692 around sacred eighth-century A.D. meditation caves where Buddhism first took root in Bhutan.

Pass through interconnected temples supported by wooden beams jutting from the cliff face, pausing in caves where monks meditate for three-year periods, then receive blessings amid centuries-old murals before descending the 800 steps that lead back to the Paro Valley.

Less strenuous activities will be available as alternatives to the hike. Return to the hotel for a festive farewell dinner, where village musicians share centuries-old folk ballads around a bonfire beneath Himalayan stars. B,L,D

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 19: PARO / DELHI, INDIA / RETURN

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 October 20. B,L

DISCLAIMER: *This itinerary is subject to change at the discretion of The Museum Travel Alliance. For complete details, please carefully read the terms and conditions at <https://museumtravelalliance.com/faq.php>.*

© 2025 Arrangements Abroad Inc. All Rights Reserved.



HIGH-ELEVATION ACTIVITIES NOTE

This carefully planned Himalayan journey begins with gentle activities at high altitudes before building to more challenging experiences, allowing your body to acclimate naturally to elevations above 11,000 feet. Many sites require walking on uneven stone paths and climbing steep steps and inclines without handrails, so **participants should be in very good health**, be able to walk a mile without rest, and stand for extended periods unassisted. Sturdy, broken-in walking shoes are a must.

PROGRAM RATE

\$22,599 per person, double rate

\$28,999 single rate

RATE INCLUDES

- Thirteen nights hotel 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 / Leh-Delhi-Kathmandu / Kathmandu-Paro / Paro-Delhi)
- Escorted sightseeing, transportation, and entrance fees for all included visits
- Airport/hotel/airport group transfers for all participants on suggested flights
- Visa fees for Bhutan
- Gratuities to local guides and drivers
- Taxes, service, and portage charges

NOT INCLUDED IN RATE: International airfare; passport fees; visa fees for India and Nepal; meals not specified; alcoholic beverages other than what is 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.

ACCOMMODATIONS

Trident Gurgaon, Delhi, India



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 multiple dining options.

TUTC CAMP, LEH

At an elevation of 11,000 feet, enjoy an extraordinary tented experience beneath the star-filled Ladakh sky. Each climate-controlled tent includes a private bathroom with hot showers, butler service 24 hours a day, and a fully stocked mini-bar. The real draw lies in the location itself: Wake each morning to views of Thiksey Monastery's golden spires set against the dramatic Himalayan peaks.

DWARIKA'S HOTEL, KATHMANDU

Rooms are designed with terracotta floors, 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.

&BEYOND RIVER LODGE, PUNAKHA

Along the banks of the Mo Chu River, this lodge seamlessly blends traditional Bhutanese architectural elements with modern comforts and luxurious amenities. Your tent opens to sweeping views of emerald paddy fields and forested hills. Inside, discover hand-carved wooden details and traditional textiles that reflect local craftsmanship, complemented by personalized service to meet your every need.

COMO UMA, PARO

Perched on a tree-clad hill overlooking Paro, this hotel combines traditional Bhutanese craftsmanship with sleek contemporary design. Other amenities include a fitness center, spa, and award-winning cuisine.

Cover photo: Swayambhunath, Kathmandu.
Highlights Page: Colorful *thangka* at the Hemis Monastery in Leh, Ladakh.

Prayer wheels, Kyichu Lhakhang, Bhutan



MUSEUM TRAVEL ALLIANCE BUDDHISM & THE HIMALAYAS OCTOBER 5 – 19, 2025 RESERVATION FORM

To reserve a place, [please click here to register online](#) through a secure form. You may also call Museum Travel Alliance at 212-324-1893 or 855-533-0033, fax: 212-344-7493; email: trips@museumtravelalliance.com; or complete and return this form with your deposit of \$1,000 per person (of which \$500 is non-refundable for administrative fees) to Museum Travel Alliance. Mail to: Museum Travel Alliance, 260 West 39th Street, 17th Floor, New York, NY 10018-4424.

Name(s) in full as on passport(s). Please print.

Address

City

State

Zip

Telephone (home)

(business)

Fax

E-mail

ACCOMMODATIONS

Hotel Room Preference One bed Two beds Single

I wish to share a room with _____

FORM OF PAYMENT

- Enclosed is my check (*Museum Travel Alliance*)
 Debit card Credit card

Name on debit/credit card

Debit/credit card number

3- or 4-digit security code

Expiration date

I/We confirm that I/we have carefully read and agree to the *Terms & Conditions* of this Program (see <https://museumtravelalliance.com/faq.php> to review or call for a copy). I/We agree to full payment by check, wire transfer, or credit card 120 days prior to departure. Each participant must sign below.

Signature (required)

Date

Signature (required)

Date

B_251005LNDEL_WTA CST 2059789-40