SPICE ROADS
CYCLING



TOURING

# BHUTAN HERITAGE BY BICYCLE

Tour Code **BTN-BUH**

**7** DAYS **6** NIGHTS

| | |
|---|---|
| Destinations | Bhutan |
| Tour Meets | Paro |
| Tour Ends | Paro |
| Fly in to | Paro International Airport (PBH) |
| Fly out of | Paro International Airport (PBH) |
| Group Size | 1-16 riders |
| Minimum Age | 18 (on scheduled departures) |

## ACTIVITY PROFILE

| | |
|---|---|
| **4** Cycling days | **189** km Total cycling distance |
| **47** km Avg distance / day | **1042** m Avg climbing / day |

## PRICING

| | |
|---|---|
| Price | US$ 3,425 |
| Bike Hire (Mountain Bike) | Included |
| Bike Hire (E-Bike) | US$ 315 |
| Single Supplement | US$ 275 |

**E-bikes are in limited supply, please enquire to reserve one.*

## DEPARTURES

04 Apr - 10 Apr 2027
24 May - 30 May 2027
14 Jun - 20 Jun 2027
12 Jul - 18 Jul 2027
26 Jul - 01 Aug 2027
13 Sep - 19 Sep 2027
18 Oct - 24 Oct 2027
01 Nov - 07 Nov 2027

## WHAT'S INCLUDED

- ✓ SpiceRoads jersey
- ✓ Water bottle
- ✓ Visa fees
- ✓ Support vehicle
- ✓ Guide(s)
- ✓ Meals (as indicated)
- ✓ Airport pick up
- ✓ Airport drop off
- ✓ Accommodation
- ✓ Snacks and drinks
- ✓ Entrance fees
- ✓ Trekking

## WHAT'S EXCLUDED

- ✗ International flights
- ✗ Domestic flights
- ✗ Alcohol
- ✗ Tips

## TRIP PROFILE

We ride a total of 189 km over 4 cycling days. This bike tour is a true classic, featuring Himalayan mountain passes, sweeping descents, magnificent views, clean air, agrarian hinterlands, and abundant culture in one of the most pristine countries in the world. With a strong focus on immersing ourselves in Bhutan's rich heritage, this tour separates sightseeing from cycling, allowing us to explore key cultural sites in depth while riding at a comfortable pace, free from lengthy interruptions. Highlights include must-see sites such as Rinpung and Punakha Dzongs (medieval fortified monasteries), Buddha Point, and national heritage institutions like the Paro Museum, the Takin Preservation Center, and the Institute for Zorig Chusum. We also hike about 8 km (round trip) to the Tiger's Nest Monastery, Bhutan's most iconic landmark. Cycling takes place in the Thimphu and Punakha valleys (Days 2, 4 & 5), with the longest and hardest day (Day 3) conquering the Dochula Pass. Our valley rides are either loops or out-and-back rides from the hotels, while Day 3 is a point-to-point ride from Thimphu to Punakha. Accommodations are 3-star hotels chosen for their traditional character and convenient locations. You'll also enjoy plenty of delicious Bhutanese meals throughout the tour.

The trip is fully supported, and your guide's expert knowledge of the area and terrain means that you always know what is coming up in terms of distance and difficulty. This makes a tremendous difference, as does the constant supply of water and refreshments along the way.

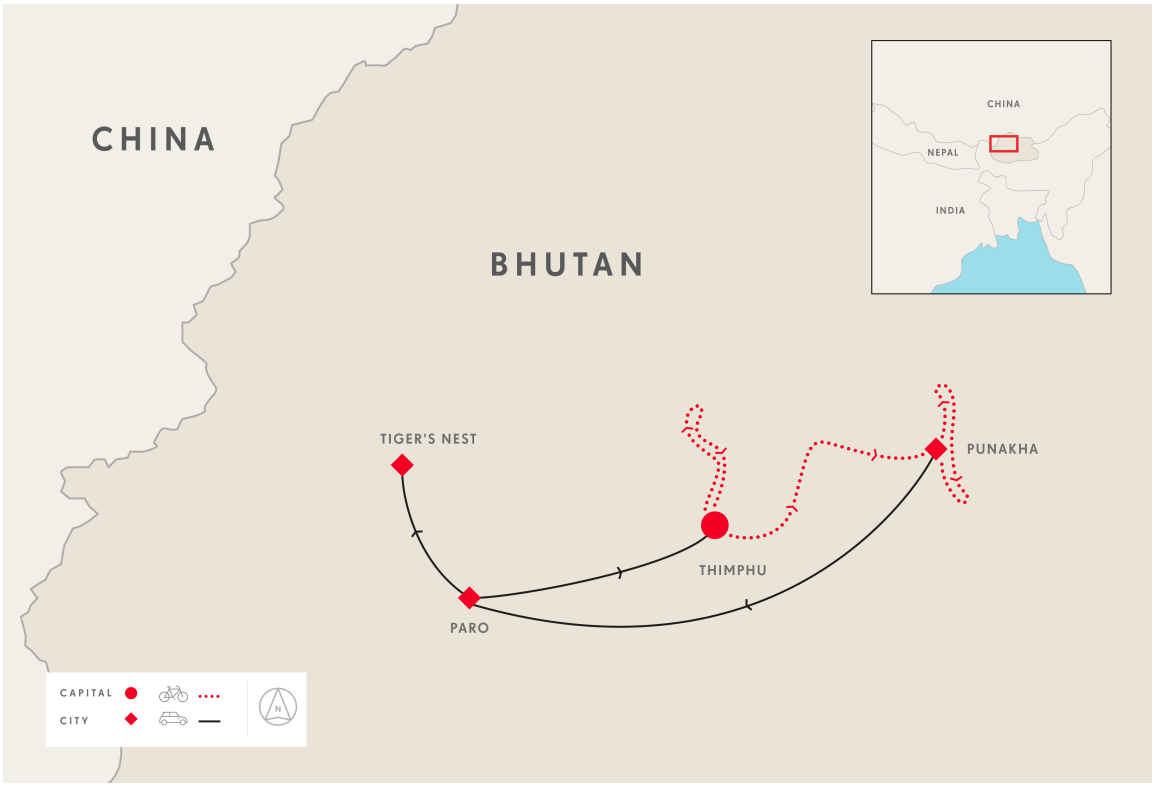
**Suitability:** This is an active level tour and riders can expect to be challenged by the route and terrain in a variety of ways. While Bhutan is a mountainous country and there are climbs each day, the gradients generally don't get too steep (there are exceptions!). Days 2 & 4, in Thimpu and Phunaka respectively, are more leisurely afternoon rides in the valleys. Days 3 & and 5, require endurance and strength, in particular the long, 18 km climb up the Dochula Pass. But the downhills are just as prominent and there are some unforgettable descents! The roads are mostly paved so there is no technical riding involved, but good handling skills to maneuver through traffic, some rough sections, and winding descents are helpful. While riders with less experience are welcome to join, a good level of physical fitness, comfort on a mountain bike, and adept handling skills enhance the enjoyment of the tour. A support vehicle is available at all times to provide refuge for weary riders.

**Biking Conditions:** This trip is on paved surfaces which are mostly in good condition, though broken asphalt, road debris, and potholes do present themselves regularly. While much of the route is quiet with little-traffic, Bhutan only has a few roads to speak of so be prepared to share them with other vehicles, including cars, motorbikes, and buses. Rain is not uncommon in Bhutan and this can impact road conditions. We generally ride rain or shine, but based on the guide's discretion or your level of comfort, modifications to the planned route can be made. It's all part of the adventure!

**Bhutan's Unique Tourism Policy:** Bhutan prides itself on its "High Value, Low Impact" tourism policy, which aims to preserve the country's cultural and natural heritage while promoting sustainable development. This policy directly influences how holidays in Bhutan are planned. Here are the key points:

- **Minimum Daily Tariff:** All tourists must pay a daily fee, which covers accommodation, meals, transport, and a guide.
- **Sustainable Development Fee (SDF):** Tourists are required to pay an additional daily fee that funds Bhutan's environmental conservation, cultural preservation, and infrastructure development.
- **Mandatory Bookings:** All travel arrangements, including hotel stays, must be made through a licensed Bhutanese tour operator.
- **Visa Requirement:** All foreign visitors (except nationals of India, Bangladesh, and the Maldives) need a visa to enter Bhutan, arranged by the tour operator.

While this may seem complex, it simply means that to visit Bhutan, you must join an organized tour. **Our Bhutan cycling adventures are all-inclusive, covering the tariff and fees mentioned above. We handle all bookings and take care of your visa arrangements, ensuring a seamless experience.** Please let us know if you plan to arrive in Bhutan before the tour starts or stay beyond the final day, as these arrangements will also need to be booked through us




## Day 1: Meet in Paro

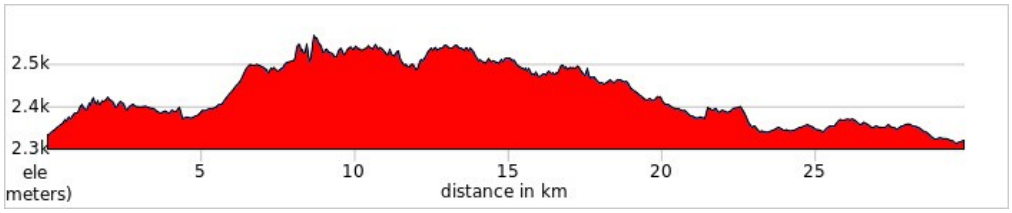
Welcome to Bhutan – or Druk Yul, the "Land of the Thunder Dragon" – as locals call it. Depending on your flight schedule, you will either have arrived in Paro the day before or will be arriving this morning. Either way, a pick-up from the airport is included. After lunch, we'll begin our exploration of Paro's must-see sites and start acquainting ourselves with Bhutan's rich cultural heritage. At the National Museum of Bhutan, housed in a 17th-century watchtower, we'll learn about the country's history through art, textiles, and sculptures. We will also visit the Rinpung Dzong, the first dzong (traditional Bhutanese fortified monastery) on this journey. Adorned with intricate woodwork, towering walls, peaceful courtyards, and sacred temples, this impressive structure serves as both a religious site and a center of administration, offering insight into Bhutan's architectural heritage. In the evening, enjoy a traditional Bhutanese welcome dinner. If you plan to arrive before the tour begins, please note that due to Bhutan's strict tourism policies, all arrangements, including hotel stays, must be booked through a travel company (that's us!). If you need assistance with booking, please let us know, and we'll be happy to help.

Hotel Pema Yangsel  Lunch, Dinner

## Day 2: Paro - Thimphu

This morning, we transfer about two hours from Paro to Thimphu, Bhutan's capital, nestled in the green valley of the Wang Chuu River. Despite being the capital, Thimphu retains a relaxed charm, with no traffic lights in the city centre and a strong focus on preserving Bhutan's cultural heritage. Upon arrival, we visit Buddha Point to admire the colossal gilded Buddha statue, one of the largest in the world, overlooking the valleys and mountains. At the Takin Preservation Center, we'll meet Bhutan's national animal, the takin – a Himalayan bovid with the body of a goat but the face of a cow — before heading to the National Institute for Zorig Chusum to explore Bhutan's 13 officially recognized traditional arts and crafts. After lunch, it's time to jump in the saddle and start cycling! Our inaugural ride takes us from Thimphu north through the valley and then back again, following roads that pass terraced rice and vegetable fields, small villages, and dense pine forests. There are a few hills to tackle, but the return to Thimphu (after around 15 km) is predominantly downhill. We reconvene in the evening for dinner, and time permitting, feel free to explore the town's renowned handicraft shops.

Hotel Gakyil  Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

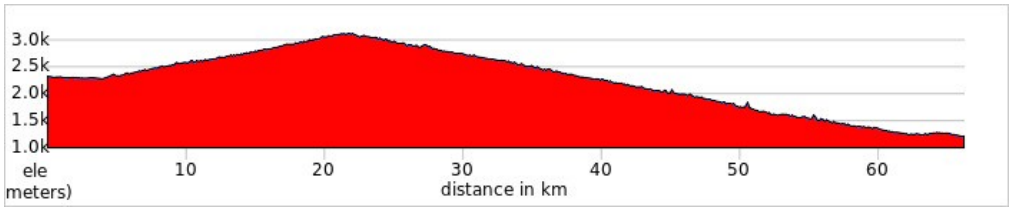



Ride 30km +520m -537m

## Day 3: Thimphu – Dochula Pass - Punakha

Today's ride marks a rite of passage for anyone cycling in Bhutan: conquering the Dochula Pass. From Thimphu, the first 5 km are an easy warm-up as we follow the river south. Then, the climbing begins. We face 18 km of continuous uphill, with an average gradient of around 4.5%. The paved road, the only throughway between Thimphu and Punakha, winds its way up the mountainside through sprawling forests and occasional highland settlements. We take it slow and steady, with the option to switch to the support vehicle always available. At the top of the pass (3,100 meters ASL), we are greeted by 108 chortens – sacred Buddhist structures – rising into the sky. Here, we unwind, soak in the panoramic views of the eastern Himalayas, and enjoy lunch. Then, it's downhill into the Punakha Valley, descending over 40 km on twisty mountain roads. Our ride ends at a charming hotel near the town of Punakha, the former capital of the Kingdom, where we'll spend the next two nights.

Damchen Riverside Resort Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

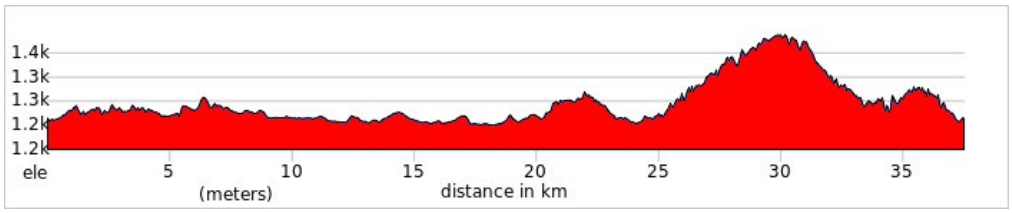



Ride 66km +1433m -2540m

## Day 4: Punakha Valley Exploration

Today is all about the Punakha Valley, beginning with an off-saddle exploration of two of the area's most iconic sites. First, we visit the grand Punakha Dzong, one of Bhutan's most impressive dzongs, located at the confluence of two rivers, showcasing stunning architecture, intricate woodwork, and centuries of fascinating history. We then head to Chhimi Lhakhang, a scenic 15th-century hilltop monastery said to bless visitors with fertility and protection, adorned with colorful phallic symbols representing good fortune and the power to ward off evil spirits. After lunch, we change into our cycling gear and embark on a leisurely loop around the valley. The highlight of the ride comes after just 7 km when we cross, one at a time, a swaying metal bridge over the Puna Tsang Chu River! We then follow the river south and loop back to our hotel, surrounded by stunning views of terraced rice paddies and towering mountains.

Damchen Riverside Resort Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

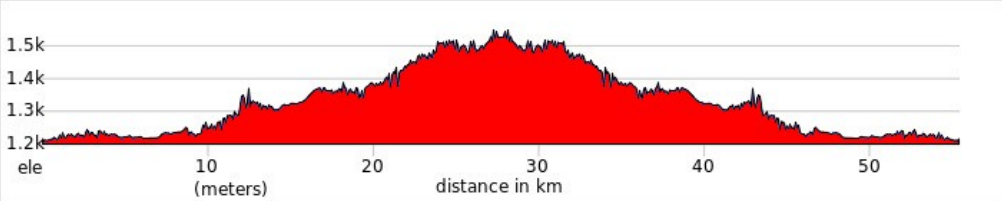



Ride 38km +542m -540m

## Day 5: Punakha - Mo Chhu River Ride - Paro

Our final ride traces the Mo Chhu River, one of two rivers that converge before the Punakha Dzong. After a relatively flat 10 km warm-up, we tackle a series of uphill sections, rewarded by stunning vistas of the braided river and hillsides adorned with forests or rice paddies. As we climb, the road narrows, and the landscape grows increasingly untamed. The surrounding woodlands, renowned for their rhododendron trees, dazzle with vibrant blooms in spring or golden hues in fall. At the highest point of our ride, we pause for a picnic-style lunch, savoring the serenity and fresh air in this remote corner of the Himalayan foothills. The downhill return to Punakha offers a thrilling descent before we pack up and transfer to Paro, a three - to four-hour drive.

Hotel Pema Yangsel  Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner




Ride 55km  +1671m  -1670m

## Day 6: Tiger's Nest Hike

We've saved Bhutan's most iconic site for last: the Tiger's Nest, or Paro Taktsang as it's known locally! Perched on a cliff at 3,120 meters ASL, this 17th-century Buddhist monastery is one of the most sacred and scenic sites in the Himalayan Buddhist world. After a 30-minute transfer from Paro, we begin the 4 km trek, climbing roughly 900 meters. The trail winds through forests, with gentle inclines interspersed with steeper zig-zags. Near the end, we cross a rope bridge adorned with prayer flags beside a cascading waterfall. A final set of steps leads to the monastery, where we'll explore its sacred spaces and enjoy breathtaking views. After retracing our steps down the mountain, we return to Paro for a farewell dinner, with the option to relax in a rejuvenating hot stone bath.

Hotel Pema Yangsel  Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

## Day 7: Paro Departure

Time to say goodbye to Bhutan! Today you will be transferred to the airport for your onward flight. If you plan to stay in Bhutan longer, please remember that due to Bhutan's strict tourism policies, all arrangements, including hotel stays, must be booked through a travel company (that's us!). If you need assistance with booking, please let us know, and we'll be happy to help.

Breakfast

Disclaimer: The adventure cycling tours we operate often go beyond the beaten track, and the countries where we ride are not always predictable. Due to these reasons, it is occasionally necessary to reroute or update itineraries. Our guarantee is that we will not change a trip unless for safety or to improve it. Our listed hotels are always accurate at the time of writing, but should we have to change any hotel, it will always be for a similar or better one.

## NUTS & BOLTS

### Bikes

Bikes are included for this tour and are well-known makes of mountain bikes. E-bikes are available at additional charge though are limited in supply so please inquire early if you'd like to secure one.

### Bike Repairs

Basic spares and tools are carried by the guide and on the support vehicle, though we cannot guarantee having spares for every conceivable problem. Carrying a basic tool kit, a spare tube and a pump while riding is recommended.

### Safety

Wearing a helmet is required on all our biking adventures and is non negotiable. If you do not wear a helmet you will not be allowed to cycle. Your tour leader is trained in first aid and emergency rescue, but to a large degree you must be responsible for your own safety while riding. It is therefore compulsory that you take out travel insurance that will cover you for a mountain biking tour.

### Guides

You will be led by a local English-speaking guide and if the group is 9 people or more we will add another guide to the tour. All our guides are well informed in the history, culture and religions of the area where you are biking and are skilled at passing that knowledge on to you. Your guide is also medically trained and an experienced cyclist, able to handle most minor repairs en route.

## THE NITTY GRITTY

### Passports and Visas

All nationalities require a passport for entry into Bhutan. Please ensure your passport is valid for at least 6 months from date of entry. Bhutan does not issue Visas before you arrive through their Embassies or Consulates. The only way to get a Visa is to get it on arrival to the country. However, you can't simply show up at their doorstep and be allowed in. You must apply with a tour operator and submit an application form for approval BEFORE you arrive. **SpiceRoads will submit your application for approval to the Department of Tourism and their approval process takes a minimum of 1 week.** For more information on Bhutan's visa requirements, please see here

**IMPORTANT**: On our "Mystical Bhutan" tour we will be crossing into India via the N.K Darranga border in Assam. **An Indian e-VISA is NOT accepted** at this border crossing, and **you must get a tourist visa physically stamped into your passport** from an Indian embassy before you come on the tour. See here for more details but please contact the Indian embassy/consulate closest to you for assistance and more information. Do not leave this to the last minute as it may take up to a week or more to complete. **Effective from 01 January 2026** anyone who is not Indian or Bhutanese is required to pay a passenger **user charge of 800 Indian Rupees (around 10 USD) per person at the N.K Darranga border crossing.** This needs to be paid in cash and in Indian Rupees (INR) - you will be able to exchange money in Samdrup Jongkhar.

### Health

We recommend that you visit a travel medical doctor and ask about the following vaccinations: typhoid, polio, tetanus and hepatitis A. As there are some high altitude passes you may consider bringing Diamox – but please consult a physician first.

### Weather

An umbrella, or light rain gear, should never be too far when traveling in Bhutan. During any month of the year it could, and will, rain. There are two optimal times of the year to travel in Bhutan. The months of March/April offers a period of warmer temperatures and bright skies. During August/-October is even more popular because of the cooler temperature and cloudless and crisp skies. Bhutan has a fairly mild climate year-round.

### Accommodation

The hotels listed are our first choice and where we hope you will stay, however, during festivals or other major events there is a chance we will have to substitute another hotel.

### Food

Meals are included as per the itinerary where B = breakfast, L = lunch, D = dinner. Meals are a mixture of Bhutanese and western cuisine, with the local food being mainly rice with vegetables with chili being used as a vegetable, not a flavoring – so beware! Local cheese is also popular and also quite tasty. Lunch will tend to vary between a packed lunch and some hot meals when

local restaurants are available. Any special dietary requirements can also be catered for as well. Please let us know at the time of booking.

### Drink

Keeping you completely hydrated is a job we take very seriously. Cold water, some energy-restoring local fruit and soft drinks are included in the tour price while riding. Soft drinks and other beverages during meals are not included. Beer is freely available everywhere, but is NOT included in the price.

### Solo Travelers

SpiceRoads does not require you to pay a surcharge for travelling alone. We will arrange for you to share accommodation with another traveller of the same gender and if we can not match you up we will provide a single room at no extra charge. If you prefer not to share a single supplement is payable to guarantee your own room. The cost of the single supplement is listed above.

### Extra Expenses

We recommend that you tuck away a few extra dollars, perhaps US$20 a day, for incidentals.

### Money

The Bhutanese currency is the ngultrum and is pegged to the Indian rupee. As the rupee and ngultrum are traded at par, rupees are generally accepted in Bhutan and may be occasionally given as change. Bhutan is a cash economy. Don't count on using your Visa and Mastercard, but there is an America Express office in the capital, and Amex is accepted in a few rare instances. Your best option is to change dollars or euros into ngultrums at the airport as the exchange rate is the same as in the banks in town. You can also change your money at the hotels in Thimphu, but the rate is not as good. You'll mainly need money for handicraft souvenirs and drinks as everything else is included in the tour.

## GENERAL BOOKING INFO

If this is the tour for you here's what you need to do to confirm your place:

### FLEXIBLE BOOKING CONDITIONS

Booking a SpiceRoads cycling adventure is easy and we try to do everything possible to make sure you have full flexibility and peace of mind. We do not require a deposit to hold your place on a tour and once full payment has been made your money is protected in our client account and you have the flexibility to cancel or change your booking if needed.

### CONFIRMING YOUR BOOKING

Just complete our online booking form or send your booking details offline (email or post), and we will confirm your participation. No deposit is needed to confirm your place on a SpiceRoads tour.

You are advised to read our Booking Conditions in full before you make your payment and should you require further clarifications of any of the conditions below, please email us or call our office.

### TRIP STATUS

There is a minimum number of participants (usually 2) required to enable the trip to go ahead. Once the minimum number is reached, the trip status will change from 'Available' to 'Guaranteed to Depart'. Once a trip is guaranteed to depart you are free to book your flights and make other travel arrangements. If the trip status is 'Limited' will mean we have only a small number of spaces available for booking. If you are unsure about the trip status, please email us or call our office.

### BOOKING ONLINE

From the tour page, click the 'Book Now' link. All departures for this tour will appear, just select the date you'd like to travel. For the next steps, you'll need to know the names of the people travelling. If you wish you can also provide extra details such as passport numbers, height (for bike hire), or you can add that later by logging into Manage My Trip (we'll set up an account for you automatically if you don't already have one). Our system will contact you from time to time to fill in the missing information, as it will be required before departure. However, if the trip that you are booking offers a child discount, you will have to fill out the date of birth of each rider (so we can calculate the appropriate discount).

If you are having any problems please send us an email, or give us a call (+66 026 3295) and one of our travel specialists will assist you with your booking.

## BOOKING OFFLINE

Just call us or send an email indicating which trip you want to join and we will happily send you a list of questions and process your booking for you.

## DEPOSITS AND PAYMENTS

We do not require a deposit or full payment to book a place for you on a tour.

The balance of the tour's cost (final invoice) will need to be paid 60 days before the departure date with fees for any bicycle rental(s), single supplement(s) and extra hotel nights.

In the case where a booking is made when there are less than 60 days until the tour departure date, the tour's cost should be paid in full within 72 hours of receiving an invoice from SpiceRoads. Payment can be made by credit card using our online payment gateway or by bank transfer. When making payment online you will need to confirm that you have read these booking conditions during the "checkout" process, which equates to agreeing to the terms of services and stipulations as indicated in this document.

In all cases, tour fees need to be paid "in full" before participation in a tour. No person(s) will be allowed to join a tour without fully settling their invoice and receiving a confirmation number from SpiceRoads.

The exception can be made for last-minute miscellaneous fees that can be paid locally (visas, additional local hotel bookings, etc.) can be settled on the day of arrival.

## FULL FLEXIBILITY FOR TOUR CANCELATIONS

If the tour is cancelled or postponed by SpiceRoads because we didn't make the trip numbers and the tour can't run, we will make a full cash refund (by bank transfer or on your credit card).

If the tour is cancelled for any other reason, including due to Covid related travel restrictions, we will give you a full credit (with no deductions for admin or any other small-print item) to use on any SpiceRoads tour with no time limit. (Exceptions being flights, special permits and other non-refundable items and these will be advised when booking the trip).

Before paying for your tour, you can cancel your booking with no charge and up until 40 days before departure, you can change your booking to another travel date or move your booking onto another SpiceRoads tour with no charges.

If you need to cancel after you have made full payment, please see our cancellation policy.

### Loyalty Riders Club

For those who have been on several long tours with us, we reward customer loyalty by offering repeat customers a special discount off the tour price (excludes single supplement and bike rental). If this is your fourth scheduled tour or more you will receive a 5% discount. If this is your eighth scheduled tour or more we will extend a 10% discount. The discount will be reflected in your online booking, but please contact us if any questions. Loyalty discounts cannot be used in conjunction with any other offer. Note: Only tours of 7 days or more will be applicable for a loyalty discount.

### International Flights

International flights, to and from the start and finish points are not included in the tour price. Once your tour is Guaranteed to Depart you can book your flight. Please contact us for advice before arranging flights for the best arrival and departure times. We would only cancel a trip for an extreme circumstance, but in that case, where we cancel your trip, we cannot be liable for losses incurred relating to any flight booking you have made. Please claim any losses from your travel insurance that you acquired when you booked your holiday.

### Newsletter

Our adventure travel e-newsletter is full of travel news, trip information, interesting stories and contests. To avoid missing out on special offers and updates from SpiceRoads, be sure to subscribe.

## CONTACT US

145 Soi Pridi Banomyong 14 (Mee Suwan 3)
Sukhumvit 71 Road, Phra Khanong Nuea, Watthana
Bangkok, Thailand 10110
Tel: +66 (0) 2 026 3295
Email: info@spiceroads.com
Website: www.spiceroads.com

## FOLLOW US

twitter.com/spiceroads
youtube.com/user/spiceroads
instagram.com/spiceroads
facebook.com/SpiceRoad