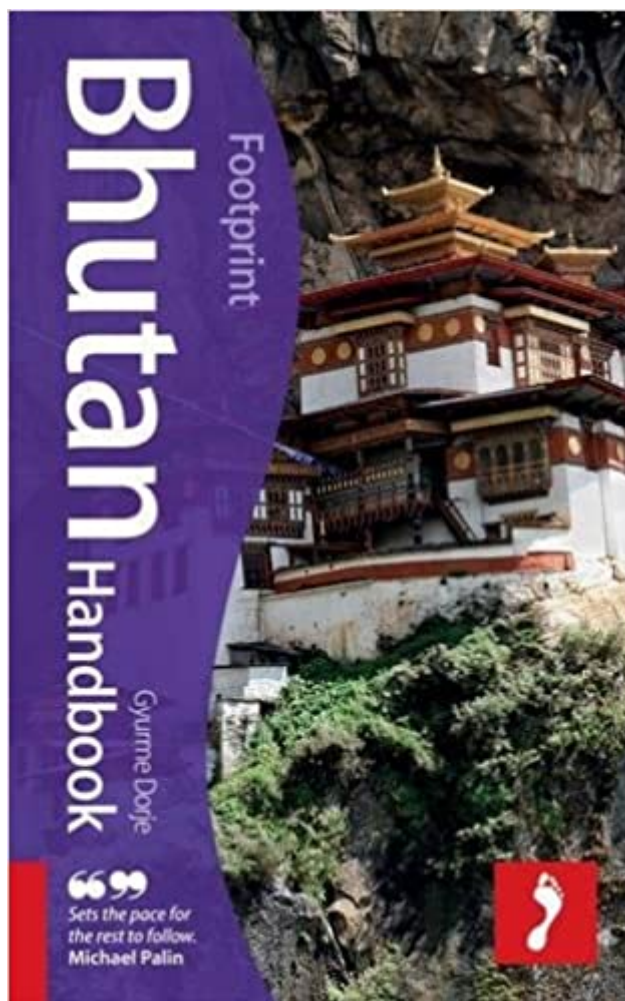


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Bhutan Handbook, 2nd: Travel Guide To Bhutan (Footprint - Handbooks)



Synopsis

Travel guide to Bhutan

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Gyurme Dorje was born in Edinburgh in 1950. He holds a PhD in Tibetan Literature (SOAS, 1987) and a Masters degree in Sanskrit with Oriental Studies (Edinburgh, 1971). For over thirty years he has been continuously engaged in both classical and modern Tibetan studies, translating primary sources and conducting fieldwork throughout the Tibetan plateau. Following more than ten years residence among Tibetan communities of North India and Nepal, Gyurme subsequently led forty-two expeditions and cultural tours to the Utsang, Kham, Amdo and Gyarong regions of Tibet from 1985 onwards. Most of these have been under the auspices of Trans Himalaya, which he founded in 1989 with the intention of pioneering diverse overland routes to Lhasa through Eastern Tibet.

Great Experience!

Am travelling to Bhutan in a short while and wanted to do some reading on the country. The lonely planet guide was not available and this guide seemed pretty good from the description unfortunately the cover is placed upside down, this of course does not stop one from being able to read it but it is utterly annoying and takes away any positive side unfortunately; especially as I live in Egypt which would make returning the item more costly than ordering it in the first place. Otherwise I find the

book as well very dry and with a lack of photographs especially as Bhutan is such a beautiful country

Compared to Lonely Planet and Odyssey Bhutan travel guides, how does Footprint measure up? Gyurme Dorje, as a Himalayan expert, offers the practicalities similar to LP, while he, as a scholar of Tibetan Studies, delves into cultural issues which Odyssey features, if in a briefer fashion. The format and layout's very similar to Lonely Planet's Bhutan (Country Travel Guide; reviewed by me May 2012) by Bradley Mayhew, Lindsay Brown, and Anirban Mahapatra, so the background coverage in a separate chapter of religious, artistic, and literary contexts does not match the scope of Bhutan: Himalayan Mountain Kingdom (Odyssey Guides; reviewed by me May 2012) by Françoise Pommaret, the pioneer in guides for visitors. Rather, like LP, the Footprint provides a more concise introduction, and then in turn examines the capital Thimphu, followed by the western, central, and eastern regions. LP tallies just under 300 pages; Footprint's about 80 pp. more but the font's a bit larger. Color photos are about equal; seven (blue-hued) LP and nine (pink-shaded) Footprint chapters can be downloaded separately or together. I've sampled both guides in their pdf versions--they did not convert legibly to my Kindle Touch. Also, even kept as pdf's, a Kindle's font cannot be matched to their format neatly. On a PC, in color, the files scan fine; the maps hang together with the text, sidebars, and illustrations. A couple of differences in the print versions. Odyssey's far more colorful, on nearly every page. LP + Footprint begin with a few vivid photos. However, that section in the latter book had its pages sewn on the top, so I could not open them correctly. The atlas maps in Footprint are in the middle of the guide, with very good road, village, and path detail, but they aren't as quick to access due to placement. But, unlike the other two guides, Footprint is in a durable hardcover. In the Essentials opening section, Dorje's knowledge of the intricate calendar enhances the festival listings for "tsechu" timing (even if these were for only 2010-12, this being published in late 2010). He tells of the long code of conduct that residents follow, and how visitors need to know etiquette accordingly: "You should remain polite and courteous in social relationships regardless of any difficulties that arise. Your loss of self-control will not bring about the desired response." (39) This tone characterizes, again, the insider's perspective that distinguishes Footprint's chosen author. Bus schedules intersperse with sights, accommodations, eateries, roads, events, festivals, and commentary on sights. This mixture of specifics and topics continues in each geographical portion. It lacks LP's verve and Odyssey's anthropological bent, but it instructs. For instance, its Background chapter delves into Buddhist contexts well, such as the auspicious symbols and prayer flags. "The sparse population, the slow,

measured pace of daily life and, in some sectors, an almost anarchical disdain for political involvement have encouraged the spiritual cultivation of Buddhism to such an extent that it has come to permeate the entire culture." (301-2) Its chart of treks ranks some by duration, difficulty, and destination. It adds a thorough list of guides and websites necessary for planners to book in advance, as required. As for the off-road itineraries, his data come in under each regional chapter (LP segregates the information), but you get a hint of what a first-time adventurer might then learn about in Bart Jordan's *Bhutan: A Trekker's Guide* (reviewed by me Dec. 2012). While recommended reading of more depth than LP's list remains welcome, I caught three errors on a single page (310). A series of line drawings in the Footnotes gives an iconographical caption to 114 deities depicted--quite a helpful touch for sightseers or researchers. A concordance of Romanized Cho-ke (from the script) and transliterated place names (as these in Dzongkha may vary), a glossary, and small phrasebook (even with a few common verbs and tenses) shows the added features of this helpful guide. It may not be as visually snappy as LP or as culturally investigative as *Odyssey*, but it balances those guides with history and data about where to go, what to see, and how to stay in compact form.

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