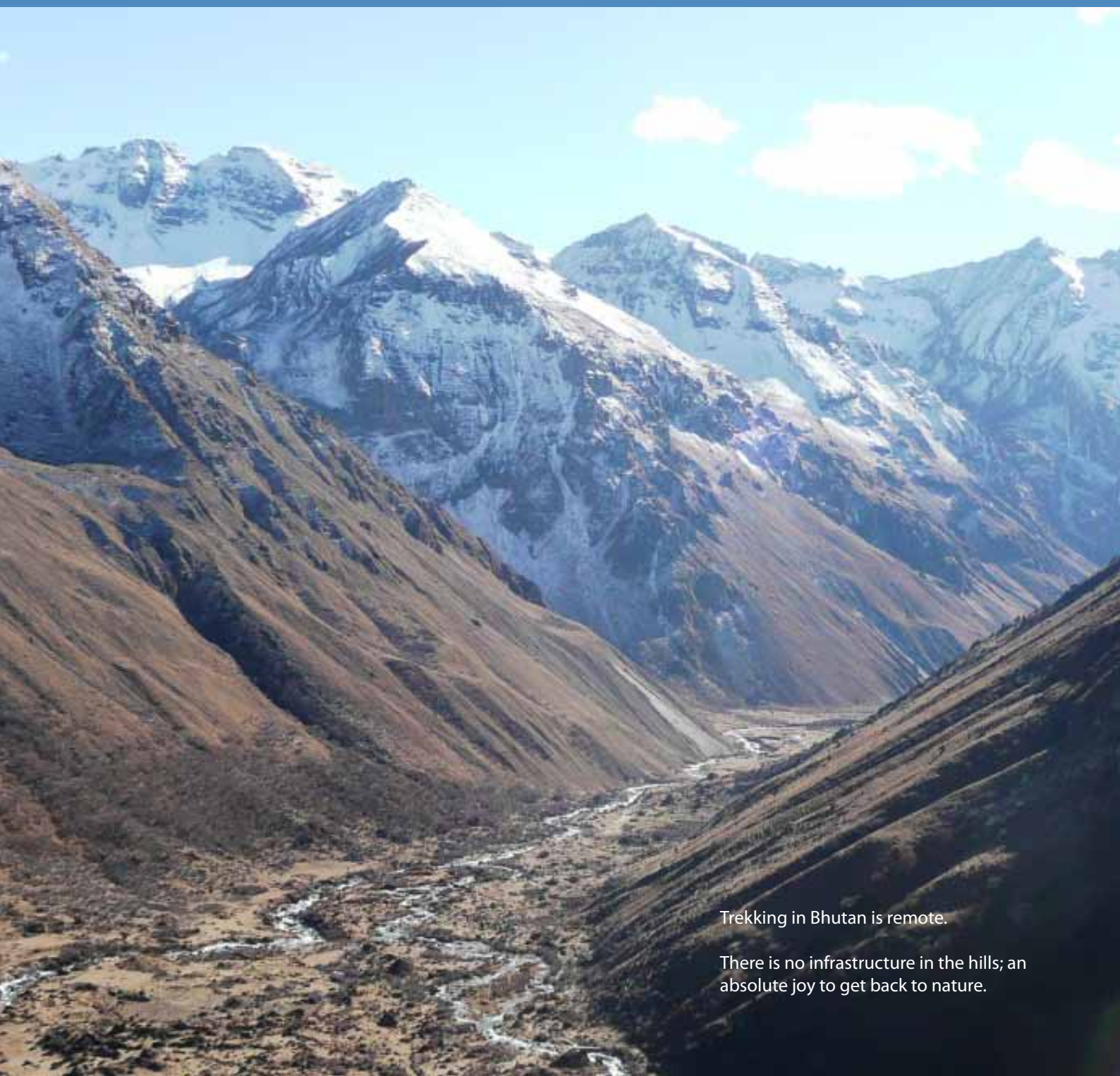


Bhutan - Chomolhari Trek Information and itinerary



Trekking in Bhutan is remote.

There is no infrastructure in the hills; an absolute joy to get back to nature.

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Taking a traditional hot stone bath in the mountains is one of life's experiences!



Introduction

The Chomolhari Trek is the best medium length, challenging trek in Bhutan.

It conveniently starts just 1 hour north of Paro and finishes in the capital Thimphu. After your time in Thimphu, the 60 mins drive then gets you back to Paro making a very nice circuit experiencing all that lies within it.

At 9 days the Chomolhari trek itself provides a challenge in testing conditions crossing two Passes each over 4800m. The route tracks north alongside the crystal clear Paro Chu (river) as well as the high ridge, which marks the Bhutan/Tibetan border before turning south to pick up the Thimphu Chu all of the way to Thimphu.

The first day is a good initial walk to Shana initially through classic rural farmland, which then gives way to lush wild forests before opening out to the higher pastureland and the numerous high altitude peaks become very visible (notably Chomolhari, 7315m). The altitude gain on this day is negligible. By now you are in remote territory and camping by the lovely flowing Paro Chu. There is no infrastructure in the mountains so the water sources become very important to you.

From Shana, it is a long day to Soi Thangthanka across some varied terrain, finally camping in a deep sheltered valley. The temperatures here can be quite low once the sun drops below the mountains.

By now you are in the Jigme Dorji National Park and slowly gaining altitude until you reach Jangothang at the end of Day 3. This excellent site sits at the base of Chomolhari with excellent views of the mountain.

At 4000m, it is time to acclimatise and rest. A full day (Day 4) is spent at this camping ground and you will be encouraged to spend some time getting higher amongst the local hills to assist with your acclimatisation.

On Day 5, your acclimatisation will be tested by crossing the 4890m Nyile La (Pass) en route to Lingshi. Once you cross this Pass, the only way out is to back track or go forward and cross another Pass of equal altitude. The route also turns south here.

Day 6 is a long hard day but by now you should be fitter and acclimatised. Your Guide will start the day early. Once over the Yale La (4950m, the highest point on trek), you will soon meet up with the Thimphu Chu (river), which will be with you until you finish.

Days 7, 8 and 9 are predominantly descending and plain sailing when compared to the previous two days but has some wonderful countryside all the same.

This truly wild and remote experience is emphasised with the common sight of literally hundreds of roaming yak and the rare blue sheep. You will see very few other trekkers.

Once you reach the end of the trek (and border of the National Park), you will be picked up and transferred into Thimphu by vehicle. This 45 min drive is itself of some quality and you will get good views of the massive Thimphu Dzong on your way in.

Sightseeing. There is enough time on either end of the trek to see the many places on offer. The Tigers Nest, the Paro and Thimphu Dzongs, Thimphu itself (the High Street isn't that big!), the Takin Reserve, the National Museum (Paro) and National Library (Thimphu) to name but a few. Whilst they are in the itinerary on certain days, your Guide will lay the plan once in country in accordance with your wishes.

Details

Dates for 2012
23 Apr - 5 May
7 - 19 May

1 - 13 Oct
15 - 27 Oct

This duration is for inside Bhutan only
We can tailor make dates to suit you

Min/Max pers: 1/12

Accommodation:
Hotels and camping (on trek)

Trip Cost Per Person:

This is an illustrative cost for this itinerary based on an exchange rate of \$1.55 = £1 and travelling in a group of 3 or more. It excludes Drukair flights. We won't charge you banking fees.

£1915 pp (1 Jan 2012 onwards)

Tailor Made - Just for you

Tailor made itineraries cost no more than any other; the cost will always be calculated on the number of nights in Bhutan and the number of people in the group (see page 6 for details).

We can speed up or slow down any itinerary, concentrate more on what you like to see or adjust it however you wish.

Tailor made is just for you.

Travel and Trek Limited is a truly independent company specializing in adventure trekking and touring. We pride ourselves on the personal touch and whether you are travelling solo or in a big group, we can adjust your itinerary to suit you.

Important information

Costs

For full details on costs, see page 6.

Fully Bonded

Your money is safe. We are protected by Insurance Passenger Protection (IPP), which protects YOU against OUR insolvency.



Expert Help

If you have any queries in the planning stage of your trip, call our experts

T: 01476 562763
M: 07725 943108

Travelling to Bhutan

Getting to Bhutan is not quite straightforward. Please read page 5 as it may affect your overall travel plans.

Bhutan's Pricing Policy

If you are not aware of Bhutan's unique all inclusive pricing policy for tourism, please read page 6.

Trip Dossier

On booking, you will receive a comprehensive Trip Dossier, which includes:

- Clothing and equipment list
- Medical notes (including vaccination requirements)
- Notes on safe drinking water
- Visas and Drukair e-tickets (if applicable)
- Food, money, electricity and more...

Airport arrivals

Your Bhutanese Guide will meet you on arrival and transfer you to the hotel. He will escort you throughout your time in Bhutan.

Passports

Passports should be valid for a minimum period of 6 months on the date on entry into Bhutan.

Tourist Visa

A tourist visa is required for UK Nationals. We will deal with this on your behalf as part of the service; it is standard policy. You cannot apply for the visa any other way. The Bhutanese Tourism Dept will issue the visa to us (by e-mail) and we will forward it on to you. It is issued usually a few weeks prior to departure.

Itineraries

Day 1 of your itinerary is deemed to be your arrival day in Bhutan.

Hotel Accommodation

Bhutan doesn't have a hotel grading system as such. Most hotels used for tourism are of 3* standard with very friendly staff to attend to your every need.

Higher grade luxury hotels/resorts are available at a premium rate.

Singles/Solo Travellers

Solo travellers in a group requesting sole occupation of a room throughout will be charged an additional US\$15 per night. If no request is made, you will be accommodated with another member of the group (same sex). No charge will be made if numbers dictate that this is not possible.

Extended Stays

It is possible to extend your stay in Bhutan; call us to discuss your requirements.

Medical/Vaccinations

You are advised to consult your GP regarding what vaccinations are required although through experience and for your planning purposes you should need:

Hep A, Typhoid, Tetanus, Polio and Meningitis.

The following website offers advice:

<http://www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk/home.aspx>

Further in depth advice is provided in the dossier.

Local Payments

Travel and Trek does not charge any local payments.

Travel Insurance

It is absolutely vital that you have adequate travel insurance. See separate page 9.

Money

- Credit cards are not widely accepted
- There are no ATM's
- Carry cash and exchange in country if required
- Indian Rupees are accepted in Bhutan although
- Bhutanese currency is not accepted in India (or anywhere else)

Travelling to Bhutan

Planning Your Trip

A long lead in time is required if you wish to secure the dates that you want especially over Festival periods; more if you can.

6 months is not an unrealistic lead in time.

Know when you want to be in Bhutan (arrival and departure dates).

Work your travel dates back from that (see Buffer Time).

Consult the Drukair website for available flights. www.drukair.com.bt

Consult Travel and Trek for availability and confirmation of costs.

You can only travel to and within Bhutan using a recognised Agent; you cannot organise it yourself.

To get to Bhutan, you can either fly, drive or a mixture of the two.

There are now three official road crossings (all on the southern Bhutanese border with India) making access to the more remote eastern side of Bhutan easier.

The Bhutanese Government monitors visitors into and out of Bhutan; they do not restrict.

You are strongly recommended to engage with us at an early stage of your trip planning to take advice of dates and the number of nights that you intend to stay in Bhutan.

Drukair does not fly into Bhutan on a daily basis from each of the cities that it serves (Bangkok is the exception).

A 6 month lead in time is reasonable if you wish to secure the dates that you want especially over Festival periods; more if you can.

Travel and Trek has extensive experience of organising and adjusting your itinerary to take all of this into account.

On entry into Bhutan, you will be met by your Guide who will escort you everywhere. He will be with you until you depart.

Drukair

Drukair is Bhutan's National airline and the main carrier into Bhutan.

Clients can now book flights with the airline directly on line. This has the advantage of getting an instant confirmation of flights allowing you to book associated international flights straight away.

With the exception of Bangkok, Drukair does not fly to every city every day and therefore you need to be aware of its schedule to fit in with your plans. It's schedule can be downloaded from the Drukair website.

Drukair can change its schedule and routings without notice (see Buffer Time).

Factor in a Buffer Time

Going into Bhutan

For planning purposes, a minimum of 3 days would normally be required from departing the UK to arriving in Bhutan.

Day 1 - Depart UK

Day 2 - Arrival at destination, ie Kathmandu or Delhi

The timing of Drukair flights is such that you may require an overnight stop in your chosen transit airport before flying to Bhutan

Day 3 - Fly into Bhutan. This represents Day 1 of your Bhutan itinerary

Leaving Bhutan

We strongly recommend that you factor in at least a spare day/night (buffer time) on the end of your trip to counter any changes or delays in your departure (only if departing by air). The spare night should be taken in the country you are transiting (ie Nepal) not in Bhutan!

Driving

It is possible to drive into Bhutan from India. The most well established and used crossing is at Puntesholding, 5hrs driving south of either Paro or the capital Thimphu. The other two crossings are not so well used due to the distance from airports.

Puntesholding is approx 4hrs from the Indian airport of Bagdogra (or Bhadrapur in Nepal (they are just across the border from each other)), from which you can fly to Kolkata or Kathmandu.

You can also drive up through West Bengal to Darjeeling and or Sikkim thereby making what can be a good circuit.

We can design an itinerary that combines Bhutan, India and/or Nepal.

Paro Airport

Paro is Bhutan's only international airport and is located in a mountainous area with unpredictable weather. The aircraft routinely have to make sharp banking turns on the approach to landing or shortly after take off.

It is subject to Visual Flight Rules (VFR).

This means that if the pilot has no clear vision of the local mountain tops, he will not take off or land. Delays are therefore always possible.

We therefore recommend that you factor in a night in Kathmandu for example (or other city) rather than risk missing a costly international flight to the UK. See Buffer Time.

Bhutan's Pricing Policy

To Work Out Your Holiday Cost

Simply multiply the number of nights in Bhutan by the appropriate nightly fee.

Add the Drukair flight costs.

Add the Tourist visa and Tourist Development fee.

How To Book

Complete the booking form (downloadable from the website) and return it with a deposit of US\$300pp. (equivalent £UK).

Booking forms can be completed electronically and returned as an attachment to an e-mail.

Details of payment options are on the booking form.

Balance payments are due 10 weeks prior to departure.

Bhutan's pricing policy is set by the Bhutanese Govt; not by Agents.

It was originally set to restrict the number of tourists coming into the country and it has worked.

Prices have remained static for a number of years, mainly due to the global economic downturn of late. In June 2011, the Govt decided to raise its prices and they are shown below.

For your all inclusive stay in Bhutan (see page 4 for general inclusions and exclusions), the Bhutanese Govt charges a flat rate fee per person per night (pppn) regardless of what you are doing in Bhutan.

*It should be made clear that a lone traveller joining two other people (or more) for the entire time in Bhutan would constitute a group of 3 and therefore the \$200 fee would apply to all.

A reduction of \$18 pppn is given on stays of longer than 9 nights. It applies to the 10th night onwards.

35% of the fees quoted above go directly to the Bhutanese Govt, which pays for free medical care and education for the entire country. The remainder of the fee goes to the Company in Bhutan providing the service to you.

Why are the prices for Bhutan shown in US\$ and not UK£?

Despite the fact that Bhutan has its own currency (Ngultrum), it quotes US\$ to foreign visitors.

Regardless of what the exchange rates are doing, whatever your fee amounts to for your trip to Bhutan (in US\$), that figure must arrive in the bank in Bhutan.

If you see a figure being quoted in UK£, the company charging that figure has got to offset the potential exchange rate fluctuation and will therefore likely be charging you a higher rate than necessary. By showing you the US\$ figure, you know precisely what you need to pay; it is the cheapest and most transparent method.

We will charge you the appropriate US\$ rate each time a transaction is made to us.

Bhutan's Nightly Rates:

All figures are US\$ and are effective for all trips commencing on or after 1st Jan 2012:

Commencing in Jan, Feb, Jun, Jul, Aug and Dec:

\$250 for a single person travelling alone
 \$240 pppn if the group consists of 2 people
 \$220 pppn if the group consists of 3 people or more

Commencing Mar, Apr, May, Sep, Oct, Nov

\$280 for a single person travelling alone
 \$270 pppn if the group consists of 2 people
 \$250 pppn if the group consists of 3 people or more

Other Fees

In addition to the nightly fee, these charges will also apply:

Tourist visa - US\$20 pp
 Tourist Development fee - US\$3 pp

We can either include the Drukair flight costs with the booking (if we book them for you) or you can book direct with the airline.

Itinerary - Chomolhari Trek

Be aware that the itinerary shown here does not include your travel time to and from Bhutan. See the section on travelling to Bhutan.

1 Arrive Paro, settle in

You will be greeted by your Guide at the airport and taken to your hotel to settle in.

This is a chance to speak to your Guide in depth about anything you wish.

Depending on your flight arrival time, you may have time to do a little sightseeing in Paro.

2 Begin Trekking - Shana (2800m)

It is about a 1hr drive to Drukgyel Dzong (now a ruin), which is where you will meet your trek crew and then get underway.

The trek today is initially along a track and then into rural farmland before camping amongst the trees close to an Army post. Overall ascent is about 380m.

About 6 hrs.

3 Shana - Thangthangka (3600m)

It is a long day primarily through forest with a fair amount of short ascents/descents.

It follows the Paro Chu (River) for most of the way and has an ascent of about 800m.

The camp site is in a deep valley so expect it to be quite cold when the sun can't be seen.

About 8hrs.

4 Thangthangka - Jangothang (4000m)

A significant day as you clear the forest environment and get into open land. You also gain 1400m and get into the more serious altitude.

It is an interesting day as many grazing yak and blue sheep should be seen. You will also pass a Bhutanese Army post.

The campsite is beside the river with glorious views of the surrounding mountains that still tower above you.

About 6 hrs.

5 Jangothang (acclimatisation)

A good day to rest and enjoy the scenery but you will also be encouraged to get up high to allow your body to acclimatise.

Your Guide will have some options for you to consider.

6 Jangothang - Lingzhi (4020m), via the Nyile L (4870m)

Assuming that you feel fine and acclimatised, you will push on to Lingzhi over the Nyile La.

It is a classic ascent and descent day taking approx 4 hrs to reach the Pass, moving quickly off of it (due to traditional high and cold winds!) and descend down to a warmer and less windy place.

Needless to say that you will experience some spectacular views.

About 7 hrs.

7 Lingzhi - Shodu (4080m), via the Yeli La (4930m)

After yesterday, today is a tough day with a similar ascent and crossing the second of the two passes; the Yeli La.

It is about 4 hrs to reach the Pass but today has a few ups and downs as opposed to a straight ascent.

About 9 hrs.

8 Shodu - Barshong (3710m)

For those who have struggled with the altitude, it will be nice to descend into easier territory and also gain the forest terrain back.

It is primarily descending although there is still some work to be done. You will re-join the river.

About 6 hrs.

9

Barshong - Dolam Kencho (3300m)

A nice easy day through forests (blooming rhododendrons in spring; beautiful) down to Dolam Kencho.

About 6 hrs.

10

Dolam Kencho - Dodina (2650m)

An easy 3 - 4 hrs down through forests and onto the road head to meet your transport back to Thimphu.

Note that you could feasibly combine some of the latter days and shorten this trek by a day (all to do with location of campsites).

Then it's back to your hotel in Thimphu for a good clean up!

You will have time to enjoy Thimphu in the evening.

11

Thimphu Sightseeing

Enjoy a whole day experiencing what Thimphu has to offer.

There is plenty to occupy you today with a visit to the Thimphu Dzong high on your list. You should see the Takin Reserve (National animal) and also walk around the town too. There are some historic buildings. There are plenty of craft type shops too.

Speak to your Guide who will be able to advise you.

12

Thimphu - Paro (Tigers Nest)

Finish off anything in Thimphu this morning but be sure to be in Paro for lunch to enable you to get up to the Tigers Nest in the afternoon.

It is a stiff 90min - 2 hrs ascent to Monastery but well worth it.

If you have any time left, use it to explore any parts of Paro that you missed on your way in.

13

Departure

You will be transferred to the airport at the appropriate time for your flight.

Say goodbye to you Guide and driver at the airport.

For planning purposes, a minimum of 3 days would normally be required from departing the UK to arriving in Bhutan.

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Day 2 - Arrival at destination, ie Kathmandu or Delhi

The timing of Drukair flights is such that you may require an overnight stop in your chosen transit airport before flying to Bhutan

Day 3 - Fly into Bhutan. This represents Day 1 of your Bhutan itinerary

Trip Inclusions and Exclusions

Included:

- All hotel accommodation, sole occupation of a room is an additional \$15 per person per night
- All ground transport (from pick up at the airport to return to airport)
- All meals
- All mineral water (bottled) whilst 'out and about' (mineral water in hotels is chargeable).
- The services of your Bhutanese Guide, full time.
- All staff and pack ponies for trekking
- All accommodation for the trek (tents)
- Fees to monuments, monasteries, etc...

Excluded:

- International return airfare into Bhutan from your chosen city (charged separately)
- International flights from UK to the access city
- Mineral water inside hotels
- Tourist Visa fee (currently US\$20)
- Tourist Development fee (currently US\$10)
- Local trek staff gratuities

Travel Insurance

It is absolutely essential that you have adequate travel insurance. Be truthful to your insurance company about precisely what activities you are undertaking and if you are trekking, to what altitude (max). Failure to do that may invalidate your policy.

To fly a patient back to the UK under any form of medical supervision (ie on a stretcher) is estimated to cost well in excess of £10,000.

If you are trekking, then in terms of activities for insurance purposes, you are trekking not climbing. There are no treks within Bhutan that require specialist safety or climbing equipment.

This Foreign & Commonwealth Office link is a useful reference and recommended read:
<http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travelling-and-living-overseas/staying-safe/travel-insurance/>

So What Happens If I Have An Accident?

If you are not trekking then your Guide and his staff will get you to the nearest medical facility as quickly as possible.

Trekkers need to be aware that there are no formal medical facilities in the mountains. It is very remote. Injuries and or illnesses will need to be dealt with from within the group. You therefore need to go well prepared.

Any serious injury that requires professional medical assistance outside the scope of the group may need to call in a helicopter. Bhutan does not have its own helicopter rescue system and those helicopters will therefore be requested to come from India (likely the Indian Army based at Bagdogra).

This will clearly take time. It will also incur significant cost. A previous incident cost the insurance company £17,000 just to get the patient from a mountain location to Paro.

Tip

Have a credit card with you and be prepared to pay for your evacuation(or at least part of the cost to get it going) if your insurance company can't be contacted immediately. It may save your life.

A Little Preparation May Save Your Life

Some insurance companies provide a very handy credit card sized card with all of their contact details on it. If your company does not, then try using this very handy website Ucardit.co.uk. Travel and Trek clients get a 10% discount.

For about £5 (including P&P), you get a virtually indestructible credit card sized card with all of your important information on it. You can either use one of three pre-designed Travel and Trek cards or design your own. An example is shown below. You can literally put whatever you want on it from flight details, mobile numbers, addresses, insurance details, etc...

To try it, go to the Home page, click 'Travel'. Then scroll down, bottom left, click on the 'Travel and Trek' banner and either use a branded template or design your own. These are example cards from the website (not full size).

