

THE SNOWMAN TREK - BHUTAN

13 Sep - 14 Oct 2011

The Lunana Snowman is reputed to be one of the toughest and longest Himalayan treks there is.

Travel and Trek is launching this trek in the autumn of 2011. The dates quoted above are provisional.

This document is dedicated to the details regarding the Snowman Trek.

The Lunana Snowman Trek. Trekking in Bhutan is generally different to just about anywhere else in Asia and indeed the rest of the world. It has an immense richness of flora and fauna (the snow leopard genuinely roams in these mountains), it is very remote (it has no formal infrastructure in the hills) and you will see very few if any others trekkers. You will also find that the support team will be quite small using a mix of mules, ponies and yaks to carry supplies rather than porters.

This trek is rare. It transits the Lunana district, which due to the high mountains that surround it, is cut off for many months of the year by snow.

So what makes the Snowman so tough to complete?

No single factor makes this trek so difficult; is a combination of:

- The trek itself is 22 days long
- Living under tented conditions throughout
- A sustained stay at high altitude (16 nights are spent sleeping above 4000m)
- Cold weather (and potentially snow) for a good percentage of that time
- Unpredictable weather may prevent crossing some Passes
- Yaks are used for high altitude sections; they too have to be able to cross the high Passes

The General Plan

Put simply, the group will be required to arrive in Bhutan on a set day. Assuming it does, it will then follow the itinerary and hopefully complete it on schedule. There are some spare days to counter illnesses or delays due to weather.

The itinerary is based on flights into Bhutan from and back to Kathmandu. If you are considering flying into Bhutan from another city other than Kathmandu, you should consult Travel and Trek. Flights into Bhutan do not fly every day from every city that Druk Air serves!

New to Bhutan?

If you have never travelled to Bhutan, you are advised to go to this webpage www.travelandtrek.com/bhutan_getting_to.shtml and download the first link on that page. It refers to 'getting to Bhutan' and the 'pricing policy'.



Beautiful views of the Paro Chu (river) at 4000m on the Chomolhari/Snowman route and below, trekking through the lowlands.

Fact File

Dates: 13 Sep - 14 Oct 2011

Dates inside Bhutan: 15 Sep - 11 Oct 2011

Number of trekking days (with rest days): 22

Number of nights sleeping above 4000m: 16

Min group size: 6 (includes UK Leader)

Deadline for min group formed: 19 March 2011

Satphone carried: Yes

Safety

You must be clear that the unpredictable weather may prevent the group from completing this trek; over 50% of those that attempt it do not finish due to the weather or illness. The route, once up high goes across numerous Passes and it therefore becomes very remote indeed. There is no road access whatsoever. You will need to be robust and durable. There are escape routes for those that need it but there will come a time when the only way out is to trek or by helicopter (Satphone will be carried). I have had to go through the process of organising a helicopter rescue from within Bhutan so I know how it works!

Injuries/Illnesses

Should an incident occur that requires evacuation by helicopter, that will be dealt with by the individual's insurance company (we will contact by Satphone). Should it not require a helicopter, the individual will be escorted down using one of the escape routes. It will be possible to depart from Bhutan earlier provided seats are available on the aircraft. This will be covered in more detail once the group is formed. Do not expect refunds on early departures from Bhutan.

Altitude

A couple of Passes go over 5000m but it is undoubtedly the sustained stay at high altitude (over 4000m) that will slowly wear you down. For more information download Travel and Trek's guide to [trekking at high altitude](#). This document can also be found on the Homepage of the website.

General Conditions

This is a long trek and the weather window is relatively small (these dates are on the front end). It is high, typically Himalayan trekking terrain. Good mountain visibility is expected. Night temperatures will be in the range -10 - -15 deg C. Your clothing and equipment should reflect this. A clothing and equipment list will be supplied.

Who and Why go?

This trek should appeal to experienced trekkers who have perhaps had Bhutan in their mind for a while. It should also appeal to anyone with a spirit of adventure. Experience at altitude is an advantage but it should not stop anyone who has not experienced it from wanting to go. This trek is a true and achievable challenge in a very remote and at times unforgiving environment. A little bit of luck with the weather is required as well as a group well motivated to completing it.

Culture

By the time you finish this trek, you will know what this country is all about. You will also want to visit one of the traditional hot stone baths (if you haven't had one en route). Bhutan has a plethora of monasteries (including the inspiring Tigers Nest), many fortress-like Dzongs and similar ancient buildings. You may also want to just rest; we can find the right places for that too.

Time in Access Cities

To access Bhutan, you need to get to one of the 'access cities' (see page 4) first. Your international flight and time spent there is to be organised and paid for by yourself although if accessing through Kathmandu, I can assist you a great deal there. You are also free to spend as much time there as you wish prior to and after the time in Bhutan.

Considering this trek, or wish to book?

Contact Travel and Trek by telephone or e-mail. All contact details are on page 8 or on any page of the website. The booking form can be downloaded off the website's Homepage (bottom right hand side). Do not book any international flights connected with this trip until formal notification is given by Travel and Trek that it will go ahead. The deadline for the minimum number being reached is 19th march 2010.



Traditional hot stone baths are a wonderful experience and can organised fairly easily

The Lunana Snowman Trek - Daily itinerary

This itinerary is based on using Kathmandu as the access city but you are free to use any other city served by Druk Air. The key is to arrive in Bhutan on the 15th Sep, if not before.

The same theory applies to arriving in your access city (in this case Kathmandu). If you wish to arrive in Kathmandu prior to 14th Sep, then you are free to do so.

Days	Date	Event	Remarks
1	13 Sep	Depart London	
2	14 Sep	Arrive Kathmandu Transfer to hotel (25 mins). Evening free to explore Thamel	Transfer to your hotel, which will be perfectly placed right in the heart of the buzzing Thamel district of the City. Evening free
3	15 Sep	Transfer to Kathmandu international airport for your flight to Bhutan Met by Travel and Trek Guide at the airport Transfer to your hotel in Paro, relax, settle in.	Superb Airbus flight with Druk Air, which will fly straight past Everest, Lohtse, Makalu and Kanchenjunga (4 of the biggest mountains in the world). Try to sit on the left side of the aircraft! Your Bhutanese guide will escort you throughout your time in Bhutan
4	16 Sep	Begin the trek, Paro - Shana Drive up to the end of the road at Drugyel Dzong where the trek begins. The trail follows the river gently uphill through narrowing valley and agricultural fields of the Tsento Village. Overnight in camp near the army outpost.	Distance: 17Km, 5 - 6 hours. Altitude of camp 2800mtrs.
5	17 Sep	Shana- Soi Thangthagkha The trail winds continues uphill following the Paro River until the valley narrows and leads to the slopes. Then it descends down into another valley. Camp in a meadow.	Distance: 17km, 6 - 7 hrs. Altitude of camp 3200m
6	18 Sep	Soi Thangthagkha - Jangothang The trek is along a gradual uphill trail which passes an army out post. Pack lunch on the way. After lunch you will be passing through the bases of many snow peaked slopes. Overnight in camp at the base of Mt. Jhumolhari.	Distance: 19km, 6 - 7 hrs. Altitude of camp 4040m.
7	19 Sep	Jangothang - Lingshi Trek through wide yak pastures and beautiful snow clad mountains. As you approach the Lingshi basin, the breathtaking view of the Lingshi Dzong can be seen. The Tsarim Gang mountain and its glaciers rise up at the north end of the valley. Camp near the stone shelter for travellers.	Distance: 19km, 6 - 7 hrs. Altitude of camp 4150m.
8	20 Sep	Lingshi - Chebisa This is probably the shortest walking day of your trip and the walk is on a wide trail with hardly any ascends. On reaching camp one can visit the small yak herding village or take a walk to the upper end of the valley.	Distance: 12km, 5 - 6 hrs. Altitude of camp 3850m.
9	21 Sep	Chebisa - Shomuthang The trek today is through wild high pastures and the trail passes through a few sparsely populated villages. You will be crossing the Gobula Pass at an altitude of 4350m. Overnight in camp.	Distance: 17km, 6 - 7 hrs. Altitude of camp 4260m
10	22 Sep	Shomuthang - Robluthang An early start is advisable as you will be crossing the Jarila Pass which stands at 4600 m above sea. Then descend down to Tsarijathang where herds of the National Animal, Takin can be seen. Camp on the flat ledge above the river.	Distance: 15km, 5 - 6 hours. Altitude of camp 4320m.

Days	Date	Event	Remarks
11	23 Sep	Robluthang - Laya After crossing the Shingela Pass at an altitude of 4900m, the trail descends to the valley beyond. On reaching Lemithang, the trail splits into two, one leading to the army camp while the other sticks to higher ground and brings one to the village of Laya. Camp beside the Laya village.	Distance: 29km, 7 - 8 hours. Altitude of camp 3804m.
12	24 Sep	Laya - Laya A day of rest and relaxation. One can take a leisurely walk through the village or hike to the monastery above the village. Entertainment by the local dancers in the evening. Overnight in camp.	
13	25 Sep	Laya - Rodophu The trail today follows the ancient trade route and leads one through pasture for yaks. Overnight in camp.	Distance: 19km, 6 - 7 days. Altitude of camp 4160m.
14	26 Sep	Rodophu - Narithang The trail today also follows the alpine grassland where yaks bound in plenty. The view of the surrounding mountains are absolutely breathtaking. Overnight in camp.	Distance: 17km, 5 - 6 hours. Altitude of camp 4220m.
15	27 Sep	Narithang - Tarina Today you will be crossing the highest point of your trek at the Ganglakarchung Pass at an altitude of 5100m. This is considered the highest pass in the country. Overnight in camp.	Distance: 18km, 6 - 7 hours. Altitude of camp 4300m.
16	28 Sep	Tarina - Woche The camp site marks the beginning of the Lunana region, a land known for its glacial lakes which brought the heavy flood in Punakha a few years ago. If you are not too tired, visit a village house.	Distance: 15km, 5 - 6 hours. Altitude of camp 4400m.
17	29 Sep	Woche - Lhedi The trail today consists of crossing the Kechela Pass at 4550m. Stop at the Thega village for rest and lunch, then continue to camp.	Distance: 19km, 6 - 7 hours. Altitude of camp 4200m.
18	30 Sep	Lhedi - Thanza The trek is slightly easy today. Enroute visit the Chezo Dzong.	Distance: 19km, 5 - 6 hours. Altitude of camp 4050m.
19	1 Oct	Thanza - Thanza A day of rest to soothe aching muscles. Explore the village and meet some locals. Short hikes can be taken around the camp.	
20	2 Oct	Thanza - Tshochena Another beautiful pass to cross today, namely, the Jezela pass at an altitude of 5050m.	Distance: 18km, 6 - 7 Hours. Altitude of camp 4500m.
21	3 Oct	Tshochena - Jichu Dramo A relatively shorter walking day, after crossing the Lojula Pass at 4940m, the trek is easy.	Distance: 14km, 4 - 5 hours. Altitude of camp 4880m.
22	4 Oct	Jichu Dramo - Chukarpo The trail crosses the Rinchen Zoe pass at 4950m. The demarcation between the forests and the barren high altitude areas are remarkably seen from here.	Distance: 15km, 4 - 5 hours. Altitude of camp 4419m.
23	5 Oct	Chhukarpo - Tampetsho The trail crosses the Tampela Pass (4550m) and the Umtsho Lake famous for the miraculous treasure discovery by Terton Pema Lingpa in the 15 th century.	Distance: 20km, 7 - 8 hours. Altitude of camp 4168m.
24	6 Oct	Tampetsho - Maraothang. The trail today is downhill till the camp which is beside the Nika Chhu river.	Distance: 24km, 4 - 5 hours. Altitude of camp 3553m.

Days	Date	Event	Remarks
25	7 Oct	<p>Maraothang - Nika Chhu Zam</p> <p>The last day of the trek takes you through the agricultural lands and the village of Sephu.</p>	Distance: 23km, 6 - 7 hours. Altitude of camp 2650m.
26	8 Oct	<p>Nika Chhu Zam - Thimphu</p> <p>Transfer to Thimphu via the lateral highway. Stop at Wangdi Town. Lunch enroute. Tea will be served at the Dochula Jakhang.</p>	<p>Overnight in Thimphu</p> <p>This is also earmarked as a spare trek day</p>
27/28	9 and 10 Oct	<p>Thimphu - Paro</p> <p>The following two days are subject to the condition of the group and flexible.</p> <p>Visit the National memorial Chorten built in the loving memory of the Late King, His Majesty, Jigme Dorji Wangchuk. Also visit the National Library, Painting School and the Changangkha Lhakhang. Your guide will be able to take you shopping if you so desire. Overnight in hotel. Evening transfer to Paro. Overnight in Hotel.</p> <p>The Tiger's Nest Monastery is also a must see.</p>	This also acts as a spare day in case of flight schedule changes.
29	11 Oct	<p>Scheduled departure from Bhutan to KTM.</p> <p>Arrive KTM, rest.</p>	
30	12 Oct	Free to fly to UK, although it is also advisable to use this as a spare day in case of delays out of Bhutan.	
31	13 Oct	Fly to UK	Arrive same day if AM flight.
32	14 Oct	Arrive UK if an overnight flight	

Costs, Inclusions and Exclusions**Costs:**

Inside Bhutan: \$6530 (based on 26 nights in Bhutan @ \$250 per night* plus the \$20 visa fee and \$10 Tourist Development fee)

Druk Air flight: \$449 (current fare and based on return economy flight from Kathmandu)

* It should be noted that the figure is Govt controlled and not set by Travel and Trek. It is higher than the standard nightly rate as it reflects the huge amount of logistics required.

Level of deposit, date of remaining balance and how to pay will be made known in due course.

Inclusions and Exclusions:

Included:

International return airfare into Bhutan from Kathmandu. Other access cities are available, refer to Travel and Trek.

All hotel accommodation (good standard, based on twin share, no surcharge for singles)

All ground transport in Bhutan including airport transfers

All meals (including on trek)

The services of a Bhutanese Guide, full time.

All staff and pack ponies/yaks for the trek

All accommodation for the trek (tents, roll mats)

Fees to monuments, monasteries, festivals, etc...

Tourist Visa (\$20) and Tourist Development fee (\$10)

Not included:

International flights from UK to the access city

Accommodation/food/transport in your chosen access city. Travel and Trek will gladly organise your transit through Kathmandu and/or Delhi

Local trek staff gratuities

Airport Departure Taxes.

Out of Kathmandu. Airport taxes out of Kathmandu are included in the price of tickets both to the UK and to Bhutan.

Out of Bhutan. Included in the ticket.

Out of Delhi. This has been changing lately, to be confirmed.

CONTACT DETAILS

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