Laya Gasa Trek

The Laya-Gasa Trek is considered one of the most scenic treks in Bhutan, offering amazing views of some of the most pristine and unspoiled landscapes in Bhutan. This fourteen-day, 217 km journey begins at Sharna in Paro and takes you through gorgeous alpine meadows, high mountain passes, and dense sub-tropical forests.

The first five days of this trek follow the same route as the Jomolhari Round Trek through Jigme Singye National Park and offer awe-inspiring views of Mt. Jomolhari, Jichu Drake, and Tsherimgang. On the sixth day, the path diverges and you will depart Lingshi for the campsite at Chebisa village, a village located between snowy mountains.

If you are lucky, you will get a chance to see blue sheep and Takins (the national animal of Bhutan). You'll travel through remote mountain villages inhabited by Layaps (people of Laya), a distinct segment of Bhutanese society with unique culture, traditions, and appearance.

This is one of the more difficult treks offered in Bhutan due to the high altitudes and steep ascents and descents along the path.

LOCATION	DURATION
Paro to Gasa	**17 Days**

DIFFICULTY	MAX ALTITUDE	BEST SEASON
hard	**5,005m**	**Mar-May, Sep-Nov**

Highlights

- One of the most scenic treks in Bhutan
- Spectacular views of Mt. Jomolhari, Jichu Drake, and Tsherimgang
- Cross Sinche La Pass (5,005m), the highest point of the trek
- Meet the Layaps, people with unique culture and traditions
- Spot blue sheep and takins in their natural habitat
- Relax in Gasa Tsachu hot springs
- Visit the iconic Tiger's Nest Monastery and Punakha Dzong

Day-by-Day Itinerary

Day 1: Arrive at Paro

Paro | 2,280m

You will be received by the representative from Byways Tours and Travels at the airport and driven to the hotel.

After lunch, visit **Ta Dzong**, an ancient watchtower built in 1656 and renovated in 1968, now converted into the National Museum of Bhutan. Then visit **Rinpung Dzong** (Paro Dzong), built in 1646 by Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal. The dzong presently houses the administrative offices of Paro District and the monastery.

Dinner and overnight in hotel.

Meals: L/D | Hotel in Paro

Day 2: Paro Sightseeing

Paro | 2,280m | 5h hike

After breakfast, take an excursion to **Tiger's Nest Monastery**. A short drive of around 25 minutes from the main town of Paro takes you to Satsam Chorten, where the trail climbs through beautiful pine forest, many of the trees festooned with Spanish moss, and an occasional grove of fluttering prayer flags.

We stop for rest and tea with cookies at the Taktsang cafeteria, then walk a short distance until we see, clearly and seemingly within reach, Tiger's Nest Monastery. The history dates back to the 8th century when Guru Rinpoche, a tantric master, flew to this place on the back of a flying tigress, said to be his Tibetan consort known as Khandro Yeshe Tsogyal, and meditated in a cave nearby. The temple was built in the 17th century by the Penlop (governor) of Paro, Gyaltse Tenzin Rabgye. This incredible monastery clings to the edge of a sheer rock cliff that plunges 600 meters into the valley below.

After lunch, visit **Drukgyel Dzong**, built in 1644 by Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal to commemorate the victory over Tibetan invaders. The dzong is now in ruins because it was completely burned down by a fire caused by a butter lamp in 1951. The name "Drukgyel" means "Victorious Druk."

Then visit **Kyichu Lhakhang**, one of Bhutan's oldest Buddhist temples, built in 659 AD by the Tibetan king Songtsen Gampo. In the evening, stroll around the tiny town of Paro. Dinner and overnight in the hotel.

Meals: B/L/D | Hotel in Paro

Day 3: Paro to Thangthangkha - Trek Starts

Gunitsawa to Thangthangkha | 3,610m | 7-8 hours | 22 km

This trek begins at **Gunitsawa Village** where you pass the army post. At the army checkpoint, your trek permit (provided by your tour operator) will be checked and endorsed.

On this long day, the trail continues with lots of small ups and downs. After going uphill through the river valley, the valley finally narrows gradually to a mere path which descends to a meadow where camp will be set up.

From here, if weather permits, you will have the first great view of **Mt. Jomolhari** (7,314m), the second highest snow-capped mountain of Bhutan.

Meals: B/L/D | Camping

Day 4: Thangthangkha to Jangothang

Thangthangkha to Jangothang | 4,080m | 5-6 hours | 19 km

If you did not see Mt. Jomolhari clearly the previous evening, you will still have a chance to get a great view early this morning.

The trek continues up the Paro Chhu valley, which widens into patches of alpine meadow and scanty growths of forest. You will cross an army checkpoint along the way and enjoy a spectacular view of high mountain ridges and snow-capped peaks.

In this area, yaks and their herders' homes become a regular feature of the landscape. After reaching **Jangothang**, one of the most beautiful campsites of the Himalayas, you will again have a spectacular view of **Mount Jomolhari** (7,314m).

Meals: B/L/D | Camping

Day 5: Jangothang Rest Day

Jangothang | 4,080m

The rest day in Jangothang provides plenty of possibilities for day hikes with great views of lakes and snow-capped mountains such as **Jomolhari** and **Jichu Drake**. There are good chances to spot some blue sheep on the upper slopes of the valley.

Jangothang is a perfect environment for your acclimatization. You can also trek up to **Tshophu** (lake) or hike around the area. There are good short hiking trails in different directions.

Jomolhari and its subsidiary mountain chains lie towards the west, Jichu Drake to the north, and there are a number of unclimbed peaks to the east.

Meals: B/L/D | Camping

Day 6: Jangothang to Lingshi

Jangothang to Lingshi | 4,010m | 6-7 hours | 18 km

The trail follows the stream for around 20 minutes and crosses the bridge to the right side. Start the climb up to the first ridge with a breathtaking view of Jomolhari, Jichu Drake, and Tsherim Gang.

Then walk towards the valley, almost flat for a while, until the climb to **Nyele La Pass** at an altitude of 4,700 meters. After the pass, it's a gradual descent to the Lingshi camp, enjoying the panoramic view of the peaks and **Lingshi Dzong**.

After reaching the campsite, you can relax for some time and walk further north to see a small isolated village of Lingshi located in a beautiful valley.

Meals: B/L/D | Camping

Day 7: Lingshi to Chebisa

Lingshi to Chebisa | 3,880m | 4-5 hours | 10 km

Today is the shortest walking day and the easiest one. Crossing the wooden bridge near your last night's campsite, the trail gradually climbs, reaching a chorten below **Lingshi Dzong**.

Here, you have the choice of staying on the main trail or taking a detour up to Lingshi Dzong (4,220m), which sits right atop a high ridge. This dzong is under reconstruction from a 2011 earthquake which damaged its central building. In addition to a very special atmosphere of mystic tranquility, Lingshi Dzong provides a great view over the valley.

After Lingshi Dzong, you will be passing the villages of Lingshi and Goyul. In Goyul, the stone houses are clustered together to form a small compact village that is unusual in Bhutan where settlements are usually scattered.

On reaching the campsite at **Chebisa**, you will have plenty of time to visit the village houses if you want to. There is also a beautiful waterfall located behind the village that is worth visiting.

Meals: B/L/D | Camping

Day 8: Chebisa to Shomuthang

Chebisa to Shomuthang | 4,220m | 6-7 hours | 17 km

The morning starts with a long ascent behind Chebisa Village (2-3 hours) through a wide pastureland towards **Gobu La Pass** (4,440m). On the way, you will see a few people herding yaks. There is also a great chance to spot large herds of blue sheep above the trail.

After crossing Gobu La, you descend into the valley, then climb again a little bit, before descending again to Shakshepasa (3,980m), where the site of a helipad is marked by a big H.

Climbing from here, you will finally reach the campsite at **Shomuthang** (4,220m).

Meals: B/L/D | Camping

Day 9: Shomuthang to Robluthang

Shomuthang to Robluthang | 4,160m | 6-7 hours | 18 km

You begin by climbing up the valley to view **Kang Bum** (6,526m) and some edelweiss. After two hours of climbing, you will reach **Jhari La** (4,750m), from where you catch the first glimpse of Sinche La (5,005m), the pass you will have to cross the day after.

The big snow peak in the north is **Gangchhenta** (6,840m), better known as the Great Tiger Mountain. If weather is clear, Tserim Kang and the top of Jomolhari will be visible.

The camp by the river is called Tsheri Jathang, located in a beautiful wide and remote valley. Herds of takin, the national animal of Bhutan, migrate to this valley in summer and remain for about four months. The valley has been declared a takin sanctuary.

Climb up a little bit and you will reach the campsite at **Robluthang** in a rocky meadow.

Meals: B/L/D | Camping

Day 10: Robluthang to Limithang

Robluthang to Limithang | 4,140m | 6-7 hours | 19 km

The trek starts with a climb of around one hour before gradually raising for another hour and a half through a boulder field. It is then a one-hour steep ascent before reaching **Sinche La** (5,005m) – the final and highest pass on the trek if you don't intend to continue the Snowman Trek from Laya onwards.

As you descend the far side of the pass, you will see an impressive terminal moraine and a glacial lake at the foot of the valley. You can see classic examples of lateral moraines where the glacier has pushed rocks up both sides of the valley.

Below the moraine, you cross the Kango Chhu river and soon reach the **Limithang** campsite (4,140m).

Meals: B/L/D | Camping

Day 11: Limithang to Laya

Limithang to Laya | 3,840m | 4-5 hours | 10 km

Today, you walk downhill all the way along a narrow, winding river valley. After a long time, the trail takes you through a densely forested region.

The trail leads you to the west side of **Laya village**. From the west of the village, you will have spectacular views of **Mt. Gangchhenta** and catch **Mt. Masagang**.

In the middle of the village is a community school and a basic health unit with a telephone connection. The campsite is located below the school.

Meals: B/L/D | Camping

Day 12: Laya Rest Day

Laya | 3,840m

You have a rest day at Laya, so that you can have an opportunity to meet with the people of Laya and walk around their village and experience the lifestyle of **Layaps**.

People who live in Laya are called Layaps. They have a unique culture, traditions, and distinctive traditional dress.

Meals: B/L/D | Camping

Day 13: Laya to Koina

Laya to Koina | 3,050m | 6-7 hours | 19 km

The trail winds up and down along the river valley of Mo Chhu, avoiding natural obstacles and affording breathtaking views of the raging river, feeder streams, and waterfalls.

Lots of ups and downs will lead you to **Kohi La** (3,300m). The trek then drops down to the large stream of Koina Chhu through a muddy trail, and you reach your campsite at **Koina**.

Meals: B/L/D | Camping

Day 14: Koina to Gasa - Trek Ends

Koina to Gasa | 2,770m | 6-7 hours | 14 km

Today you will have the last major climb of the Laya Gasa Trek. You need to cross **Bari La** (3,740m), after which the trail descends all the way until you reach **Gasa village** (2,770m), where you will find the first restaurants since you started from Sharna at Paro.

There is also a campsite close to **Gasa Dzong**. You will have to decide whether you want to stay in Gasa village or descend for another hour to the **Gasa Tsachu** (hot springs) and relax in the rejuvenating mineral waters. The Gasa Tsachu is one of the most popular hot springs in Bhutan.

Meals: B/L/D | Camping/Guesthouse

Day 15: Gasa to Punakha

Gasa to Punakha | 1,250m | 3 hours drive | 76 km drive

After breakfast, drive to Punakha valley (76 km, 3 hours drive).

Visit **Punakha Dzong**, one of the most beautiful dzongs in Bhutan, located at the edge of Pho Chu (Male River) and Mo Chu (Female River). Built in 1637 by Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal, it served as the capital of Bhutan until the time of the second king.

The dzong was named Druk Pungthang Dechen Phodrang, which means "Palace of Great Happiness." Punakha is still the winter residence of the Chief Abbot (Je Khenpo).

After lunch, visit **Chimi Lhakhang**, also known as the "Temple of Fertility," built by Lama Drukpa Kunley, popularly known as "The Divine Madman," in the 15th century. Dinner and overnight at hotel.

Meals: B/L/D | Hotel in Punakha

Day 16: Punakha to Thimphu

Punakha to Thimphu | 2,350m | 3 hours drive | 76 km drive

After breakfast, drive to Thimphu via **Dochula Pass** (3,140m). We stop for a while at Dochula Pass where 108 stupas are built together to take photographs. If the weather is clear, in the far distance you will get a chance to see the higher Himalayas from Dochula Pass.

In Thimphu, visit **National Memorial Chorten**, built in 1974 by the mother of our third king in memory of Jigme Dorji Wangchuck. The paintings and statues in the temple are dedicated to the third king.

Then visit the tallest statue of **Buddha Dordenma** (51 meters tall).

After that, visit the **Mini Zoo** where you will get a chance to see our national animal, the Takin.

Finally, visit **Tashichho Dzong** and stroll around Thimphu city for shopping. Dinner and overnight in hotel.

Meals: B/L/D | Hotel in Thimphu

Day 17: Departure

Paro Airport | 2,280m

Drive to the airport and farewell!

Meals: B

What's Included

Included

+ Accommodation in 3* Hotels in twin sharing basis
+ All Three Meals (Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner)
+ Daily Tariff
+ Royalty and Government Taxes
+ Sustainable Development Fee of USD 100 per night per person which goes towards free education, free healthcare and infrastructure development
+ Transportation from receive till drop
+ Museum and Monument fee
+ Bottle Water in Car
+ Sightseeing
+ English Speaking Guide
+ Driver
+ Camping equipment and tents
+ Pack horses and horsemen
+ Trekking permits

Not Included

- Air Fare
- Visa fee of USD 40 per person
- Insurance Premiums
- Payment for service provided on a personal basis
- Cost for any services not mentioned in the "Inclusive Head"
- Cost incurred due to mishaps, strikes, political unrest, etc.
- Personal expenses in items such as laundry, soft or hard drinks, camera charges, bottle water in restaurants or in hotels, portage, bellboy charges
- Charges for chartered flights necessitated by a sudden death or unforeseen mishap
- Tips to guide and driver

Ready to Book?

Contact our Bhutan travel experts to customize this itinerary.

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