

Snowman Trek

The Snowman Trek is an extension of the beautiful [Laya Gasa Trek](#) and leads from Laya into the high altitudes of the Bhutanese Himalayas. This trek is one of the hardest treks in the world. It takes tough and enduring trekkers into the Lunana region and further on to Gangkhar Puensum and to Sephu in Trongsa district.

The Snowman Trek leads through the most remote areas up to very high altitudes. Trekkers have to camp at altitudes above 5,000m more than once, and depending on seasonal temperatures, the camps are sometimes on snow. The best seasons to complete this trek are April to May and September to October.

| LOCATION | DURATION |
|------------------------|----------------|
| Paro to Trongsa | 32 Days |

| DIFFICULTY | MAX ALTITUDE | BEST SEASON |
|----------------|---------------|-------------------------|
| extreme | 5,320m | Mar-May, Sep-Nov |

Highlights

- One of the world's most challenging treks
- Cross multiple passes above 5,000m including Rinchen Zoe La (5,320m)
- Experience the remote Lunana region, accessible only on foot
- Views of Gangkhar Puensum (7,570m), the world's highest unclimbed peak
- Camp at Table Mountain base and pristine glacial lakes
- Visit traditional villages virtually unchanged for centuries

Day-by-Day Itinerary

Day 1: Arrival in 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.

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, Gyaltsen 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 was completely burned down by a fire caused by a butter lamp in 1951. The name "Drukgyel" means "Victorious Druk." The dzong was used as an administrative center until 1951.

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

Meals: B/L/D | Hotel in Paro

Day 3: Trek to Thangthangkha

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: Trek 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: Rest Day at Jangothang

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: Trek 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 Tsherimgang.

Then walk towards the valley, almost flat for a while, until the climb to **Nyele La pass** at an altitude of 4,870 meters. After the pass, it is 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: Trek 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 to 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 that 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 pass through 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. There is also a beautiful waterfall located behind the village that is worth visiting.

Meals: B/L/D | Camping

Day 8: Trek 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 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 (4,440m), you descend into the valley, then climb again a little bit, before descending again to Shakshepasa (3,980m), where there is a helipad 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: Trek 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 next day.

The big snow peak in the north is **Gangchenta** (6,840m), better known as the Great Tiger Mountain. If the weather is clear, Tsherimgang 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: Trek to Limithang

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

The trek starts with a climb of around one hour before gradually rising 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 do not 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: Trek 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 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: Rest Day in Laya

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 distinct culture, traditions, and appearance that set them apart from other Bhutanese communities.

Meals: B/L/D | Camping

Day 13: Trek to Rodophu

Laya to Rodophu | 4,160m | 6-8 hours | 19 km

From Laya, you descend to an army camp and continue following the river until the turn-off point to Rodophu.

After lunch, the climb continues through rhododendron bushes until you reach the camp at Rodophu just next to the Rhodu Chhu (river).

Meals: B/L/D | Camping

Day 14: Trek to Narethang

Rodophu to Narethang | 4,900m | 5-6 hours | 17 km

After following the river for about 30 minutes, you will have a steady climb to a high open valley at 4,600m and then further up to **Tsomo La** (4,900m).

Tsomo La offers a superb view of Lunana, Mount Jomolhari and Jichu Drake, and the Tibetan border too. The route then crosses a flat, barren plateau at about 5,000m.

The campsite at Narethang is towered by the peak of **Gangla Karchung** (6,395m).

Meals: B/L/D | Camping

Day 15: Trek to Tarina

Narethang to Tarina | 3,970m | 7-8 hours | 18 km

From the camp, you will climb for about an hour to **Gangla Karchung La** (5,120m). The view from the pass is breathtaking, and the whole range of mountains including Jekangphu Gang (7,100m), Tsenda Kang, and Teri Gang (7,300m) can be seen.

The pass descends along a large moraine. Again one has great views: a massive glacier descends from Teri Kang to a deep turquoise lake at its foot. Up here, a glacial lake burst through its dam in the early 1960s, causing widespread damage and partially destroying Punakha Dzong.

Finally, it is a very long descent through thick rhododendron to Tarina valley, where you will find several good campsites along the Tang Chhu.

Meals: B/L/D | Camping

Day 16: Trek to Woche

Tarina to Woche | 3,910m | 6-7 hours | 17 km

The walk leads down through conifer forests following the upper ridges of the Pho Chhu, passing some impressive waterfalls.

The trail then climbs over a ridge and drops to **Woche**, a settlement of a few houses and the first village in the Lunana region.

There have been reports of theft here, so you need to keep your belongings safely inside the tent.

Meals: B/L/D | Camping

Day 17: Trek to Lhedi

Woche to Lhedi | 3,700m | 6-7 hours | 17 km

The trek starts through juniper and fir forests, and further ahead through rhododendron bushes.

Climb up to **Keche La pass** (4,650m) where you can have a great view of the surrounding mountains again. After the pass, descend to the riverside, walking through a village with a stunning view of Table Mountain and others.

Follow the river to the small **Lhedi Village**. Lhedi Village has a school, basic health unit, and wireless telephone connection.

Meals: B/L/D | Camping

Day 18: Trek to Thanza

Lhedi to Thanza | 4,150m | 7-8 hours | 17 km

In clear weather, you will have great views of **Table Mountain** (7,100m). Around lunchtime, you will pass the small village of Chozo (4,090m), which has a dzong that is still in use.

Reaching Thanza, you will again have a great view of Table Mountain, which forms a 3,000m high wall of snow and ice behind the village.

Although there are possibilities to camp directly at Thanza, most groups prefer to camp in Thoencha. You can discuss with your guide where to camp.

Meals: B/L/D | Camping

Day 19: Rest Day at Thanza

Thanza | 4,150m

Today you can either walk around and experience some village life or climb up the ridge for fascinating views of lakes and mountain ranges.

As it takes time to arrange new yaks (because the yaks from Laya will not go further than Thanza), you might have to spend one day at Thanza anyway.

Meals: B/L/D | Camping

Day 20: Trek to Danji

Thanza to Danji | 4,230m | 3-4 hours | 8 km

If you stayed at Thoenchu last night, the trail for today climbs up to a large boulder from where you will have excellent views of Thanza, Thoenchu, and Choso villages and the surrounding mountains.

After a few hours of relatively flat and easy walking, you will reach a yak meadow with some yak herders' huts. An excellent campsite with a great chance to spot blue sheep again on the hills above.

A trail junction near the campsite will give you the choice between the route up to **Gangkhar Puensum base camp** and further on to Sephu (Trongsa).

Meals: B/L/D | Camping

Day 21: Trek to Tshochena

Danji to Tshochena | 4,970m | 5-6 hours | 12 km

Today the trek crosses the creek, and after a long climb, you will reach **Jaze La** (5,150m) with spectacular panoramic views of mountain ranges.

The path then descends between snow-covered peaks and a couple of small lakes to the campsite near the shore of **Tshochena Lake**.

This is the first of two nights camping above 4,900m.

Meals: B/L/D | Camping

Day 22: Trek to Jichu Dramo

Tshochena to Jichu Dramo | 5,050m | 4-5 hours | 14 km

You follow the bank of the blue-green lake before arriving at a ridge at 5,100m, where there is another spectacular view in all directions.

After going up and down over small hills to reach a glacial lake, the route descends first before climbing again to the next pass, **Loju La** (5,140m).

Finally, after crossing a small saddle (5,100m), you will enter a wide glacial valley from where the trail descends gradually to the campsite at Jichu Dramo.

Meals: B/L/D | Camping

Day 23: Trek to Chukarpo

Jichu Dramo to Chukarpo | 4,600m | 5-6 hours | 18 km

Right after leaving the camp, you will climb through a moraine to **Rinchen Zoe La pass** (5,320m). Spectacular mountain scenery with **Gangkhar Puensum** amongst the impressive mountains is the reward for climbing the highest pass on this trek route. Rinchen Zoe Peak (5,650m) towers above the pass to the west.

Descending from the pass, the route leads into a wide valley with several lakes and goes steeply down along a moraine to the Thamphe Chhu. Here the vegetation begins to thicken again, and you will see the first real trees since Lhedi.

After a couple of hours, you reach the campsite at Chukarpo.

Meals: B/L/D | Camping

Day 24: Trek to Thampe Tsho

Chukarpo to Thampe Tsho | 4,300m | 5-6 hours | 18 km

Today you walk descent along the river until you reach the yak herder huts at Gala Pang Chhu (4,010m).

From here, the trail climbs steeply towards **Thampe Tsho**, a beautiful clear turquoise lake, with the campsite next to it.

Meals: B/L/D | Camping

Day 25: Trek to Maurothang

Thampe Tsho to Maurothang | 3,610m | 5-6 hours | 14 km

From the lake, you climb steeply to the last pass on your trek, **Thampe La** (4,600m), with a good chance to spot blue sheep again on the way.

Then the path descends to the sacred lake **Om Tsho**. Passing a waterfall, you will reach another smaller lake 100m below and descend steeply to the Nikka Chhu.

The path finally leads through mixed forest to a large clearing on the banks of the river with a few yak herder huts at Maurothang.

Meals: B/L/D | Camping

Day 26: Trek to Sephu and Drive to Trongsa

Maurothang to Sephu to Trongsa | 2,580m | 5-6 hours | 18 km

On the last day of this extraordinary trek, your porters will have to change from yaks to horses as the yaks will not be willing to go further down.

The path follows the Nikka Chhu to reach a large grassy area overlooking the road and the village of Sephu. You will finally reach the road at the Nikka Chhu bridge at Sephu, where you will find several stores (mainly selling bamboo products) and small restaurants.

After that, drive to Trongsa.

Meals: B/L/D | Hotel in Trongsa

Day 27: Trongsa to Bumthang

Trongsa to Bumthang | 2,580m

After breakfast, visit **Trongsa Dzong**, which was built in 1643 by Chogyel Minjur Tempa, an official sent by Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal to unify the eastern part of Bhutan. It was then enlarged at the end of the 17th century by Desi Tenzin Rabgye.

The official name of Trongsa Dzong is Choekhor Raptentse Dzong, also known by its short name Choetse Dzong. Trongsa Dzong was the ancestral home of Bhutan's royal family. The first two hereditary kings ruled from this dzong, and tradition still dictates that the crown prince serve as Trongsa Penlop (governor) before acceding to the throne. The current king became Trongsa Penlop in 2004.

After that, visit **Ta Dzong** (an ancient watchtower which is now the Trongsa Museum), then drive to Bumthang.

Meals: B/L/D | Hotel in Bumthang

Day 28: Bumthang Sightseeing

Bumthang | 2,580m

After breakfast, visit **Jakar Dzong**. Legend has it that when the lamas assembled in about 1549 to select a site for a monastery, a big white bird rose suddenly in the air and settled on a spur of a hill, so this was interpreted as an important omen, and the hill was chosen as the site for a monastery and for Jakar Dzong,

which translates as "Castle of the White Bird."

Zhabdrung's great-grandfather, Ngagi Wangchuk, founded the monastery. The current structure was built in 1667 and has a circumference of more than 1,500m. Its official name is Yuelay Namgyal Dzong, in honor of the victory over the troops of Tibetan ruler Phuntsho Namgyal.

After that, visit **Jambay Lhakhang**, believed to have been built in 659 AD by the Tibetan king Songtsen Gampo, on the same day as Kyichu Lhakhang in Paro. This is followed by a visit to **Kurjey Lhakhang**, named after the body print of Guru Rinpoche ("Kur" means body and "jey" means print).

After lunch, visit **Tamshing Lhakhang**, established in 1501 by the great saint Pema Lingpa who was born in the Tang Valley of Bumthang. This temple, also known as Tamshing Lhendup Chholing ("the temple of good message"), is one of the most important Nyingma monasteries in the kingdom.

Finally, visit the **Burning Lake**. Stroll around the town in the evening.

Meals: B/L/D | Hotel in Bumthang

Day 29: Bumthang to Punakha via Gangtey

Bumthang to Gangtey to Punakha | 1,250m

After breakfast, drive to Punakha via Gangtey Valley. While in Gangtey Valley, visit **Gangtey Goenpa**. Gyaltshe Pema Thinley, the grandson and mind reincarnation of Pema Lingpa, founded the temple in 1613, and Tenzin Legpai Dhendup, the second reincarnation, built the temple.

Then visit the **Black-necked Crane Center**, where you can see the cranes through telescopes. Black-necked cranes are a rare species and are winter visitors to a few places in Bhutan; they fly back to the Tibetan plateau in summer.

After lunch, drive to Punakha.

Meals: B/L/D | Hotel in Punakha

Day 30: Punakha to Thimphu

Punakha to Thimphu | 2,350m

After breakfast, visit **Punakha Dzong**, one of the most beautiful dzongs in Bhutan, located at the confluence of Pho Chu (Male River) and Mo Chu (Female River).

Punakha Dzong was built in 1637 by Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal. For many years until the time of the second king, it served as the capital of Bhutan. The construction of the dzong was foretold by Guru Rinpoche, who visited this place in the 8th century and predicted that a person named Namgyal would arrive at a hill that looks like a sleeping elephant.

The dzong was named Druk Pungthang Dechen Phodrang, which means "Palace of Great Happiness." The war materials captured during the battle with Tibetans are preserved here. Punakha is still the winter residence of the Chief Abbot (Je Khenpo), and King Jigme Dorji Wangchuck convened the First National Assembly here in 1952.

Then 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.

After lunch, drive to Thimphu via **Dochula Pass** (3,140m). Stop at Dochula Pass where 108 stupas are built together to take photographs, and if the weather is clear, you will have the chance to see the higher Himalayas in the distance.

Meals: B/L/D | Hotel in Thimphu

Day 31: Thimphu Sightseeing

Thimphu | 2,350m

After breakfast, visit the **National Memorial Chorten**, which was built in 1974 by the mother of the third king in memory of King Jigme Dorji Wangchuck. The paintings and statues in the temple are dedicated to the third king.

Then visit the tallest statue of **Buddha** in the world, which stands 51 meters tall.

After that, visit the **Mini Zoo** where you will have the chance to see the national animal of Bhutan, the Takin.

Finally, visit **Tashichhoe Dzong** and stroll around Thimphu city for shopping.

Meals: B/L/D | Hotel in Thimphu

Day 32: Departure

Paro Airport | 2,280m

Drive to the airport for your departure flight. 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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