

# The Laya Trek

Trip Code: LAY

Version: LAYL The Laya Trek Laya Trek - Laya Royal Highlander Festival



WALK & TREK



GUIDED GROUP



CHALLENGING



## HIGHLIGHTS

- Complete one of the world's greatest treks, journeying through the Bhutanese Himalaya
- Visit Laya, a beautifully and remote village only accessible on foot
- Cross 4 high passes, including the Shinge La (4900m), close to the Tibetan border
- Explore Paro, Thimphu and Punakha and visit the Tiger's Nest Monastery
- Time your holiday to join in the celebrations at the Royal Highlander Festival at Laya

## AT A GLANCE

- 14 days trekking
- Max altitude - 5000 metres
- Join at Kathmandu

## ACCOMMODATIONS & MEALS

- All meals included
- 5 nights Hotel
- 12 nights Camping

VIEW DATES, PRICES & BOOK YOUR HOLIDAY HERE

# Introduction

This iconic [Bhutan trekking holiday](#), from Paro to Thimphu via Laya and the Punakha Valley, is widely acknowledged to be one of the world's great treks. It certainly has all the right ingredients; from picturesque farmland and ancient forest, to alpine pasture and challenging high mountain passes including the Shinge La (5000m). A succession of spectacular campsites with views of some of Bhutan's most impressive peaks, including Chomolhari and Jitchu Drake, are amongst the many highlights of this trekking circuit. Visits to a number of strategically located fortress-monasteries (dzongs) and scattered settlements including Laya Village, close to the Tibetan border, add a good dose of culture.

The welcoming people of Laya, one of the highest inhabited villages in Bhutan, present a striking picture, with their pointed hats, hair covered in mustard oil and highly decorative jewellery. With time for sightseeing in the Paro Valley, including the Tiger's Nest Monastery, as well as visits to the winter and summer capitals of Thimphu and Punakha, this is an excellent 3-week trekking adventure.

**BOOK EARLY for BHUTAN!** With only two airlines operating flights into Paro from Kathmandu, seats are limited and in high demand. Book early to guarantee your place on your chosen departure. We strongly advise booking a year in advance where possible.

## Is this holiday for you?

This route presents a great variety of landscape types; ranging from fertile and intensively terraced farmland, through some of the finest mixed forest in the world, to open, alpine pastureland and high mountain valleys and passes.

Trekking conditions are reasonably straightforward, since the trail has been well prepared for the ponies or yaks.

There are no glaciers to negotiate and the passes that we cross should not be heavily snow covered. There are some rugged sections where extra care needs to be taken and at lower elevations the trail can be muddy in places.

The trekking is sustained and involves some long, strenuous, days (up to 9hrs) and the crossing of four passes over 4500 metres, including the Shinge La at 5000 metres.

A good degree of fitness is a necessity.

# Itinerary

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## DAY 1

**Arrive Kathmandu. Transfers from Kathmandu Airport to the group hotel are provided.**

The holiday starts at the group hotel in Kathmandu. Transfers from Kathmandu Airport are provided. The rest of the day is free to relax or for independent sightseeing. We have also arranged for dinner in the hotel tonight, which you can take at your own leisure.

Meals: **D**



**Accommodation**  
Hotel

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## DAY 2

**Fly to Paro in the Kingdom of Bhutan. Meet our Tour Leader and transfer to hotel.**

The group will meet in the lobby of the hotel. We transfer together back to airport in time to check in for the flight to Paro.

The flight from Kathmandu to Bhutan is one of the most spectacular of all mountain flights. From the left side of the plane Everest, Makalu and Kangchenjunga, three of the world's highest mountains, are clearly visible. The total flying time is only 45 minutes and soon we are descending into the Paro Valley, enjoying the splendid views of alpine forests, small monasteries, temples and flat-roofed farmhouses. On arrival we will be met by our Tour Leader who will accompany us to the hotel.

If the flight to Paro is in the morning, there may be time today to visit the National Museum housed in an ancient watchtower, high above the Paro Valley overlooking the Dzong.

Meals: **B L D**



**Accommodation**  
Hotel

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## DAY 3

## Hike to the Taktsang (Tiger's Nest) Monastery (3120m).

This morning we hike up to one of the most important religious site in the entire Himalaya, the Tiger's Nest. The monastery has a most stunning location, perched on the ledge of a cliff 700 metres above the Paro Valley, and is only accessible on foot. Not just a cultural experience, this hike up to over 3000 metres will provide excellent acclimatisation ahead of our trek.

Around half way up the trail there is a classic viewpoint, looking across the gorge to the monastic buildings clinging to the cliff wall opposite. There is a small teahouse here where we can stop for a rest with a truly unforgettable view.

The final approach to the monastery takes us down to a sacred waterfall, surrounded by a thousand fluttering prayer flags, where every crack in the rock is crammed with tsa-tsas (small caskets containing the ashes of the dead), before climbing back up towards the monastery. If we are lucky we will be allowed inside to look at some of the chambers and altar rooms.

We return to Paro in the afternoon. Tonight we will want to repack our bags ready for beginning our trek in the morning. You may leave some items you won't need on the trek at the hotel.

Meals: **B L D**

|  |                               |  |                        |  |                         |  |                               |  |                        |
|--|-------------------------------|--|------------------------|--|-------------------------|--|-------------------------------|--|------------------------|
|  | <b>Accommodation</b><br>Hotel |  | <b>Ascent</b><br>1000M |  | <b>Descent</b><br>1000M |  | <b>Time</b><br>5 hrs trekking |  | <b>Distance</b><br>8KM |
|--|-------------------------------|--|------------------------|--|-------------------------|--|-------------------------------|--|------------------------|

### DAY 4

## Drive to Shana (2880m) to begin our trek. Hike to Thongbu Samba (3100m).

From Paro we drive west for (30 mins) to the end of the surfaced road at the ruins of Drugyel Dzong (2530m). From here, we continue following a farm road for around 1 -1.5 hours, passing through small hamlets of houses built in traditional Bhutanese design. Arriving at Shana (2880m), we will be happy to stretch our legs. While our bags are loaded on the ponies, we will set off following a path beside the river before climbing to our first night's camp at Thongbu Samba (3100m).

Meals: **B L D**

|   |                                 |   |                       |   |                        |   |                                   |   |                        |
|---|---------------------------------|---|-----------------------|---|------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|---|------------------------|
|  | <b>Accommodation</b><br>Camping |  | <b>Ascent</b><br>390M |  | <b>Descent</b><br>170M |  | <b>Time</b><br>2 - 3 hrs trekking |  | <b>Distance</b><br>7KM |
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### DAY 5

## Trek to Soi Thangka (3600m).

We gain height slowly as we continue along the river through a mixed forest. The autumn colours of the leaves contrast with the Pale Spanish moss (old man's beard). After rain, the trail can be muddy and there

will possibly be slippery rocks to contend with. Our crew will be on hand to assist. The trail undulates as we make our way north and after crossing a bridge at 3560 metres, we make a short steep climb to reach a junction of two valleys, marked by a chorten. From near here, weather permitting, we can see Chomolhari at the head of the valley. Our trail stays on the west bank of the Paro Chu and our next camp at Soi Thangka is only a half an hour's walk away.

Meals: **B L D**

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|---|---------------------------------|---|-----------------------|---|------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|---|-------------------------|
|  | <b>Accommodation</b><br>Camping |  | <b>Ascent</b><br>770M |  | <b>Descent</b><br>270M |  | <b>Time</b><br>5 - 6 hrs trekking |  | <b>Distance</b><br>11KM |
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## DAY 6

### Trek to Jangothang (4100m) - Chomolhari Basecamp.

We continue our trek today on the cow herder's trail up to the small hamlet of Jumphu. From here, we re-join the main trekking trail to today's camp at Jangothang (Chomolhari Basecamp). We have lunch in a meadow at Tikithang, from where it is another hour until camp. Our camp tonight is next to a ruined dzong (4100m) beneath the huge east face of Chomolhari.

Meals: **B L D**

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|   |                                 |   |                       |   |                       |   |                               |   |                         |
|---|---------------------------------|---|-----------------------|---|-----------------------|---|-------------------------------|---|-------------------------|
|  | <b>Accommodation</b><br>Camping |  | <b>Ascent</b><br>560M |  | <b>Descent</b><br>60M |  | <b>Time</b><br>6 hrs trekking |  | <b>Distance</b><br>13KM |
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## DAY 7

### Acclimatisation walk to the Tshophu Lakes. Overnight at Jangothang (4100m).

We will spend a second night at Jangothang as an important part of our acclimatisation, with the option today to hike up to the twin lakes at Tshophu, a great place from which to look back at the peaks on Bhutan's northern border with Tibet including the striking Jitchu Drake. Green grass, grazing yaks and stunning mountain scenery - it doesn't come much better than this. The trail ascends into a valley running towards the south-east and it will take a couple of hours to reach the lakes. We drop back to our camp at Jangothang for a late lunch and a restful afternoon.

Meals: **B L D**

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|---|---------------------------------|---|-----------------------|---|------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|---|-------------------------|
|  | <b>Accommodation</b><br>Camping |  | <b>Ascent</b><br>430M |  | <b>Descent</b><br>430M |  | <b>Time</b><br>4 - 5 hrs trekking |  | <b>Distance</b><br>11KM |
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## DAY 8

## Cross the Nyele La (4850m) to a camp close to the village of Lingshi (4010m).

Today we cross the Nyele La (4850m) to reach Lingshi. We follow the river for a while, before crossing it on a bridge. From here the path climbs steeply at first, with the trail offering fine views toward Chomolhari and Jitchu Drake. We are now near the Tibetan Border as we make our way along a broad hanging valley to the final steep slopes leading to the Nyele La, which is adorned with prayer flags. From the pass, we descend, steeply at first, to follow a ridge before finally dropping through forests of rhododendron and pine to our camp beside the river at the place known as Tshajithang.

Meals: **B L D**

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|   |                                 |   |                       |   |                        |   |                                   |   |                         |
|---|---------------------------------|---|-----------------------|---|------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|---|-------------------------|
|  | <b>Accommodation</b><br>Camping |  | <b>Ascent</b><br>860M |  | <b>Descent</b><br>950M |  | <b>Time</b><br>7 - 8 hrs trekking |  | <b>Distance</b><br>15KM |
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### DAY 9

## A day at Lingshi.

This is a great place to spend a day and, once again, this helps with our acclimatisation. We can visit the village of Lingshi and the famous 17th century Lingshi Yugyal Dzong which is once again under repair, with the rebuilding nearing completion. We can also take a hike to a pair of nearby glacial lakes, situated amongst moraine. Close by there is another Buddhist temple and two hermit's caves. We spend a second night at the Tshajithang camp.

Meals: **B L D**

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|   |                                 |   |                       |   |                        |   |                               |   |                        |
|---|---------------------------------|---|-----------------------|---|------------------------|---|-------------------------------|---|------------------------|
|  | <b>Accommodation</b><br>Camping |  | <b>Ascent</b><br>400M |  | <b>Descent</b><br>400M |  | <b>Time</b><br>4 hrs trekking |  | <b>Distance</b><br>8KM |
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### DAY 10

## Trek to Chebisa (3880m) via Gang Yul.

After breakfast, we climb up to Lingshi Dzong. From here, our path contours the hillside. There are views across the valley to the Basingthang Peaks and we can watch kestrels hovering above the ridges. After a couple of hours the path turns a corner and there is a view of Tserim Gang, before we descend to Gang Yul (meaning 'village at the pass'). Home to about 150 people, living in a dozen or so beautifully designed houses, this village offers great photo opportunities. The village sits beneath limestone cliffs and is dwarfed by the east face of Jitchu Drake. Leaving the village, the path continues along the hillside to Chebisa, a picturesque valley of pastures and shingle roofed stone houses. It is here that the blue sheep (or bharal) come to graze during summer. We will make camp here for the night at 3880m.

Meals: **B L D**



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|---|---------------------------------|---|-----------------------|---|------------------------|---|-------------------------------|---|-------------------------|
|  | <b>Accommodation</b><br>Camping |  | <b>Ascent</b><br>560M |  | <b>Descent</b><br>710M |  | <b>Time</b><br>6 hrs trekking |  | <b>Distance</b><br>12KM |
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### DAY 11

#### Cross the Gombu La (4400m) to Somothang (4221m).

From Chebisa we follow an undulating trail up to the Gombu La (4440m). The views back to Lingshi and the surrounding peaks are spectacular. Hill partridges have been seen here and it is common to spot lammergeyer soaring above the alpine pastures. From the pass we descend through a forest of cypress, spruce, and rhododendron to reach our camp at Shomuthang (4221m). We will most likely camp beside the river, but we may also decide hike up the valley an hour to make tomorrow's hike a little easier.

Meals: **B L D**

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|   |                                 |   |                        |   |                        |   |                                   |   |                         |
|---|---------------------------------|---|------------------------|---|------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|---|-------------------------|
|  | <b>Accommodation</b><br>Camping |  | <b>Ascent</b><br>1170M |  | <b>Descent</b><br>740M |  | <b>Time</b><br>7 - 8 hrs trekking |  | <b>Distance</b><br>14KM |
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### DAY 12

#### Cross the Jare La (4760m) to Robluthang (4160m)

We start early for the climb up to the Jhari La (4760m). There are great views of Tiger Mountain (Gangchen Tagg (7000m) from the pass. We should be able to look over to tomorrow's objective, the Shinge La, which is the lowest point of the horizon opposite. As we descend through more pine forest we keep a look out for takin, the national animal of Bhutan, which are quite common in this part of Bhutan. The scenery on this day's walk inspired Victor Saunders, one of Britain's most travelled Himalayan climbers, to comment that this was the best walking he'd ever done! We cross a river and camp in a very scenic position, just a short walk up the hillside, at Robluthang (4160m).

Meals: **B L D**

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|   |                                 |   |                       |   |                        |   |                               |   |                         |
|---|---------------------------------|---|-----------------------|---|------------------------|---|-------------------------------|---|-------------------------|
|  | <b>Accommodation</b><br>Camping |  | <b>Ascent</b><br>720M |  | <b>Descent</b><br>780M |  | <b>Time</b><br>6 hrs trekking |  | <b>Distance</b><br>10KM |
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### DAY 13






#### Cross the Shinge La (5000m) to Limithang (4150m).

We follow a yak trail above the camp for around 2 hours until we reach a beautiful hanging valley with a lone yak herders hut. The path takes the left side of the valley and soon the Shinge La (5000m) is visible. The final climb is quite strenuous, but save some energy to place a small stone on one of the four cairns

that mark the end of the climbing. This pass marks the boundary of the Laya District. Our descent follows an obvious path into the centre of the valley, to a clearing by a huge rock. We continue descending until we see a bank of moraine, which is holding back a very picturesque lake. The backdrop to this beautiful valley is Kang Che Da, the Great Tiger Mountain. We camp a short way down the valley at Limithang (4150m), in a meadow by the river.

Meals: **B L D**

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|   |                                 |   |                       |   |                        |   |                                   |   |                         |
|---|---------------------------------|---|-----------------------|---|------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|---|-------------------------|
|  | <b>Accommodation</b><br>Camping |  | <b>Ascent</b><br>900M |  | <b>Descent</b><br>940M |  | <b>Time</b><br>7 - 8 hrs trekking |  | <b>Distance</b><br>15KM |
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## DAY 14


### Arrive into Laya (3800m).

A beautiful morning's walk today through a bird spotter's paradise. Although shorter than some of the days so far, there is quite a lot of up and down. We cross a bridge and follow the left bank of the river on an undulating trail through a forest of spruce and juniper. As we descend we start to see Spanish moss once again hanging from the trees. The path then climbs above the river and soon we see the first houses on the outskirts of Laya (3800m). The people of Laya are very welcoming and present a striking picture, with their pointed hats, hair covered in mustard oil and highly decorative jewellery. We aim to arrive in time for lunch and have the afternoon free to look around the village and visit the monastery. We set up camp on one of the village fields. In the Autumn the fields have been harvested and finding a camping place is easy.

LAY.01.24 will follow a slight amended itinerary this afternoon visiting the Laya Royal Highlander Festival.

Meals: **B L D**

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|---|---------------------------------|---|-----------------------|---|------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|---|-------------------------|
|  | <b>Accommodation</b><br>Camping |  | <b>Ascent</b><br>400M |  | <b>Descent</b><br>700M |  | <b>Time</b><br>4 - 5 hrs trekking |  | <b>Distance</b><br>11KM |
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## DAY 15

### Morning in Laya village. Trek to Tongchu Drak (3300m). Drive to Gasa (2500m).

The morning is free to explore Laya village. As with most villages in the high Himalaya, cultivation is difficult. The villagers are semi-nomadic and rely on yak herding for a livelihood. They spend some of the year in black tents woven from yak hair, but here in the village they live in drystone-walled houses, where they also store their grains, which they use to barter for goods with other valleys. Leaving Laya, we follow the main path through the village, which descends to the lowest house, passes through a large entrance chorten and drops down to the river. During the monsoon, from June to September, this valley receives a great deal of rainfall. As a result, the forest is particularly lush and impressive. We pass by an army camp and continue on a trail alongside the Mo Chu. Though we are generally descending today, there



are places where the path has to climb above the river to negotiate steep spurs. At Thongchu Drak we will find our vehicles waiting to drive us to Gasa (2.5hrs) where we will have our last camp near the hot springs. Gasa Tsachu (hot spring) is where people from all over Bhutan come to bathe, we might have the option to enjoy a soak after trek.

#### IMPORTANT NOTICE

The hot springs at Gasa are currently being restored having been damaged by floods. If the hot springs are not accessible we will continue the drive to Punakha and stay in a hotel on this night.

Meals: **B L D**

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|---|---------------------------------|---|-----------------------|---|------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|---|-------------------------|
|  | <b>Accommodation</b><br>Camping |  | <b>Ascent</b><br>160M |  | <b>Descent</b><br>660M |  | <b>Time</b><br>5 - 6 hrs trekking |  | <b>Distance</b><br>16KM |
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### DAY 16

#### Drive to Thimphu, visit Punakha en route.

Getting an early start we drive alongside the Mo Chu, through Damji, and across several ridges. As we descend, the valley becomes more populated and we begin to encounter rice fields and scattered hamlets. Eventually, we reach Punakha (1350m), which was the winter capital of Bhutan for more than 300 years. Punakha Dzong lies at the junction of the Mo (mother) Chu and the Po (father) Chu and, in winter, is home to over 1000 monks. From Punakha we drive west on Bhutan's remarkable east-west highway, which winds its way up to the Dochu La (3050m). From the pass, the road winds its way down to the Bhutanese capital, Thimphu. We check into our hotel where we can freshen up before sitting down to a celebratory evening meal.

Meals: **B L D**

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|   |                               |
|---|-------------------------------|
|  | <b>Accommodation</b><br>Hotel |
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### DAY 17

#### Fly to Kathmandu. Afternoon free for independent sightseeing.

We have an early transfer to Paro Airport for the morning flight to Kathmandu. The flight takes only 45 minutes and on arrival we transfer to our comfortable hotel. The remainder of the day is free to explore the city or for shopping in the bazaars. An evening meal is included at the hotel, for those that wish to dine together, or you are free to head out into Thamel independently to a restaurant of your choice.

Meals: **B L D**



**Accommodation**  
Hotel

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## DAY 18

### **Departure day. Transfers to Kathmandu Airport are provided.**

The holiday ends after breakfast. Transfers to Kathmandu airport are provided. If you would like to spend more time exploring Nepal, why not pre-book a full day-tour of the Kathmandu Valley, or a multi-day excursion to a wildlife reserve in Chitwan National Park. Contact the KE Team for more details.

Meals: **B**

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# Extensions

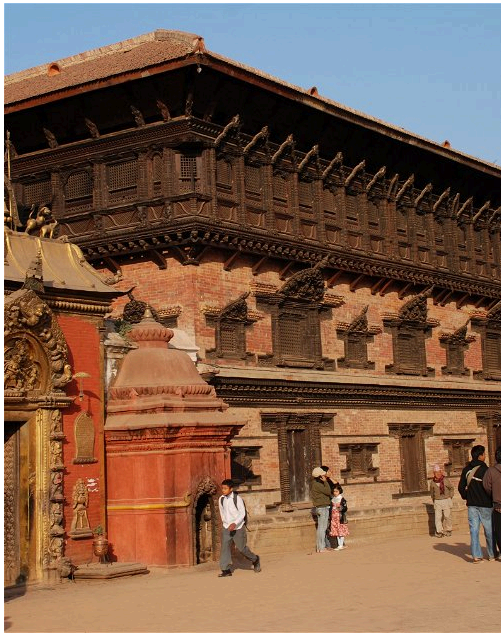
When booking your holiday, you will be able to 'add an extension option'. Once we have received your booking we will contact you to discuss additional services required for the extension and to take any additional deposit.



## Chitwan Jungle Extension

The jungles of southern Nepal are an interesting counterpoint to trekking in the foothills or the high Himalaya. Tiger Tops Tharu Lodge provides a relaxing and comfortable base for a wildlife safari and cultural village experience. During two days of wildlife viewing in the Chitwan National Park 'buffer zone' - the interface area between visitors and the animals that live at Chitwan - you will be accompanied by expert guides on safaris by jeep by boat and on foot.

**3 days from**  
**US\$1,545** per person



## Kathmandu Tour - Nagarkot and Bhaktapur

The Kathmandu Valley contains the cities of Patan, Bhaktapur and Kathmandu itself, all of which were once independent kingdoms. An exploration of the valley's historic and cultural sights is an excellent way to begin or end your adventure in Nepal. Highlights of this tour includes a very early drive up to Nagarkot on the Kathmandu Valley rim, the perfect place to watch a Himalayan sunrise. This is followed by a tour of the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Bhaktapur, renowned for its temples and traditional buildings.

1 day from  
**US\$175** per person

# Holiday Information

## What's Included

- A professional and qualified tour leader plus support crew
- Bhutan visa fee
- Flights between Kathmandu and Paro
- All transfers and land transport involved in the itinerary
- All accommodation as described
- All meals
- Full service camping on trek including all camping equipment
- 'Thermarest' inflatable camping mats whilst camping
- FREE Sleeping bag and down jacket hire is available for this holiday on request

## What's not Included

- Travel insurance
- Nepalese visa costs
- Tips for drivers and trek staff
- Miscellaneous expenses - beer and souvenirs etc

## Joining Arrangements & Transfers

The holiday starts at the group hotel in Kathmandu.

Airport transfers are provided for all clients arriving Kathmandu on Day 1 and departing on the last day of the Land Only itinerary and all clients with additional nights booked through KE.

Hotel contact details and an emergency telephone number will be provided with your booking confirmation.

## Meal Plan

All meals are included in the holiday price.

## Food & Water

It is not recommended to drink untreated water from the taps. If you are on a trekking or cycling holiday, water is supplied to fill up your individual bottles. This will be boiled, filtered or provided in large jerry cans or 5 litre bottles. Additionally you should take purification tablets or a filter bottle (such as a [Water-To-Go bottle](#)) to treat your water when in towns or where water is not supplied. We do not encourage the purchasing of single use plastic bottles.

The Bhutanese love chillies; red, green, raw, cooked and flavouring their condiments – fans of spicy food will be in their element in Bhutan! Don't panic if spicy food is not for you, all the hotels and restaurants in Thimpu and Paro offer a range of delicious dishes suitable for all tastes. Breakfasts whilst in hotels will consist of choice of cereal or muesli, eggs, toast, beans, sausage or bacon with tea, coffee and juices.

You can expect to be fed very well during the trekking section of your holiday. Our trekking chefs are old hands at managing camps and meals whilst in the mountains. A senior trek cook and camp manager must have a minimum of five years of training and experience to qualify for the post! Our cooks have undergone training both on Bhutanese and continental dishes and can expect to be served a wide variety of delicious food on trek. Breakfast and dinner will be taken at the camp sites, whilst lunches will generally be carried on ponies and served mid-way on the trekking route for the day. Tea and hot drinks will be provided throughout the day and you will also usually also get a wakeup call from the camp crew with a nice cup of hot *Chai*! Whilst on trek drinking water will be purified by boiling and will be provided regularly.

## Special Diets

Whilst we can cater for vegetarians, albeit sometimes with a more limited choice, we cannot always provide special diets. Due to the nature of some of the trips that we operate and the countries in which we operate them, it can be very hard (and sometimes impossible) to cater for a wide range of dietary choices and you may have to supplement your diet with food/snacks from home. If you have specific dietary requirements please do speak to our sales team and they will be able to advise you whether or not we will be able to offer your specific choice. Please note that we are unable to provide separate menus and cannot accept liability for any problems arising from special dietary requirements or intolerances.

## Accommodation

This holiday includes 2 nights in Kathmandu, one en route to Bhutan and one on the return journey. In Kathmandu we use a comfortable, centrally located hotel. In Bhutan, we will also use comfortable and well-located hotels throughout.

Whilst on trek there are 12 nights full service camping where you will enjoy a full-service from our friendly camp team. You will sleep in hardy 2 man dome tents and inflatable Thermarest mattresses are provided.

All the camp equipment and luggage will be transported between camps by ponies or yaks, you need only carry your day packs. Our team will erect and dismantle the tents for you, cook, and take care of all the camp chores.

During walking days, having stayed behind to collapse camp, it is usual for the team and the pack animals to overtake us during the day and we will usually arrive into camp to find it already established, with our personal bags already placed into our pre-assigned tents and the kettle on!

In camp, as well as the tents used for sleeping, there will also be a mess tent, with chairs and tables, where the group will dine (and socialise into the evening), a toilet tent and even a shower tent where a bucket of hot water can be provided for you to wash with. Hot water on bowls for washing will also be provided to you in the mornings and when you arrive at the camp each day. On cold nights we'll even provide hot water bags/bottles when it is time for you to retreat to your tents for the evening.

All accommodation is on a twin share basis. If you are travelling by yourself you will be paired with another single traveller of the same sex. Single rooms and/or single tents are available for a supplementary cost. If you are planning to extend your holiday, additional nights in Kathmandu are available on request.

## Internal flights

### Flights to Bhutan

It is possible to fly to Bhutan from Kathmandu, Delhi, Bangkok and Singapore, as well as from Dhaka and several regional airports in India. Our preferred port of transit for this holiday is Kathmandu, which has daily flights to Paro and a good tourism infrastructure. In addition, Nepal visas are easily obtained on arrival and are relatively inexpensive. Druk Air and Bhutan Airlines are the only airlines operating flights to Bhutan and seats can be limited, particularly around the time of the major festivals. Early booking is essential. It is not always possible to confirm seats immediately and it is not uncommon for passengers to be 'waitlisted' for several weeks until their booking clears. In rare circumstances, it may be necessary to route our groups or individual clients through an alternative airport if waiting lists are not cleared in good time.

## Group Leader & Support Staff

The group will be met and escorted in Kathmandu by a local KE representative. Once in Bhutan the group will be accompanied throughout by a professional and qualified tour leader. During the trek the tour leader will be assisted by local guides and a full trek crew including cooks, baggage animals and their handlers.



## Altitude

This holiday involves going to very high altitude. During the course of your trip you will be spending at least one night above 4000 metres and/or trekking to 5000 metres or above. This is not something that you should worry about; the human body is quite capable of adapting to a very wide range of altitudes, but it is important that we follow some simple rules in order to acclimatise successfully. Before coming on this holiday you should read the advice on [trekking at high altitude](#). Unless you have previous experience of trekking above 4000 metres you should consult one of our trekking experts before embarking on this holiday. On this trip we carry a portable altitude chamber (PAC-bag) and/or bottled oxygen for use in emergencies.

## Spending Money

Approximately \$250-300 should be allowed for miscellaneous expenses including porter and trek crew tips and soft drinks etc. We recommend that you carry your travel money in the form of cash, since you will exchange the majority of this on arrival (into Nepalese rupees in Kathmandu, and Bhutanese Ngultrum at Paro Airport). Sterling, US Dollars and Euros are equally acceptable for exchange in Nepal and in Bhutan. You can withdraw cash from ATMs in Kathmandu. In Bhutan money can be easily exchanged but you cannot rely on withdrawing money from ATMs.

## Guidance on Tipping

Tipping is the accepted way of saying thank you for good service.

As a rough guide we suggest that each group member contributes US\$230 (in local currency equivalent) to a group tipping pool, around \$20 per person of this should go into a kitty for drivers, hotel porters and waiters (you can give this to your tour leader who will make sure it is distributed fairly).

Normally the trek staff (assistant guides, cook, ponymen etc...) are given their tips at the end of the trek. You will usually have two different trek crews during the Snowman Trek, one as far as Laya and another for the trek into Lunana. The tipping pool should be split fairly between the crews. Your Bhutanese tour leader will advise the group on an appropriate level of tipping for each crew and crew member. Most groups will mark the end of their trek by handing out the tips with a bit of a ceremony on the last evening.

A tip for your main Bhutanese tour leader is not included in the above. As a group you may want to make a separate collection to tip your tour leader separately during dinner on your final evening in Bhutan.

## Baggage Allowance

For this holiday you should take one piece of luggage, which should be a soft duffel bag, and a daypack. Your bag on trek will be carried by pack animals and should not weigh more than 15kg. It is possible to leave extra baggage at the hotel in Kathmandu and also in Paro. Baggage left in Paro will meet you at your first hotel post trek. Checked baggage allowance for the flight from Kathmandu to Paro is 30kg. For other international flights please check your baggage allowance with your airline.

## Group Size & Holiday Status

For each holiday there is a minimum number of participants required to enable it to go ahead. Once the minimum number is reached, the trip status will change from 'Available' to 'Guaranteed to run'. You can check the trip status for each departure in 'Dates and Prices' table. Other than in exceptional circumstances, we will not cancel a trip once it has achieved this guaranteed to run status and so you are free to proceed with your international flight booking and other travel arrangements.

# General Information

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## Passport & Visas

The information that we provide is for UK passport holders. A passport with 6 months remaining validity at the end of your stay is generally required, and you should have at least 2 blank pages for each country that you visit.

**It is your responsibility to ensure that you have the correct travel documents and visas for your holiday.** Please ensure that you check for the latest advice before travel. For the most up to date information on entry requirements, please visit the [UK Government website](#).

## Visa Nepal

All nationalities require a visa. The visa process is partly automated and the fee is \$30 for 15 days, \$50 for 30 days, \$125 for 90 days. The visa is FREE for children under 10 years. The visa allows multiple re-entry. Payment must be made in cash and USD, GBP or Euros are accepted.

Part of this on-arrival visa process involves filling in a 'Tourist Visa Application Form' and you can simplify the procedure at Kathmandu Airport by filling this form in online (**within 15 days of travelling**) at [this link](#). This generates a receipt which you present (hard copy or saved on your phone) on arrival. This should allow you to go straight to the cashier to pay for your visa and has the potential to save you time in the visa queue.

Whilst these are not now needed for the visa process, we recommend that you travel with at least 2 spare passport photographs.

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If you are travelling via India (Delhi or Calcutta) to your destination you may also require a visa for India. This may apply even if you are not leaving the airport unless your baggage has been checked all the way through to your destination. Generally, if you use the same carrier for both legs of your journey, you will not need an India Visa. Please download the detailed information document: [Visa PDF India](#).

## Visa Bhutan

All nationalities require a visa. KE will apply for the visa for you and the visa fee is included in your holiday cost.

Please note that this will be a group visa and will list the names, date of birth and passport details for all members of the group. A copy of this visa will be issued to each member of the group in Kathmandu prior to your check-in for the flight to Paro in Bhutan and your passport will be stamped on arrival in Paro.

We require a copy of the information page of your passport in order to make the arrangements for your Bhutan Visa. A colour scan must be emailed or posted to us at the earliest opportunity.

## Health & Vaccinations

If you have a severe allergy please inform the KE office before you travel. We will do all we can to help, but we cannot guarantee an allergy free environment on KE trips. You will need to carry your own treatment for the allergy with you, as 'adrenaline auto-injectors' are not carried as standard by KE leaders and staff. You should inform your leader on arrival of your allergy, and let them know where you keep your adrenaline pen.

Dengue fever is a known risk in places visited. It is a tropical viral disease spread by daytime biting mosquitoes. There is currently no vaccine or prophylaxis available and therefore the best form of prevention is to avoid being bitten. We recommend you [take precautions to avoid mosquito bites](#).

## Vaccinations

You should contact your doctor or travel clinic to check whether you require any specific vaccinations or other preventive measures. You should be up to date with routine courses and boosters as recommended in the UK e.g. diphtheria-tetanus-polio and measles-mumps-rubella, along with hepatitis A and typhoid.

Malarial prophylaxis is not usually required for trips in the mountains, however if you are visiting rural and remote low lying areas then they might be necessary.

On holidays to more remote areas you should also have a dentist check up. A good online resource is [Travel Health Pro](#).

## Currency

The unit of currency in Nepal is the Nepalese Rupee.

The unit of currency in Bhutan is the Bhutanese Ngultrum.

## Preparing for your Holiday

It makes a lot of sense to spend some time before coming on a trekking trip getting some additional exercise. The fitter you are, after all, the more enjoyable you will find the experience. For this trip you should be comfortable with walking up to 7 hours per day (longer on some days) and for several days consecutively. We would suggest that you take part in regular exercise leading up to your trip. Hill walking is the best training, but running, cycling and swimming are also good for developing cardiovascular fitness and stamina. Before departure we suggest that you try to fit in a number of long walks with a reasonable amount of ascent and descent.

There is little you can do to prepare for the altitude but if you have an excellent level of fitness this can help.

## Climate

In general the climate of Bhutan is colder and damper than one would expect to find in the Himalaya of India or Nepal. The monsoon usually arrives in June, and lasts until early September, bringing with it the heavy rainfall which is responsible for the lush vegetation which carpets much of Bhutan. March and April, as well as late September through to November are the best months to visit Bhutan. Pre-monsoon the weather is generally very good, with bright, sunny mornings and sometimes a moderate build up of cloud in the afternoons. Post-monsoon the weather is normally bright and clear. Day-time highs of around 20°C can be expected at altitudes around 2000 metres, whilst at our highest camps the maximum daytime temperature will be 10°C to 15°C. At night-time, the temperature will fall below freezing at our highest camps. Although prolonged periods of bad weather are not common outside of the monsoon season, mountains do create their own weather and short-lived periods of rain or snow can never be completely ruled out.

## Travel Aware

As a reputable tour operator, KE supports the British Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office's '[Travel Aware](#)' campaign to enable British citizens to prepare for their journeys overseas. The 'Travel Aware' website provides a single, authoritative source of advice for all kinds of travellers and we recommend that prior to travel, all KE clients visit the official UK Government website at [travelaware.campaign.gov.uk](http://travelaware.campaign.gov.uk) and read the FCDO Travel Advice for their chosen destination. North Americans can also check out the U.S. Department of State website: [www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov) for essential travel advice and tips.

KE treat the safety and security of all clients as the most important aspect of any trip we organise. We would not run any trip that we did not consider reasonably safe. Should the FCDO advise against travel for any reason, we will contact everyone booked to travel to discuss the situation. We receive regular updates direct from the FCDO and are in constant touch with our contacts on the ground. If you have any questions about government travel advice, please call our office.

## Single Use Plastic

KE do not encourage the use of single use plastic items. We are ensuring that our agents all over the world are working together to reduce the problem and educate those around them. We are leading by example in our KE office by reducing our plastic use.

## Books

- Bhutan. A Trekker's guide. Bart Jordans. Cicerone.
- Bhutan. Lonely Planet Guide.
- Bhutan. Insight Guides
- Bhutan, Land of the Thunder Dragon. Owen Edmunds.

## Maps

### Bhutan Himalaya. 1:390,000 Nepa Maps (Himalayan Maphouse)

This map gives a general overview of the main trekking routes. Relief is indicated by shading and selected altitudes of peaks and passes. Highways, main roads, minor roads, and trekking routes are marked. Symbols denote campsites, post offices, dzongs, monuments, places of interest etc. The map is indexed for place names, dzongs, passes and peaks. Inside the map cover are printed some geographical notes on the country and driving and trekking times between selected locations.

## Travel Insurance

It is an essential condition of joining a holiday with KE Adventure Travel that you have a valid travel insurance policy to cover the cost of medical treatment and to protect the value of your holiday in the event of cancellation. When taking out insurance please ensure the policy you choose covers you for the activities and altitude included in your itinerary.

For appropriate insurance cover we recommend Campbell Irvine Direct. Please go to our [Travel Insurance](#) page for further information and to get a quote.

# Equipment Information

## Equipment List

Please try to keep the weight of your trek bag to a minimum. See the 'baggage allowance' section for further details.

The packed weight of your kit bag while trekking should be no more than 15kg.

### You **SHOULD** bring the following items:

- Sleeping bag (comfort rating -15°C)\*
- Warm jacket (down)
- Hiking boots
- Socks
- Waterproof and windproof jacket



- Waterproof and windproof overtrousers
- Trekking trousers
- Thermal baselayer leggings
- Thermal baselayer shirts
- Fleece jacket
- Warm jacket (down)\*
- Sunhat
- Warm hat
- Scarf or buff
- Sunglasses
- Thermal gloves
- Warm and waterproof gloves or mittens
- Daypack 30 litres
- Headtorch with spare batteries
- Washbag and toiletries
- Antibacterial handwash
- Sun protection (including total bloc for lips, nose etc.)
- Water bottles 1 Litre (x2). (Note that the tube on camelback / platypus type systems can be prone to freezing in cold conditions) (we encourage re-filling water bottles rather than single use plastic)

- Water purification tablets
- Selection of dry bags (to keep luggage contents dry)

Basic First Aid Kit including: Antiseptic cream, throat lozenges, diarrhoea treatment (Imodium), altitude

- (Diamox), painkillers, plasters and blister treatment, and re-hydration salts (Dioralite). Glucose tablets and multi-vitamin tablets are also a good idea.

### **The following items are optional:**

- Sleeping bag liner
- Thermos flask
- Swimwear (for the hotel pool in Kathmandu)
- Travel clothes
- Trainers or similar
- Spare laces
- Trekking poles
- Gaiters (highly recommended due to muddy conditions)
- Insect repellent - (DEET)
- Pen-knife (note: always pack sharp objects in hold baggage)
- Repair kit - (eg. needle, thread, duct tape)
- Small padlock (to lock your luggage)
- Camera
- Small travel towel

- Reusable cloth bag for shopping (to avoid plastic bags)

## Notes

\*FREE sleeping bag and down jacket hire is included in your KE holiday booking upon request.

Please make all requests at least 6 weeks prior to the trip departure date. Note all hire / rental equipment is issued in Bhutan. Please remember to allow room in your trek bag for these items.

Foam camping mats (approx. 5cms thick) are provided whilst camping.

## FESTIVAL DRESS CODE

The Bhutanese always come dressed in their finest clothing for a festival and so you may want to bring a smarter set of clothes with you to use on the days you are attending the festivals. Long sleeves and long trousers are best, women might want to bring a scarf. Dirty boots or open toed sandals should be avoided where possible. Hats and umbrellas should be avoided.

## FESTIVAL ETIQUETTE

Bhutan's Tshechus (festivals) are religious events and the festival grounds are purified and consecrated by lamas. The dancers are in a state of meditation, they believe that they transform themselves into the deities they represent on the dance ground, generating a spiritual power, which purifies, enlightens and blesses the spectators. Out of respect, whilst watching the dances, you should not eat, drink, talk or laugh loudly at inappropriate times. You should not use flash photography and please be respectful when photographing dancers or onlookers. The festivals are not tourist attractions, they are manifestations of religious traditions thousands of year's old, which we are fortunate to be able to witness.

## Cotswold Outdoor



Many of the Equipment items listed above are available from [Cotswold Outdoor](#) - our '**Official Recommended Outdoor Retailer**'. When you book a holiday with KE you will receive 12.5% discount voucher from Cotswold Outdoor and other retailers.  
[-> Find out more](#)

## Land Only Information

The LAND ONLY dates and prices are for joining at the hotel in Kathmandu. Transfers from Tribhuvan International (Kathmandu) Airport to/from the group hotel are provided on the first and last day of the holiday.

## Flight Inclusive Information

The FLIGHT INCLUSIVE dates and prices are based on UK flights from London to Kathmandu. Outbound flights will usually depart from the UK in the evening, arriving mid afternoon the following day (day 1 of the itinerary). Return flights will depart Kathmandu usually in the morning of the last day of the itinerary, arriving in the UK later the same day.

# Why Choose KE

## Why KE

We include additional acclimatisation days at Jangothang - Chomolhari Basecamp and at Lingshi, to ensure that everyone is well acclimatised. This allows our groups to complete the trek not only safely, but also comfortably - we want to make sure you enjoy every moment of your time in beautiful Bhutan. Your Bhutan visa fees, all meals, and return flights from Kathmandu to Paro are included, and there's even FREE sleeping bag and down jacket hire available too.

**Please Note** This document was downloaded on 09/05/2024 and the trip is subject to change