

# LUNANA SNOWMAN, BHUTAN



View from Karchung La on Lunana Snowman trek



## HIGHLIGHTS

- Gary Pfisterer will lead our **September/ October 2010** Lunana Snowman trek, he knows the trail well having led a successful Snowman trek in 2004.
- This is a challenging 28 day trek through the remote and rarely visited Lunana region in Northern Bhutan along the border with Tibet.
- The Lunana Snowman is known as one of the most difficult and beautiful trek in the Himalayas.
- We organise a cultural tour of Paro at the beginning of the trip and of Punakha and Thimphu after the trek.
- The Mountain Company organised a successful Lunana Snowman trek in October 2008.

## REASONS TO CHOOSE THE MOUNTAIN COMPANY FOR LUNANA SNOWMAN

- The Mountain Company organised a successful Lunana Snowman trek in October 2008. Due to our good contacts in Bhutan we did not lose any days due to logistical problems organising animal transport (unlike other operators who have frequently lost several days negotiating with yak herders in Thanza).
- The Lunana Snowman itinerary has been designed based on this first hand experience which is the best in terms of acclimatisation, safety and enjoyment.
- We have chosen the optimal time of year to complete this trek, if one starts later there is a high chance of the passes into and out of Lunana being blocked with early winter snows.
- Our itinerary starts and finishes in Calcutta (Kolkata), this is better than flying via Kathmandu because the flights are cheaper with more availability. Also it is easier to obtain Druk Air tickets from Calcutta to Paro rather than Kathmandu to Paro.

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Postal address: Flat 3, 190 Cedars Rd, Clapham, London SW40PP, UK



- We use **Mountain Hardwear Trango 3.1** tents for all camping treks in Bhutan. These are three person domed tents where there is plenty of space for two people sharing a tent plus gear.
- We bring a satellite phone (Thuraya) for logistical, safety and personal use.
- There will be a range of tasty meals for breakfast, lunch and supper. We also bring along a supply of chocolate bars.
- We bring a comprehensive first aid kit from UK (Life Systems Mountain Leader) plus high altitude medicine, antibiotics and other medicines.
- Everyone's blood oxygen saturation and heart rate is measured twice daily using a pulse oximeter in order to monitor how the group is adjusting to the altitude.
- Pre trip support will be given by Roland via email, phone or face to face meetings.

**"Roland was probably the best trekking guide I've ever had. He kept us safe and informed. I am particularly grateful for your resourcefulness and rapid response in replacing my disintegrating boots on Day 2 and making the effort to go back and advise us how much longer it would be till campsite after a long cold and wet day... you really went the extra mile.**

**The scenery on the Snowman trek was gorgeous and I feel really privileged to have seen this kind of vanishing wilderness. It was arduous but worth every step. It was a treat to have real coffee as never been on a trek that offered it... you have raised the bar! Thanks for everything, Roland!" Dee Standley (USA).**



# LUNANA SNOWMAN, BHUTAN

Total number of days	36 days
Grade & days trekking	Strenuous, 28 trekking days
Accommodation	8 nights hotel, 27 nights camping
2010 price ex Calcutta	USD\$7,495
Minimum group size	6
Dates	September 24 <sup>th</sup> to October 29 <sup>th</sup> 2010 September 23 <sup>rd</sup> to October 28 <sup>th</sup> 2011 September 21 <sup>st</sup> to October 26 <sup>th</sup> 2012



## **THE FOLLOWING IS INCLUDED IN THE PRICE OF THE TRIP**

- Return Druk Air flight to/from Calcutta & Paro.
- All transfers including airport collections at Calcutta & Paro.
- Twin share room at Fairlawn Hotel in Calcutta and all hotels in Bhutan.
- Breakfast only at Fairlawn Hotel in Calcutta, all meals included while in Bhutan.
- Twin share tents while on trek using our three person Mountain Hardwear Trango 3.1s.
- All trekking arrangements including permits and fees, tents, Western & Bhutanese guide, pack animals and cook.
- Financial protection insurance with International Passenger Protection.
- Pre departure support and advice from The Mountain Company by email, phone and face to face meetings in London. After booking with us we will send you our comprehensive "Bhutan Trek Information" notes

## **THE FOLLOWING SINGLE SUPPLEMENT IS AVAILABLE:**

Single room supplement	USD\$POA
Single tent supplement	USD\$250

Please note that if you are a single person booking on one of our trips you do not have to pay the single room supplement, this is only payable if you specifically request to have a room or tent to yourself. You will not have to pay this for this option if you happen to end up with a single room or tent due to odd numbers on the trip.



## THE FOLLOWING IS NOT INCLUDED IN THE PRICE OF THE TRIP

- International flight to/from Calcutta (London from £450).
- Travel & trekking insurance (Snowcard from £102).
- India visa up to 6 month (£30).
- Lunch and evening meals in Calcutta.
- Personal clothing & equipment please see Appendix for suggested kit list.
- Tips.
- Other items not listed in “What is included”.

## YOUR COMPLETE FINANCIAL PROTECTION

In accordance with "The Package Travel, Package Holidays and Package Tours Regulations 1992" all passengers booking with The Mountain Trekking Company Ltd (“The Mountain Company”) are fully protected for the initial deposit and subsequently the balance of all monies paid to us, including repatriation if required, arising from cancellation or curtailment of your travel arrangements due to the insolvency of The Mountain Company.



For further information about our financial protection insurance with International Passenger Protection please see Appendix 2.

## PARTICIPATION STATEMENT

Participants should be aware trekking, mountaineering and travelling in a developing country are activities that involve a risk of personal injury or death. As a



condition of booking you must accept these risks and be responsible for your own actions and involvement.

Adventure travel requires an open and flexible attitude. You may experience extreme conditions, unpredictable weather and last minute changes to the itinerary beyond our control. Lack of acclimatisation to high altitudes could also be a risk factor. Our itineraries allow optimum time for acclimatising although it is possible that some individuals might be slow acclimatisers.

The majority of our trips visit remote areas where you are away from normal emergency services and medical facilities. In case of a serious injury requiring hospitalisation, it has to be accepted by you, evacuation could take up to several days and may impede your ensuing recovery. Helicopters are the most usual means of evacuation, however they are not always available or they may be hindered by poor weather and flying conditions.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Snowman trek is a long and challenging trek visiting Lunana a remote and rarely visited region of the Eastern Himalaya.

This is a 28 day trek crossing the north of Bhutan along the border with Tibet covering 356km and crossing eight Himalayan mountain passes. Very few westerners have ever visited the remote district of Lunana due to its inaccessibility; one can only get in and out by crossing mountain passes over 5,000m that are frequently blocked by snow. Our itinerary completes the full journey starting in Paro and finishing near Bumthang.

The mountain views throughout this trek are spectacular with many peaks along the Bhutan and Tibet border un-named and un-mapped, you will see several mountains over 7,000m such as Chomolhari and Gangkar Punsum the world's highest unclimbed mountain.

The Lunana Snowman has been described by the Bhutan Trekkers Guide by Cicerone as "one of the most difficult and beautiful of the whole Himalayas", in fact more people have summited Everest than completed this unique traverse of the Eastern Himalaya.



## DETAILED ITINERARY

It is our intention to keep to the day by day itinerary detailed below, although there might be some flexibility due to local conditions or other factors beyond our control. If this is the case the trek leader will do everything possible to work out the changes to the itinerary in order to minimise your inconvenience.

### **Day 1. Fly to Calcutta.**

You will be met on arrival to Calcutta (Kolkata) airport and transferred back to the Fairlawn Hotel on Sudder Street. This hotel is centrally located so for the rest of the day you can explore the city, the Victoria Memorial and Park Street are walking distance. Overnight Fairlawn Hotel.

### **Day 2. Fly to Paro (2,280m), afternoon sightseeing.**

After the morning transfer to Calcutta airport we fly by Druk Air to Paro. The flight has superb views of the Himalayas. On arrival we will be met by our Bhutanese guide and driven back to the hotel in Paro. In the afternoon we can explore Paro town, change money at the bank and then visit Paro Dzong and the National museum.

### **Day 3. Morning walk to Taktsang monastery (Tiger's Nest)**

After breakfast we walk up to the Taktsang monastery know as the "Tiger's Nest". It takes about 2 to 3 hours to walk through pine forest and up to the monastery perched on a cliff overlooking the valley.

### **Day 4. Trek to Shana (2,790m)- 5 hours walking.**

There is a short drive to the roadhead at Drukgei Dzong for the start of the Lunana Snowman trek. While the crew are sorting loads and loading ponies we can take a walk over and look around the Dzong. The trail heads up the Paro Chhu valley passing traditional Bhutanese farmhouses and cultivated fields. Tonight we camp for the night at Sharna.

### **Day 5. Trek to Soi Thangthanka (3,510m)- 6 to 7 hours walking.**

From Sharna camp the trail continues through rhododendron and blue pine forests. The trail is normally quite muddy in places so it is a good idea to use trekking poles and to wear gaiters. Tonight we camp in a clearing in the forest at Soi Thangthanka.



**Day 6. Trek to Jangothang (4,080m)- 5 to 6 hours walking.**

After an hour or so from camp we leave the forest as we climb above the tree line into a beautiful valley. Arriving at Jangothang camp there is a superb view of Mt Chomolhari next the ruins of an old Dzong that used guard Bhutan against invasions from Tibet.

**Day 7. Acclimatisation day at Jangothang (4,080m).**

In order to help the acclimatisation process it is a good idea to go for a walk in the morning to higher altitude (“climb high, sleep low”). There are a number of options for a morning walk including walking up a ridge to the north for good views of Mt Jichu Drake or to walk to the twin lakes at Tsho Phu (4,350m).

**Day 8. Trek to Lingshi (4,150m) crossing Nyile La (4,890m)- 6 hours walking.**

Today we cross the first of the major passes, the Nyile La pass at 4,890m. It is a steady ascent to the pass on a good trail. There are views of Mt Takaphu (6,526m) to the north and Tiger Mountain to the east.

**Day 9. Trek to Chebisa (3,850m)- 4 hours walking.**

After we will visit the Lingshi Dzong and then on to Lingshi. On leaving the village the trail contours high above the valley passing through hillsides covered with medicinal plants and flowers. After passing a ridge with some prayer flags, we descend into a side valley to a beautiful village called Goyok. Another hour further we arrive to Chebisa village located in a valley with a waterfall at one end.

**Day 10. Trek to Shomuthang (3,950m) crossing Gombu La (4,400m)- 5 to 6 hours walking.**

After crossing the Gombu La we descend through a hillside of rhododendrons to Shomuthang where we camp for the night.

**Day 11. Trek to Robulathang (4,410m) crossing Jhare La (4,780m)- 7 hours walking.**

After an early start we climb towards the Jhare La pass where there are good views of Tiger Mountain, Mt Jichu Drake, Takaphu and Kang Bum. Descending from the pass we arrive to Tsharijathang where herds of Takin (national animal of Bhutan) can be seen at certain times of the year.



**Day 12. Trek to Limithang (4,160m) crossing the Shinge La (5,000m).**

After a long climb to the Shinge La at 5,000m we are rewarded with stunning views of mountains, including the spectacular Tiger Mountain at the head of the valley.

**Day 13. Trek to Laya (3,700m)- 4 to 5 hours walking.**

Today we walk through forest alongside the river to the largest village on the trek. The Layap women wear distinctive conical bamboo hats with turquoise and jade jewellery.

**Day 14. Rest day.**

Today you can explore the village and probably get the chance to watch archery later in the afternoon.

**Day 15. Trek to Rodophu (4,120m)- 6 to 7 hours walking.**

The trail descends from Laya to the army post at Taksaka, from here we turn to the east towards Lunana. We camp at Rodophu for the night.

**Day 16. Trek to Narethang (4,900m) crossing Tsema La (4,905m)- 6 hours walking.**

After a steep climb out of Rodophu camp the trail then steepens on the approach Tsema La. Narethang camp is in a very remote area with superb views of Gangla Karchung towering above.

**Day 17. Trek to Tarina (5,080m) crossing the Karchung La (5,240m)- 7 to 8 hours walking.**

The climb to Karchung La is rewarded with superb views of Jejekangphu Gang (7300m) and Tsenda Kang (7100m). There is a beautiful place for lunch with views of the glacial lakes and the valley below. From here there is a steep and often muddy path through rhododendrons. In October 2008 members of our group saw a Himalayan black bear and cub near Tarina camp.

**Day 18. Trek to Woche (3,810m).**

The trail follows the Pho Chhu river through pine forest and past several spectacular waterfalls. There is then a steady climb over a ridge to the village of Woche, we camp an hour further at the base of the Keshe La.



**Day 19. Trek to Lhedi (3,700m) crossing Keshe La (4,435m)- 6 to 7 hours walking.**

There is a steep climb to Keshe La, on the way we pass a beautiful green coloured lake. There are prayer flags and cairns on the pass, from here it is a steep descent to Tega village. The trail contours high above East Pho Chhu and continues to Lhedi village where we camp for the night.

**Day 20. Trek to Thanza (3,970m).**

The trail continues gradually uphill following the East Pho Chhu to Chozo village. It is very likely that you will have to cross the river 1 hour from Lhedi as the bridge has been washed out. The valley opens out into a classic U shape as on the approach to Thanza village.

**Day 21. Rest day.**

Today there is an optional morning walk to the glacial lake above Thanza or you can relax in camp and explore the village.

**Day 22. Trek to before Danje (4,540m)- 4 hours walking.**

Today is a shorter walk to Danje where we camp for the night. It is important for acclimatising to spend the night here rather than continuing on to Tshorim.

**Day 23. Trek to Tshorim lake camp (5,250m)- 6 hours walking.**

We continue up the valley towards Tshorim and camp by the lake where the views are sensational.

**Day 24. Trek over Gophu La (5,240m) and to Geche Woma (4,450m)- 6 hours walking.**

A classic day as we cross the Gophu La and shortly after see the highest mountain in Bhutan, Gangkar Punsum, at 7,541m. From the pass we descend to the camp at Geche Woma.

**Day 25. Trek to Mischugang (4,200m) at base of Phorang La- 4 hours walking.**

The trail follows the Sasha Chuu valley to a yak herders camp at Mischugang below the Phorang La.



**Day 26. Trek to Worithang (4,400m) crossing Phorang La (4,650m) and Saga La (4,820m)- 6 hours walking.**

There is a steep climb on grassy slopes to the Phorang La, from the pass there is a 50m descent to the yak herders huts at Phorang. Shortly after you see a lake surrounded by peaks and the steep trail winding its way to the Saga La. There is a superb view from the Saga La, the trail descends to a grassy plateau past two lakes and after a short climb to the Worithang La. The camp at Worithang is next to several yak herders' huts with Nephu La visible behind the camp.

**Day 27. Trek to Dur Tsachu (3,200m) crossing Nephu La (4,560m)- 4 hours walking.**

There is a short walk to the Nephu La and then a long descent through forest to Dur Tsachu. The hot springs are well worth visiting in the afternoon for a soak.

**Day 28. Trek to Tso Chenchen (3,850m) crossing Gongto La (4,327m) and Djule La (4,551m)- 7 to 8 hours walking.**

Today is a tough day as we climb 1000m to the Gongto La, descend to the lake and then head up again to the Djule La. In October 2008 the group saw over 40 Blue Sheep on the slopes above the lake. Tso Chen Chen is a yak herder's camp and we pitch our tents nearby.

**Day 29. Trek to Gorsum (2,680m)- 5 to 6 hours walking.**

The trail descends through forest and lower down bamboo stands. The camp at Gorsum is in a grassy meadow.

**Day 30. Contingency day or extra rest day.**

**Day 31. Trek to Minchugang then drive to Bumthang- 3 hours walking then 40 minutes driving.**

After a short trek to the roadhead at Minchugang we drive to Jakar and check into our hotel. In the afternoon we can visit the Dzong and monasteries then walk around Jakar township

**Day 32. Drive to Wangdiphodrang- 8 hours driving.**

From Bumthang we drive over Yotong La and to Tongsa, from here the road climbs to Pele La and descends to Wangdiphodrang where we spend the night.



**Day 33. Drive to Thimphu- 4 hours driving.**

After breakfast we make the short drive to Punakha where we visit the Dzong. There is a long climb to Dochu La where there is superb view of the Himalayas including Gangkar Punsum, from the pass the road descends to Thimphu.

**Day 34. Sightseeing in Thimphu.**

Today we will organise a sightseeing tour of Thimphu, you can see thakin in the outdoor zoo, Dzong, thangka painting school or Butanese paper factory. It is worth wondering around Thimphu and watching archery competition in the afternoon.

**Day 35. Fly to Calcutta.**

We will meet on arrival to Calcutta (Kolkatta) airport and transferred back to the Fairlawn Hotel on Sudder Street.

**Day 36. Fly back home.**

Transfers to Calcutta airport for flights back home.



# ETHICAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

The Mountain Company is committed to adopting a responsible attitude to the areas we visit. We are guests of the communities visited and with some thought and care we can ensure that everyone benefits from the experience.

We work closely with the International Porter Protection Group ([www.ippg.net](http://www.ippg.net)) who we support as a Camp 1 sponsor- we abide by their 5 guidelines for porter protection.

We also work with other organisations such as Climate Care ([www.climatecare.org](http://www.climatecare.org)), Tourism Concern ([www.tourismconcern.org.uk](http://www.tourismconcern.org.uk)), Friends of Conservation ([www.foc-uk.com](http://www.foc-uk.com)) and Kathmandu Environmental Education Project ([www.keepnepal.org](http://www.keepnepal.org)).

We have developed a Responsible Tourism policy which aims to ensure that The Mountain Company and its clients act in a way that is socially, environmentally and culturally sound.

The Mountain Company has joined the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) Know Before You Go campaign. The aim is to make sure travellers are properly prepared before travelling overseas. The best way to get the FCO latest advice is to visit their website at: [www.fco.gov.uk/travel](http://www.fco.gov.uk/travel).





# PRACTICAL INFORMATION

## ALTITUDE AND ACCLIMATISATION

Our Lunana Snowman itinerary has been designed for gradual acclimatisation to take place. There are ways of helping the acclimatisation process, as described below:

- Walk slowly: there is plenty of time included in the itinerary so there is no need to rush, go at your own pace and enjoy the incredible views!
- Drinks lots of water: it is easier for your body to acclimatise when hydrated so drink water and avoid coffee, tea and alcohol.
- Consider taking diamox (acetazolamide): before using this drug we recommend consulting a doctor and thoroughly researching the pros and cons.

**For further information we suggest you take a look at the following websites:**

**Base Camp MD website:**

<http://www.BaseCampmd.com/expguide/highalt.shtml>

**High Altitude medicine website:**

<http://www.high-altitude-medicine.com>

**Medex Travel at High Altitude:**

<http://www.medex.org.uk/v26%20booklet.pdf>

**BMC website:**

<http://www.thebmc.co.uk/Feature.aspx?id=1746>

## COMMUNICATIONS

We bring a Thuraya satellite phone for logistical, safety and personal use. Personal calls charged at £3 per minute and £2 to send and receive SMS text.

Telephone and fax: 0207 4980953 / International callers: +44 207498 0953

Skype ID: Rolandh1 / Email: [info@themountaincompany.co.uk](mailto:info@themountaincompany.co.uk) / [www.themountaincompany.co.uk](http://www.themountaincompany.co.uk)

Postal address: Flat 3, 190 Cedars Rd, Clapham, London SW40PP, UK



## ACCOMMODATION IN CALCUTTA

The Mountain Company's standard hotel in Calcutta is the Hotel Fairlawn which is located centrally on Sudder Street. It is a short walk from the hotel to Park Street and 15 minutes to Victoria Memorial. For more information take a look at their website <http://www.fairlawnhotel.com/>

## ACCOMMODATION IN BHUTAN

Tourist accommodation in Bhutan is comfortable but can be fairly basic especially as you travel further east. Most hotels in the main tourist destinations have rooms with private bathrooms, hot water (at least at some stage during the day), telephone and electricity. Plumbing is not always up to the standard you may be used to and there are no hotels with central heating although heaters of some sort will generally be provided.

Tourist hotels tend to provide meals buffet-style which gives you the opportunity to try a variety of Bhutanese dishes. In the larger hotels a la carte service is also available, although they do not always have everything on the menu. Thimphu has a pizza restaurant (the Seasons) and there is a good café in the centre of Thimphu (near the Swiss bakery) called the Art Café which serves sandwiches, cake and filter coffee.

Please note that there is currently a shortage of hotel accommodation in Bhutan especially during festivals or the peak trekking season of October. We reserve rooms at all hotels in advance but the bookings are never certain until the group check in on the day. Bearing this in mind we will reserve rooms in the following hotels:

Paro: Dechen Hill Resort or Silverpine Hotel

Thimphu: Peaceful Resort or Hotel Pedling.

Punakha/Wangdue: Tashiling Hotel or Dragon Nest Resort

Bumthang: Hotel Mipham or Garden Hotel.



## **DRUK AIR FLIGHT**

The Druk Air flight to/ from Paro is notoriously unreliable with the final timetable often published very late. The itinerary is based on the latest schedules but it is subject to change. Flights can also be cancelled at the last minute with no alternative offered. In this situation we might have to drive to or from Paro.

Passengers in Executive Class (J class) are entitled to a maximum of 30 kg, and those in Economy Class (Y class) are entitled to a maximum of 20 kg.

## **A TYPICAL DAY ON TREK**

The day starts with an early morning mug of tea brought to your tent by one of the cook's helpers. Before heading over to the mess tent for breakfast it is best to pack your overnight gear into your duffel bag. During breakfast the tents will be packed away and, after the pack animals have been loaded they will set off on the trail in the cool of the morning.

After breakfast, probably around 8am we start walking. The pace of the trek is leisurely with plenty of time to enjoy the scenery, take photos and explore the local villages. A hot lunch will be prepared by the cook after breakfast and transported in a tiffin carrier until lunch time.

There is more walking after lunch and normally you will get into camp by mid afternoon with the tents already put up by the local staff. In the evening a three course meal is served in the mess tent around 7pm. After supper the western leader will discuss the plan for the next day with the group. People might stay in the mess tent chatting about the day's events for a while before retiring to their tent for the night.

## **FOOD**

In Calcutta there is a wide range of excellent restaurants close to the hotel.

While on the trek you will get breakfast with porridge and cereal, toast or chapattis, omelettes and a range of hot drinks. A hot lunch will be prepared by the cook after



breakfast and transported in a tiffin carrier until lunch time. On arrival at the camp in the afternoon you will be given tea and biscuits and a three course meal will follow later in the evening.

We bring along fresh vegetables for the main meals and also provide a supply of chocolate bars.

## CLIMATE AND WEATHER

The timing of this trek is very important in order to increase the chances of successfully completing the journey as well as getting good views along the way. The optimal time to start the trek is at the end of September when the monsoon should be winding down, this places the group in Lunana around mid October hopefully before the winter snows block the exit passes.

The traditional trekking seasons in Bhutan are late September to November and March to May with October generally recognised as having the best weather. Spring is also a popular time of year with warmer weather and the advantage of seeing spring flowers and rhododendrons in bloom.

This trek will have a wide range of temperatures depending on the altitude and the time of day. In the mountains between 1,000m and 3,500m the nights will be cool, normally around 5°C, and during the day temperatures sometimes rise to 25°C. At higher altitudes temperatures range from about 15°C to -20°C.

## CLOTHING AND EQUIPMENT

A list of suggested clothing and equipment for the Lunana Snowman trek has been included in Appendix below. This is a comprehensive list and experienced trekkers will often take only a selection of these items based on what has worked in the past. It is worth pointing out that you will need a sleeping bag for this trip.

If you do not have the clothing and equipment contained in this list then a good option might be to rent from the UK. Trek Hire is a company that rents out high quality items at competitive prices which would save you the expense of buying. The link to their website is <http://www.trekhireuk.com/>



Alternatively if you are going to buy then please contact the office for the Cotswold Outdoor promo code that entitles you, as a client of The Mountain Company, to a 15% discount in their stores and online.

Each trekker should bring one backpack for items required during the day. Your day backpack will contain items such as warm clothes, jacket, camera, water bottles, personal first aid kit and snacks.

The rest of your personal equipment packed in a duffel bag or backpack will be carried by a porter. **The maximum weight allowance is 15kgs.** Please ensure that your bag is marked clearly on the outside for easy identification.

## VISA REQUIREMENTS

### **Bhutan visa**

The Mountain Company team will obtain your Bhutan visa. We will send you a copy of the confirmation from the Bhutanese Department of Tourism showing that your visa has been authorised. Your actual visa will be issued on arrival at Paro.

### **India visa**

Citizens from the UK, US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand require an entry visa, it is your responsibility to obtain the entry visa. The Indian High Commission in London has updated the procedure for obtaining tourist visas. The decision on whether to grant a visa has been retained by the High Commission, however the application and collection process has been outsourced to VFS Global.

All applications have to be made online at <http://in.vfsglobal.co.uk/> You still have to apply online if you are submitting your application by post or using a visa agency. Walk-in applicants also need to fill out the online form before visiting VFS's office.

It should take 2 to 3 days to process your visa from submission although many people have experienced delays so please allow longer than this. Postal applications might take up to 15 days plus postage time.

We suggest you carefully read the VFS website taking particular care in calculating



the fee payable and also the rules for acceptable passport photos in order to avoid further delays.

## VACCINATIONS AND MEDICAL

You should obtain professional advice from a travel clinic or your local GP about which vaccinations to have before you arrive in Nepal. A dental check-up is a good idea as there will be no dental facilities while on the trek.

We bring a comprehensive first aid kit from UK (Life Systems Mountain Leader) plus high altitude medicine, antibiotics and other medicines.

## FLIGHTS

We recommend Max Travel (ATOL bonded license# 4705) for booking international flights and other travel arrangements. Please take a look at their website at <http://www.maxtravel.co.uk/> or give them a call on 020 7095 0920.

There are a number of good online agents that we also recommend, they are:

Kayak: *an excellent flight cost comparison website* <http://www.kayak.co.uk/>

Traveljungle: *another good flight cost comparison website*  
<http://www.traveljungle.co.uk/>

Cheap Tickets: this site quotes airfares in USD\$ & often is very competitive when translated back to GBP£ <http://www.cheaptickets.com/>

Southall Travel: very competitive prices for India, Pakistan and Nepal both online and telephone support <http://www.southalltravel.co.uk/>

## INSURANCE

Travel insurance for any Mountain Company itinerary is a condition of booking a holiday. At the very least you should have emergency medical and repatriation insurance which must include the cost of mountain rescue. Cancellation insurance



is strongly recommended as all deposits paid to The Mountain Company are non-refundable.

To get an online quote for your personal travel and trekking insurance (UK residents only), take a look at Snowcard's website at

[http://www.snowcard.co.uk/pages/d\\_select1.asp?referrer\\_id=MC](http://www.snowcard.co.uk/pages/d_select1.asp?referrer_id=MC)

**The Snowcard activity level for Lunana Snowman is 3 and prices start from £102.**



Please note that The Mountain Company do not act as an agent of Snowcard Insurance and any policy bought via this web link is effected directly with Snowcard Insurance Services Limited.

## **CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS**

The Royal Government of Bhutan has a strict policy to preserve its cultural and traditional values. For example antiques may not be taken out of the country and they request that clients do not give sweets, pens, etc., to children or distribute medicine to villagers. Further information you be provided in the Bhutan pre departure notes sent after booking.

## **SUGGESTED READING**

Please take a look at The Mountain Company's bookstore for a wide selection of books and maps to Nepal, the link is at: <http://astore.amazon.co.uk/themountainco-21>

- Pocket Guide to the Birds of Bhutan: Grimmett R, Inskipp C & T.
- Two and Two Halves to Bhutan: Peter Steele



- Bhutan – Land of the Peaceful Dragon: G.N. Mehra
- Bhutan, An Illustrated Guide: Françoise Pommaret, Odyssey Guides
- Bhutan, Land of the Thunder Dragon: E.T. Owen, London 1998
- Pocket Guide to the Birds of Bhutan: Grimmett R, Inskipp C & T.
- Two and Two Halves to Bhutan: Peter Steele



# APPENDIX 1

## SUGGESTED CLOTHING AND EQUIPMENT LIST

### Footwear:

- Walking boots. A pair of water repellent boots with ankle support.
- Gaiters. A pair used to keep boots dry if walking through deep snow.
- Wool and liner socks.
- Trainers/sneakers or sandals. Can be used in camp/lodge in the evenings.

### Clothing:

- Waterproof jacket and trousers (goretex or similar).
- Trekking trousers.
- Long sleeve synthetic shirt.
- Micro fleece.
- Mid to heavyweight fleece.
- Sleeveless or body warmer type fleece.
- Thermals or baselayer for top & bottom (merino wool or synthetic).
- Fleece pants.
- Medium weight down jacket.

### Handwear:

- Fleece gloves.
- Warms mittens and/or gloves.

**Headwear:**

- Wool or fleece hat.
- Sun hat.
- Bandana or scarf.
- Headtorch. Bring extra batteries.
- Sunglasses.

**Personal Equipment:**

- Sleeping bag.
- Sleeping mat (eg. Thermarest).
- Backpack large enough to carry water bottles, camera, lunch and extra clothing.
- Stuff sacks for keeping your gear dry and organised.
- Two water bottles (Nalgene wide mouth bottles are the best).
- Sunscreen and lipsalve with a high SPF.
- Insect repellent.
- Water purification tablets (Pristine, Biox Acqua or Acqa Mira).
- Favourite snack food.
- Books, ipod and cards etc.
- Trekking poles.
- Camera with spare batteries and memory cards.
- Insurance certificate.
- Earplugs (optional).
- Baby wipes (optional).
- Hand sanitizer (optional)



### **Travelling:**

- Duffle bag or large backpack for your personal gear on the trek (carried by a porter). Bring a small combination padlock to secure the bag.
- Travel clothes. You will need casual clothing for air travel days and time spent in Calcutta, Paro and Thimphu.
- Toiletry bag include toilet paper, soap, towel, toothbrush, etc.

### **Personal first aid kit:**

Note: we provide a comprehensive group first aid kit but please bring personal medications and other items you might use regularly such as:

- Any personal medications.
- Blister treatment (Compeed patches are the best).
- Rehydration powder eg Dioralyte.
- Analgesics (paracetamol, ibuprofen and aspirin).
- Plasters and zinc oxide tape.
- Throat lozenges.
- Diamox (helps with acclimatisation).



# APPENDIX 2

## INTERNATIONAL PASSENGER PROTECTION

In accordance with "The Package Travel, Package Holidays and Package Tours Regulations 1992" all passengers booking with The Mountain Trekking Company Ltd ("The Mountain Company") are fully protected for the initial deposit and subsequently the balance of all monies paid to us, including repatriation if required, arising from cancellation or curtailment of your travel arrangements due to the insolvency of The Mountain Company.

There is no requirement for Financial Protection of day trips, and none is provided. This insurance is only valid for packages booked that DO NOT include flights.

**Consumer aware:** Your booking is insured by IPP Ltd and its panel of insurers. This insurance is only valid for passengers who book and pay directly with/to The Mountain Company. If you have booked and/ or paid direct to a Travel Agent for a holiday with The Mountain Company please request proof of how the booking is secured as this will not be covered by IPP Ltd in this instance. For further information please go to [www.ipplondon.co.uk](http://www.ipplondon.co.uk)

This Insurance has been arranged by International Passenger Protection Limited and underwritten by Insurers who are members of the Association of British Insurers & Lloyds Syndicates.

**Claim procedures:** download claim form from [www.ipplondon.co.uk](http://www.ipplondon.co.uk), any occurrence which may give rise to a claim should be advised within 14 days to: International Passenger Protection Limited, Claims Office, IPP House, 22-26 Station Road, West Wickham, Kent BR4 0PR, United Kingdom. Telephone: +44 (0) 208 7763752. Fax: +44 (0) 208 7763751.

In order to deal promptly with any claims hereunder it is essential that you retain all bills, receipts and other documents relating to your travel arrangements. Claims forms must be submitted to IPP within six months of date of insolvency they cannot consider or pay claims received after this date.