

LUNANA SNOWMAN



COUNTRIES VISITED: BHUTAN

TRIP TYPE: Trekking
TRIP GRADE: Strenuous
TRIP STYLE: Camping
5 Based On 20 Reviews
KG Carbon Footprint

TRIP LEADER: International Leader
GROUP SIZE: 5 - 14 people
NEXT DEPARTURE: 30 Sep 2024
34 Trees Planted for each Booking

Lunana Snowman is a long trek over many high passes through remote a region in Bhutan Himalaya.

Often called The Snowman trek this is a spectacular Himalayan journey taking 29 days. The trail crosses eight high mountain passes over 4,000m and three over 5,000m. The Mountain Company has 100% track record of organising Lunana Snowman in Bhutan. Our groups have completed this trek on ten previous occasions.

Snowman trek has the reputation for being [one of the hardest treks in the world](#). As you can read from our blog this is a difficult trek due to crossing many high passes during 28 days of trekking. There are more challenging treks in the Himalayas such as [Makalu to Everest GHT](#). Our [Kanchenjunga Base Camp to Makalu Base Camp GHT](#) trek is longer with 36 days of trekking.

The mountain scenery is spectacular especially from the summit of the Lunana passes. You will see the 7,000m peaks of Mount Chomolhari, Mount Gangkar Punsum and Table Mountain. There are also many peaks along the Bhutan and Tibet border that are un-named and un-mapped. We have included this trek as one of the "Big 3" in our Blog article called [What Is The Best Trek In The Himalayas?](#)

The Complete Lunana Snowman trek starts near Paro and finishes near Bumthang. Other Bhutan trekking companies offer shorter versions taking Nikka Chu valley from Lunana. To help your acclimatisation we

visit Haa Valley (2,700m) for two nights before starting the trek.

This is a camping-style trekking expedition where you sleep in tents and our cooks provide the meals.

REASONS TO CHOOSE US

- We are Himalayan trekking specialists having operated trips in Bhutan for many years. [Roland Hunter](#) has designed our itinerary from his first-hand experience of Snowman trek.
- We work with the best [mountain leaders](#). They have deep knowledge and experience of the Himalaya. Unlike many other operators we use international leaders for remote trips in Bhutan.
- The Mountain Company has organised ten successful Lunana Snowman treks since 2008. For more information on how these treks went please take a look at our Trip Reports.
- Our Lunana Snowman itinerary is the best for acclimatisation, safety and enjoyment. We include two nights in Haa Valley before the trek for essential acclimatisation.
- We have chosen the optimal times of year to complete this trek in Spring and Autumn seasons. By starting earlier or later there is a high chance that winter snows will block the passes into and out of Lunana.
- Our [AITO Traveller Reviews for Lunana Snowman](#) have a holiday rating of 100%. Based on client feedback we won the 2018 Gold Award as AITO Tour Operator of the Year. Read more about our [Testimonials and Awards](#).
- We use sturdy A frame tents for our camping treks in Bhutan. These are high quality tents with space for two people plus gear.
- We pay for private weather forecasts from EverestWeather.com. We also use in house forecasting throughout the duration of this trek.
- We send a Thuraya satellite phone on our group treks in Bhutan. Your leader will have reliable communications for logistics, planning and group safety. We use GPS to upload your location daily on to Google Maps to track your progress during the trek.
- We provide the porters with windproof jackets & trousers, crampons and shelter. We follow International Porter Protection Group ("IPPG") guidelines.

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- All internal transport and transfers including airport collections in Paro.
- Twin share rooms at hotels while in Bhutan.
- All meals included while in Bhutan.
- Twin share tents while on trek.
- Trekking arrangements. Including permits and fees, tents, International and Bhutanese guides, pack animals and cooks.
- Weather forecasts from EverestWeather.com.
- Thuraya satellite phones for organising logistics and medical evacuations. It can also be also used for personal calls at extra cost.
- GPS tracking on Google Maps. Your friends and family can track your progress during the trek.
- Rubberised luggage tag posted to you before departure
- Full financial protection. Our Air Travel Organiser's Licence (ATOL) number is 10921. Our Association of Bonded Travel Operators Trust (ABTOT) membership number is 5365).
- Pre departure support and advice from The Mountain Company. We are available by email, phone or face to face meetings.

WHAT'S NOT INCLUDED

- International flight to/from Paro.
- Travel & trekking insurance.
- Personal clothing & equipment please see Appendix for suggested kit list.
- Tips. Each trekker should budget for giving tips into the group fund. This should be in the region of £150, US\$210 or €180.
- Other items not listed in "What is included".

ITINERARY

DAY 1: FLY TO PARO (2,280M), AFTERNOON SIGHTSEEING

Arrive in Paro

Sightseeing in Paro

Lunch and Dinner

Hotel Olathang in Paro

We will meet you on arrival at Paro airport and drive you to the hotel. When the whole group has arrived we will give a full briefing to get you ready for the Lunana Snowman trek. Later on we will organise a trip into Paro to change money at the bank and to look around the town. Afterwards we arrange sightseeing tour to visit Paro Dzong and the National museum. Paro is Bhutan's second largest town. The valley also contains significant religious and historic sites in the country. It also has as well as Bhutan's only international airport.

DAY 2: MORNING WALK TO TAKTSANG MONASTERY (3,120M), AFTERNOON DRIVE TO HAA VALLEY (2,712M) VIA CHELE LA (3,780M)

Walking for 9km (4 hours)

Drive to Haa Valley (2 1/2 hours)

Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Risum Resort in Haa Valley

After breakfast we organise a walk up to the Taktsang monastery known as the "Tiger's Nest". The hike up to the monastery through pine forest takes about 2 to 3 hours and the trail ascends 520m. This is a good opportunity to stretch your legs after your travels to Bhutan. After our visit to Taktsang we drive to the Chele La pass at an altitude of 3,780m. From here on a clear day there is a view of Mount Chomolhari to the north. We descend from the pass into Haa Valley at an altitude of 2,712m where we stay for two nights. Being at this high elevation before the trek is essential for acclimatisation. Haa Valley remains one of the least visited areas in the country.

DAY 3: DAY WALK AROUND HAA VALLEY (2,712M)

Day walk in Haa Valley

Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Risum Resort in Haa Valley

Today we explore Haa valley and go for a walk. With past Snowman groups we walked through Lechuna village and down to the Haa Chhu (river). After crossing a wooden bridge we walked up through forest up to Jamte Gompa. After visiting this old monastery we descend to Chumpa bridge and to Chuma village.

DAY 4: DRIVE TO CHELE LA (3,780M) AND WALK ALONG THE RIDGE FOR ACCLIMATISATION THEN DRIVE TO PARO AND ONTO SHANA (2,790M)

Drive to Paro and onto Shana Camp

Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Camping

We leave Haa valley and drive up to Chele La where we stop and walk along the ridge for extra acclimatisation. If we are lucky we will get the views again of Mount Chomolhari to the north. From the pass we drive down to Paro and then we continue past Drugyel Dzong. From here we drive further along a jeep track to Shana. At Shana we meet the trek crew and spend our first night in the tents before starting the trek tomorrow.

DAY 5: TREK TO SOI THANGTHANKA (3,510M)

Walking for 9km (6 to 7 hours)

Walking ascent 895m

Walking descent 175m

Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Camping

Today we start the Lunana Snowman trek and have 28 days of walking ahead of us to look forward to. From Shana camp the trail passes through rhododendron and blue pine forests. It is often muddy on this section of the walk 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 CHOMOLHARI BASE CAMP (4,080M)

Walking for 13km (5 hours)

Walking ascent 530m

Walking descent 65m

Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Camping

After an hour or so walking from camp we leave the forest as we climb above the tree line into a beautiful valley. We arrive at Chomolhari Base Camp, often known as Jangothang, at an elevation of 4,080m. Towering above there is a superb view of Mount Chomolhari at an altitude of 7,326m. Next to the camp are the ruins of an old Dzong that used to guard Bhutan against invasions from Tibet.

DAY 7: ACCLIMATISATION DAY AT CHOMOLHARI BASE CAMP (4,080M)

Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Camping

To help the acclimatisation process we spend two nights at Chomolhari Base Camp. It is a good idea to go for a walk in the morning upto higher altitude ("climb high, sleep low"). There are options including walking up a ridge to the north for good views of Mt Jichu Drake. The other scenic walk is to the twin lakes at Tsho Phu (4,350m). This is a holy lake where fishing, swimming or throwing stones is not permitted.

DAY 8: CROSS NYILE LA (4,890M) AND TREK TO LINGSHI (4,150M)

Walking for 13km (6 hours)

Walking ascent 835m

Walking descent 830m

Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Camping

Today we cross the first of the major passes on the Lunana Snowman trek. It is a steady ascent on a good trail to Nyile La pass at an altitude of 4,890m. There are fine views of Mt Takaphu (6,526m) to the North and Tiger Mountain to the East. We descend from the pass on another good trail. Further down we enter a forest and then walk to our camp in a grassy area outside Lingshi village.

DAY 9: TREK TO CHEBISA (3,850M)

Walking for 10km (4 1/2 hours)

Walking ascent 360m

Walking descent 495m

Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Camping

After breakfast we walk past the Dzong damaged in the recent earthquake. On leaving Lingshi village the trail contours high above the valley. This area is well known for its medicinal plants and flowers. We pass a ridge covered with prayer flags and descend into a side valley near Goyok village. Another hour further we arrive at Chebisa village located in a valley with a waterfall at its head.

DAY 10: CROSS GOMBU LA (4,400M) AND TREK TO SHOMUTHANG (3,950M)

Walking for 14km (5 hours)

Walking ascent 670m

Walking descent 550m

Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Camping

After crossing the Gombu La at an altitude of 4,400m we descend through a hillside of rhododendrons. We camp for the night at Shomuthang.

DAY 11: CROSS JHARE LA (4,780M) AND TREK TO ROBULATHANG (4,410M)

Walking for 14km (5 hours)

Walking ascent 1,000m

Walking descent 800m

Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Camping

After an early start we climb towards the Jhare La at an altitude of 4,780m. From the summit of the pass there are good views of Tiger Mountain, Mt Jitchu Drake, Takaphu and Kang Bum. Descending from the pass we pass Tsharijathang where herds of Takin live at some times of the year. The taking is the national animal of Bhutan.

DAY 12: CROSS SHINGE LA (5,000M) AND TREK TO LIMITHANG (4,160M)

Walking for 12.5km (7 hours)

Walking ascent 900m

Walking descent 860m

Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Camping

There is a long climb taking around 4 hours to the Shinge La at an altitude of 5,000m. In 2011 monks built and consecrated a Buddhist chorten on the summit of Shinge La. There is another fine view of the Bhutan Himalaya including the Tiger Mountain at the head of the valley. On the descent we walk next to a terminal moraine and glacial lake located above Limithang camp.

DAY 13: TREK TO LAYA (3,700M)

Walking for 10.5km (4 1/2 hours)

Walking ascent 280m

Walking descent 560m

Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Camping

Today we walk through forest along the river to Laya village. Layap women wear distinctive conical bamboo hats with turquoise and jade jewellery. We deliver food and fuel at Laya to support the next

section of Snowman trek into Lunana. We have to plan the logistics as it is not possible buy supplies along the way.

DAY 14: REST DAY AT LAYA (3,700M)

Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Camping

Today is a rest day for the group and trek crew. The cooks and kitchen helpers will unpack and repack the delivery of new food and fuel. We also arrange for a changeover in horses as it is best to have fresh animals as we enter Lunana.

You can spend the day exploring the village. In the afternoon the Layaps often have a game of archery and this is well worth watching. If you like there is also a walk to view point above Laya at 4,200m with superb views of Masagang mountain.

DAY 15: TREK TO RODOPHU (4,120M)

Walking for 15km (7 1/2 hours)

Walking ascent 1,100m

Walking descent 660m

Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Camping

From Laya the trail descends to the army post at Taksaka where we turn to East towards the Lunana region. We camp at Rodophu for the night.

DAY 16: CROSS TSEMA LA (4,905M) AND TREK TO NARETHANG (4,900M)

Walking for 9km (6 hours)

Walking ascent 895m

Walking descent 175m

Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Camping

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

DAY 17: CROSS KARCHUNG LA (5,240M) AND TREK TO TARINA (3,900M)

Walking for 12km (7 to 8 hours)

Walking ascent 350m

Walking descent 1,200m

Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Camping

From Camp the walk up to the entry pass into Lunana called Karchung La takes only about 1 ½ hours. On the summit of this pass you see superb views of Jejekangphu Gang (7,300m) and Tsenda Kang (7,100m). A short way down from the pass there is a beautiful place for lunch. There are views of peaks in Tibet and down to the valley floor far below. From here there is a steep and often muddy path through rhododendrons to Tarina camp. Previous groups saw a Himalayan black bear and cub near Tarina.

DAY 18: TREK TO WOCHÉ (3,810M)

Walking for 10.5km (5 hours)

Walking ascent 370m

Walking descent 400m

Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Camping

From Tarina we follow the trail along Pho Chhu river. High above there are several spectacular waterfalls. Now lower in altitude we walk through pine forest. There is a steady climb over a ridge to Woché. We camp an hour further up from this village towards the base of the Keshe La.

DAY 19: CROSS KESHE LA (4,435M) AND TREK TO LHEDI (3,700M)

Walking for 12km (6 1/2 hours)

Walking ascent 850m

Walking descent 1,050m

Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Camping

There is a steep climb for 2 hours to Keshe La, on the way we pass a beautiful green coloured lake. There are prayer flags and cairns on the pass. From the summit of the pass there 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)

Walking for 24km (6 to 7 hours)

Walking ascent 725m

Walking descent 250m

Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Camping

The trail continues uphill following the East Pho Chhu to Chozo village. It is likely that you will have to cross the river about one hour from Lhedi as the bridge is often washed out. The erosion scar from Glacial Lake Outflow Flood ("GLOF") is still seen on side of the valleys. The Lunana valley opens out into a classic U shape on the approach to Thanza village.

DAY 21: REST DAY IN THANZA (3,970M)

Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Camping

Today we are likely to have a rest day for the group and trek crew. It is also a good opportunity to do some laundry. There is a walk to the glacial lake above Thanza or you can relax in camp and explore the village. Having said that, in some years we move on without taking a rest day. Your leader will make a decision based on several factors such as weather forecasts.

During the Summer months the Lunap pick Cordyceps Sinesis ("caterpillar fungus"). This grows on the grassy slopes above the village during the summer months. They sell the Cordyceps to the Chinese as herbal medicine and are worth more per kg than gold.

DAY 22: TREK TO DANJE (4,540M)

Walking for 5km (3 1/2 hours)

Walking ascent 600m

Walking descent 90m

Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Camping

Today is a shorter walk up to Danje where we camp for the night. It is important for acclimatising not to continue on to Tshorim in one day. Tshorim camp is too far from Thanza and is the highest camp on Snowman at an altitude of 5,240m.

DAY 23: TREK TO TSHORIM LAKE CAMP (5,250M)

Walking for 14km (6 hours)

Walking ascent 845m

Walking descent 150m

Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Camping

We continue up the valley towards Tshorim and camp by the lake where the views are sensational. Many of our past Snowman trekkers have told us Tshorim lake is their favourite camp in the Himalaya. Wrap up tonight in your down jacket as it is a cold place given its high altitude.

DAY 24: CROSS GOPHU LA (5,240M) AND TREK TO GECHE WOMA (4,450M)

Walking for 9km (5 1/2 hours)

Walking ascent 300m

Walking descent 650m

Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Camping

This is a classic day trekking in Bhutan Himalaya. It takes about one hour to walk from Tshorim Lake camp to Gophu La. This pass is the exit pass from Lunana and sits on the boundary between Lunana and Trongsa districts. After crossing Gophu La we see the highest mountain in Bhutan, Gangkar Punsum, at 7,541m. From the pass we descend past two lakes and cross several glacial moraines. We walk along a lateral moraine to the main valley where we follow the river to the camp at Geche Woma.

DAY 25: TREK TO MISCHUGANG (4,200M) AT BASE OF PHORANG LA

Walking for 10km (4 1/2 hours)

Walking ascent 90m

Walking descent 600m

Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Camping

The trail from camp follows the Sasha Chuu valley. We stay on left side of valley past yak herders' huts as by this time of year have moved their herds to a lower altitude. We stay the night near a yak herders camp at Mischugang below the Phorang La.

DAY 26: CROSS PHORANG LA (4,650M) AND SAGA LA (4,820M), TREK TO WORITHANG (4,400M)

Walking for 9km (6 1/2 hours)

Walking ascent 865m

Walking descent 570m

Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Camping

Shortly after leaving camp we start the climb on grassy slopes up to 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. From the summit of this pass at an altitude of 4,820m there is a wonderful view in all directions. The trail descends to a grassy plateau past two lakes and shortly 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: CROSS NEPHU LA (4,560M) AND TREK TO DUR TSACHU (3,200M)

Walking for 7.5km (4 1/2 hours)

Walking ascent 220m

Walking descent 1,385m

Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Camping

From Camp 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 body soak.

DAY 28: CROSS GONGTO LA (4,327M) AND DJULE LA (4,551M), TREK TO TSO CHENCHEN (3,850M)

Walking for 13km (8 hours)

Walking ascent (1,600m)

Walking descent 960m

Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Camping

Today is a tough day as we climb 1,000m up to the Gongto La. We descend to a lake and then head up again to the Djule La. In October 2008 our group saw a snow leopard 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)

Walking for 14km (6 hours walking)

Walking ascent 255m

Walking descent 970m

Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Camping

The trail descends through forest and dense bamboo stands. An hour before Gorsum we cross the bridge and walk up a muddy trail to the camp located in a grassy meadow.

DAY 30: CONTINGENCY DAY OR EXTRA REST DAY.

Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Camping

DAY 31: TREK TO MINCHUGANG THEN DRIVE TO BUMTHANG

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

DAY 32: DRIVE TO PUNAKHA

Drive to Punakha (8 hours driving)

Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Hotel Sonamgang in Punakha

We have a long drive from Bumthang to Punakha via Tongsa.

DAY 33: DRIVE TO THIMPHU, AFTERNOON EXPLORING TOWN

Drive to Thimphu (3 hours driving)

Sightseeing in Thimphu

Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Pelyang Boutique in Thimphu

After breakfast we visit Punakha Dzong. This is an impressive building and at the confluence of the Pho Chhu (father) and Mo Chhu (mother) rivers. This dzong is the second largest in Bhutan. Ngawang Namgyal, 1st Zhabdrung Rinpoche, built the dzong in 1638 so it is also the second oldest.

Afterwards we visit Chimi Lhakang also known as the fertility temple of Bhutan. Local families see the temple as a potent fertility shrine. It takes about 20 minutes to walk across rice fields to reach the temple. Lama Drukpa Kunley, known as the divine madman, forms the basis of legends about the monastery.

In the afternoon we leave for Thimphu by driving over the Dochu La pass at an altitude of 3,050m. This is one of the finest viewpoints of Eastern Himalaya. On a clear day you can see the peaks Masangang, Tsendagang, Terigang and Gangkar Punsum. On arrival to Dochu La you can get out of the car to admire the view. We walk around the 108 chortens marking the summit of the pass. We then drive through beautiful forest into the Thimphu Valley.

After checking into the hotel you have the afternoon to explore the town centre of Thimphu. There are a wide range of shops, restaurants and cafes.

DAY 34: DRIVE TO PARO AIRPORT FOR FLIGHT BACK HOME

Flight back

Breakfast

Transfers to Paro airport for flights back home. End of trip.

DATES & PRICES

2024

Dates	Trip Leader	Price	Single Supplement: Room/Tent	Availability
30 Sep 2024 to 02 Nov 2024	Almas Khan	US\$13,995pp	US\$395pp / US\$950pp	Guaranteed

2025

Dates	Trip Leader	Price	Single Supplement: Room/Tent	Availability
29 Sep 2025 to 01 Nov 2025	International Leader	US\$13,995pp	N/A	5 Left to Guarantee

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

A Typical Day On Trek

TYPICAL DAY ON CAMPING TREK IN BHUTAN

We provide a comfortable experience on our camping style treks in Bhutan. Our team works hard to support you so that you can relax and enjoy the trek. We provide personal tents, mess tent, kitchen tent and toilet tent(s). The camp will be set up and dismantled by the trek crew. We bring along a cook and kitchen helpers to provide the meals.

The day starts with an early morning mug of tea brought to your tent by one of the trek crew. Before heading for breakfast you pack your overnight gear into your duffel bag. During breakfast the trek crew pack away the tents. The pony men load up the pack animals and set off on the trail. After breakfast, between 7am and 8am, we start walking.

The pace of the trek is moderate as there is plenty of time in the itinerary to reach the camp for tonight. There will be plenty of time to enjoy the scenery, take photos and explore the local villages. Lunch will be around midday at a spot by the side of the trail. After lunch we continue the walk and on most days we arrive to camp by mid afternoon. Some of the trek crew would have gone ahead of the group to set up camp and to put up the tents. On arrival to camp you will get a hot drink and biscuits. In the evening our cook will provide a three course meal in the mess tent around 6pm.

After supper the leaders will discuss the plan for the next day. Afterwards people might stay in the mess tent chatting about the day's events or playing cards. After a tiring day most people head to their tent quite early for the night. Tomorrow is likely to be very similar as today! The only difference is that if we are crossing a high pass or climbing to a summit we leave camp earlier in the morning.

Food provided on Camping Trek

FOOD PROVIDED ON CAMPING TREK IN BHUTAN

While on a camping style trek in Bhutan we provide tasty and nutritional food. We make sure there is more than enough quantity to go around as trekkers will be hungry after a long day on the trail. Over the years we have worked on increasing the variety of the menus. We have expanded the list of ingredients provided to the cooks so they have more to work with. Also in 2015 we purchased two food dehydrators with a vacuum sealing machine. We dehydrate a large number of different vegetables in Paro before departure. This has transformed the quality of food especially on the longer treks to remote areas.

For breakfast we provide porridge or cereal, toast or chapatis and eggs. There will be hot drinks including tea, herbal teas, hot chocolate and coffee. We provide fresh coffee from our Bialetti Moka coffee machine.

For lunch we stop at a convenient spot with water at the side of the trail. In Bhutan the cooks prepare lunch after breakfast before leaving camp in the morning. One of the ponies carries the insulated "tiffin" containers to the lunch place. After lunch we have time to relax before starting to walk again in the afternoon.

On arrival at camp in the afternoon you have biscuits and a hot drink such as tea or coffee. Around 6pm we serve a three course meal in the mess tent. The starter is often soup with popcorn or poppadums. We have a range of main dishes and carbohydrates including rice, potatoes or pasta.

We cater for a variety of dietary requirements. Our meals are suitable for vegetarians. If there is a meat dish then we also provide vegetarian options as standard. During booking we find out if you have any dietary needs and agree upon meal plans before departure. If you have any questions about the food provided please get in touch with us to discuss further.

Communications

COMMUNICATIONS

We bring a Thuraya satellite phone for logistical, safety and personal use. Personal calls charged at £4 (US\$5 or €4.50) per minute and £2 (US\$3 €4.50) to send and receive SMS text.

Kit List

KIT LIST FOR LUNANA SNOWMAN TREK

This is the mandatory kit list for the safety of everyone in the group and to ensure a successful trek. You must have the following items tailored for The Snowman trek. The group leader will check your gear in Paro before departure for the trek.

As a reminder, the weather on this trek will vary season to season and day to day as you ascend to higher elevations. At the start of the Autumn trek you are likely to experience rainy and muddy conditions. You will experience the coldest temperatures at Narethang Camp and Tshorim Lake. Overnight lows here will be down to around -15 Celsius.

You should bring a rucksack or backpack for gear required during the day. Your pack should contain items such as warm clothes, jacket, camera, water bottles, personal first aid kit and snacks. **The weight limit is 5kg.** A pack animal will carry the rest of your personal equipment packed in a duffel or kit bag. **The weight limit for your duffel bag is 18kg.** Please mark your bag on the outside for easy identification.

It is not possible to buy trekking gear in Bhutan. You must arrive at the start of the trip with the right kit as per this list. Print the kit list and tick items off as you pack them then weigh your kit bag before you come on trek.

Footwear

- Walking Boots. A pair of water repellent boots with ankle support. Boots must be in good condition, the best approach is to get new boots and break in before the trek. Over the years we have had several boots fall apart so you should also bring trail shoes as a backup.
- Trail shoes. Used around camp and as a replacement if your walking boots fall apart!
- Sandals. Enclosed sandals are best to protect your feet during river crossings. Required for river crossings as well as two trekking poles.
- Walking socks.

Clothing

- Waterproof and Windproof jacket (with hood) and trousers (goretex or similar). For use if it rains or snows during the trek and in windy conditions.
- Trekking trousers. (eg. Mountain Hardwear Mesa V2 or The North Face Paramount Peak).

- Soft Shell Trousers.
- Long sleeve tops or shirts (not cotton).
- Micro fleece.
- Mid to heavyweight fleece or synthetic/ primaloft top.
- Sleeveless/ gilet or body warmer type fleece / synthetic top. This will help keep your core warm while not bulking when layering up. Gilet used in combination with base layers, other fleeces and down jacket. This provides the most warmth and insulation.
- Thermals or base layer for top & bottom (merino wool or synthetic).
- Fleece or synthetic leggings. Worn around the camp or added as a layer when the temperatures start to drop higher up.
- Medium weight down jacket.

Heads and Gloves

- Fleece gloves.
- Warms mittens and/or gloves.
- Wool or fleece hat.
- Sun hat.
- Bandana or scarf (eg. Buff Headwear).
- Head torch. Bring extra batteries.
- Sunglasses. The lenses need to be Category 4 rated. They should have side protection or wraparound design.

For crossing the passes

- Trekking poles (Black Diamond with "Flick Lock" are best). Two poles are mandatory for your safety. These will be helpful on steep sections of the trail and river crossings. Also for walking on snow or ice higher up.
- [Kahtoola Microspikes](#) or [YakTrax Summits](#). These are for your security when descending passes with snowy or icy conditions. They fit onto your walking boots.
- Gaiters. A pair of knee high gaiters used to keep boots dry if walking through snow or on wet ground.

Personal equipment

- Sleeping bag. Overnight lows down to -15 Celsius.
- Fleece or silk liner for your sleeping bag. A liner protects your sleeping bag from getting dirty. Also helps by adding extra insulation to keep you warm at night.
- Sleeping mat (eg. Thermarest). We do NOT provide mats on our treks in Bhutan.
- Day pack. Recommended size is around 40 litres. You need to have enough space to carry water bottles, camera, snacks and extra clothing and climbing gear. The pack should have a good waist belt. It is also a good idea to bring a rain cover to keep the contents dry.
- Stuff sacks for keeping your gear dry and organised. Or even better are fold dry bags such as from Exped.
- Two water bottles. Nalgene wide mouth bottles are the best. You may use a hydration pack lower down but the tube will freeze in the cold so ensure you still have two water bottles.
- Pee bottle. Recommended as means you do not have to get up to find the toilet tent at night! For men you can use an old water bottle. For women take a look at SheWee.
- Sunscreen and lipsalve with a high SPF.
- Water purification tablets (Pristine, Biox Aqua or Aqua Mira).
- Favourite snack food.
- Books and cards etc.
- Camera with spare batteries and memory cards.
- Insurance certificate.
- Earplugs (optional).
- Baby wipes (optional).
- Hand sanitizer. Keep this in your day pack for use after a toilet break during the trek or before eating any snacks. We provide sanitizer for use before meals.

Travelling

- Duffel bag for your personal gear on the trek (carried by a pack animal). Rugged and waterproof made of a plastic material. Size 100-120 litres. Eg. Mountain Equipment 100l or Rab 120l. Bring a small

combination padlock to secure the bag.

- Travel clothes. You will need casual clothing for air travel days and time spent before/ after the trek.
- Toiletry bag with soap, travel towel, toothbrush etc. We provide toilet paper while on trek.

Personal first aid kit

We provide a [comprehensive group first aid kit](#). Please bring personal medications and other items you might use 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).

Threat and risk assessment

RISK ASSESSMENT FOR LUNANA SNOWMAN TREK

You should be aware trekking in a developing country involves a risk of personal injury or death. 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 and unpredictable weather. There could be last minute changes to the itinerary beyond our control. The ability to work in a team is an important aspect of our trips.

We have performed a threat and risk assessment for The Snowman trek in Bhutan. Our trips have a degree of risk. This is part of the attraction of adventure travel and why so many people choose to join this type of holiday. By identifying the hazards on this trekking holiday we assess the level of risk. We have control measures in place to reduce this happening or to reduce the impact.

Our risk assessment is available to clients on request. We have listed below a summary of the significant risks and hazards identified by us:

- Falls and trips resulting in physical injury eg. slipping on ice or falling off the path.
- Altitude illness including but not limited to AMS, HACE and HAPE.
- Getting lost or becoming separated from group eg. crossing Lunana high passes in whiteout.
- Severe bad weather and conditions when camping eg. Tshorim Lake at 5,000m.
- Climatic injuries (dehydration, sunburn, heat exhaustion, hypothermia or heat stroke).
- Crossing a river with no bridge resulting in drowning and/ or a fall.
- Rock fall and landslides.
- Snow and ice avalanches.
- Lightning strike.
- Wildlife, pack animals (e.g. donkeys or horses) or stray dogs. Pack animals can knock people off the path. Dogs can attack and bite. Discuss rabies vaccination with your doctor.
- Earthquake.
- Risk of fire in the hotel.
- Endemic local diseases. Discuss vaccinations with your doctor before departure.
- Physiological injury. Such as heart attack, appendicitis, hernia, toothache etc. in a remote area.
- Road traffic accidents.
- Contaminated food and/ or water.

This trip visits a remote area. You are away from the usual emergency services and medical facilities. Evacuation for a serious injury requiring hospitalisation could take up to several days. This delay could impede your ensuing recovery. Helicopters are the usual means of evacuation. They are not always available or hindered by poor weather and flying conditions.

Weather and conditions

WEATHER AND CONDITIONS FOR LUNANA SNOWMAN TREK

The trekking season in Bhutan is late September through to May. October is generally recognised as having the best weather. Spring is a popular time of year with warmer weather than in Autumn. Also there is the advantage of seeing spring flowers and rhododendrons in bloom.

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

The time of year is important to increase the chances of completing the journey. The optimal time in Autumn season is to start towards the end of September. The monsoon should be winding down although the exact date varies year to year. In some years there is monsoonal rain during the start of the trek. The key reason for starting earlier in Autumn season is to place the group in Lunana around mid October. This means we can exit this remote region before the winter snows block the passes.

In the Spring season we start towards the end of April and trek through until the end of May. These are the optimal dates as the temperatures are warmer and winter snows melted off on the passes.

Suggested reading

SUGGESTED READING AND MAPS BHUTAN TREK

Books

Bhutan A Trekker's Guide: Bart Jordans, published by Cicerone

Beneath Blossom Rain: Discovering Bhutan on the Toughest Trek in the World. By Kevin Grange

Pocket Guide to the Birds of Bhutan: Grimmett R, Inskipp C & T.

Bhutan, An Illustrated Guide: Françoise Pommaret, Odyssey Guides

Maps

Bhutan Himalaya. 1:390,000 by Nepal maps.

Cultural information

ETHICS AND ETIQUETTE IN BHUTAN

The Royal Government of Bhutan has a policy to preserve its cultural values.

- Lakes in Bhutan are holy and inhabited by spirits. No fishing, swimming or throwing stones.
- Do not disturb or feed wildlife or do anything to destroy their natural habitat.
- Do not use detergent in or near rivers. For personal washing use biodegradable soap at least 50m from any watercourse.
- Do not give sweets, pens or gifts to children or distribute medicine to villagers. There are Basic Health Units operated by Bhutan Government throughout the country.
- Do not buy local household items or religious artefacts from villagers. Antiques may not be taken out of the country.
- Please respect the culture and traditions of local people. This includes trek crew, villagers and pack animal owners.

DRESS CODE AND CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR ENTERING DZONGS

It is important to follow the dress code for dzongs, monasteries and lhakhangs. Use the details below to assist with your planning for the trip. We understand when on trek you will have fewer smart clothes with you. Your guide will discuss each days visits with you to reconfirm appropriate attire.

- Go for smart casual look such as long sleeved shirt with collar i.e no T shirts or short sleeved shirts.
- Full length trousers or long skirts (ankles must be covered) i.e no shorts, $\frac{3}{4}$ length trousers or short

skirts.

- Shoes with socks covering ankles i.e no sandals or slippers.
- No hats and umbrellas allowed.
- Photographs are only allowed in the courtyard of most monasteries.
- Walk around Buddhist temples or stupas in a clockwise direction.
- Turn off your mobile/ cell phone and talk in a quiet tone.
- It is customary to give a small donation when visiting a monastery.

ACCOMMODATION

HOTEL OLATHANG IN PARO



Hotel Olathang is set amidst 28 acres of blue pine forest on a hill overlooking Paro valley. This hotel is in traditional Bhutanese style.

There are 28 rooms with attached bathrooms and the cottages have an outdoor deck with chairs. There is a restaurant and bar in the main building. Other facilities include a spa and a traditional hot stone bath.

This was the first hotel built for tourists in Bhutan. Established in 1974 for the guests invited to the coronation of the Fourth King of Bhutan.

SWISS GUESTHOUSE IN BUMTHANG



Swiss Guesthouse is above Jakar with good views over the valley. This property is an old Bhutanese farmhouse surrounded by apple orchards. The older sister of the first King of Bhutan used to live here.

A Swiss-Bhutanese family set up the guesthouse. They also make cheese and this property is well known for its Swiss dishes such as Fondue and Raclette. There is a restaurant and a bar. They serve Red Panda beer, this is a traditional wheat beer brewed in Bumthang. The rooms are simple with attached bathrooms. They also have a wood-burning stove (bukhari) for heating.

HOTEL MERI PUENSUM IN PUNAKHA



Hotel Meri Puensum is above Punakha with good views down to the river and valley below. This property is family owned and was one of the first hotels built in Punakha.

The rooms have attached bathrooms and are simple yet functional. Some of the rooms have balconies overlooking the valley. There is a restaurant serving Bhutanese, Indian and Chinese dishes. Most meals are a buffet style. The blocks of the hotel are set in an attractive garden.

GYELSA BOUTIQUE INN IN THIMPHU



Gyelsa Boutique Inn is a family-run hotel located in the centre of Thimphu city. It is within walking distance of the restaurants, cafes and shops of the largest city in Bhutan.

The hotel has 6 suites and 12 twin rooms. The furniture is made in Bhutan from Himalayan wood. Facilities include a restaurant, bar and café. Every room has wifi.

CAMPING IN BHUTAN



We use A frame tents in Bhutan. These sturdy tents work well with the conditions experienced in Bhutan. They are waterproof plus have ample headroom inside.

TRIP REPORTS

To read the trip report please click on the link below to our blog:

[Lunana Snowman in October 2022 led by Natalie Wilson](#)

[Lunana Snowman in October 2019 led by Jo Clark](#)

[Lunana Snowman in October 2018 led by Almas Khan](#)

[Lunana Snowman in October 2017 led by Almas Khan](#)

[Lunana Snowman in October 2016 led by Almas Khan](#)

[Lunana Snowman in October 2015 led by Almas Khan](#)

[Lunana Snowman in October 2014 led by Almas Khan](#)

[Lunana Snowman in October 2013 led by Paul Burditt](#)

[Lunana Snowman in October 2012 led by Almas Khan](#)

[Lunana Snowman in October 2011 led by Roland Hunter \(long version\)](#)

[Lunana Snowman in October 2011 led by Roland Hunter \(short version\)](#)

[Lunana Snowman in October 2008 led by Roland Hunter](#)

TRIP REVIEWS

REVIEW BY GRAHAMMAC 17/01/2023

Beautiful Challenging Snowman Trek in Bhutan. Bhutan is a special country and we had the privilege to explore beautiful and remote regions. From friendly villages to isolated valleys with no-one there except an occasional nomadic yak herder. This was a long trek of 27 nights camping and every day brought new highlights: the mountains (Jonolhari, Ji chu Drake, Gangkhar Puensum, Table Mountain), the passes (Goplu La, Saga La, all 14 of them), the villages of Laya and Thanza, the hot springs at Dur Tsachu. A spectacular trip. The Mountain Company is superb in every respect. Roland and Natalie are supremely professional and very experienced. The crew was exceptional from the senior local guide right through the last horseman. The chef was amazing and produced fantastic food from the first day to the last. I felt guiltily pampered throughout. This was my second trip with TMC and I'm sure I'll be back. I have no hesitation in recommending them. ...

REVIEW BY RICHARD 02/02/2023

An unforgettable trek. I embarked on the Lunana Snowman trek with the Mountain Company in October 2022. I had already been converted to trekking with the Mountain Company and had wanted to do Snowman for some time. The trip was exceptional on every way. It is an amazing trek but my appreciation of it was enhanced in so many ways by the planning and care of the Mountain Company before and throughout the trek. Through their years of experience they had put together a wonderful team who, together with our great leader Nat, looked after us every inch of the way so all we had to do was push ourselves to get over the passes, wonder at the scenery and eat incredibly well in the remotest of locations. My thanks to all of TMC for this. Brilliant organisation and attention to detail which gives you a feeling of complete confidence. So important when you are approaching something both unique and

challenging. Roland the MD is great in providing all necessary pretrip information and keeping one informed to the moment of departure. ...

REVIEW BY TOMCAMPBELL ON 06/01/2023

Exploring the Wilds of Bhutan - Snowman's Trek The Mountain Company was fortunate to get a trek visa for Bhutan as soon as they opened. The Snowman's Trek was everything I had hoped for. Great group, visits to spiritual sites, trekking in Noman territories, and of course great views. The Mountain Company has run the Snowman's Trek for over 12 y ears. Therefore, this was a very well-organized tour with amazing local guides and the great oversite of Roland and Natalie. They were amazingly thoughtful and responsive. The local guides were incredibly organized and took care of all our needs. Can't imagine a better tour operator. ...

Notes downloaded on: 29-04-2024

