

# LAYA GASA TREK, BHUTAN



Bhutanese farmhouse in front of Mount Jitchu Drake



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## HIGHLIGHTS

- ) One of Bhutan's finest treks travelling through picturesque farmland, forests, alpine pastures and to high passes.
- ) Laya Gasa is a 14 day trek through Northern Bhutan along the border with Tibet and along the way you will cross three Himalayan mountain passes over 4,000m and one over 5,000m.
- ) Superb mountain views of Bhutan's most impressive peaks including Chomolhari and Jitchu Drake.
- ) At the start of the trip we organise a visit to Haa valley for two nights in order to help essential acclimatisation before the trek. This valley offers wonderful scenic walk along trails passing through traditional villages and magnificent monasteries.
- ) Cultural tour of Punakha and Thimphu after the trek.

## REASONS TO CHOOSE THE MOUNTAIN COMPANY FOR LAYA GASA TREK

- ) The Mountain Company has a good track record of organising treks in Bhutan, our groups have successfully completed Laya Gasa and Snowman treks many times since 2005.
- ) Due to our good contacts in Bhutan on our previous Laya Gasa treks we did not lose any days due to logistical problems organising animal transport.
- ) Our Laya Gasa itinerary has been designed based on first-hand experience which is the best in terms of acclimatisation, safety and enjoyment. Unlike most other Laya Gasa itineraries we now include one night in Paro and two nights in Haa Valley before starting the trek for essential acclimatisation.



- ) We bring a comprehensive first aid kit from plus high altitude medicine, antibiotics and other medicines. There will also be a portable altitude chamber (PAC or Gamow bag).
- ) We send a Thuraya satellite phone on all of our treks in Bhutan. It is essential for your guide to have reliable communications with us for logistics, planning and group safety.
- ) Pre trip support will be given by Roland via email, phone or face to face meetings.

## TESTIMONIALS

"The trek was fantastic thank you, our guide (Tashi) was great and the horseman we had knew the area very well. We spent four days around Mt. Masangang which was superb. The day closest to the Tibetan border was the best (not too close) - glaciers and lakes etc and good weather." **Laya Gasa trek with Masagang BC extension, Mike and Louise (UK)**

"We had a fantastic time on our Laya Gasa trek in April, it was hard but lived up to all our expectations. Please tell Tashi that we all thought he is a superb trekking guide, his knowledge was spot on all the time and his timings accurate. So in summary we had a fantastic holiday with memories that will last a lifetime." **Laya Gasa trek, Phil and Gail Hunt (UK)**

"Our Laya Gasa trek was a fantastic adventure in a beautiful country. All the guides were excellent and looked after us well, both on the trek itself and during the days spent sightseeing. All in all, we had a wonderful three weeks. Thank you!" **Gareth and Cheryl Jones (UK)**



# LAYA GASA TREK, BHUTAN

Total number of days	18 days
Grade & days trekking	Demanding, 14 trekking days
Accommodation	4 nights hotel, 13 nights camping
Minimum group size	2
Maximum group size	8
2019 price from Paro	£3,395 (US\$4,395 or €3,875) per person
2020 price from Paro	£3,395 (US\$4,395 or €3,875) per person
Dates	April 17 <sup>th</sup> to May 4 <sup>th</sup> 2019 October 2 <sup>nd</sup> to 19 <sup>th</sup> 2019 April 15 <sup>th</sup> to May 2 <sup>nd</sup> 2020 October 7 <sup>th</sup> to 24 <sup>th</sup> 2020

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

- ) All transfers including airport collections at Paro.
- ) Twin share hotels while in Bhutan.
- ) All meals included while in Bhutan.
- ) Twin share tents while on trek.
- ) All trekking arrangements including permits and fees, tents, Bhutanese guide, pack animals and cook.



- ) Bespoke weather forecasts for from EverestWeather.com throughout the duration of this trek.
- ) Thuraya satellite phone to ensure our guides have reliable communications with us for logistics, planning and group safety.
- ) Full financial protection for all monies paid to us through our membership of Association of Bonded Travel Operators Trust (our ABTOT membership number is 5365) and having an Air Travel Organiser's Licence (our ATOL number is 10921).
- ) Pre departure support and advice from The Mountain Company by email, phone or face to face meetings in London. After booking with us we will send our comprehensive "Bhutan Pre Trip Information" notes.

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

Single room supplement	£160 (US\$200 or €185)
Single tent supplement	£190 (US\$240 or €190)

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 Paro (flying from Bangkok, Singapore, Kathmandu and Delhi).
- ) Travel & trekking insurance.
- ) Personal clothing & equipment please see Appendix for suggested kit list.
- ) Tips.



) Other items not listed in “What is included”.

## PARTICIPANT SELECTION

The Mountain Company carefully selects and screens potential participants applying to join our groups to ensure the trip is an appropriate objective for you. We have a number of pre-trip questions asking information about your outdoor experience, training, experience, medical conditions and fitness. To access the pre-trip questions please send in your application by clicking on the “**Apply now**” **button** on the trek webpage. After review of your replies we might contact you by telephone or email for further information to aid our selection process.

Please ensure you have done your own research about Dhaulagiri Circuit trek by reading our pre trip documents (Trip Dossier, Trip Grading and Trip Reports published on TMC blog) to ensure you have a realistic idea of what to expect. Every trip organised by The Mountain Company has been graded based on four factors: daily walking times, altitude, terrain and remoteness.

## INTRODUCTION

One of the finest treks in the Himalaya covering a long distance across northern Bhutan along the border with Tibet.

Laya Gasa trek starts near Paro crosses four Himalayan mountain passes over 4,000m to arrive at the village of Laya, from here we descend to the hot springs at Ghasa then to the Punakha Valley followed by a drive to Thimpu. You will travel through a cross section of Bhutan landscape from picturesque farmland, forests, alpine pastures to high Himalayan passes.

There are superb mountains views of Bhutan’s most impressive peaks including Chomolhari and Jitchu Drake. Along the way you will see a number of Dzongs, these are fortress monasteries located in strategic positions along the Tibet border.

At the start of the trip we organise a visit to Haa valley for two nights in order to help essential acclimatisation before the trek. This valley offers wonderful scenic walk along trails passing through traditional villages and magnificent monasteries. This is

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a beautiful area adorned with pristine alpine forests and still remains one of the least visited areas in the country.

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

You will be met on arrival at Paro airport and driven back to the hotel. Please provide travel plans on booking and we will arrange the pick-up and transfer. A full trek briefing will be given in the afternoon. Please get in touch with us if you like a quote for your flight to Paro (flying from Bangkok, Singapore, Kathmandu and Delhi). **Overnight at hotel in Paro (Meals: L,D).**

### **Day 2. Morning walk to Taktsang monastery known as the Tiger's Nest) (3,120m). In the afternoon we drive to Haa Valley (2,712m) via Chele La (3,780m)- 2 ½ hours driving.**

After breakfast we will organise a walk up to the Taktsang monastery known 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.

After our visit to Taktsang we drive to the Chele La pass and on a clear day there is a view of Mount Chomolhari to the north. Haa Valley is a beautiful area adorned with pristine alpine forests and remains one of the least visited areas in the country. The valley offers wonderful scenic walk along trails passing through beautiful villages and magnificent monasteries. **Overnight at hotel in Haa Valley (Meals: B,L,D).**

### **Day 3. Day walk around Haa valley (2,712m).**

Today there are a number of options for day walks in Haa valley. Most likely we will walk through the lower village of Lechuna and continue down to the Haa Chhu (river) before crossing a wooden bridge. From here we walk up through forest up to the Jamte Gompa. After visiting the 300 year old monastery currently undergoing



renovation after suffering earthquake damage we descend to Chumpa bridge and to Chuma village. **Overnight at hotel in Haa Valley (Meals: B,L,D).**

**Day 4. Drive to Chele La (3,780m) and walk along the ridge for acclimatisation then drive to Paro and onto Shana (2,790m).**

We leave Haa valley and drive up to Chele La where we stop and walk along the ridge for 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 and 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. **Overnight camping (Meals: B,L,D).**

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

From Shana 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. **Overnight camping (Meals: B,L,D).**

**Day 6. Trek to Chomolhari Base Camp (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 Chomolhari Base Camp there is a superb view of Mt Chomolhari next the ruins of an old Dzong that used guard Bhutan against invasions from Tibet. **Overnight camping (Meals: B,L,D).**

**Day 7. Acclimatisation day at Chomolhari Base Camp (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 Jitchu Drake or to walk to the twin lakes at Tsho Phu (4,350m). **Overnight camping (Meals: B,L,D).**

**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. **Overnight camping (Meals: B,L,D).**





**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.

**Overnight camping (Meals: B,L,D).**

**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. **Overnight camping (Meals: B,L,D).**

**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 Jitchu 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. **Overnight camping (Meals: B,L,D).**

**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.

**Overnight camping (Meals: B,L,D).**

**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. **Overnight camping (Meals: B,L,D).**

**Day 14. Trek to Koena (3,240m)- 7 hours walking.**

The trail descends from Laya to the army post at Taksaka, not far from here is the turn off for Lunana whereas we continue along the path towards Punakha. The forest along Mo Chu is lush and you have to ascend over numerous spurs as the trail descends this valley. It is a long walk today to our camp at Koena located before crossing Bale La. If you make good progress the guide may decide to



continue for further 1 ½ hours to a camp located at a place called Chamsa (3,700m). **Overnight camping (Meals: B,L,D).**

**Day 15. Trek to Gasa, cross the Bale La (3,800m)- 6 hours walking.**

From Koena camp it take about 2 ½ hours to ascend the Bale La pass. After the pass and we will soon see the Gasa Dzong perched on a hill overlooking the village. We will camp at the road head for the last night of the trek. If you would like to soak in the hot springs then these are located an hours walk below the village. **Overnight camping (Meals: B,L,D).**

**Day 16. Drive to Punakha for sightseeing- 2 hours driving.**

In the morning we drive down the valley alongside the Mo Chu through Damji and onto Punakha. On the way to your hotel we will visit the impressive Punakha Dzong, this is an impressive building and is located at the confluence of the Pho Chhu (father) and Mo Chhu (mother) rivers in the Punakha valley. This dzong is the second largest in Bhutan and was constructed by Ngawang Namgyal, 1st Zhabdrung Rinpoche, in 1637-38 so it is also the second oldest.

In the afternoon we visit Chimi Lhakang also known as the fertility temple of Bhutan. Lama Drukpa Kunley, who was a highly unorthodox Buddhist saint, deeds form the basis of many local legends blesses the monastery. The temple is fondly regarded by local families as a potent fertility shrine. It takes about 20 minutes to walk across rice fields to reach the temple. **Overnight at hotel in Punakha (Meals: B,L,D).**

**Day 17. Drive to Thimphu over Dochu La (3,050m) and sightseeing.**

Today we leave for Thimphu by driving over the Dochu La pass at an altitude of 3,050m known as one of the finest viewpoints of Eastern Himalaya. On a clear day you can see the peaks Masangang, Tsendagang, Terigang and Gangkar Punsum (the highest unclimbed mountain in the world). On arrival to Dochu La you can get out of the car to admire the view and walk around the 108 chortens marking the summit of the pass. We then descend through beautiful forest into the Punakha Valley at an altitude of 1,350m.

In the afternoon 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. **Overnight at hotel in Thimphu (Meals: B,L,D).**

### **Day 18. Fly back home.**

Transfers to Paro airport for flights back home.

## **YOUR COMPLETE FINANCIAL PROTECTION**

The Mountain Trekking Company Ltd (trading as The Mountain Company) is a fully licensed and bonded tour operator. For flight inclusive packages sold to UK residents these will be covered by our Air Travel Organisers Licence (our ATOL number is 10921). For packages that do not include flights and for packages sold to customers outside of the UK your financial protection is covered by our membership of Association of Bonded Travel Organisers' Trust ("ABTOT"). Our ABTOT membership number is 5365.



Our membership of these organisations means that you can book with us in complete confidence that all monies paid to us for trips are protected.

## **THREAT AND RISK ASSESSMENT**

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

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beyond our control. The ability to work in team is an important aspect of all of our trips.

As a part of our planning process we have performed a detailed threat and risk assessment for our Laya Gasa trek. It is worth pointing out all of our trips have a certain degree of risk, this is of course part of the attraction of adventure travel and why so many people choose to join this type of holiday. However by identifying the potential hazards on Laya Gasa we can assess the level of risk and implement control measures to reduce this happening.

Our full threat and risk assessment for Laya Gasa is available to clients on request. For your information 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.
- ) Severe bad weather and conditions when camping or during the day when walking.
- ) Climatic injuries (dehydration, sun burn, 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 ie. while crossing high passes.
- ) Lightning strike.
- ) Wildlife, pack animals (eg. donkeys or horses) or stray dogs. Pack animals have been known to knock people off the path. Dogs can attack and bite, we advise you discuss rabies vaccination with your doctor.
- ) Earthquake.
- ) Risk of fire in the hotel or lodge.



- ) Endemic local diseases. We advise you discuss vaccinations with your doctor before departure.
- ) Physiological injury such as heart attack, appendicitis, hernia, toothache etc. in a remote area.
- ) Road traffic or flight accident.
- ) Contaminated food and/ or water.

This trip visits a remote area where you are away from normal emergency services and medical facilities. In case of a serious injury requiring hospitalisation 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.

## THE ASSOCIATION OF INDEPENDENT TOUR OPERATORS (“AITO”)

The Mountain Company is a member of the Association of Independent Tour Operators (AITO) and we have agreed to abide by the terms of the AITO Quality Charter.

AITO is the Association for independent and specialist holiday companies. Our member companies, usually owner-managed, strive to create overseas holidays with high levels of professionalism and a shared concern for quality and personal service. The Association encourages the highest standards in all aspects of tour operating. For more information please take a look at <http://www.aito.com/>





# 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 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.

In 2017 the Association of Independent Tour Operators (AITO) launched Project PROTECT in recognition of the important role that destinations play in the future of the travel industry. The aim of this project is to encourage sustainable tourism and to nurture the destinations for tomorrow's travellers. The PROTECT acronym stands for People / Resources / Outreach / Tourism / Environment / Conservation / Tomorrow.

This project is led by Professor Xavier Font of the University of Surrey and each AITO member has to publish an annual pledge and report back at the end of the year on how they got along. To see The Mountain Company's Project PROTECT pledges for 2018 and 2017, please take a look at our [Sustainable Tourism page on AITO website](#).



We work closely with the International Porter Protection Group and abide by their five guidelines for porter protection, their website is at [www.ippg.net](http://www.ippg.net). We also have partnered with Kathmandu Environmental Education Project in Nepal, their website is at [www.keepnepal.org](http://www.keepnepal.org)



# PRACTICAL INFORMATION

## ALTITUDE AND ACCLIMATISATION

Our Laya Gasa 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!
- ) Drink 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.

Please remember even the fittest and healthiest person can develop one of the altitude illnesses: AMS (acute mountain sickness), HACE (high altitude cerebral edema) and/ or HAPE (high altitude pulmonary edema). The symptoms of these illnesses are listed below, if any of these occur when you are on trek please immediately tell your guide.

### **Symptoms of AMS:**

- ) Tiredness
- ) Dizziness
- ) Nausea or if severe, vomiting
- ) Poor sleep

### **Symptoms of HACE:**

- ) Usually preceded by AMS
- ) Like "Severe AMS" also with severe headache unresponsive to painkillers; confusion and physical clumsiness (ataxia).



## Symptoms of HAPE:

- ) Fluid in the lungs: cough, tiredness, breathlessness out of proportion to exercise especially at rest and worse when lying flat.
- ) Often symptoms start later (at night or after 24 to 48 hours at new altitude).
- ) Often occurs without AMS (often no headache)
- ) But you can have AMS and HACE too.

If you have symptoms of altitude illness (AMS, HACE or HAPE) you must not ascend in altitude. If you have HACE or HAPE you must descend to nearest health post (if available) or seek medical help.

If you have only mild symptoms of AMS you should rest, drink fluids, try to eat, keep warm. If symptoms go away then you can go up. If symptoms get worse you have to descend in altitude escorted by one of our guides (someone with altitude illness must never descend alone).

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

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>

## 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.

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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: Hotel Olathang, Silverpine Hotel or Phuentsho Juney Hotel

Haa Valley: Heritage Lodge or Rigsum Resort

Thimphu: Peaceful Resort, Hotel Pedling or Hotel Wangchuk

Punakha/Wangdue: Meri Puensum, Dragon Nest Resort or Damchen Resort

## **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 porters have arranged their loads, they will set off on the trail in the cool of the morning.

After breakfast, probably between 7am and 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. Lunch will be around 11am at a spot by the side of the trail and is prepared for us by the cooks.

There is more walking after lunch and normally you will get into camp by mid to late 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**

While on the trek you will get breakfast with porridge and cereal, toast or chapattis, omelettes and a range of hot drinks. Normally a hot lunch is prepared by the trek crew or on the longer days a pack lunch is provided after breakfast. 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. We also provide a supply of chocolate bars and nuts.

## **CLIMATE AND WEATHER**

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 -12°C.

## CLOTHING AND EQUIPMENT

A list of clothing and equipment for Laya Gasa trek has been included in Appendix below. 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 and Expedition Kit Hire rent out high quality items at competitive prices which would save you the expense of buying. The links to their websites are at <http://www.trekhireuk.com/> and <http://www.expeditionkithire.co.uk>

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. Typically the backpack would be 30 to 40 litres in size.

The rest of your personal equipment packed in a duffel bag or backpack will be carried by a pack animal. **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.



## 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 Bhutan. 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 including high altitude medicine, antibiotics and other medicines. Please get in contact with us if you would like to see the list of medicines contained in our medical kits.

## FLIGHTS

The Mountain Company does not book international flights for our holidays. Instead all package prices are Land Only with services starting from arrival to the destination country.

If you would like help arranging flights then we suggest you contact our partner travel agent, StudentUniverse (ATOL registered) a specialist division of the Flight Centre Travel Group ---> [Get an online quote](#)

## 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.

Please carefully check your insurers' Terms and Conditions in particular you should make sure the following is covered: 1) Activity (i.e touring, trekking or mountaineering) 2) Maximum altitude reached on trek 3) Helicopter evacuation in an emergency.

It is important for you to understand that ultimately the burden of any expense incurred in evacuation and repatriation procedures will be borne by you and that it is your responsibility to pay any costs incurred in respect of any evacuation or for



medical treatment. You should be fully aware of the implications involved in arranging your own travel insurance and understand the limitations and exclusions of your policy.

You should be aware that under certain circumstances, The Mountain Company leader (or our local agent, if no western leader) might instigate rescue proceedings via helicopter (or any other means necessary) in situations of medical emergency without first contacting your insurance company for their approval.

The Mountain Company has arranged travel and trekking insurance for European Union residents with the specialist insurance broker **Campbell Irvine**. Their insurance policy will cover you for most of the trips in our portfolio. However if your trek is classified or graded by The Mountain Company as “**Strenuous**” or “**Challenging**” then you must make sure you select this option when obtaining an online quote for your insurance. Campbell Irvine will not provide insurance cover for any trips classified as “**Mountaineering**”.

**CAMPBELL IRVINE**  
DIRECT TRAVEL INSURANCE

To apply for an online quote through [Campbell Irvine's Direct Travel Insurance](#) website. Should you have any questions regarding the terms and conditions of cover please contact Campbell Irvine on 0207 938 1734 or email [info@campbellirvine.com](mailto:info@campbellirvine.com)

We have [listed on TMC website a comprehensive list of specialist adventure travel insurers](#) that our trekkers from UK, EU and Internationally based have used in the past. Please carefully check their Terms & Conditions prior to purchase. These companies are not necessarily recommended by us so it is your responsibility to ensure you have appropriate coverage.



## 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.

## SUGGESTED READING

- ) Bhutan A Trekker's Guide : Bart Jordans, published by Cicerone
- ) Beneath Blossom Rain: Discovering Bhutan on the Toughest Trek in the World: Kevin Grange
- ) Pocket Guide to the Birds of Bhutan: Grimmett R, Inskipp C & T.
- ) Bhutan, An Illustrated Guide: Françoise Pommaret, Odyssey Guides



# APPENDIX

## CLOTHING AND EQUIPMENT LIST FOR LAYA GASA

For the safety of everyone in the group and to help ensure a successful trek, you are required to have the following items in our clothing and equipment list tailored for Laya Gasa trek.

As a reminder, the weather on this trek will vary season to season and day to day as you ascend to higher elevations. During the first couple of days on Laya Gasa trek you are likely to experience rainy and muddy conditions. You will experience the coldest temperatures in Robulathang (altitude of 4,410m) where overnight lows will be down to around -12°C.

### **Footwear:**

- ) Walking boots. A pair of water repellent boots with ankle support.
- ) Wool and liner socks.
- ) Trainers/sneakers or sandals. Can be used on arrival to camp.

### **Trekking gear for crossing the passes:**

- ) Two trekking poles (Black Diamond poles with “Flick Lock” are best). Having two poles is mandatory as required for your safety on steep and loose sections of the trail and for walking through deep snow higher up.
- ) Kahtoola Microspikes or YakTrax XTRs. These are for your safety and security when descending passes if snowy or icy conditions, for more information please take a look at: <https://kahtoola.com/product/microspikes/> and <https://www.yaktrax.com/product/xtr>
- ) Gaiters. A pair of knee high gaiters used to keep boots dry if walking through deep snow or on wet/ muddy ground.

**Clothing:**

- ) Waterproof jacket and trousers (goretex or similar). For use if it rains or snows during the trek.
- ) Trekking trousers. Minimum two pairs of trousers.
- ) Long sleeve synthetic shirt. Minimum two shirts.
- ) Micro fleece.
- ) Mid to heavyweight fleece.
- ) Sleeveless/ gilet or body warmer type fleece. This will help keep your core warm while not bulking when layering up. Gilet fleece can be used in combination with base layers, other fleeces and down jacket to provide maximum warmth and insulation.
- ) Thermals or baselayer for top & bottom (merino wool or synthetic).
- ) Fleece pants. To be worn around camp or added as an additional layer when the temperatures start to drop higher up.
- ) Medium weight down jacket (eg. The North Face Nuptse jacket 700 fill).

**Handwear:**

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

**Headwear:**

- ) Wool or fleece hat.
- ) Sun hat.
- ) Bandana or scarf (eg. Buff Headwear check out <http://www.buffwear.com>).
- ) Headtorch. Bring extra batteries.
- ) Sunglasses. The lenses need to be Category 4 rated and should have side protection or wraparound design to prevent light getting through to your eyes that could cause sun blindness.





### **Personal Equipment:**

- ) Sleeping bag. Maximum overnight lows at Chomolhari Base Camp will be around -12 Celsius.
- ) Fleece or silk liner for your sleeping bag. A liner protects your sleeping bag from getting dirty and helps by adding extra insulation to keep you warm at night.
- ) Sleeping mat (eg. Thermarest). Please note we do not provide a mat for our Bhutan treks.
- ) Daypack. Recommended size is 30 to 40 litres as you need to have enough space to carry water bottles, camera, snacks and extra clothing as well as micro spikes, trekking poles and down jacket for days crossing the high passes. It is also a good idea to bring a pack 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).
- ) Pee bottle. Highly recommended as means you do not have to get up to find toilet tent at night! For men you can use an old water bottle for women take a look at SheWee at <http://www.shewee.com/>
- ) Sunscreen and lipsalve with a high SPF.
- ) Insect repellent.
- ) Water purification tablets (Pristine, Biox Acqua or Acqa Mira). You will be provided with boiled water at camp however if you refill water bottle at a water tap or steam during the day you should use water purifiers.
- ) Favourite snack food.
- ) Books, ipod and cards etc.
- ) Umbrella (you are quite likely to get some rain on this trek....)
- ) Camera with spare batteries and memory cards.



- ) Insurance certificate.
- ) Earplugs (optional).
- ) Baby wipes (optional).
- ) Hand sanitizer. We suggest you keep this in your day pack for use after a toilet break during the trek or before eating any snacks.

### **Travelling:**

- ) Duffle bag or large backpack for your personal gear on the trek (carried by a pack animal). Bring a small combination padlock to secure the bag.
- ) Travel clothes. You will need casual clothing for air travel days and time spent in Paro and Thimphu.
- ) Toiletry bag include toilet paper, soap, towel, toothbrush, etc. We provide toilet paper so you do not need to bring this with you.

### **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).