

# Chomolhari Base Camp



**TRIP TYPE:** Trekking  
**TRIP GRADE:** Demanding  
**TRIP STYLE:** Camping

**TRIP LEADER:** Local Leader  
**GROUP SIZE:** 2 - 10 people  
**NEXT DEPARTURE:** 18 Apr 2021

This trek has superb views of Mt. Chomolhari and Mt. Jitchu Drake and includes crossing of high passes of Nyile La (4,890m) and Yale La (4,930m).

Mount Chomolhari at 7,134m is the second highest peak in Bhutan lying on the northern border with Tibet. The trek to Chomolhari Base Camp traverses beautiful and varied country and after a day acclimatising and exploring around Base Camp we cross a high mountain pass to reach the Camp below Lingshi Dzong. This is a monastery and fortress built by the first ruler of Bhutan to defend against a Tibet invasion, the Dzong has a superb location on a hill overlooking Lingshi village.

From Lingshi the route crosses another Himalayan pass as we start the trek south back to Bhutan's capital, Thimphu. At this pass we are rewarded with stunning views of Jitchu Drake (6,900m) and Chomolhari as well as many un-named and un-mapped peaks along the Bhutan - 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 a beautiful area adorned with pristine alpine forests and still remains one of the least visited areas in the country.

## REASONS TO CHOOSE US

- We are Himalayan trekking specialists and we have been operating trips in Bhutan for many years. Roland Hunter, owner and founder of The Mountain Company, has modified this itinerary based on his first-hand experience of Chomolhari Base Camp.

- Our approach to organising trips in the Himalayas has helped The Mountain Company win awards such as 2018 Gold Award as AITO Tour Operator of the Year and 2015 Bronze Award as AITO Tour Operator of the Year.
- Our Chomolhari Base Camp itinerary has been designed based on first-hand experience which is the best in terms of acclimatisation, safety and enjoyment. Unlike most other itineraries we now include one night in Paro and two nights in Haa Valley before starting the trek for essential acclimatisation.
- We have chosen the optimal times of year to complete this trek in Spring and Autumn seasons. If one starts later in Autumn/ Fall or earlier in Spring season there is a high chance of the passes into will be blocked by winter snows.
- The Mountain Company will receive bespoke weather forecasts from EverestWeather.com and from our in house forecasting throughout the duration of this trek.
- 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. We use GPS on Thuraya satellite phone to upload daily your location on to Google Maps so your friends and family can track your progress during the trek.
- There will be a range of tasty meals for breakfast, lunch and supper. We give everyone in the group one chocolate or muesli bar per day (Mars, Twix, Bounty etc) and also provide biscuits at tea time. For breakfast every morning we provide fresh coffee from our Bialetti Moka coffee machine.
- We bring a comprehensive first aid kit plus high altitude medicine, antibiotics and other medicines. There will also be a portable altitude chamber (PAC or Gamow bag).
- Pre trip support will be given by our Operations team with first hand knowledge of Chomolhari Base Camp trek.

## WHAT'S INCLUDED

- 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 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.

## WHAT'S NOT INCLUDED

- 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".

## ITINERARY

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

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Arrive in Paro

Sightseeing in Paro

Lunch and Dinner

Hotel Olathang in Paro

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).

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

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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 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.

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

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Day walk in Haa Valley

Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Risum Resort in Haa Valley

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.

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

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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 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.

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

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Walking for 9km (6 to 7 hours)

Walking ascent 895m

Walking descent 175m

Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Camping

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.

## **DAY 6: TREK TO CHOMOLHARI BASE CAMP (4,080M)**

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Walking for 13km (5 hours)

Walking ascent 530m

Walking descent 65m

Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Camping

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 CHOMOLHARI BASE CAMP (4,080M)**

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Day walk

Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Camping

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)**

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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, 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 SHODU (4,080M) CROSSING YALE LA (4,930M)**

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Walking 18km (8 to 9 hours)

Walking ascent 940m

Walking descent 920m

Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Camping

This is the most challenging day on the trek as we cross the Yale La pass at 4,930m, from the pass there are fantastic views of the eastern Himalayas.

## **DAY 10: TREK TO BARSHONG (3,710M)**

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Walking 17km (5 to 6 hours)

Walking ascent 250m

Walking descent 670m

Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Camping

The trail starts by crossing the river and carries on under dramatic yellow cliffs including several meditation caves. After descending a steep stone staircase we come down to the river where it then crosses several times through cypress forest in a narrow valley.

The route climbs to Barshong where there is a ruined dzong and a few other buildings. It is possible to camp here though it is not ideal due to the site being in a swampy meadow, most groups prefer to continue to a camp another 1 ½ hours further along the river.

## DAY 11: TREK TO DOLAMKOINCHO (3,320M)

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Walking 10.5km (4 to 5 hours)

Walking ascent 290m

Walking descent 640m

Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Camping

The trail descends through forest of rhododendron, birch and conifers then steeply on a rocky trail to Wang Chhu. After ½ hour walking through larch forest we enter a clearing called Ta Gume Thang which is translated as Waiting for Horses. Most groups will camp here or a little further on at Dom Shisa instead of Barshong.

The trail stays on the left hand side of the river and climbs over ridges and side valleys. After a steeper climb followed by a path through rhododendron forests the trail descends to Dolamkoincho, the camp in a meadow at 3320m. There is also an option to bypass Dolamkoincho by continue a little further along to Dodina.

## DAY 12: TREK TO ROAD HEAD THEN DRIVE TO THIMPHU

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Walking 5km (3 hours)

Walking ascent 500m

Walking descent 930m

Drive to Thimphu (2 hours)

Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Gyelsa Boutique Inn in Thimphu

Today is mainly downhill, we will take a stop at Dodina and visit the monasteru of Cheri. This monastery was built by Bhutan's first ruler, Ngawang Namgyal, and many Thimphu monks begin their religious life here. We are met at the roadhead and drive back to the hotel in Thimphu.

## DAY 13: SIGHTSEEING IN THIMPHU

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Sightseeing in Thimphu

Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Gyelsa Boutique Inn in Thimphu

Today you will explore Thimphu with a Bhutanese guide, this might included the Tashichodzong, the National library, the pottery and silversmith's workshops, the late King's Memorial Chorten, the School of Painting, the Heritage Museum, the Textiles Museum, the paper factory and the Swiss bakery! In the evening you will drive back to Paro.

## DAY 14: FLY BACK HOME

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Fly home

Breakfast

Transfers to airport for flight back home.

## DATES & PRICES

### 2021

Dates	Trip Leader	Price	Single Supplement: Room/Tent	Availability
18 Apr 2021 to 01 May 2021	Local Leader	US\$3,295pp	NA / US\$200pp	2 Left to Guarantee
03 Oct 2021 to 16 Oct 2021	Local Leader	US\$3,295pp	NA / US\$200pp	2 Left to Guarantee

### 2022

Dates	Trip Leader	Price	Single Supplement: Room/Tent	Availability
17 Apr 2022 to 30 Apr 2022	Local Leader	US\$3,295pp	NA / US\$200pp	2 Left to Guarantee
02 Oct 2022 to 15 Oct 2022	Local Leader	US\$3,295pp	NA / US\$200pp	2 Left to Guarantee

## PRACTICAL INFORMATION

A Typical Day On Camping Trek

### A TYPICAL DAY ON CAMPING TREK

The day starts with an early morning mug of tea brought to your tent by one of the assistant guides. Before heading over to the mess tent for breakfast you will 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 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 6-7pm. After supper the international 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 provided on Camping Trek

While on the trek, the cook will provide good quality food in sufficient quantities. For breakfast you are likely to get porridge or cereal, toast or chapatis, omelettes and a range of hot drinks. For our camping treks in Nepal we provide fresh coffee from our Bialetti Moka coffee machine. On arrival to camp in the afternoon you will be given tea and biscuits and a three course meal will follow later in the evening.

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.

Clothing and Equipment List

## CLOTHING AND EQUIPMENT LIST FOR CHOMOLHARI BASE CAMP

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 Chomolhari Base Camp 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 Chomolhari Base camp trek you are likely to experience rainy and muddy conditions. You will experience the coldest temperatures in Jangthang (altitude of 4,080m) where overnight lows can get down to around -12°C.

Each trekker should bring one backpack for gear 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 maximum weight allowance for back pack is 5kg.** The rest of your personal equipment packed in a duffel or kit bag will be carried by a porter. **The maximum weight allowance for your duffel bag is 15kg.** Please ensure that your bag is marked clearly on the outside for easy identification.

We suggest you 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.
- Wool and liner socks.
- Trainers/sneakers or sandals. Can be used in camp/lodge in the evenings.

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>
- 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 shirts (not cotton). 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 base layer 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 Nuptse jacket by The North Face)

#### 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>)
- Bring extra batteries.
- 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.
- Recommended size is 30 to 40 litres as you need to have enough space to carry water bottles, camera, snacks and extra clothing such as down jacket etc. 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- drybags such as from Exped.
- 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.
- 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 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).

Threat and risk assessment

## **THREAT AND RISK ASSESSMENT FOR CHOMOLHARI BASE CAMP**

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. 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 Chomolhari Base Camp 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 Chomolhari Base Camp we can assess the level of risk and implement control measures to reduce this happening.

Our full threat and risk assessment for Chomolhari Base Camp 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.

Weather and climate

## **WEATHER AND CLIMATE FOR CHOMOLHARI BASE CAMP**

Chomolhari Base Camp 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.

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.

## ACCOMMODATION

### HOTEL OLATHANG IN PARO



Hotel Olathang is located amidst 28 acres of blue pine forest on a hill overlooking Paro valley. This hotel is designed in traditional Bhutanese style and was established in 1974 for the guests invited to the coronation of the Fourth King of Bhutan.

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

## **GYELSA BOUTIQUE INN IN THIMPHU**



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

The hotel has 6 suites and 12 twin rooms where the furniture is carved out of Himalayan wood and made in Bhutan. Every room has access to high speed wireless internet connectivity. Other facilities include a restaurant, bar and café.

## CAMPING IN BHUTAN



We use A frame tents in Bhutan, these sturdy tents work well with the conditions often experienced in Bhutan and are waterproof plus have ample head room inside.

Notes downloaded on: 06-07-2020

