



HAA VALLEY PILGRIMS



COUNTRIES VISITED: **BHUTAN**

TRIP TYPE: Trekking
TRIP GRADE: Demanding
TRIP STYLE: Camping
NAN Based On 0 Reviews
KG Carbon Footprint

TRIP LEADER: Local Leader
GROUP SIZE: 2 - 10 people
NEXT DEPARTURE: 05 Oct 2022
12 Trees Planted for each Booking

Haa Valley Pilgrims is a six day Himalayan trek in a remote region of Bhutan. There are superb views of high peaks including Mount Chomolhari and Mount Kanchenjunga. We walk with Buddhist pilgrims to the sacred lake at Nub Tshona Patta.

Haa Valley Pilgrims trek follows a trail used by pilgrims up to the Nub Tshona Pata lake. We cross high passes with spectacular views of Mount Chomolhari (7,134m) and Mount Jitchu Drake (6,900m). We also see the third highest peak in the world, Mount Kanchenjunga at an elevation of 8,586m.

In 2019 we sent our leader, [Ade Summers](#), on reconnaissance to the Nub Tshona Patta trek in Haa Valley. We designed this itinerary based on his feedback and suggestions. Ade had a wonderful trek and came back full of excitement about this trek as well as [Dagana & Lawagu trek](#) in Bhutan.

This is a camping style trek where you sleep in a tent for every night of the hike. All treks in Bhutan are camping as there are no lodges like in Nepal. Other shorter camping treks in Bhutan include [Druk Path](#) and [Kitiphu Ridge](#).

We include several days in this itinerary visiting Bhutan's main cultural sites. Before the trek you will explore Paro Valley with a walk to Taktsang or 'Tiger's Nest' monastery. After the trek we explore Thimphu.

In Haa Valley we visit the Lhakhang Karpo (black temple) and Lhakhang Nagpo (white temple). They are among 108 monasteries built in one day during the 7th Century by a Tibetan king, Songtsen Gampo.

REASONS TO CHOOSE US

- In November 2019 [Adrian \(Ade\) Summers](#) went on a reconnaissance trek for us. We have set up Haa Valley Pilgrim trek based on his experience and feedback.
- We are Himalayan trekking specialists having operated trips in Bhutan for many years. We have organised over ten successful Lunana Snowman treks.
- Our Haa trek itinerary is the best for acclimatisation, safety and enjoyment.
- 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.
- 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 provide a range of tasty meals for breakfast, lunch and supper. We give everyone in the group a chocolate or muesli bar per day. For breakfast we provide fresh coffee from our Bialetti Moka coffee machine.
- We bring a comprehensive medical aid kit.
- Our team with first hand knowledge of this trek provides pre trip support.

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, 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.
- 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 (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

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 Haa Valley 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)

Walking for 9km (4 hours)

Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Hotel Olathang in Paro

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. This is a good opportunity to stretch your legs after your travels to Bhutan. In the afternoon we will visit more of the important sites of the Paro valley and have time to explore the town.

DAY 3: DRIVE TO HAA VALLEY (2,712M) VIA CHELE LA (3,780M) AND IN AFTERNOON SIGHTSEEING

Drive to Haa Valley (2 1/2 hours)

Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Risum Resort in Haa Valley

It is a scenic 3 to 4 hour drive through the Bhutanese countryside and over Chele La pass to the Haa Valley. This is a beautiful area adorned with pristine alpine forests and monasteries. Haa Valley remains one of the least visited areas in the country.

In the afternoon we explore the valley. We will visit the Lhakhang Karpo (black temple) and Lhakhang Nagpo (white temple). The valley has beautiful villages, farmland and pine forests.

DAY 4: DAY WALK IN HAA VALLEY (2,712M)

Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Risum Resort in Haa Valley

We spend two nights in Haa valley and have a day walk today to help acclimatisation to high altitude. There are several options for day walks in Haa valley. One of the most popular is the walk through the lower village of Lechuna. We 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 we descend to Chumpa bridge and to Chuma village.

DAY 5: DRIVE TO JANA DIANKHA MONASTERY AND TREK TO TSO KAM (3,632M)

Drive to Jana Diankha monastery (1/2 hour)

Walking 4km (3 hours)

Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Camping

After breakfast we drive for ½ hour along a track to reach the Jana Diankha monastery. We can take our time to visit the monastery and walk around their beautiful garden. We meet the trek crew and start the trek. For our first day we have an easy start with only 3 hours walking. Take your time and enjoy the views along the way.

From the monastery we follow a yak herders' trail through the larch and conifer forest. There are also rhododendron trees and flowers. There is a steady ascent to reach our first campsite at the dry lake at Tso Kam. The local legend is that the Protector Spirit of the lake has moved to another place. This is a beautiful campsite in a meadow of flowers surrounded by trees. Look out for the Himalayan Monal pheasant as these colourful birds are often seen here.

DAY 6: TREK TO WANGITHANG (3,632M)

Walking 7.5km (5 to 6 hours walking)

Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Camping

After our first night in a tent, we rise early to see the early morning sun rising over the ridge. After breakfast, we set off and soon meet the same trail from yesterday. We continue our ascent through the forest of larch, pine and silver birch. After approximately 1 to 1 ½ hours we come out of the forest onto a ridge covered with prayer flags. From here there are spectacular views of the Himalaya mountains. We can see the peaks of Mount Chomolhari, Mount Tshering Gang and Mount Jitchu Drake. It is well worth taking a rest at this beautiful view point on the Choza La at a height of 3,907m.

From the pass we follow the trail traversing the ridge for a short while. We ascend through juniper bushes to cross the 4,000m mark. The trail on the right is an old trade route with Tibet no longer used these days. A short distance further up the ridge is our lunch spot on the Tsabjo La pass at 4,107m. We have more with spectacular views of Mount Chomolhari and adjacent peaks. There are often blue sheep grazing on the upper slopes of this pass. It is a further 2 hours down through the forest and crossing a few small rivers to our campsite at Wangithang (3,632m). On the way we will pass herds of yaks grazing in the upper pastures.

DAY 7: TREK TO NUB TSHONA PATTA LAKE (4,189M)

Walking 9.5km (6 to 7 hours)

Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Camping

Today is a tougher but very rewarding day. We gain height and get spectacular views as we cross three

Himalayan passes. We start off by ascending through the forest of pine and rhododendron trees for about 1 ½ to 2 hours. We gain a ridge with the glorious valleys intertwined below. After another ¾ hour or so we get to our first pass of the day, Wangchela Pass at 4,192m. We enjoy fine views of Mount Chomolhari.

From the pass we descend 100m before climbing back up to our second pass Tsho Jung La at 4,287m . From the top there are distant views of the India and Tibet border. There is another climb up to 4,443m to cross Tsho La Pass, this is our third and final pass that we cross today. It is a further ½ hour to our campsite near the Holy lake of Nub Tshona Patta. It is likely that we will share our campsite with some pilgrims on our route. After arriving at camp we can join the pilgrims at the lake who have walked here to pay homage to the local deity.

DAY 8: TREK TO RINGONA LAKE (3,986M)

Walking 8.5km (6 to 7 hours)

Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Camping

Today we cross two valleys to reach our campsite beside Ringona Lake. From camp we ascend up to the Dong Kacheydo pass at 4,156m. We get spectacular views of Mount Kanchenjunga. This is the border peak of Eastern Nepal and India. Descending into the valley we can see the second pass from yesterday's walk. We may see more pilgrims on the route. Climbing back out of this valley we have a high altitude lunch with a view of the yaks grazing in the pastures. From this morning's campsite to our lunch spot takes about 3 to 3 ½ hours.

After lunch we descend back down and cross the valley to a significant ridge line. We hike through a beautiful pine and fir forest before emerging on the shore of Ringona Thso (Lake). Our campsite is a further 15 minutes on the other side.

DAY 9: TREK TO TSHO TSHO KHA (4,157M)

Walking 8.5km (6 hours)

Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Camping

We leave camp on a trail with the lake on our right. We ascend uphill heading for a saddle with a big rock covered with prayer flags. We head up the valley staying to the left and climb up to what looks like another saddle or pass. This leads into a hanging valley which we follow to another pass with a rock cairn. This place is Ringona Tsho La pass at 4,274m and takes about 2 ½ hours from our campsite at Ringona Lake. To your right the black rotten peak is Nakula (Black Mountain). If you look up the far ridge on the right you will see three stone cairns with prayer flags. This is your next pass.

We traverse to the right and gaining height. It takes about 1 hour to get to this pass, called Yockta La pass at 4,426m. There are more views of Mount Chomolhari and Mount Jitchu Drake. A good place to have lunch is after the pass where it is more protected from the wind. It takes about 3 hours from our camp at Ringona Lake to this pass. From the pass follow the trail down and around a cliff face. There is a tricky trail in places but after about 30-40 mins you pick up a good trail. Looking across the valley you see tonight's camp on the other side above the ridge with the landslide scar.

There is then a series of large ridges and gullies to traverse. This is an enjoyable high and open trail. After another 2 hours you come around the last ridge and then you see the campsite at Tsho Tsho Kha at 4,157m. This place is set in a wonderful location with spectacular views.

DAY 10: TREK TO DAMDHANG VILLAGE AND DRIVE TO THIMPHU

Walking 9km (5 hours walking)

Drive to Thimphu (2 1/2 hours)

Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Gyelsa Boutique Inn in Thimphu

Today is our last walking day on the trek. From camp we follow the trail from yesterday heading for the large stone cairn with flags. During our reconnaissance trek in November 2019 we saw a large herd of blue sheep that walked above us. After the ridge with the cairn and prayer flag head for the obvious saddle on your left. This takes 45 minutes or so. Stay high on your left for great views of Mount Chomolhari. You will notice that the valley and pass to your right is the route from Day 3 of the trek. Keep traversing left for better views of the mountains and Tatung village below.

The trail descends into the trees on your left and then on a rocky zigzag trail. After 20 minutes you drop to a saddle with pray flags and you are below 4,000m. Again this is the first pass from Tso Kam camp on Day 3. We follow the trail in the forest to have lunch at our camp from the second night of the trek. From Tso Kam camp lunch spot we pick up the trail back to the monastery. After about 10 minutes take a smaller less defined trail to the left (look for an arrow and circle sign carved in a tree). This trail descends for 1 to 1 ½ hours through the forest and is muddy in places. You then pick up a track which you follow for 30mins to arrive at a beautiful meadow. This is a campsite called Chana Phu at 3,000m.

From Chana Phu we walk for an hour to the road. We continue to the village of Damdhang village where we meet our transport. We can look around the village and say farewells to our horsemen and trek crew. We drive to Thimphu on a scenic road that takes about 2 ½ hours.

DAY 11: SIGHTSEEING IN THIMPHU

Sightseeing in Thimphu

Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Gyelsa Boutique Inn in Thimphu

Today we have a full day of sightseeing in Thimphu. There are many options of places to visit with your guide. We visit the Tashichho Dzong and the large Shakyamuni Buddha statue overlooking town. It is also worth taking time to explore the town centre. We can see the Clock Tower square and Changlimithang Stadium. There are lots of shops, restaurants and cafes.

DAY 12: FLY BACK HOME

Flight home

Breakfast

Transfer to Paro airport for flight home.

DATES & PRICES**2022**

Dates	Trip Leader	Price	Single Supplement: Room/ Tent	Availability
05 Oct 2022 to 16 Oct 2022	Local Leader	US\$2,995pp	NA / US\$125pp	2 Left to Guarantee
26 Oct 2022 to 06 Nov 2022	Local Leader	US\$2,995pp	NA / US\$125pp	2 Left to Guarantee
09 Nov 2022 to 20 Nov 2022	Local Leader	US\$2,995pp	NA / US\$125pp	2 Left to Guarantee

2023

Dates	Trip Leader	Price	Single Supplement: Room/ Tent	Availability
05 Apr 2023 to 16 Apr 2023	Local Leader	US\$2,995pp	NA / US\$125pp	2 Left to Guarantee
26 Apr 2023 to 07 May 2023	Local Leader	US\$2,995pp	NA / US\$125pp	2 Left to Guarantee
04 Oct 2023 to 15 Oct 2023	Local Leader	US\$2,995pp	NA / US\$125pp	2 Left to Guarantee
25 Oct 2023 to 05 Nov 2023	Local Leader	US\$2,995pp	NA / US\$125pp	2 Left to Guarantee
08 Nov 2023 to 19 Nov 2023	Local Leader	US\$2,995pp	NA / US\$125pp	2 Left to Guarantee

2024

Dates	Trip Leader	Price	Single Supplement: Room/ Tent	Availability
03 Apr 2024 to 14 Apr 2024	Local Leader	US\$2,995pp	NA / US\$125pp	2 Left to Guarantee
24 Apr 2024 to 05 May 2024	Local Leader	US\$2,995pp	NA / US\$125pp	2 Left to Guarantee
02 Oct 2024 to 13 Oct 2024	Local Leader	US\$2,995pp	NA / US\$125pp	2 Left to Guarantee
23 Oct 2024 to 03 Nov 2024	Local Leader	US\$2,995pp	NA / US\$125pp	2 Left to Guarantee
06 Nov 2024 to 17 Nov 2024	Local Leader	US\$2,995pp	NA / US\$125pp	2 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 HAA 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 Haa 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 Nub Tshona Patta at an altitude of 4,189m. Overnight lows here will be down to around -10 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 15kg.** 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.

Head and Gloves

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

Personal equipment

- Sleeping bag. Overnight lows down to -10 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.
- 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.
- 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 2 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 HAA VALLEY 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 our Dhaulagiri Circuit trek. 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 we assess the level of risk. We have control measures in places 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 the group.
- Severe bad weather and conditions when camping.
- 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 or lodge.
- 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 HAA VALLEY

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.

Haa Pilgrim 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 2,000m 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 -10°C.

The time of year is important to increase the chances of completing the journey. The optimal time in Autumn season is to start in October. The monsoon should be winding down although the exact date varies year to year. In the Spring season we start in April. 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: Grimmitt R, Inskipp C & T.

Bhutan, An Illustrated Guide: Françoise Pommaret, Odyssey Guides

Maps

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

Cultural information

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.

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.

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.

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.

Notes downloaded on: 12-08-2022

