

SNOWMAN TREK WITH GANKHAR PHUNSUM EXTENSION

Day 01. Arrive at Paro: Arrive Paro by Druk air flight. During this flight, one will experience breathtaking views of Mt. Everest, Kanchenjunga and other Himalayan peaks including the sacred Jhomolhari and Mt. Jichu Drakey in Bhutan. On arrival at Paro you will be received by your representative from Dragon Adventures. The drive to the hotel through Paro valley is enchanting. Overnight at hotel in Paro.

Day 02. Paro Sightseeing: After breakfast drive the winding road northwest up the Pachu to the Drugyal Dzong, the ruined fort which once defended this valley from the Tibetan invasions. It was built by Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal to commemorate the victory over the Tibetan invaders in 1644; the dzong name's means indeed "Victorious Druk." The Dzong was used as an administrative center until 1951 when a fire caused by a butter lamp destroyed it. Then visit Kyichu Lhakhang, one of Bhutan's oldest and most sacred monasteries dating from the introduction of Buddhism in the 8th century and Rimpung Dzong (Paro Dzong) built in 1646 by Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyal. The Dzong presently houses administrative offices. After lunch we tour the Ta dzong, an ancient watchtower, which has been, since 1967, the national museum of Bhutan. Dinner and overnight at the hotel in Paro.

Day 03. Paro – Shana (Start of Trek): (Distance 14 kms. Time 5/6 hrs. Altitude 2,820 m, 9,250 ft) Our trek to Shana starts at Drukgyal Dzong. Following the Paro River we pass cultivated fields and tiny picturesque villages. The forests are alive with numerous birds and brightly colored butterflies. Overnight at camp Shana.

Day 04. Shana – Thangthangka: (Distance 21 kms. Time 7/8 hrs. Altitude 3610 m, 11,850 f) The trail follows the river through a heavily forested area with a few isolated farmhouses. It narrows, closes in and winds up and down along the drainage. We pass a junction enroute, where another path leads north over the Tremo La to Tibet. Camp is in a meadow with a stone shelter.

Day 05. Thangthangka – Jangothang: (Distance 15 kms. Time 5/6 hrs. Altitude 4,115 m, 13,500 ft) In the morning after passing a small army post, the trail slowly leaves the forest line and gradually climbs into a beautiful valley, through Tegethang, a winter home of yak herdsman. Lunch will be served in one of these huts. Lots of yaks will be seen today before we arrive at the Jhomolhari base camp. High mountains overlook the camp and visible nearby are the ruins of an old fortress used to guard Bhutan against Tibetan invasions.

Day 06. Jangothang (Acclimatization): A rest day. A chance to acclimatize and walk to the Jhomolhari glacier or to the lakes in the opposite direction.

Day 07. Jangothang – Lingshi: (Distance 17 kms. Time 6/7 hrs. Altitude 4,700 m, 15,400 ft) The trail follows the stream for half an hour and crosses a bridge to the right side. As we start the climb up to the first ridge there are breathtaking views of Jhomolhari, Jichu Drakey and Tsrimey Ghang. Then it's down towards the valley, almost flat for a while, until a climb to the Nyeley La pass.. After the pass there is a gradual descent to the Lingshi camp, while you can enjoy the panoramic view of the peaks and Lingshi Dzong.

Day 08. Lingshi – Chebisa: (Distance 12 kms. Time 4/5 hrs. Altitude 3,780 m, 12,400 ft) Walk past the Lingshi Dzong, perched on the hilltop with a commanding view of green hills, the winding river and magnificent peaks. This is a very easy day and a pleasant walk through villages and yak herders camps. Lunch will be at scenic Goyuna village. After lunch, a short walk will take us to Chebisa Village. We camp here by the side of stream.

Day 09. Chebisa – Shomuthang: (Distance 17 km. Time 7/8 hrs. Altitude 4,500 m, 14,800 ft) Today begins with a stiff climb up a ridge to Gubula pass taking nearly four hours to the top. After the pass we descend to a lunch spot, through a forest of rhododendron. In the afternoon we continue along the up and down path, crossing the stream, through rhododendron forests and yak herders camps. You may see herds of Blue Sheep now and then. Arrive at camp in Shomuthang.

Day 10. Shomuthang – Robluthang: (Distance 22 km. Time 7/8 hrs. Altitude 4,640 m, 15,200 ft) The trek starts with a climb to Jari La pass. Then we descend to Tsharijathang Valley, the summer residence of the rare Himalayan Takin (national animal of Bhutan). From here we may have to cross the stream and get wet, as most of the time the foot bridge is washed away. After crossing the stream, the trail ascends till we reach Robluthang camp.

Day 11. Robluthang - Lemithang: (Distance 18 kms. Time 6/7 hrs. Altitude 4,870 m, 16,000 ft) This is one of the hardest days of the trek. We climb slowly up to Shinchela La and are rewarded with stunning views of mountains, including the spectacular Gang Chen Ta at the head of the valley. On a clear day practically all the mountains on the northern border are visible. Eagles, griffin vultures, blue sheep and yaks abound in this area. We descend down to camp on a lovely spot by the riverbank.

Day 13. Lemithang – Laya: (Distance 10 kms. Time 4/5 hrs. Altitude 3,880 m, 12,700 ft) We walk along the river, one of the tributaries of the Mochu and through a forest of rhododendron and silver fir and then enter the village of Laya. The people of Laya are famous for their vertical stripe yak hair clothing and their strange conical bamboo hats. The women wear their hair long and with much turquoise and jade jewelry. The features of the people are more Tibetan/ Mongolian than the Bhutanese who live in the central valleys. The rest of the day is spent at leisure or visiting village houses and mixing with the villagers. There are good views of the Masagang and the other peaks.

Day 13. Rest day at Laya: Explore around the village. You can go and visit any of the houses around. By tradition one can go to any house without an invitation. A cup of tea or Chang (local drink) is always offered. The people in this village are very interesting with a unique dress, language and ornaments.

Day 14: Laya – Rhodophu: (Distance 19 kms. Time 7/8 hrs. Altitude 4,350 m, 14,300 ft) From Laya descend to army camp and continue following the river till the turn off point to Rhodophu. After lunch continue the climb through rhododendron bushes until the camp.

Day 15. Rhodophu – Tarina: (Distance 18 kms. Time 10/11 hrs. Altitude 5,080 m, 16,500 ft) This is the longest day of the trip and therefore very essential to start early. We start at 5 am by climbing to Tsimola La. After crossing the first pass and at the little summit one can have a superb view of Lunana, Jumolhari and Jichu Drake. This path is

flat for another four hours till the climb to Gangla Karchula pass. The view from the pass is breathtaking. The whole range of mountains, including Masagang, Tsendegang, Teri Gang can be seen, after the pass there is a very long descent to Tarina valley.

Day 16. Tarina – Woche: (Distance 17 kms. Time 6/7 hrs. Altitude 3,800 m, 12,500 ft) This day is much easier as the path follows the river down the valley. Lunch at the lowest point (3500m). After lunch climb to the village of Woche.

Day 17. Woche – Lhedi: (Distance 17 kms. Time 7/8 hrs. Altitude 4,480 m, 14,500 ft) The Trek starts through juniper and fir forests and then through rhododendron bushes. We climb up to Keche La pass where one can have a great view of the mountains. After the pass, descend to the river walking through a village with stunning views of Table Mountain and others. Follow the river, one of the main source of Phochu, till Lhedi village.

Day 18. Lhedi – Thanza: (Distance 15 kms. Time 7/8 hrs. Altitude 4,000 m, 13,000 ft) The trek continues following the river, rising gradually to Choejong village. After lunch visit the Choejong Dzong and continue towards the wide valley. Cross a bridge to reach Thanza camp.

Day 19. Thanza – Tsorim: (Distance 18 kms. Time 8/9 hrs. Altitude 5,150 m, 16,900 ft.) The trek starts with climb up to the ridge with great view of the Table Mountain and Thanza valley below. The ridge rises gradually to a foot bridge. After lunch walk up towards the left side of the bridge enjoying the views of the snow peaked mountains. Then we climb up ridge after ridge until we reach the camp at Tsorim.

Day 20. Tshorim - Gangkar Puensum base camp: (Distance 16 kms. Time 6/7 hrs. Altitude 5,230 m, 17,150 ft) This is the highest of the trip. We start the day with a short climb to the Tshorim Lake. Walk on the side of the lake enjoying the panoramic views of the Gophula ranges. The last climb to Gophula pass is very short. After the pass descend to the base camp walking along the ridge. Enjoy the great view of Gangkar Puensum. Those with a lot of energy can divert to the left side to climb up the Pyramid Peak for better view. Others can go down to the base camp nearly Sha Chu.

Day 21: Rest day at the base camp, enjoy the great view.

Day 22. Base camp - Geshe woma: (Distance 17 kms. Time 6/8 hrs. Altitude 4,200 m, 13,800 ft.) Time to leave the beautiful mountains, but the trek is far from over. The path follows the Sha Chu and descends gradually to Geshe woma.

Day 23. Geshe Woma – Warathang: (Distance 18 kms. Time 8/9 hrs. Altitude 4,800 m, 15,700 ft.) The path continues following Shachu for two and a half hours until the stiff climb to Sakala begins. Visibility along the Sakala trail is poor so one must watch the top of the ridge for guidance. Lunch nearby a yak herder's camp. After lunch climb up to Sakala pass then descend to lakes followed by a short ascent to Wartangle pass. The scenery once again is stunning with small lakes and mountain peaks.

Day 24. Warathang - Dur Tsachu: (Distance 12 kms. Time 5 hrs. Altitude 4,400 m, 14,500 ft.) First there is a short half hour climb to Je Li La. After the pass descend to the riverside through dense rhododendron, juniper and conifer forest. After the bridge a little

climb to Dur Tsachu hot spring, where Guru Padmasambava is supposed to have bathed in the 8th hot spring.

Day 25. Dur Tsachu –Tshochenchen: (Distance 19 kms. Time 8/9 hrs. Altitude 4,400 m, 14,500 ft.) Today we go again across the last pass of the trip Je Le La. We descend to a stream and from the stream it is a steady climb again with great views of the mountains in Lunana. We pass blue lakes and yak herders' camps to arrive at the Thochechen camp.

Day 26. Tshochenchen – Dur – Jakar: (Distance 16 kms. Time 5/8 hrs. Altitude 3,100 m, 10,000 ft.) This is the last day of the trek. Here we change from yak to pack ponies for carting trekking gear. The path follows the Chamkhar Chu, descending gradually with few climbs. The trek ends when we arrive at Dhur village.

Day 27. Jakar – Wangdi: Start early to visit some of the famous monasteries in Bumthang and drive to Trongsa, 70 km, 9-10 hrs, driving time. Lunch at a local hotel. After lunch we drive to Wangdi, 130 km) via Pelela. Overnight at the lodge.

Day 28. Drive to Thimphu: 68 km, 3-4 hrs, drive. Afternoon free time for shopping.

Day 29. Paro (Departure): Drive to Airport and farewell.