

Laya Gasu Trek - 15 days/ 14 nights

This trek route offers great variety of trekking conditions, from picturesque farmland and forests to alpine pastureland and high passes. Spectacular campsites, beneath some of Bhutan's most impressive peaks, of which the most notable are Mount. Chomolhari and Mount. Jichu Drake, are also the features of this trekking route. Numerous isolated dzongs and scattered settlements, including the outlandish village of Laya, provide a great deal of cultural interest enroute. Wildlife such as the blue sheep, marmots, musk deer and the national animal, the takin, can be seen. One should also not rule out the possibility of the rare sighting of a snow leopard, great Himalayan bear or even the yeti! The best season for this trek is April-May and mid September to mid November.

Day 01: Laya Gasu Trek.

Paro (Drukgyel Dzong) – Shana Zampa, distance – 17 km, time – 5/6 hours.

The trek starts from Paro valley (Drukgyel Dzong, 2580m), traversing through swaying paddy fields, village houses and small chortens (stupas). The Pa Chhu (Paro River) snakes along the valley in a placid ribbon of silver and its banks covered with cascade of wild pink and white roses in full bloom. Camp at altitude 2,870m near the village of Shana Zampa in a meadow surrounded by trees.

Overnight tented campsite.

Day 02 : Laya Gasu Trek.

Shana Zampa – Soi Thangthangkha, distance – 22 km, time – 7/8 hours.

The trail continues its gradual climb alongside the Pa Chhu (Paro River) through forests of oak, rhododendrons and ferns and breathtaking vistas. The campsite (3,630m) is surrounded with beautiful views and lulled by the sound of the Paro River.

Overnight tented campsite.

Day 03: Laya Gasu Trek.

Soi Thangthangkha – Jangothang, distance – 19 km, time – 6/7 hours.

This day starts with beautiful landscape reaching to summer pastures of yaks, truly beasts of bounty for herders providing abundant cheese, butter, meat and thick waterproof hair for making tents, caps and blankets. The approach to Jangothang (4,090m) camp site is heralded by prayer walls, chortens, prayer flags fluttering in the wind and a spectacular view of Mount. Chomolhari (7,314m).

Overnight tented campsite.

Day 04: Laya Gasu Trek.

Jangothang – Lingshi, distance – 18 km, time – 6/7 hours.

Ten minutes walk from Jangothang presents spectacular views of Mount. Jichu Drake (6,989m) and further ahead Mount Tserim Kang (6,789m). The final pull enroute is Nyile la pass (4,890m) about 4 hours from Jangothang. The trail later travels above the tributary of Mo Chhu River, gradually descending to the campsite at Lingshi (4,010m). There is also the possibility of an excursion from Lingshi to the base camp of Mount Tserim Kang for fishing and encountering enroute blue sheep and musk deer.

Overnight tented campsite.

Day 05: Laya Gasar Trek.

Lingshi – Chebisa, distance – 10 km, time – 5 hours.

Proceed ahead passing Lingshi Dzong built in the 17th century, perched on the hilltop with a commanding view of the green hills, the winding river and magnificent peaks. After an hour from Lingshi, the trail reaches a cairn and prayer flags on a ridge at 4,140m and then makes a long descent to the pleasant settlement of Gayul (3,870m). Leaving this village, after making a short ascent and descent, the route leads to the spectacular Chebisa valley. Campsite on a meadow at an altitude of 3,880m.

Overnight tented campsite.

Day 06: Laya Gasar Trek.

Chebisa – Shomuthang, distance – 17 km, time - 7 hours.

On today's early part of the trek, there is the possibility of spotting blue sheep, branded vultures and Himalayan griffons. The route later crosses Gombu la pass (4,500m) and then descends through rhododendrons bushes to a stream at about 4,170m. The trail further climbs over a small ridge through a cedar forest then into the main Jholethang Chhu valley in a deep forest of fir and birch and then to the village of Shakshepasa (3,980m). There are several yak herders huts enroute. The camp is at Shomuthang (4,200m) in a cluster of brush beside a stream.

Overnight tented campsite.

Day 07: Laya Gasar Trek.

Shomuthang – Robluthang, distance – 18 km, time – 6 / 7 hours. The trek starts with a climb to Jari la pass (4,700m) then descending to Tasharijathang valley, the summer place of the rare Himalayan Takin. Camp is at Tsheri Jathang valley which has been declared a special Takin sanctuary.

Overnight tented campsite.

Day 08: Laya Gasar Trek.

Robluthang – Limithang, distance – 19 km time – 7 hours.

Today cross Shinje la pass (4,900m) the last and the highest pass on the trek which is about 5 hours walk from camp. Later the descent is on a rough, rocky trail into a glacial valley, eventually reaching to Kango Chhu, a stream. After that it is a short climb through rhododendron trail and cedar forest interspersed small meadows to Limithang (4,140m), a lovely campsite in a big meadow.

Overnight tented campsite.

Day 09: Laya Gasar Trek.

Limithang – Laya, distance – 10 km, time - 5 hours.

Today's walk to Laya is extremely pleasant with wonderful mountain scenery and passing through forests filled with moss and singing birds. The village of Laya is the second highest settlement in the country at an altitude of 3,800m.

Overnight tented campsite.

Day 10: Laya Gasar Trek.

Laya Halt. Spend the day relaxing visiting village houses or going on short hikes above the camp.

Overnight tented campsite.

Day 11: Laya Gasar Trek.

Laya – Koina, distance – 19 km, time – 6 / 7 hours.

The route follows the Mo Chhu river downstream all the way to Punakha (western Bhutan) crossing few streams and making several ascents and descents. Also the route offers interesting view of Masang Gang peak (7,165m). Camp at Koina at an altitude of 3,050m.

Overnight tented campsite.

Day 12: Laya Gasu Trek.

Koina – Gasu Tsachu, distance – 14 km, time – 5 / 6 hours.

The day starts with a major ascent to Bari la pass (3,900m) traversing through deep forests of fir. The route starts down again, sometimes steeply through a bamboo forest to a stream at 3,080m, the view point of Gasu Dzong. The trail further traverses above Jigme Dorji Wangchuck National Park onwards to Gasu.

Overnight tented campsite.

Day 13: Laya Gasu Trek.

Trek to Gasu Tsachu (2 hours) and spend the day relaxing in the medicinal waters of the hot springs.

Overnight tented campsite.

Day 14: Laya Gasu Trek.

Gasu Tsachu – Damji, distance – 18 km, time – 6 hours.

The path continues ascending and descending through heavily forested areas and wild orchids. The campsite Damji (2,430m) lies in huge side valley with an amphitheatre of rice terraces.

Day 15: Laya Gasu Trek.

Damji – Tashithang - Punakha, distance – 16 km, time – 5 hours.

The trail begins a long descent following the Mo Chhu River, winding down gently in the jungle past a few streams. The main valley at 1880m is full of sub-tropical vegetation. From Tashithang it is about 18 km drive to Punakha town.

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