

Trekking in Bhutan

Trekking in Bhutan is unlike anywhere else in the Himalayas. The walks are long and arduous but they are complemented by crystal air and views that defy description. Only a handful of tourists trek each year and paths and communications may not be as developed as they are in other Himalayan destinations. However, what Bhutan may lack in infrastructure development it makes up through its superb facilities for trekkers. All parties are accompanied by a trained guide, a cook, an assistant and at least one horseman. Horses and yaks carry all provisions and most belongings; trekkers rarely have to carry more than a daypack with camera and extra film.

The support crew walks ahead of the trekking party each day and pitch camp before the trekkers arrive. A warm cup of tea waiting in the dining tent is the most welcome treat after hours of walking up and down mountains as high as 18,000 feet.

All meals are carefully planned. Breakfast is always cooked and dinner includes a choice of at least four dishes. In many of the remote parts of the country, villages are scarce and few people cross paths and as a result BTCL takes every precaution to ensure the safety and comfort of the trekkers.

Altitude sickness is an acute problem for trekkers in Bhutan. Almost all of the designated treks go above 3,000 metres (9,000 feet). Walkers who have not properly acclimatised or those who suffer from altitude sickness are advised not to trek. If you are not used to high altitudes it's a good idea to start slowly and allow yourself to acclimatise. Trekking permits are required for all parties.

Treks vary from short three-day walks across relatively low altitudes to the three-week Snowman Trek that covers 356 kilometres and climbs three of the Kingdoms highest passes. Inexperienced trekkers are recommended to do the trek from Thimphu to Paro or vice-versa. Called the Druk Path, it leads across the chain of mountains separating the two valleys passing crystal clear lakes and offering splendid views of the high Himalayas outside the monsoon season. More difficult treks take in northern villages and pass yak herdsman who spend most of the year tending to their herds high above the villages. The northern paths climb as high as 5,500 metres and should only be attempted by strong experienced walkers.

TREKKING SEASONS:

TREK	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
BUMTHANG	X	X	S	S	S	S	M	M	S	S	S	X
GANGTEY	S	S	S	S	S	S	M	M	S	S	S	S
SAMTENGANG	S	S	S	S	S	S	M	M	M	S	S	S
LAYA/LINGSHI	S	S	S	S	S	S	M	M	M	S	S	S
LUNANA SNOW MAN	X	X	S	M	S	S	S	S	M	X	X	X
GASA HOT SPRINGS	S	S	S	S	S	M	M	M	M	S	S	S
JHOMOLHARI	X	X	S	S	S	S	M	M	S	S	X	X
DRUK PATH	X	X	S	S	S	S	M	M	S	S	S	X
DAGALA	X	X	S	S	S	S	M	M	S	S	X	X

S : Refers to good season for trekking.

M: Refers to moderate season as there are chances of rain during the trek in these months

X : Refers to the months when the trekking routes are closed due to snow.

QUICK REFERENCE CHART FOR TREK ROUTES IN BHUTAN:

DIFFICULTY GRADE OF TREKS:- S-STRENOUS. M-MODERATE. E-EASY.

No	Trek Name	Days Grade	Alt.m	Season	Start-End	Scenes Enroute
1	Bumthang Cultural	03- E	H: 3353 L: 2800	May-Jun Sept-Nov	Bumthang-Jakar (Bumthang)	Farm houses, fields, temples
2	Gangtey Winter	03- E	H: 3203 L: 1370	Mar-Jun Sept-Nov	Gangtey - Chu zomsa/Wangdue	Fields, villages, temples, forests
3	Chelela Nature	03- E	H: 3845 L: 2200	May-Jun Sept-Nov	Paro-Paro	Farm houses, wild flowers
4	Punakha Winter	04- E	H: 1800 L: 1350	Jan-Mar Nov-Dec	Thimphu- Wangdue	Villages, temples, rhododendrons, chirpine forests
5	Sinchula	04- M	H: 3600 L: 1350	Mar-May Sept-Nov	Thimphu- Punakha	Mixed forests, villages, small lakes
6	Dongla	04- S	H: 3170 L: 1780	Apr-May Sept-Nov	Lhuentse- TrashiYangtse	Villages, temples, mixed forests
7	Druk Path	05-M	H: 3400 L: 2200	Apr-Jun Sept-Nov	Paro-Thimphu	Blue pine forests, rhododendron, yak-herders, lakes
8	Rodungla	06- S	H: 3170 L: 1780	May-Jun Sept-Nov	Bumthang- Lhuentse	Villages, temples, mixed forests

9	Dagala Thousand Lakes	07- M	H: 4420 L: 2210	Mar-May Sept-Nov	Chuzom- Simtokha	Villages, forests, lakes, fishing
10	Dur Hot Springs	08- S	H: 3400 L: 2800	May-Jun Sept-Nov	Bumthang- Bumthang	Mixed forests. Villages, temples, blue sheep
11	Jhomolhari	10- S	H: 4820 L: 2200	Apr-Jun Sept-Nov	Paro- Dodena/ Thimphu	Yak herders, fishing, blue sheep, musk deer, Mts.
12	Beautiful Laya Gasa	15- S	H:4600 L: 1350	Apr-Jun Sept-Nov	Paro- Punakha	Villages, yak herders, hot springs at Gasa
13	Lunana Snowman	25- S	H:5100 L:1370	May-Jun Sept-Oct	Paro-Bumthang	Forests, hot springs, yak herders, blue sheep.

In addition to the above mentioned treks, BTCL has surveyed and successfully developed two new trekking routes.

1	The Ancient Royal Route.	03: E	H:3330 L:	Apr-June Sept-Nov	Tongsa -Bumthang	forest, farm houses, village, monastery
2	Bhey-Laga	09: S	H: L:	Apr-May Sept-Oct	Chuzom/Wangdi Nikachu/Wangdi	forest, village, yak herders, lakes, blue sheep.

OUTLINE OF TREKKING ROUTES

You would require a few days before and after the actual trekking days to arrive to the trek starting point and to return to the point of your departure.

1. BUMTHANG CULTURAL TREK

<i>Day</i>	<i>Start</i>	<i>Camp/End</i>
01	Bumthang	Nganglhakhang
02	Nganglhakhang	Ugyenchholing
03	Ugyenchholing	Jakar

02. GANGTEY WINTER TREK

<i>Day</i>	<i>Start</i>	<i>Camp/End</i>
01	Gantey Gumpa	Gogona
02	Gogona	Khotokha
03	Kothokha	Chuzomsa, Wangdi via Nizergang

03. THE ANCIENT ROYAL ROUTE. * TONGSA TO BUMTHANG TREK.

<i>Day</i>	<i>Start</i>	<i>Camp/End</i>
01	Trongsa	Shopjapang
02	Shopjapang	Domkhar
03	Domkhar	Jakar

04. CHILELA NATURE TREK

<i>Day</i>	<i>Start</i>	<i>Camp/End</i>
01	Paro	Chonana
02	Chonana	Domselha
03	Domselha	Kichu/Paro

05. PUNAKHA WINTER TREK

<i>Day</i>	<i>Start</i>	<i>Camp/End</i>
01	Khuruthang	Limukha
02	Limukha	Chungsakha
03	Chungsakha	Samtengang
04	Samtengang	Wangdi-Punakha

06. SINCHULA TREK.

<i>Day</i>	<i>Start</i>	<i>Camp/End</i>
01	Thimphu/Kabjesa	Sinchula
02	Sinchula	Dupsingpang
03	Dupsingpang	Chorten Nebu
04	Chorten Nebu	Kabje Sirigang

07. DONGLA TREK FROM LHUENTSI TO TASHIYANGTSE

<i>Day</i>	<i>Start</i>	<i>Camp/End</i>
01	Lhuntsi	Wangsi Lhakhang
02	Wangsi Lhakhang	Pemi
03	Pemi	Toupang
04	Toupang	Tashiyangtse (Chorten Kora Camp)

08. DRUK PATH TREK

<i>Day</i>	<i>Start</i>	<i>Camp/End</i>
01	Paro	Jele Dzong
02	Jele Dzong	Jangchulakha
03	Jangchulakha	Jimilangtso
04	Jimilangtso	Simkota
05	Simkota	Phajoding
06	Phajoding	Thimphu

09. RODUNGLA TREK

<i>Day</i>	<i>Start</i>	<i>Camp/End</i>
01	Bumthang	Nganglhakhang
02	Nganglhakhang	Ugyenchholing
03	Ugyenchholing	Phokpey
04	Phokpey	Ungar
05	Ungar	Taskila
06	Taskila	Lhuntshi
07	Lhuntshi	Menji
08	Menji	Pemi
09	Pemi	Taupang
10	Taupang	Yangtshi

10. DAGALA THOUSAND LAKES TREK

<i>Day</i>	<i>Start</i>	<i>Camp/End</i>
01	Thimphu	Geynekha
02	Geynekha	Gur
03	Gur	Labatama
04	Labatama	Halt
05	Labatama	Panka
06	Panka	Talika
07	Talika	Simtokha

11. DUR HOT SPRING TREK

<i>Day</i>	<i>Start</i>	<i>Camp/End</i>
01	Bumthang	Gorsum
02	Gorsum	Lungsum
03	Lungsum	Tsochenchen
04	Tsochenchen	Dur Tsachu
05	Dur Tsachu	** Halt
06	Dur Tsachu	Tsochenchen
07	Tsochenchen	Gorsum
08	Gorsum	Bumthang

12. BHEY LAGA TREK.

<i>Day</i>	<i>Start</i>	<i>Camp/End</i>
01	Wangdi	Rifakha
02	Rifakha	Bhey Niuley
03	Bhey Niuley	Bhey Riju
04	Bhey Riju	Bhey Namtokha
05	Bhey Namtokha	Peyra Camp
06	Peyra Camp	Sintha Camp
07	Sintha Camp	Tempey Tsho
08	Tampey Tsho	Morathang
09	Morathang	Nikkachhu/Wangdi

13. CHOMOHARI TREK

Day	Start	Camp/End
01	Paro	Shana
02	Shana	Soi Thangthangkha
03	Soi Thangthangkha	Jangothang
04	Jangothang	** Halt
05	Jangothang	Lingshi
06	Lingshi	** Halt
07	Lingshi	Shodu
08	Shodu	Barshong
09	Barshong	Dolam Kencho
10	Dolam Kencho	Thimphu

14. BEAUTIFUL LAYA/GASA TREK

Day	Start	Camp/End
01	Paro	Shana
02	Shana	Soi Thangthangkha
03	Soi Thangthangkha	Jangothang
04	Jangothang	Lingshi
05	Lingshi	Chebisa
06	Chebisa	Shomuthang
07	Shomuthang	Robluthang
08	Robluthang	Lemithang
09	Lemithang	Laya
10	Laya	** Halt
11	Laya	Koena
12	Koena	Gasa Tsachu
13	Gasa (Hot Springs)	** Halt
14	Gasa	Goem Damji
15	Goem Damji	Tashithang/Thimphu

15. Lunana Snowman Trek

Day	Start	Camp/End
01	Paro	Shana
02	Shana	Soi Thangthangkha
03	Soi Thangthangkha	Jangothang
04	Jangothang	**Halt
05	Jangothang	Lingshi
06	Lingshi	Chebisa
07	Chebisa	Shomuthang
08	Shomuthang	Robluthang
09	Robluthang	Limithang
10	Limithang	Laya
11	Laya	**Halt
12	Laya	Roduphu
13	Roduphu	Narethang
14	Narethang	Tarina
15	Tarina	Woche
16	Woche	Lhedi
17	Lhedi	Thanza
18	Thanza	** Halt
19	Thanza	Tsorim
20	Tsorim	Geshe Woma
21	Geshe Woma	Warathang
22	Warathang	Dur Tsachu
23	Dur Tsachu	Tsochenchen
24	Tsochenchen	Gorsum
25	Gorsum	Bumthang

Trek Routes-BTCL

Important Trek Routes in Bhutan

A brief account of eight of the 13 popular treks of the country is provided here with tailor made itineraries:

Trek – I: Chomolhari Trek

This nine days trek offers a rare glimpse of the High Himalayan landscape. Passing through scattered hamlets, farmland and densely forested tracts, the trek terminates into a fabulously colorful high alpine pastureland. The ideal season for this trek is April - May and September - November. The trek routing is as under:

Day 01: *Paro (Drukgyel Dzong) to Shana Zampa (distance – 17 km, time – 5/6 hours)*. The trek starts from Paro valley (Drukgyel Dzong, 2580m), traverses through swaying paddy fields, village houses and small *chhortens* (stupas) along the route. The *Pa Chhu* (Paro River) snakes in the valley like a placid ribbon of silver. Its banks covered with cascade of wild pink and white roses in full bloom. Campsite is at an altitude of 2,870m on the outskirts of the rustic village of Shana Zampa located in spectacular meadow surrounded by trees.

Day 02: *Shana Zampa to Soi Thangthangkha (distance – 22 km, time – 7/8 hours)*. The trail continues gradual climb alongside the *Pa Chhu* (Paro River) through forests of oaks, rhododendrons and ferns amidst breathtaking vistas. The campsite (3,630m) is surrounded with beautiful views and lulled by the sound of the Paro River.

Day 03: *Soi Thangthangkha to Jangothang (distance – 19 km, time – 6/7 hours)*. This day begins with beautiful landscape all round and summer pastures of yaks. The herdsmen would gladly offer cheese, butter, meat and thick waterproof hair for making tents, caps and blankets. The approach to Jangothang (4,090m) campsite is heralded by prayer walls, *chhortens*, prayer flags fluttering in the wind and a spectacular view of Mount. Chomolhari (7,314m).

Day 04: Exploring Jangothang. The itinerary of day four is generally advised to be used in leisurely activities including fishing expedition to *Tshophu*, a high altitude lake rich spotted trout. Landscape all round is breathtaking and offers splendid opportunities for nature spotting and photography.

Day 05: *Jangothang to Lingshi (distance – 18 km, time – 6/7 hours)*. Jangothang is the last settlement in the valley. A mere ten minutes walk from it presents spectacular views of Mount. Jichu Drkae (6,989m) and further ahead Mount Tserim Kang (6,789m). Enroute is Nyile la pass (4,890m) at about 4 hours travel from Jangothang. The trail ascends along a tributary of Mo Chhu River and gradually descends to the altitude of 4,010m, to the site of Lingshi camp. There is an alternate excursion from Lingshi to base camp of Mount Tserim Kang where they can enjoy fishing or may encounter enroute blue sheep and musk deer, if lucky enough.

Day 06: Lingshi Halt. Spend the day with an excursion to Tsokha, the base camp of Mount Jichu Drake.

Day 07: *Lingshi to Sodhu (distance – 22 km, time – 8/9 hours)*. The trek trails across Yele la pass (4,820m) leading to fascinating views of Mount Chomolhari (7,314m), Gangchhenta (6,840m), Tserim Kang (6,789m) and Masang Gang (7,165m). Campsites located near a stream in a meadow at an altitude of 4,110m, too offers dramatic mountain scene all around.

Day 08: *Shodu to Barshong (distance – 16 km, time – 5/6 hours)*. The trek winds up and down along the Thimphu Chhu River through a steep-walled canyon with cliffs to the north and rich cypress forest to the south. One of the interesting aspects of the day is crossing Thimphu River as many as six times before reaching the campsite located at Barshong (3,680m).

Day 09: *Barshong to Dolam Kencho (distance – 15 km, time – 5/6 hours)*. The trail descends gently through dense forest of rhododendron, birch and conifers and latter on drops steeply to meet Thimphu Chhu (river). After traversing a steep cliff it finally reaches to Dolam Kencho, the camp among pasture land at 3,430m amid a beautiful meadow.

Day 10: Dolam Kencho to Dodena – Thimphu (*distance – 8 km, time - 3 hours*). Initially ascending through conifer and high altitude broadleaf forests to a pass at 3,510m and then drops steeply to Thimphu River, following it southward till Dodena (2,600m), the terminating point of the nine day trek. From here one can drive further to his / her next destination to Thimphu.

Trek – II: Druk Path Trek

It is a relatively short, soft trek leading from Paro valley to Thimphu valley or vice versa, crossing the chain of mountains that separates the two valleys. The route passes through sparsely populated places. One of the interesting features of this trek is the presence of beautiful lakes enroute teeming with fish. Also this area is particularly famous for spectacular rhododendron forests which run riot in the month of May. The best time for this trek is March - May and September - November.

Day 01: *Paro – Jele Dzong (distance – 8 km, time – 3 hours)*. The trek is rather gradual up till a fortress in ruins (3,400 m). Campsite for the day is reached after crossing the 3,400m Jele la pass, arriving at Jele Dzong which is mostly in ruins.

Day 02: *Jele Dzong – Jangchulakha, distance – 10 km, time – 3 / 4 hours*. The route climbs through thick alpine forests and rhododendrons to a saddle at 3,590m. Stunning views of Mount. Chomolhari (7,314m) and the surrounding mountains can be seen from the trail. The beautiful Monal pheasant can also be seen during the day. Campsite at 3,780m near yak herders' camp.

Day 03: *Jangchulakha – Jimilang Tsho, distance – 11 km, time – 4 hours*. The trek follows the ridge to a saddle at 4,040m, then drops a bit and follows the ridge back to Jangchu la pass (4,180m). Camp is near Jimilang Tsho (Sand Ox Lake) known for its giant size trout. Also there are good views of Mount. Jichu Drake (6,989m), the peak representing the protective deity of Paro valley.

Day 04: *Jimilang Tsho – Simkota Tsho, distance – 11 km, time – 4 hours*. The trail traverses through dwarf rhododendron trees and Janetsho Lake and passes by yak herder camps. It is a short climb along the side of the ridge and then a short, steep descent to camp at 4,040m which is near Simkota Tsho Lake famous for its trout.

Day 05: *Simkota Tsho – Phajoding, distance – 10 km, time – 3 / 4 hours*. The day begins with a gradual climb to a saddle at 4,180m crossing Phume la pass (4,210m) marked by prayer flags. If weather permits, there are enchanting views

of Mount Gangkhar Puensum (7,541m) and other Himalayan peaks here. The trail then descends past Thujidrag Goemba, a meditation centre hanging on the side of a precipitous rock face, continuing further through juniper trees to the campsite near Phajoding Goemba (3,870m), an important pilgrimage site.

Day 06: *Phajoding – Thimphu*, distance – 5 km, time- 3 hours. Today's trek is all downhill through forested areas of mostly bluepine.

Trek – III : Gangtey Trek

This trek in Phobjikha valley (3,000m) is in one of the few glacial valleys in Bhutan. The region is the chosen home of the rare black-necked cranes who migrate here during the winter months from the Tibetan plateau. This moderate trek passes through fascinating villages, meadows and forests of juniper, bamboo, magnolia and rhododendrons. The best time for this trek is March to May and September to November.

Day 01: *Gangtey – Gogona, distance – 15 km, time – 6 / 7 hours.* The trek commences from Gangtey village (2,830m) traversing through meadows, fields and mixed forests of juniper, bamboo, rhododendrons and magnolia, later ascending to Tselela pass (3,400m). After passing through several meadows, the trail reaches Gogona village (3,100m), the beautiful hilltop campsite situated among fluttering prayer flags.

Day 02: *Gogona – Khotokha, distance – 16 km, time – 6 / 7 hours.* The route further passes through forests of fir, oak, spruce, dwarf rhododendron, cypress and juniper leading to Shobjula pass (3,400m) and later to Chhorten Karpo (group of four chhortens dedicated to previous chief abbots). Campsite is at an altitude of 2,790m, near forests of large blue pine overlooking the valley and village of Khotokha.

Day 03: *Khotokha – Chazam, distance – 12 km, time – 5 hours.* A short steep ascent leads to Tashila pass (2,800m) leading downhill through beautiful forests of rhododendron, magnolia, ferns and dwarf bamboo. This trail is also one of the most interesting bird watching areas in the country and few species in this region include; laughing thrush, shrike, magpie and woodpecker. Later the route traverses further along the west ridge crossing the Tang Chhu River, reaching to the district of Wangduephodrang.

Trek – IV: Dagala Thousand Lakes Trek

This relatively moderate trek passes through various picturesque high altitude lakes so named as the *Thousand Lakes Trek*. Also the route is particularly rich in bird species, alpine flowers and attractive meadows. The route also presents fascinating views of prominent eastern Himalayan peaks such as Mount. Everest, Mount. Kanchenjunga, Chomolhari, Jichu Drake, Masang Gang, Tsenda Gang and Gangchhenta. The best months for this trek are April and Oct.

Day 01: *Thimphu – Geynekha, distance – 14 km, time – 4 hours*. The start point of trek (Khoma) is about an hour drive from Thimphu, on an unpaved road. The villages of this region produce famous matsutake and chantarelle mushrooms. The first day walk is all through terraced fields and coniferous vegetation. Campsite at Geynekha, alongside a stream at an altitude of 2,800m

Day 02: *Geynekha – Gur, distance – 15 km, time – 4 hours*. On today's trek, the true communion with the nature starts with alpine flora and plenty of birds. Two hours of gradual uphill walk and rest on top of a huge rock platform, offers a picturesque view of the valley. Another two hours of walk leads to camp at Gur (3,350m) amongst abundance of flowers.

Day 03: *Gur – Labatama, distance – 12 km, time – 5 hours*. Today's trek is amidst flowers and meadows that freshens the trekkers with poetic sentiments. The pass at 4,240m offers spectacular view of the entire *Dagala range*, meadows and yak herders camp. Camp at altitude 4,300m near *Utsho* Lake where plenty of golden trout flourish.

Day 04: Labatama. Day excursion to *Relitsho, Hentsho* or *Jametsho* Lake.

Day 05: *Labatama – Panka, distance – 8 km, time – 4 hours*. After a walk of about 30 min, there is majestic view of the prominent Himalayan peaks such as Mount. Everest, Mount, Kanchenjunga, Masang Gang, Gangchhenta, Tsenda Gang and Jichu Drake. In this route Himalayan Monal Pheasants are a common sight apart from yak herders. Camp at Panka at an altitude of 4,000m.

Day 06: *Panka – Talikha, distance – 8 km, time – 4 hours.* The route leads north enroute crossing a pass at altitude 4,000m then climbing along the side of a ridge to a crest at 4,270m. Later it is a long descent to the village of Talikha at 3,050m.

Day 07: *Talikha – Simtokha, distance – 3 km, time – 2 hours.* The trek trail descends steeply through mixed forests of rhododendron and bamboo and apple orchards ending at Simtokha (5 miles before Thimphu).

Trek – V: Bumthang Cultural Trek

This trek passes via several villages on its meandering route through the Bumthang countryside. The route provides plenty of opportunity to visit villages, lhakhangs (temples) and other places of cultural interest, justifying its name. The best season for this trek is March to May and September to November.

Day 01 : *Toktu Zampa – Ngang Lhakhang*, distance – 12 km, time – 4.1/2 hours. The trek route follows the Chamkhar Chhu River, coming across villages, temples, meadows and forests of blue pine. Camp at *Ngang Lhakhang* (Swan Temple) at an altitude of 2,900m.

Day 02: *Ngang Lhakhang – Ugyenchholing*, distance – 17 km, time – 7/8 hours. The trek starts across meadows, dwarf bamboo also crosses enroute several small streams. It further gradually ascent to Phephe la pass (3,360m) marked by tall birch and fir trees. The trail then leads down a stream at 3,200m and valleys filled with dwarf bamboo, prayer walls and stupa. The walk is delightful, breaking out of the forest into broad meadows, pastures of grazing cows and ploughed fields. Camp by the side of the river at an altitude of 2,850m.

Day 03: *Ugyenchholing – Bumthang*, distance – 15 km, time – 5 / 6 hours. The trekking route leads downstream through meadows and further into the main valley of Tang Chhu river at an altitude of 2,640m. The motorable road is another two km walk from this valley.

Trek – VI: Dur Hot Spring Trek

This trek is particularly famous for its hot springs. Walking across forests of cyprus, juniper, spruce, hemlock and maple, the route also offers opportunity to view interesting fauna such as Musk deer, Blue sheep and Himalayan black bear. The best season for this trek is March to April and September to early October.

Day 01: *Bumthang – Gorsum, distance – 18 km, time – 7 hours.* The trek starts from Dur village (3,100m) following the river Yoleng Chhu famous for its trout.

Day 02: *Gorsum – Lungsum, distance - 12 km, time – 5 hours.* Today's trek trail passes through dense forests of spruce, hemlock, cypress, juniper and maples, leading to the campsite at an altitude of 3,160m.

Day 03: *Lungsum – Tsochenchen, distance – 15 km, time – 6 hours.* In today's route there is dense vegetation till camp at 3,400m which is just above the tree line.

Day 04: *Tsochenchen – Dur Tsachu, distance – 17 km, time – 7 hours.* Today's walk is all the way uphill until Juli la pass (4,700m), offering fascinating views of the surrounding mountains. The route further crosses Gokthongla pass then descends steeply through forests to the campsite near Dur hot springs at 3,590m.

Day 05: Explore Dur Tsachu hot springs.

Day 06, Day 07 & Day 08: Dur Tsachu – Tsochenchen – Gorsum - Bumthang

Trek – VII: Wild East Rodungla Trek

This trek across the top of eastern Bhutan is on the important trade route that was used, prior to the construction of the National Highway. The trek provides the opportunity to visit remote dzongs (fortresses/monasteries). The best season for this trek is October and March, April.

Day 01: *Toktu Zampa (Bumthang) – Ngang Lhakhang*, distance – 12 km, time – 4 1/2 hours. The trek route follows the Chamkhar Chhu River, coming across villages, temples, meadows and forests of blue pine. Camp at *Ngang Lhakhang* (Swan Temple) at an altitude of 2,900m.

Day 02: *Ngang Lhakhang – Ugyenchholing*, distance – 17 km, time – 7/8 hours. The trek starts across meadows, dwarf bamboo and crosses enroute several small streams. It further ascends gradually to Phephe la pass (3,360m) marked by tall birch and fir trees. The trail then leads down a stream at 3,200m and valleys filled with dwarf bamboo, prayer walls and stupas. The walk is delightful, breaking out of the forest into broad meadows, pastures of grazing cows and ploughed fields. Camp by the side of the river at an altitude of 2,850m.

Day 03: *Ugyenchholing – Phokpey*, distance – 17 km, time – 6 hours. Today's route passes through dwarf bamboo forests, meadows and trail dotted with blue alpine flowers. Camp in a meadow at an altitude of 3,650m.

Day 04: *Phokpey – Pemi*, distance – 20 km, time – 7 hours. After about two hours trek from Phokpey is Rodungla pass (4,160m) marked by a chhorten with a long, steep descent of nearly 2500m to the valley floor. There are small meadows enroute alongwith the forests of pines and conifers. Camp at an altitude of 2,950m.

Day 06: *Pemi – Khaine Lhakhang*, distance – 21 km, time – 7 / 8 hours. The route leads through dwarf bamboo with the vegetation changing to ferns and rhododendrons along the route. The trail descends further steeply near a meadow known as Sang Sangbe (2,300m) and then drops off the side of the ridge over a stream at 1700m passing through Ungaar and Zhobi villages enroute. Traversing

in and out of several side valleys and villages, the route leads to Khaine Lhakhang, a temple situated at 2,010m.

Day 07: *Khaine Lhakhang – Tangmachu, distance – 18 km, time – 6 / 7 hours.* After traversing in and out of several side valleys, the route ascends climbing gently through the tree line. The next stretch of the route also leads through side valleys reaching to Zerim la pass (1,940m). Passing further through grassy slopes, fields and villages the route leads to Tage la pass (1,760m). Camp is south-east of this pass at an altitude of about 1,700m. The famous Lhuntse Dzong is about 8 km from this camping site.

Day 08: *Tangmachu – Menji, distance – 16 km, time – 5 hours.* Today's trail traverses through rice terraces and corn fields leading to Menji village (1,800m). Campsite near Darchu Pang Lhakhang (temple) situated in a garden of marigold, geraniums, dahlias and nasturtiums.

Day 09: *Menji – Pemi, distance 20 km, time – 7 hours.* The route continues uphill through thick forests full of dense foliage of ferns and creepers, reaching to Pemi village at 2,450m.

Day 10: *Pemi – Taupang, distance – 21 km, time – 7 / 8 hours.* The trek route crosses Dong la pass (3,900m), offering enchanting mountain views and finally descending steeply through thick evergreen forests. The camp is at Taupang village (2,450m).

Day 11: *Taupang – Trashy Yangtse, distance – 24 km, time – 8 hours.* The path through the forests encounters ferns, red-berried palms and several bird species and gradually descends down to Yangtse, the easternmost town of Bhutan.

Trek – VIII: Laya Gasa Trek

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: *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.

Day 02 : *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.

Day 03: *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, chhortens, prayer

flags fluttering in the wind and a spectacular view of Mount. Chomolhari (7,314m).

Day 04: *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.

Day 05: *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.

Day 06: *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.

Day 07: *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.

Day 08: *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.

Day 09: *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.

Day 10: Laya Halt. Spend the day relaxing visiting village houses or going on short hikes above the camp.

Day 11: *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.

Day 12: *Koina – Gasa 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 Gasa Dzong. The trail further traverses above Jigme Dorji Wangchuck National Park onwards to Gasa.

Day 13: Trek to Gasa tsachu (2 hours) and spend the day relaxing in the medicinal waters of the hot springs.

Day 14: *Gasa 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: *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.

Trek: IX: Snowman Trek

This trek goes up to the remote Lunana district in northern Bhutan and is considered as the toughest trek in the country owing to distances, altitudes and its remoteness. The best season for Snowman trek is mid October.

Day 01: *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 *chhortens* (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 2870m near the village of Shana Zampa in meadow surrounded by trees.

Day 02 : *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 Paro River.

Day 03: *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, *chhortens*, prayer flags fluttering in the wind and a spectacular view of mount. Chomolhari (7,314m).

Day 04: Exploration in Jangothang. Day for fishing expedition to *Tshophu*, a high altitude lake in shape of bowl which has good supply of spotted trout.

Day 05: *Jangothang – Lingshi, distance – 18 km, time – 6/7 hours.* Jangothang is the last settlement in the valley and ten minutes walk from this place 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.

Day 06: *Lingshi – Chebisa, distance – 10 km, time – 5 hours.* Proceed ahead passing Lingshi Dzong built in 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.

Day 07: *Chebisa – Shoumuthang, distance – 17 km, time - 7 hours.* On today's early part of the trek, there is the possibility of encountering 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 onwards to the village of Shakshepasa (3,980m). There are several yak herders huts enroute. The camp is at Shoumuthang (4,200m) in a cluster of brush beside a stream.

Day 08: *Shoumuthang – Robluthang, distance – 18 km, time – 6 / 7 hours.* The trek starts with a climb to Jari la pass (4,700m) then descends to the Tasharijathang valley, the summer place of the rare Himalayan takin. Camp is in Tsheri Jathang valley which has been declared a special takin sanctuary.

Day 09: *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.

Day 10: *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.

Day 11: Laya halt

Day 12: *Laya – Rhodophu*, distance – 19 km, time – 7 hours. The trek gradually descends and then climbs through forests of conifers, maple and rhododendrons bushes. Camping site is in a pasture near a stream at an altitude of 4,150m.

Day 13: *Rhodophu – Narethang*, distance – 17 km, time – 6 hours. The path leads through rhododendron bushes and crosses Tshomo la pass (4,740m) and then descends to the campsite at Narethang (4,500m), beneath the peak of Gangla Karchung (6,395m).

Day 14: *Narethang – Tarina*, distance – 18 km, time – 6 / 7 hours. The trek starts with a climb to Karchung la pass (5,120m) then descends to glacial lakes which feeds the Tang Chhu River. The mighty peaks of Jejekangphu Gang (7,300m) and Tsenda Kang (7,100m) tower above these lakes. The route further makes several steep descents through dense rhododendron tress arriving at the campsite at Tarina (4,020m).

Day 15: *Tarina – Woche*, distance – 17 km, time – 6 hours. The path leads down through conifer forests following the upper reaches to Pho Chhu River, finally dropping at Woche (3,940m) which marks the beginning of the Lunana region.

Day 16: *Woche – Lhedi*, distance – 17 km, time – 6 hours. The trek starts through juniper and fir forests and further ahead passes via rhododendron bushes crossing enroute Kechu la pass (4,480m). Camp in Lhedi village at an altitude of 3,700m.

Day 17: *Lhedi – Thanza*, distance – 17 km, time – 6 hours. The trail climbs gradually following the main source of Pho Chhu River, to Chozo village. Above Chozo, the valleys opens approaching towards Thanza village, near the base of

Zongophu Gang (7,100m) also known as Table Mountain. Camp at Thanza (4,090m), the main village in Lunana district.

Day 18: *Thanza Halt*. Halt necessary in order to change yaks. Excursion to Lugi Tsho (lake) and other lakes.

Day 19: *Thanza – Tsorim*, distance – 19 km, time – 8 / 9 hours. The trek starts by climbing the ridge (4,650m) with great views of the Table Mountain and Thanza valley. After climbing several other ridges, the campsite is at Tsorim (5,125m).

Day 20: *Tsorim - Geshe Woma*, distance 19 km, 8 / 9 hours. View of Gangkhar Phuensum (7,561m) on a clear day. Uphill trek for about an hour till Gophula pass and then the trail descends gradually. The trail leaving behind the beautiful mountains follows the Sha Chhu River and descends gradually to the campsite at Geshe Woma at an altitude of 4,200m.

Day 21: *Geshe Woma – Warathang*, distance – 19 km, time – 8 / 9 hours. The path continues following the Sha Chhu River then climbs steeply to Sakala pass (4,800m). Later it descends through lakes and to Wartangle pass (4,590m). The scenery enroute is stunning with small lakes and mountain peaks. Camp at Warathang at an altitude of 4,000m.

Day 22: *Warathang – Dur Tsachu*, distance – 16 km, time – 5 hours. The trek starts with a short climb to Juele la pass (4,400m) and descends to the riverside through dense forests of rhododendron, juniper and conifers, finally reaching to *Dur Tsachu* (hot spring).

Day 23: *Dur Tsachu – Tshochenchen*, distance – 18 km, time – 8 / 9 hours. From Dur hot spring, it is a long and steady climb with great views of mountains in the Lunana region. Also the route crosses several blue lakes and yak herders camp at an altitude of 3,850m.

Day 24: *Tsochenchen – Gorsum, distance – 12 km 4-5 hours.* Trail follows Chamkhar Chhu and gently ascends for half an hour and subsequently descends till Gorsum.

Day 25: *Gorsum / Bumthang, distance – 12 km, time – 4 hours.* The path follows the Chamkhar Chhu River, descending gradually and finally ending at Dur village in Bumthang (central Bhutan).