

# The Snowman Trek

Trip Code: BST

Version:



WALK & TREK



GUIDED GROUP



TOUGH



## HIGHLIGHTS

- Take on the full Snowman Trek, from Shana to Trongsa through the Himalaya
- Traverse Laya and Lunana across 11 high passes, up to an altitude of 5300 metres
- Each year only a handful of trekking groups complete this world-class circuit
- Explore Kathmandu and Paro, and visit the Taktsang (Tiger's Nest) Monastery
- The later of this year's departures coincides with the Chomolhari Festival

## AT A GLANCE

- 25 days trekking
- 5 days touring and sightseeing
- Max altitude - 5300 metres
- Join at Kathmandu

## ACCOMMODATIONS & MEALS

[VIEW DATES, PRICES & BOOK YOUR HOLIDAY HERE](#)

# Introduction

Quite possibly the greatest trail on Earth, Bhutan's incredible Snowman Trek traverses west to east beneath the chain of Himalayan peaks that form the border between Bhutan and Tibet. Starting out from Paro, this challenging 25 day trek crosses five 5000 metre passes and leads through the 'shangri-la' region of Lunana, one of the most isolated inhabited valleys on the planet. Along the way we'll journey through traditional villages, like Laya and have close-up views of stunning mountains, including Chomolhari, the astounding Jitchu Drake and the world's highest unclimbed peak, Gangkar Puensum. We'll also have time to absorb some of the unique culture of this special Himalayan Kingdom, with visits to the spectacular cliff-face Taktsang 'Tiger's Nest' Monastery and the picturesque Punakha Dzong. Not for novices, this tough trek is the holy grail for seasoned Himalayan trekkers.

The later departure in 2024 (BST.1) coincides with the 2-day Chomolhari Festival at Jangothang.

**BOOK EARLY for BHUTAN!** With only two airlines operating flights into Paro from Kathmandu, seats are limited and in high demand. Book early to guarantee your place on your chosen departure.

## Is this holiday for you?

The Snowman Trek is widely regarded as one of the hardest treks in the world. This is due to its length, altitude, and the fact that 11 high passes must be crossed. The itinerary is paced to suit experienced trekkers looking for a very challenging trip. For a continuous period of almost 2 weeks we will be camping above 4000 metres and trekking for, on average, 7-8 hours a day. Prior experience of high altitude trekking is essential. The route follows a trail throughout and, though there is no scrambling or glaciers to cross, there are some rugged sections where extra care needs to be taken. You should also be prepared for variable weather and cold temperatures. Due to the remote nature of this trek a degree of flexibility with regard the itinerary is needed as the route may need to be adapted if conditions intervene.

These challenges should be judged as positive attractions to someone looking for the ultimate trekking adventure.

# Itinerary

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Version:

# Extensions

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When booking your holiday, you will be able to 'add an extension option'. Once we have received your booking we will contact you to discuss additional services required for the extension and to take any additional deposit.



## Chitwan Jungle Extension

The jungles of southern Nepal are an interesting counterpoint to trekking in the foothills or the high Himalaya. Tiger Tops Tharu Lodge provides a relaxing and comfortable base for a wildlife safari and cultural village experience. During two days of wildlife viewing in the Chitwan National Park 'buffer zone' - the interface area between visitors and the animals that live at Chitwan - you will be accompanied by expert guides on safaris by jeep by boat and on foot.

**3 days from**  
**US\$1,545** per person



## Kathmandu Tour - Nagarkot and Bhaktapur

The Kathmandu Valley contains the cities of Patan, Bhaktapur and Kathmandu itself, all of which were once independent kingdoms. An exploration of the valley's historic and cultural sights is an excellent way to begin or end your adventure in Nepal. Highlights of this tour includes a very early drive up to Nagarkot on the Kathmandu Valley rim, the perfect place to watch a Himalayan sunrise. This is followed by a tour of the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Bhaktapur, renowned for its temples and traditional buildings.

1 day from  
**US\$175** per person

# Holiday Information

## What's Included

- A professional and qualified tour leader plus support crew
- Bhutan visa fee
- Flights between Kathmandu and Paro
- All transfers and land transport involved in the itinerary
- All accommodation as described
- All meals
- Full service camping on trek including all camping equipment
- 'Thermarest' inflatable camping mats whilst camping
- FREE Sleeping bag and down jacket hire is available for this holiday on request

## What's not Included

- Travel insurance
- Nepalese visa costs
- Tips for drivers and trek staff
- Miscellaneous expenses - beer and souvenirs etc

## Joining Arrangements & Transfers

The holiday starts at the group hotel in Kathmandu.

Airport transfers are provided for all clients arriving Kathmandu on Day 1 and departing on the last day of the Land Only itinerary and all clients with additional nights booked through KE.

Hotel contact details and an emergency telephone number will be provided with your booking confirmation.

## Meal Plan

All meals are included in the holiday price.

## Food & Water

It is not recommended to drink untreated water from the taps. If you are on a trekking or cycling holiday, water is supplied to fill up your individual bottles. This will be boiled, filtered or provided in large jerry cans or 5 litre bottles. Additionally you should take purification tablets or a filter bottle (such as a [Water-To-Go bottle](#)) to treat your water when in towns or where water is not supplied. We do not encourage the purchasing of single use plastic bottles.

The Bhutanese love chillies; red, green, raw, cooked and flavouring their condiments - fans of spicy food will be in their element in Bhutan! Don't panic if spicy food is not for you, all the hotels and restaurants in Thimpu and Paro offer a range of delicious dishes suitable for all tastes. Breakfasts whilst in hotels will consist of choice of cereal or muesli, eggs, toast, beans, sausage or bacon with tea, coffee and juices.

You can expect to be fed very well during the trekking section of your holiday. Our trekking chefs are old hands at managing camps and meals whilst in the mountains. A senior trek cook and camp manager must have a minimum of five years of training and experience to qualify for the post! Our cooks have undergone training both on Bhutanese and continental dishes and can be expected to serve a wide variety of delicious food on trek. Breakfast and dinner will be taken at the camp sites, whilst lunches will generally be carried on ponies and served mid-way on the trekking route for the day. Tea and hot drinks will be provided at mealtimes and you will also usually get a wakeup call from the camp crew with a nice cup of hot *Chai!* Whilst on trek drinking water will be purified by boiling and will be provided regularly. We recommend that you bring along a few of your favourite snacks to eat on the trail as depending on the day's requirements, there may be several hours between breakfast and lunch.

## Accommodation

This holiday includes 2 nights in Kathmandu, one en route to Bhutan and one on the return journey. In Kathmandu we use a comfortable, centrally located hotel. In Bhutan, we will also use comfortable and well-located hotels throughout.

Whilst on trek there are 23 nights full service camping where you will enjoy a full-service from our friendly camp team. You will sleep in hardy 2 man dome tents and inflatable Thermarest mattresses are provided.

All the camp equipment and luggage will be transported between camps by ponies or yaks, you need only carry your day pack. Our team will erect and dismantle the tents for you, cook, and take care of all the camp chores.

During walking days, having stayed behind to collapse camp, it is usual for the team and the pack animals to overtake us during the day and we will usually arrive into camp to find it already established, with our personal bags already placed into our pre-assigned tents and the kettle on!

In camp, as well as the tents used for sleeping, there will also be a mess tent, with chairs and tables, where the group will dine (and socialise into the evening), a toilet tent and even a shower tent where hot water can be provided for you to wash with. Hot water in bowls for washing will also be provided to you in the mornings and when you arrive at the camp each day. On cold nights, we'll even provide hot water bags/bottles when it is time for you to retreat to your tents for the evening.

All accommodation is on a twin share basis. If you are travelling by yourself you will be paired with another single traveller of the same sex. Single rooms and/or single tents are available for a supplementary cost. If you are planning to extend your holiday, additional nights in Kathmandu are available on request.

## Internal flights

### Flights to Bhutan

It is possible to fly to Bhutan from Kathmandu, Delhi, Bangkok and Singapore, as well as from Dhaka and several regional airports in India. Our preferred port of transit for this holiday is Kathmandu, which has daily flights to Paro and a good tourism infrastructure. In addition, Nepal visas are easily obtained on arrival and are relatively inexpensive. Druk Air and Bhutan Airlines are the only airlines operating flights to Bhutan and seats can be limited, particularly around the time of the major festivals. Early booking is essential. It is not always possible to confirm seats immediately and it is not uncommon for passengers to be 'waitlisted' for several weeks until their booking clears. In rare circumstances, it may be necessary to route our groups or individual clients through an alternative airport if waiting lists are not cleared in good time.

## Group Leader & Support Staff

The group will be met and escorted in Kathmandu by a local KE representative. Once in Bhutan the group will be accompanied throughout by a professional and qualified tour leader. During the trek the tour leader will be assisted by local guides and a full trek crew including cooks, baggage animals and their handlers.

## Altitude

This holiday involves going to very high altitude. During the course of your trip you will be spending at least one night above 4000 metres and/or trekking to 5000 metres or above. This is not something that you should worry about; the human body is quite capable of adapting to a very wide range of altitudes, but it is important that we follow some simple rules in order to acclimatise successfully. Before coming on this holiday you should read the advice on [trekking at high altitude](#). Unless you have previous experience of trekking above 4000 metres you should consult one of our trekking experts before embarking on this holiday. On this trip we carry a portable altitude chamber (PAC-bag) and/or bottled oxygen for use in emergencies.

## Spending Money

Approximately £500 (or equivalent in Euros, US dollars etc.) changed into local currency should be allowed for miscellaneous expenses including porter and trek crew tips, drinks, snacks etc. We recommend that you carry your travel money in the form of cash, since you will exchange the majority of this on arrival (into Nepalese rupees in Kathmandu, and into Bhutanese Ngultrum at Paro Airport). Sterling, US Dollars and Euros are equally acceptable for exchange in Nepal and in Bhutan. You can withdraw cash from ATM's in Kathmandu. In Bhutan money can be easily exchanged but you cannot rely on withdrawing money from ATM's.

## Guidance on Tipping

Tipping is the accepted way of saying thank you for good service.

Each group member can expect to pay tips of US\$400 (in local currency equivalent). On arrival in Paro, approx. \$20 per person of this should be handed to your Bhutanese tour leader, who will use this to pay tips to drivers, hotel porters and waiters.

Normally the trek staff (assistant guides, cook, ponymen etc...) are given their tips at the end of the trek. You will usually have two different trek crews during the Snowman Trek, one as far as Laya and another for the trek into Lunana. The tipping pool should be split fairly between the crews. Your Bhutanese tour leader will advise the group on an appropriate level of tipping for each crew and crew member. Most groups will mark the end of their trek by handing out the tips with a bit of a ceremony on the last evening.

A tip for your main Bhutanese tour leader(s) is not included in the above. As a group you may want to make a separate collection to tip your tour leader(s) separately during dinner on your final evening in Bhutan.

## Baggage Allowance

For this holiday you should take one piece of luggage, which should be a soft duffel bag, and a daypack. Your bag on trek will be carried by pack animals and should not weigh more than 15kg. It is possible to leave extra baggage at the hotel in Kathmandu and also in Paro. Baggage left in Paro will meet you at your first hotel post trek. Checked baggage allowance for the flight from Kathmandu to Paro is 30kg. For other international flights please check your baggage allowance with your airline.



## Group Size & Holiday Status

For each holiday there is a minimum number of participants required to enable it to go ahead. Once the minimum number is reached, the trip status will change from 'Available' to 'Guaranteed to run'. You can check the trip status for each departure in the 'Dates and Prices' table. Other than in exceptional circumstances, we will not cancel a trip once it has achieved this guaranteed to run status so you are free to proceed with your international flight booking and other travel arrangements.

# General Information

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## Passport & Visas

The information that we provide is for UK passport holders. A passport with 6 months remaining validity at the end of your stay is generally required, and you should have at least 2 blank pages for each country that you visit.

**It is your responsibility to ensure that you have the correct travel documents and visas for your holiday.**

Please ensure that you check for the latest advice before travel. For the most up to date information on entry requirements, please visit the [UK Government website](#).

### Visa Nepal

All nationalities require a visa. The visa process is partly automated and the fee is \$30 for 15 days, \$50 for 30 days, \$125 for 90 days. The visa is FREE for children under 10 years. The visa allows multiple re-entry. Payment must be made in cash and USD, GBP or Euros are accepted.

Part of this on-arrival visa process involves filling in a 'Tourist Visa Application Form' and you can simplify the procedure at Kathmandu Airport by filling this form in online (**within 15 days of travelling**) at [this link](#). This generates a receipt which you present (hard copy or saved on your phone) on arrival. This should allow you to go straight to the cashier to pay for your visa and has the potential to save you time in the visa queue.

Whilst these are not now needed for the visa process, we recommend that you travel with at least 2 spare passport photographs.

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If you are travelling via India (Delhi or Calcutta) to your destination you may also require a visa for India. This may apply even if you are not leaving the airport unless your baggage has been checked all the way through to your destination. Generally, if you use the same carrier for both legs of your journey, you will not need an India Visa. Please download the detailed information document: [Visa PDF India](#).

### Visa Bhutan

All nationalities require a visa. KE will apply for the visa for you and the visa fee is included in your holiday cost.

Your individual visas will be issued to you in Kathmandu prior to your check-in for the flight to Paro in Bhutan and your passport will be stamped on arrival in Paro.

To make the arrangements for your Bhutan Visa we need:

- 1). A clear and complete colour scan of the information page of your passport.
- 2). A colour scan of a recent passport style photo. Portrait orientation on a white background - with eyes open and forehead and ears clearly visible.

Please email these scans to us at the earliest opportunity.

## Health & Vaccinations

If you have a severe allergy please inform the KE office before you travel. We will do all we can to help, but we cannot guarantee an allergy free environment on KE trips. You will need to carry your own treatment for the allergy with you, as 'adrenaline auto-injectors' are not carried as standard by KE leaders and staff. You should inform your leader on arrival of your allergy, and let them know where you keep your adrenaline pen.

Dengue fever is a known risk in places visited. It is a tropical viral disease spread by daytime biting mosquitoes. There is currently no vaccine or prophylaxis available and therefore the best form of prevention is to avoid being bitten. We recommend you [take precautions to avoid mosquito bites](#).

## Vaccinations

You should contact your doctor or travel clinic to check whether you require any specific vaccinations or other preventive measures. You should be up to date with routine courses and boosters as recommended in the UK e.g. diphtheria-tetanus-polio and measles-mumps-rubella, along with hepatitis A and typhoid.

Malarial prophylaxis is not usually required for trips in the mountains, however if you are visiting rural and remote low lying areas then they might be necessary.

On holidays to more remote areas you should also have a dentist check up. A good online resource is [Travel Health Pro](#).

## Currency

The unit of currency in Nepal is the Nepalese Rupee.

The unit of currency in Bhutan is the Bhutanese Ngultrum.

## Preparing for your Holiday

Getting some additional exercise before coming on an active holiday makes a lot of sense. The fitter you are, after all, the more enjoyable you will find the experience. This holiday falls within our highest grade and you need to be aerobically fit and also comfortable with walking up to 7 or 8 hours each day with ascents and/or descents of up to 1000 metres (3300 feet) over several days. Hill walking, with a good amount of ascent and descent, is the best training, and we would suggest that you try to fit in a number of long weekend walks before you depart. Running, cycling and swimming are also good for developing cardio vascular fitness and stamina.

There is little you can do to prepare for the altitude but if you have an excellent level of fitness this can help.

## Climate

In general the climate of Bhutan is colder and damper than one would expect to find in the Himalaya of India or Nepal. The monsoon usually arrives in June, and lasts until early September, bringing with it the heavy rainfall which is responsible for the lush vegetation which carpets much of Bhutan. March and April, as well as late September through to November are the best months to visit Bhutan. Post-monsoon the weather is normally bright and clear. Day-time highs of around 20°C can be expected at altitudes around 2000 metres, whilst at our highest camps the maximum daytime temperature will be 10°C to 12°C. At night-time, the temperature will fall below freezing and at our highest camps you need to be prepared for very cold night time temperatures. Although prolonged periods of bad weather are not common outside of the monsoon season, mountains do create their own weather and short-lived periods of rain or snow can never be completely ruled out.

## Travel Aware

As a reputable tour operator, KE supports the British Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office's '[Travel Aware](#)' campaign to enable British citizens to prepare for their journeys overseas. The 'Travel Aware' website provides a single, authoritative source of advice for all kinds of travellers and we recommend that before travel, all KE clients visit the official UK Government website at [travelaware.campaign.gov.uk](http://travelaware.campaign.gov.uk) and read the FCDO Travel Advice for their chosen destination. North Americans can also check out the U.S. Department of State website: [www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov) for essential travel advice and tips.

KE treat the safety and security of all clients as the most important aspect of any trip we organise. We would not run any trip that we did not consider reasonably safe. Should the FCDO advise against travel for any reason, we will contact everyone booked to travel to discuss the situation. We receive regular updates directly from the FCDO and are in constant touch with our contacts on the ground. If you have any questions about government travel advice, please call our office.

## Single Use Plastic

KE do not encourage the use of single use plastic items. We are ensuring that our agents all over the world are working together to reduce the problem and educate those around them. We are leading by example in our KE office by reducing our plastic use.

## Books

- 'Lunana - A Yak in the Classroom' (2019 film) - Bhutan's first Oscar-nominated film.
- Bhutan, a Trekker's guide. Bart Jordans. Cicerone Press.
- Bhutan. (Lonely Planet Guide). Stan Armington.
- Bhutan, Land of the Thunder Dragon. Owen Edmunds

## Maps

### Bhutan Himalaya. Nepa Maps

Indexed general map of Bhutan, providing a general overview at 1:390,000 of the main trekking routes. Bold hill-shading indicates the general relief, and light green shading highlights the national park areas. Highways, main roads and selected minor routes are marked, and highlighted in different colours are the trekking routes. Selected peaks passes and altitudes are marked, and symbols denote campsites, monasteries, monuments, and places of interest.

## Travel Insurance

It is an essential condition of joining a holiday with KE Adventure Travel that you have a valid travel insurance policy to cover the cost of medical treatment and to protect the value of your holiday in the event of cancellation. When taking out insurance please ensure the policy you choose covers you for the activities and altitude included in your itinerary.

For appropriate insurance cover we recommend Campbell Irvine Direct. Please go to our [Travel Insurance](#) page for further information and to get a quote.

# Equipment Information

## Equipment List

Please try to keep the weight of your trek bag to a minimum. See the 'baggage allowance' section for further details.

The packed weight of your kit bag while trekking should be no more than 15kg.

### You **SHOULD** bring the following items:

- Sleeping Bag (comfort rating -15C)\*
- Warm jacket (down)\*
- Hiking boots
- Waterproof and windproof jacket
- Waterproof and windproof overtrousers
- Trekking trousers

- Thermal baselayer leggings
  - Thermal baselayer shirts
  - Fleece jacket
  - Sunhat
  - Fleece hat
  - Scarf or buff
  - Sunglasses
  - Thermal gloves
  - Warm and waterproof gloves or mittens
  - Daypack 30 litres.
  - Headtorch with spare batteries
  - Washbag and toiletries
  - Antibacterial handwash
  - Sun protection (including total bloc for lips, nose etc.)
  - Water bottles (2 or 3 x 1 Litre). (Note that the tube on camelback / platypus type systems can be prone to freezing in cold conditions) (we encourage re-filling water bottles rather than single use plastic)
  - Water purification tablets
  - Selection of dry bags (to keep kit bag contents dry)
- Basic First Aid Kit including: Antiseptic cream, throat lozenges, diarrhoea treatment (Imodium), altitude (Diamox), painkillers, plasters and blister treatment, and re-hydration salts (Dioralite). Glucose tablets and multi-vitamin tablets are also a good idea.

## The following items are optional:

- Sleeping bag liner
- Thermos flask
- Swimwear (for the hotel pool in Kathmandu)
- Travel clothes
- Trainers or similar
- Spare laces
- Trekking poles
- Gaiters (highly recommended due to muddy conditions)
- Insect repellent - (DEET)
- Pen-knife (note: always pack sharp objects in hold baggage)
- Repair kit - (eg. needle, thread, duct tape)
- Camera
- Small travel towel
- Reusable cloth bag for shopping (to avoid plastic bags)

## Notes

\*FREE sleeping bag and down jacket hire is included in your KE holiday booking upon request.

Please make all requests at least 6 weeks prior to the trip departure date. Note all hire / rental equipment is issued in Bhutan. Please remember to allow room in your trek bag for these items.

'Thermarest' inflatable camping mats are provided whilst camping.



**PHD Gear Advisor:** PHD specialise in cold weather equipment, from the world's lightest right up to the most protective for Everest or the Poles. It's a large range. So to help you choose what you need to keep you warm, PHD have listed the gear that is appropriate for this expedition. [Click here.](#)

## FESTIVAL DRESS CODE

The Bhutanese get dressed up for festivals and you may want to take a smarter set of clothes with you to use on the days you are attending the festivals. Long sleeves and long trousers are best, women might want to bring a scarf. Dirty boots or open toed sandals should be avoided where possible. Hats and umbrellas should be avoided.

## FESTIVAL ETIQUETTE

Bhutan's Tshechus (festivals) are religious events and the festival grounds are purified and consecrated by lamas. The dancers are in a state of meditation, they believe that they transform themselves into the deities they represent on the dance ground, generating a spiritual power, which purifies, enlightens and blesses the spectators. Out of respect, whilst watching the dances, you should not eat, drink, talk or laugh loudly at inappropriate times. You should not use flash photography and please be respectful when photographing dancers or onlookers. The festivals are not tourist attractions, they are manifestations of religious traditions thousands of year's old, which we are fortunate to be able to witness.

## Cotswold Outdoor

Many of the equipment items listed above are available from [Cotswold Outdoor](#) - our '**Official Recommended Outdoor Retailer**'. When you book a holiday with KE you will receive a 12.5% discount with Cotswold Outdoor, Snow+Rock and Runners Need. The discount code can be downloaded from your MyKE account and you can use this code at the checkout, either in store or online.

## Land Only Information

The LAND ONLY dates and prices are for joining at the hotel in Kathmandu. Transfers from Tribhuvan International (Kathmandu) Airport to/from the group hotel are provided on the first and last day of the holiday.

## Flight Inclusive Information

The FLIGHT INCLUSIVE dates and prices are based on UK flights from London to Kathmandu. Outbound flights will usually depart from the UK in the evening, arriving mid afternoon the following day (day 1 of the itinerary). Return flights will depart Kathmandu usually in the morning of the last day of the itinerary, arriving in the UK later the same day.

# Why Choose KE

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## Why KE

THE GREATEST AND MOST CHALLENGING HIMALAYAN TREK OF ALL! We are one of the few companies that offer the complete Snowman Trek, all the way from Shana, west of Paro, following the border with Tibet, to Lunana beneath Gangar Puensum, the highest unclimbed mountain on Earth! Bhutan visa fees, all meals, and return flights from Kathmandu to Paro are included, and there's even FREE sleeping bag and down jacket hire available too.

**Please Note** This document was downloaded on 23/11/2024 and the trip is subject to change