

# LUNANA SNOWMAN, BHUTAN



View from Karchung La on Lunana Snowman trek



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## HIGHLIGHTS

- This is a challenging 29 day trek through the remote and rarely visited Lunana region in Northern Bhutan along the border with Tibet. On Lunana Snowman trek you will cross eight Himalayan mountain passes over 4,000m and three over 5,000m.
- Lunana Snowman is known as one of the most difficult and beautiful trek in the Himalayas.
- At the start of the trip we organise a visit to Haa valley for two nights in order to help essential acclimatisation before the trek. This valley offers wonderful scenic walk along trails passing through traditional villages and magnificent monasteries.
- Cultural tour of Bumthang, Trongsa, Punakha and Thimphu after the trek.
- More people have summited Mount Everest than walk the complete Snowman trek from Paro to Bumthang....

## REASONS TO CHOOSE THE MOUNTAIN COMPANY FOR LUNANA SNOWMAN

- We are Himalayan trekking specialists and we have been operating trips in Bhutan for many years. [Roland Hunter](#), owner and founder of The Mountain Company, has modified this itinerary based on his first-hand experience of the Lunana region of Bhutan.
- Read our [AITO Traveller Reviews](#) received for Lunana Snowman where our overall holiday rating is 100%. Our approach to organising trips in the Himalayas has helped The Mountain Company win awards such as [2018 Gold Award as AITO Tour Operator of the Year](#) and 2015 Bronze Award as AITO Tour Operator of the Year.



- The Mountain Company has 100% track record of organising Lunana Snowman in Bhutan with our groups having successfully completed this trek on ten previous occasions from 2018 to 2011, 2008 and 2006. You can [view these Trip Reports](#).
- Due to our good contacts in Bhutan on our previous Lunana Snowman treks we did not lose any days due to logistical problems organising animal transport.
- Our Lunana Snowman itinerary has been designed based on this first-hand experience which is the best in terms of acclimatisation, safety and enjoyment. Unlike most other Snowman itineraries we now include one night in Paro and two nights in Haa Valley before starting the trek for essential acclimatisation.
- We have chosen the optimal times of year to complete this trek. If one starts later in Autumn/ Fall there is a high chance of the passes into and out of Lunana being blocked with early winter snows.
- The Mountain Company will receive bespoke weather forecasts for this region of Bhutan from EverestWeather.com throughout the duration of this trek.
- We send two Thuraya satellite phones on our Snowman trek in Bhutan. It is essential for your guide to have reliable communications with us for logistics, planning and group safety.
- We use GPS on Thuraya satellite phone to upload daily your location onto Google Maps so your friends and family can track your progress during the trek.
- There will be a range of tasty meals for breakfast, lunch and supper. We also bring along a supply of chocolate bars. For breakfast every morning we provide fresh coffee from our Bialetti Moka coffee machine.
- We bring a comprehensive first aid kit plus high altitude medicine, antibiotics and other medicines. There will also be a portable altitude chamber (PAC or Gamow bag).
- Pre-trip support will be given by Roland via email, phone or face to face meetings.



# TESTIMONIALS

“The Lunana Snowman trek in Bhutan was for me a dream fulfilled that transcended the magical. Yes - it was long and challenging but now indelibly etched on my mind as the most beautiful place I have been privileged to visit. The highlights were....Karchung La....the rest day in Thanza.....Tshorim Lakes....Saga la....simply stunning... and inevitably the Swiss Guest House! Superb leadership by Roland; a master logistician and outdoorsman.....an absolute gentleman.” **Mark Simmonds (Canada)**

"The scenery on the Snowman trek was gorgeous and I feel really privileged to have seen this kind of vanishing wilderness. It was arduous but worth every step. It was a treat to have real coffee as never been on a trek that offered it... you have raised the bar! Thanks for everything, Roland!" **Dee Standley (USA)**

“I have trekked with a number of companies, and at the end of the trek there are usually a number of issues to provide feedback on, and certainly some lingering dissatisfactions. I can honestly say, however, that on this occasion, the trek was one of the best organised, most efficient, well thought out treks that I have been on. Every staff member spoke very highly of you and your company, as did the guides and the many repeat guests for the Mountain Company that I met on the trek.

“Thank you for offering this trip and providing such great service. I am also glad I did this route. The hot springs and first night at Swiss Guest House made it extra special. This was definitely the trip of a lifetime for me and it delivered on everything I expected.” **Sharon Folkes (Canada)**



# LUNANA SNOWMAN, BHUTAN

Total number of days	34 days
Grade & days trekking	Strenuous, 29 trekking days
Accommodation	6 nights hotel, 27 nights camping
2020 price ex Paro	£6,895 (or US\$8,795 or €7,595)
2021 price ex Paro	£6,895 (or US\$8,795 or €7,595)
Minimum group size	6
Dates	September 21 <sup>st</sup> to October 24 <sup>th</sup> 2020 April 26 <sup>th</sup> to May 29 <sup>th</sup> 2021 September 20 <sup>th</sup> to October 23 <sup>rd</sup> 2021



## THE FOLLOWING IS INCLUDED IN THE PRICE OF THE TRIP

- All transfers including airport collections in Paro.
- Twin share hotels while in Bhutan.
- All meals included while in Bhutan.
- Twin share tents while on trek.
- All trekking arrangements including permits and fees, tents, Western & Bhutanese guide, pack animals and cook.
- Bespoke weather forecasts from EverestWeather.com throughout the duration of this trek.
- Two Thuraya satellite phones for organising logistics and medical evacuations, it can also be also used for personal calls at extra cost.
- We use GPS on Thuraya satellite phone to upload daily your location onto Google Maps so your friends and family can track your progress during the trek.
- Full financial protection for all monies paid to us through our membership of Association of Bonded Travel Operators Trust (our ABTOT membership number is 5365) and having an Air Travel Organiser's Licence (our ATOL number is 10921).
- Pre departure support and advice from The Mountain Company by email, phone and face to face meetings in London. After booking with us we will send you our comprehensive "Bhutan Pre Trip Information" notes

## THE FOLLOWING SINGLE SUPPLEMENT IS AVAILABLE:

Single room supplement	£310 (or US\$395 or €340)
Single tent supplement	£430 (or US\$550 or €475)

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Please note that if you are a single person booking on one of our trips you do not have to pay the single room supplement, this is only payable if you specifically request to have a room or tent to yourself. You will not have to pay this for this option if you happen to end up with a single room or tent due to odd numbers on the trip.

## THE FOLLOWING IS NOT INCLUDED IN THE PRICE OF THE TRIP

- International flight to/from Paro.
- Travel & trekking insurance.
- Personal clothing & equipment please see Appendix for suggested kit list.
- Tips (we recommend you budget £170, US\$220 or €195 for local crew).
- Other items not listed in “What is included”.

## PARTICIPANT SELECTION

The Mountain Company carefully selects and screens potential participants applying to join our groups to ensure the trip is an appropriate objective for you. We have a number of pre-trip questions asking information about your outdoor experience, training, experience, medical conditions and fitness. To access the pre-trip questions please send in your application by clicking on the **“Apply now” button** on the trek webpage. After review of your replies we might contact you by telephone or email for further information to aid our selection process.

Please ensure you have done your own research about Lunana Snowman trek by reading our pre trip documents (Trip Dossier, Trip Grading and Trip Reports published on TMC blog) to ensure you have a realistic idea of what to expect. Every trip organised by The Mountain Company has been graded based on four factors: daily walking times, altitude, terrain and remoteness.



## INTRODUCTION

The Snowman trek is a long and challenging trek travelling to Lunana, this is a remote and rarely visited region of the Eastern Himalaya. The Mountain Company has **100% track record** of organising Lunana Snowman in Bhutan with our groups having successfully completed this trek on ten previous occasions.

This is a 29 day trek crossing the north of Bhutan along the border with Tibet covering 356km and crossing eight Himalayan mountain passes over 4,000m and three over 5,000m.

Very few westerners have ever visited the remote district of Lunana due to its inaccessibility; one can only get in and out by crossing mountain passes over 5,000m that are frequently blocked by snow. Our itinerary completes the full journey starting in Paro and finishing near Bumthang.

At the start of the trip we organise a visit to Haa valley for two nights in order to help essential acclimatisation before the trek. This valley offers wonderful scenic walk along trails passing through traditional villages and magnificent monasteries. This is a beautiful area adorned with pristine alpine forests and still remains one of the least visited areas in the country.

The mountain views throughout this trek are spectacular with many peaks along the Bhutan and Tibet border un-named and un-mapped, you will see several mountains over 7,000m such as Chomolhari and Gangkar Punsum the world's highest unclimbed mountain.

## DETAILED ITINERARY

It is our intention to keep to the day by day itinerary detailed below, although there might be some flexibility due to local conditions or other factors beyond our control. If this is the case the trek leader will do everything possible to work out the changes to the itinerary in order to minimise your inconvenience.

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### **Day 1. Fly to Paro (2,280m), afternoon sightseeing.**

You will be met on arrival at Paro airport and driven back to the hotel. Please provide travel plans on booking and we will arrange the pick-up and transfer. A full trek briefing will be given in the afternoon. Later on we will organise sightseeing tour to explore Paro, change money at the bank, visit Paro Dzong and the National museum. **Overnight at hotel in Paro (Meals: L,D).**

### **Day 2. Morning walk to Taktsang monastery known as the Tiger's Nest) (3,120m). In the afternoon we drive to Haa Valley (2,712m) via Chele La (3,780m)- 2 ½ hours driving.**

After breakfast we will organise a walk up to the Taktsang monastery known as the "Tiger's Nest". It takes about 2 to 3 hours to walk through pine forest and up to the monastery perched on a cliff overlooking the valley.

After our visit to Taktsang we drive to the Chele La pass and on a clear day there is a view of Mount Chomolhari to the north. Haa Valley is a beautiful area adorned with pristine alpine forests and remains one of the least visited areas in the country. The valley offers wonderful scenic walk along trails passing through beautiful villages and magnificent monasteries. **Overnight at hotel in Haa Valley (Meals: B,L,D).**

### **Day 3. Day walk around Haa valley (2,712m).**

Today there are a number of options for day walks in Haa valley. Most likely we will walk through the lower village of Lechuna and 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 currently undergoing renovation after suffering earthquake damage we descend to Chumpa bridge and to Chuma village. **Overnight at hotel in Haa Valley (Meals: B,L,D).**

### **Day 4. Drive to Chele La (3,780m) and walk along the ridge for acclimatisation then drive to Paro and onto Shana (2,790m).**

We leave Haa valley and drive up to Chele La where we stop and walk along the ridge for acclimatisation. If we are lucky we will get the views again of Mount Chomolhari to the north. From the pass we drive down to Paro and then we continue past Drugyel Dzong and along a jeep track to Shana. At Shana we meet the trek crew and spend our first night in the tents before starting the trek tomorrow. **Overnight camping (Meals: B,L,D).**



**Day 5. Trek to Soi Thangthanka (3,510m)- 6 to 7 hours walking.**

From Shana camp the trail continues through rhododendron and blue pine forests. The trail is normally quite muddy in places so it is a good idea to use trekking poles and to wear gaiters. Tonight we camp in a clearing in the forest at Soi Thangthanka. **Overnight camping (Meals: B,L,D).**

**Day 6. Trek to Chomolhari Base Camp (4,080m)- 5 to 6 hours walking.**

After an hour or so from camp we leave the forest as we climb above the tree line into a beautiful valley. Arriving at Chomolhari Base Camp there is a superb view of Mt Chomolhari next the ruins of an old Dzong that used to guard Bhutan against invasions from Tibet. **Overnight camping (Meals: B,L,D).**

**Day 7. Acclimatisation day at Chomolhari Base Camp (4,080m).**

In order to help the acclimatisation process it is a good idea to go for a walk in the morning to higher altitude (“climb high, sleep low”). There are a number of options for a morning walk including walking up a ridge to the north for good views of Mt Jichu Drake or to walk to the twin lakes at Tsho Phu (4,350m). This is a holy lake where fishing, swimming or throwing stones is not permitted according to Buddhist beliefs. **Overnight camping (Meals: B,L,D).**

**Day 8. Trek to Lingshi (4,150m) crossing Nyile La (4,890m)- 6 hours walking.**

Today we cross the first of the major passes, the Nyile La pass at 4,890m. It is a steady ascent to the pass on a good trail. There are views of Mt Takaphu (6,526m) to the north and Tiger Mountain to the east. **Overnight camping (Meals: B,L,D).**

**Day 9. Trek to Chebisa (3,850m)- 4 hours walking.**

After breakfast we will visit the Dzong and then carry on to Lingshi village. On leaving Lingshi the trail contours high above the valley passing through hillsides covered with medicinal plants and flowers. After passing a ridge covered with prayer flags, we descend into a side valley to a beautiful village called Goyok. Another hour further we arrive to Chebisa village located in a valley with a waterfall. **Overnight camping (Meals: B,L,D).**

**Day 10. Trek to Shomuthang (3,950m) crossing Gombu La (4,400m)- 5 to 6 hours walking.**



After crossing the Gombu La we descend through a hillside of rhododendrons to Shomuthang where we camp for the night. **Overnight camping (Meals: B,L,D).**

**Day 11. Trek to Robulathang (4,410m) crossing Jhare La (4,780m)- 7 hours walking.**

After an early start we climb towards the Jhare La pass where there are good views of Tiger Mountain, Mt Jitchu Drake, Takaphu and Kang Bum. Descending from the pass we arrive to Tsharijathang where herds of Takin (national animal of Bhutan) can be seen at certain times of the year. **Overnight camping (Meals: B,L,D).**

**Day 12. Trek to Limithang (4,160m) crossing the Shinge La (5,000m).**

After a long climb of 4 hours to the Shinge La at 5,000m we are rewarded with stunning views of mountains, including the spectacular Tiger Mountain at the head of the valley. In 2011 a new Buddhist chorten was constructed on the summit of Shinge La. On the descent from pass we walk next a terminal moraine and glacial lake located above Limithang camp. **Overnight camping (Meals: B,L,D).**

**Day 13. Trek to Laya (3,700m)- 4 to 5 hours walking.**

Today we walk through forest alongside the river to Laya the largest village on the trek. Layap women wear distinctive conical bamboo hats with turquoise and jade jewellery. **Overnight camping (Meals: B,L,D).**

**Day 14. Rest day.**

Today you can explore the village and possible get the chance to watch archery later in the afternoon. There is also a walk to a view point above Laya at 4,200m with superb views of Masagang mountain. **Overnight camping (Meals: B,L,D).**

**Day 15. Trek to Rodophu (4,120m)- 6 to 7 hours walking.**

The trail descends from Laya to the army post at Taksaka from here we turn to the east towards Lunana. We camp at Rodophu for the night. **Overnight camping (Meals: B,L,D).**

**Day 16. Trek to Narethang (4,900m) crossing Tsema La (4,905m)- 6 hours walking.**

After a steep climb out of Roduphu camp the trail then steepens on the approach Tsema La. Narethang camp is in a very remote area with superb views of Gangla Karchung towering above. **Overnight camping (Meals: B,L,D).**



**Day 17. Trek to Tarina (3,900m) crossing the Karchung la (5,240m)- 7 to 8 hours walking.**

The climb to Karchung La takes 1 ½ hours and on the summit of pass you will be rewarded with superb views of Jejekangphu Gang (7,300m) and Tsenda Kang (7,100m). There is a beautiful place for lunch with views of the glacial lakes to the peaks north of Lunana and down to the valley below. From here there is a steep and often muddy path through rhododendrons to Tarina camp. In October 2008 members of our group saw a Himalayan black bear and cub near Tarina.

**Overnight camping (Meals: B,L,D).**

**Day 18. Trek to Woche (4,150m).**

The trail follows the Pho Chhu river through pine forest and past several spectacular waterfalls. There is then a steady climb over a ridge to the village of Woche, we camp an hour further at the base of the Keshe La. **Overnight camping (Meals: B,L,D).**

**Day 19. Trek to Lhedi (3,700m) crossing Keshe La (4,435m)- 6 to 7 hours walking.**

There is a steep climb for 2 hours to Keshe La, on the way we pass a beautiful green coloured lake. There are prayer flags and cairns on the pass and from here it is a steep descent to Tega village. The trail contours high above East Pho Chhu and continues to Lhedi village where we camp for the night. **Overnight camping (Meals: B,L,D).**

**Day 20. Trek to Thanza (3,970m).**

The trail continues gradually uphill following the East Pho Chhu to Chozo village. It is very likely that you will have to cross the river 1 hour from Lhedi as the bridge has been washed out. The erosion scar from Glacial Lake Outflow Flood (“GLOF”) is still seen by erosion scars on side of the valleys. The Lunana valley opens out into a classic U shape on the approach to Thanza village. **Overnight camping (Meals: B,L,D).**

**Day 21. Rest day.**

Today there is an optional morning walk to the glacial lake above Thanza or you can relax in camp and explore the village. The Lunaps make good money



picking Cordyceps Sinesis ("caterpillar fungus") over the summer months, these are sold to the Chinese as herbal medicine and is worth more than per kg than gold!

**Day 22. Trek to before Danje (4,540m)- 4 hours walking.**

Today is a shorter walk to Danje where we camp for the night. It is important for acclimatising to spend the night here rather than continuing on to Tshorim.

**Overnight camping (Meals: B,L,D).**

**Day 23. Trek to Tshorim lake camp (5,200m)- 6 hours walking.**

We continue up the valley towards Tshorim and camp by the lake where the views are sensational. **Overnight camping (Meals: B,L,D).**

**Day 24. Trek over Gophu la (5,345m) and to Geche Woma (4,950m)- 5 to 6 hours walking.**

A classic day as we cross the Gophu La and shortly after see the highest mountain in Bhutan, Gangkar Punsum, at 7,541m. It takes only an hour to walk to the pass from Tshorim lake camp. From the pass we descend past two lakes and cross several moraines with view of a broken and crevassed glacier. We walk along a lateral moraine to the main valley we follow the river to the camp at Geche Woma.

**Overnight camping (Meals: B,L,D).**

**Day 25. Trek to Mischugang (4,300m) at base of Phorang La- 4 hours walking.**

The trail follows the Sasha Chuu valley to a yak herders camp at Mischugang below the Phorang La. We stay on left side of valley passing a number of empty yak herders' huts as by this time of year have moved their herds to a lower altitude.

**Overnight camping (Meals: B,L,D).**

**Day 26. Trek to Worithang (4,500m) crossing Phorang La (4,850m) and Saga La (4,960m)- 6 hours walking.**

There is a steep climb on grassy slopes to the Phorang La, from the pass there is a 50m descent to the yak herders' huts at Phorang. Shortly after you see a lake surrounded by peaks and the steep trail winding its way to the Saga La. There is a superb view from the Saga La, then the trail descends to a grassy plateau past two lakes and shortly after a short climb to the Worithang La. The camp at Worithang is next to several yak herders' huts with Nephu La visible behind the camp.

**Overnight camping (Meals: B,L,D).**



**Day 27. Trek to Dur Tsachu (3,200m) crossing Nephu La (4,560m)- 4 hours walking.**

There is a short walk to the Nephu La and then a long descent through forest to Dur Tsachu. The hot springs are well worth visiting in the afternoon for a soak.

**Overnight camping (Meals: B,L,D).**

**Day 28. Trek to Tso Chenchen (3,850m) crossing Gongto La (4,327m) and Djule La (4,551m)- 7 to 8 hours walking.**

Today is a tough day as we climb 1000m to the Gongto La, descend to the lake and then head up again to the Djule La. In October 2008 the group saw over 40 Blue Sheep on the slopes above the lake. Tso Chen Chen is a yak herder's camp and we pitch our tents nearby. **Overnight camping (Meals: B,L,D).**

**Day 29. Trek to Gorsum (3,300m)- 5 to 6 hours walking.**

The trail descends through forest and further down bamboo stands. An hour before Gorsum we cross the bridge and walk up a very muddy trail to the camp located in a grassy meadow. **Overnight camping (Meals: B,L,D).**

**Day 30. Contingency day or extra rest day.**

**Day 31. Trek to Minchugang (3,200m) then drive to Bumthang (2,700m)- 4 hours walking then 40 minutes driving.**

After a short trek to the road head at Minchugang we drive to Jakar and check into our hotel. In the afternoon we can visit the Dzong and monasteries then walk around Jakar township. **Overnight at hotel in Bumthang (Meals: B,L,D).**

**Day 32. Drive to Punakha- 8 hours driving.**

From Bumthang we drive over Yotong La and to Tongsa, from here the road climbs to Pele La and descends to Punakha where we spend the night. **Overnight at hotel in Punakha (Meals: B,L,D).**

**Day 33. Drive to Thimphu- 3 hours driving.**

After breakfast we make the short drive to Punakha where we visit the Dzong. There is a long climb to Dochu La where there is superb view of the Himalayas including Gangkar Punsum, from the pass the road descends to Thimphu. After checking into the hotel you have the afternoon to explore the town centre of



Thimphu with a wide range shops, restaurants and cafes. **Overnight at hotel in Thimphu (Meals: B,L,D).**

**Day 34. Drive to Paro airport for flight back home- 1 hour driving.**  
Transfers to Paro airport for flights back home.

## YOUR COMPLETE FINANCIAL PROTECTION

The Mountain Trekking Company Ltd (trading as The Mountain Company) is a fully licensed and bonded tour operator. For flight inclusive packages sold to UK residents these will be covered by our Air Travel Organisers Licence (our ATOL number is 10921). For packages that do not include flights and for packages sold to customers outside of the UK your financial protection is covered by our membership of Association of Bonded Travel Organisers' Trust ("ABTOT"). Our ABTOT membership number is 5365.



Our membership of these organisations means that you can book with us in complete confidence that all monies paid to us for trips are protected.

## THREAT AND RISK ASSESSMENT

Participants should be aware trekking, mountaineering and travelling in a developing country are activities that involve a risk of personal injury or death. As a condition of booking you must accept these risks and be responsible for your own actions and involvement.

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Adventure travel requires an open and flexible attitude. You may experience extreme conditions, unpredictable weather and last minute changes to the itinerary beyond our control. The ability to work in team is an important aspect of all of our trips.

As a part of our planning process we have performed a detailed threat and risk assessment for our Lunana Snowman trek. It is worth pointing out all of our trips have a certain degree of risk, this is of course part of the attraction of adventure travel and why so many people choose to join this type of holiday. However by identifying the potential hazards on Lunana Snowman we can assess the level of risk and implement control measures to reduce this happening.

Our full threat and risk assessment for Lunana Snowman is available to clients on request. For your information 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.
- Severe bad weather and conditions when camping eg. Tshorim Lake at 5,000m.
- Climatic injuries (dehydration, sun burn, 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 ie. While crossing high passes.
- Lightning strike.
- Wildlife, pack animals (eg. donkeys or horses) or stray dogs. Pack animals have been known to knock people off the path. Dogs can attack and bite, we advise you discuss rabies vaccination with your doctor.
- Earthquake.
- Risk of fire in the hotel or lodge.





- Endemic local diseases. We advise you discuss vaccinations with your doctor before departure.
- Physiological injury such as heart attack, appendicitis, hernia, toothache etc. in a remote area.
- Road traffic or flight accident.
- Contaminated food and/ or water.

This trip visits a remote area where you are away from normal emergency services and medical facilities. In case of a serious injury requiring hospitalisation evacuation could take up to several days and may impede your ensuing recovery. Helicopters are the most usual means of evacuation, however they are not always available or they may be hindered by poor weather and flying conditions.

## THE ASSOCIATION OF INDEPENDENT TOUR OPERATORS ("AITO")

The Mountain Company is a member of the Association of Independent Tour Operators (AITO) and we have agreed to abide by the terms of the AITO Quality Charter.

AITO is the Association for independent and specialist holiday companies. Our member companies, usually owner-managed, strive to create overseas holidays with high levels of professionalism and a shared concern for quality and personal service. The Association encourages the highest standards in all aspects of tour operating. For more information please take a look at <http://www.aito.com/>



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# ETHICAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

The Mountain Company is committed to adopting a responsible attitude to the areas we visit. We are guests of the communities visited and with some thought and care we can ensure that everyone benefits from the experience. We have developed a Responsible Tourism policy which aims to ensure that The Mountain Company and its clients act in a way that is socially, environmentally and culturally sound.

In 2017 the Association of Independent Tour Operators (AITO) launched Project PROTECT in recognition of the important role that destinations play in the future of the travel industry. The aim of this project is to encourage sustainable tourism and to nurture the destinations for tomorrow's travellers. The PROTECT acronym stands for People / Resources / Outreach / Tourism / Environment / Conservation / Tomorrow.

This project is led by Professor Xavier Font of the University of Surrey and each AITO member has to publish an annual pledge and report back at the end of the year on how they got along. To see The Mountain Company's Project PROTECT pledges for 2018 and 2017, please take a look at our [Sustainable Tourism page on AITO website](#).



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We work closely with the International Porter Protection Group and abide by their five guidelines for porter protection, their website is at [www.ippg.net](http://www.ippg.net). We also have partnered with Kathmandu Environmental Education Project in Nepal, their website is at [www.keepnepal.org](http://www.keepnepal.org)

# PRACTICAL INFORMATION

## ALTITUDE AND ACCLIMATISATION

Our Lunana Snowman itinerary has been designed for gradual acclimatisation to take place. There are ways of helping the acclimatisation process, as described below:

- Walk slowly: there is plenty of time included in the itinerary so there is no need to rush, go at your own pace and enjoy the incredible views!
- Drinks lots of water: it is easier for your body to acclimatise when hydrated so drink water and avoid coffee, tea and alcohol.
- Consider taking diamox (acetazolamide): before using this drug we recommend consulting a doctor and thoroughly researching the pros and cons.

Please remember even the fittest and healthiest person can develop one of the altitude illnesses: AMS (acute mountain sickness), HACE (high altitude cerebral edema) and/ or HAPE (high altitude pulmonary edema). The symptoms of these illnesses are listed below, if any of these occur when you are on trek please immediately tell your guide.

### **Symptoms of AMS:**

- Tiredness
- Dizziness
- Nausea or if severe, vomiting

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- Poor sleep

### **Symptoms of HACE:**

- Usually preceded by AMS
- Like “Severe AMS” also with severe headache unresponsive to painkillers; confusion and physical clumsiness (ataxia).

### **Symptoms of HAPE:**

- Fluid in the lungs: cough, tiredness, breathlessness out of proportion to exercise especially at rest and worse when lying flat.
- Often symptoms start later (at night or after 24 to 48 hours at new altitude).
- Often occurs without AMS (often no headache)
- But you can have AMS and HACE too.

If you have symptoms of altitude illness (AMS, HACE or HAPE) you must not ascend in altitude. If you have HACE or HAPE you must descend to nearest health post (if available) or seek medical help.

If you have only mild symptoms of AMS you should rest, drink fluids, try to eat, keep warm. If symptoms go away then you can go up. If symptoms get worse you have to descend in altitude escorted by one of our guides (someone with altitude illness must never descend alone).

For further information we suggest you take a look at the following websites:

High Altitude medicine website:

<http://www.high-altitude-medicine.com>

Medex Travel at High Altitude:

<http://www.medex.org.uk/v26%20booklet.pdf>

BMC website:

<http://www.thebmc.co.uk/Feature.aspx?id=1746>



## COMMUNICATIONS

We bring a Thuraya satellite phone for logistical, safety and personal use. Personal calls charged at £4 (US\$5) per minute and £2 (US\$3) to send and receive SMS text.

## A TYPICAL DAY ON TREK

The day starts with an early morning mug of tea brought to your tent by one of the cook's helpers. Before heading over to the mess tent for breakfast it is best to pack your overnight gear into your duffel bag. During breakfast the tents will be packed away and, after the pack animals have been loaded they will set off on the trail in the cool of the morning.

After breakfast, probably around 8am we start walking. The pace of the trek is leisurely with plenty of time to enjoy the scenery, take photos and explore the local villages. A hot lunch will be prepared by the cook after breakfast and transported in a tiffin carrier until lunch time.

There is more walking after lunch and normally you should get into camp by mid to late afternoon with the tents already put up by the local staff. In the evening a three course meal is served in the mess tent around 7pm. After supper the western leader will discuss the plan for the next day with the group. People might stay in the mess tent chatting about the day's events for a while before retiring to their tent for the night.

## FOOD

While on the trek you will get breakfast with porridge and cereal, toast or chapattis, omelettes and a range of hot drinks. A hot lunch will be prepared by the cook after breakfast and transported in a tiffin carrier until lunch time. On arrival at the camp in the afternoon you will be given tea and biscuits and a three course meal will follow



later in the evening. We bring along fresh vegetables for the main meals and also provide a supply of chocolate bars.

We send a full resupply of food to Laya village in order to have sufficient provisions for the second half of Snowman through Lunana and out to Bumthang.

## **CLIMATE AND WEATHER**

The timing of Lunana Snowman trek is very important in order to increase the chances of successfully completing the journey. The optimal time to start the trek is towards the end of September when the monsoon should be winding down which places the group in Lunana around mid October hopefully before the winter snows block the exit passes.

We have used the same dates for our Lunana Snowman with our previous eleven treks since 2008 and we have 100% success rate in completing this trek. Having said this each year the monsoon finishes at different times of the year. Sometimes there will be cloud and rain during the first section of the trek to Laya village whereas most years the weather clears after arrival to Chomolhari Base Camp. Lunana Snowman is a remote Himalayan trek and you should be prepared for a range of conditions and weather throughout the trek.

The traditional trekking seasons in Bhutan are late September to November and March to May with October generally recognised as having the best weather. Spring is also a popular time of year with warmer weather and the advantage of seeing spring flowers and rhododendrons in bloom.

This trek will have a wide range of temperatures depending on the altitude and the time of day. In the mountains between 1,000m and 3,500m the nights will be cool, normally around 5°C, and during the day temperatures sometimes rise to 25°C. At higher altitudes temperatures range from about 15°C to -20°C.

## **CLOTHING AND EQUIPMENT**

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A list of clothing and equipment for the Lunana Snowman trek has been included in the Appendix below. It is worth pointing out that you will need a sleeping bag for this trip.

If you do not have the clothing and equipment contained in this list then a good option might be to rent from the UK. Trek Hire and Expedition Kit Hire rent out high quality items at competitive prices which would save you the expense of buying. The links to their websites are at <http://www.trekhireuk.com/> and <http://www.expeditionkithire.co.uk>

Alternatively if you are going to buy then please contact the office for the Cotswold Outdoor promo code that entitles you, as a client of The Mountain Company, to a 15% discount in their stores and online.

Each trekker should bring one backpack for items required during the day. Your day backpack will contain items such as warm clothes, jacket, camera, water bottles, personal first aid kit and snacks.

The rest of your personal equipment packed in a duffel bag or backpack will be carried by a porter. **The maximum weight allowance is 18kgs.** Please ensure that your bag is marked clearly on the outside for easy identification.

## VISA REQUIREMENTS

### Bhutan visa

The Mountain Company team will obtain your Bhutan visa. We will send you a copy of the confirmation from the Bhutanese Department of Tourism showing that your visa has been authorised. Your actual visa will be issued on arrival at Paro.

## VACCINATIONS AND MEDICAL

You should obtain professional advice from a travel clinic or your local GP about which vaccinations to have before you arrive in Bhutan. A dental check-up is a good idea as there will be no dental facilities while on the trek.



We bring a comprehensive first aid kit plus high altitude medicine, antibiotics and other medicines.

## FLIGHTS

For most of our trips The Mountain Company does not book international flights as our package prices are Land Only with services starting from arrival to the destination country. However for our Bhutan treks like Snowman we can book your Druk Air or Bhutan Airways flights through our office in Thimphu, please get in touch if you like us to check availability and costs.

## INSURANCE

Travel insurance for any Mountain Company itinerary is a condition of booking a holiday. At the very least you should have emergency medical and repatriation insurance which must include the cost of mountain rescue. Cancellation insurance is strongly recommended as all deposits paid to The Mountain Company are non-refundable.

Please carefully check your insurers' Terms and Conditions in particular you should make sure the following is covered: 1) Activity (i.e touring, trekking or mountaineering) 2) Maximum altitude reached on trek 3) Helicopter evacuation in an emergency.

It is important for you to understand that ultimately the burden of any expense incurred in evacuation and repatriation procedures will be borne by you and that it is your responsibility to pay any costs incurred in respect of any evacuation or for medical treatment. You should be fully aware of the implications involved in arranging your own travel insurance and understand the limitations and exclusions of your policy.

You should be aware that under certain circumstances, The Mountain Company leader (or our local agent, if no western leader) might instigate rescue proceedings





via helicopter (or any other means necessary) in situations of medical emergency without first contacting your insurance company for their approval.

The Mountain Company has arranged travel and trekking insurance for European Union residents with the specialist insurance broker **Campbell Irvine**. Their insurance policy will cover you for most of the trips in our portfolio. However if your trek is classified or graded by The Mountain Company as “**Strenuous**” or “**Challenging**” then you must make sure you select this option when obtaining an online quote for your insurance. Campbell Irvine will not provide insurance cover for any trips classified as “**Mountaineering**”.



To apply for an online quote through [Campbell Irvine's Direct Travel Insurance](#) website. Should you have any questions regarding the terms and conditions of cover please contact Campbell Irvine on 0207 938 1734 or email [info@campbellirvine.com](mailto:info@campbellirvine.com)

We have [listed on TMC website a comprehensive list of specialist adventure travel insurers](#) that our trekkers from UK, EU and Internationally based have used in the past. Please carefully check their Terms & Conditions prior to purchase. These companies are not necessarily recommended by us so it is your responsibility to ensure you have appropriate coverage.

## CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS

The Royal Government of Bhutan has a strict policy to preserve its cultural and traditional values. For example antiques may not be taken out of the country and they request that clients do not give sweets, pens, etc., to children or distribute medicine to villagers. Further information you be provided in the Bhutan pre departure notes sent after booking.



## SUGGESTED READING

- Bhutan A Trekker's Guide: Bart Jordans, published by Cicerone
- Beneath Blossom Rain: Discovering Bhutan on the Toughest Trek in the World: Kevin Grange
- Pocket Guide to the Birds of Bhutan: Grimmett R, Inskipp C & T.
- Bhutan, An Illustrated Guide: Françoise Pommaret, Odyssey Guides



# APPENDIX

## CLOTHING AND EQUIPMENT LIST FOR LUNANA SNOWMAN

For the safety of everyone in the group and to help ensure a successful trek, you are required to have the following items in our clothing and equipment list tailored for Lunana Snowman trek. Your gear will be checked by the group leader in Paro prior to 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. During the first couple of days on Lunana Snowman trek you are likely to experience rainy and muddy conditions. You will experience the coldest temperatures in Narethang Camp (altitude of 4,900m) and Tshorim Lake (altitude of 5,250m) where overnight lows will be down to around -15°C.

**Important note:** it is not possible to purchase any decent quality trekking gear in Bhutan therefore it is essential everyone arrives to Paro at start of the trip with all of the right kit as per this list.

### 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 of organising Snowman trek we have had several boots fall apart so it is essential you also bring trail shoes as a backup (see below).
- Trail shoes. Can be used around camp and as a replacement if your walking boots fall apart!
- Sandals: fully enclosed sandals are best to protect your feet during river crossings. These are required for river crossings as well as two trekking poles (see below)



- Wool and liner socks.

### **Trekking gear for crossing the passes:**

- Two trekking poles (Black Diamond poles with “Flick Lock” are best). Having two poles is mandatory as required for your safety on steep and loose sections of the trail and for walking through deep snow higher up.
- Kahtoola Microspikes or YakTrax XTRs. These are for your safety and security when descending passes if snowy or icy conditions, for more information please take a look at: <https://kahtoola.com/product/microspikes/> and <https://www.yaktrax.com/product/xtr>
- Gaiters. A pair of knee high gaiters used to keep boots dry if walking through deep snow or on wet/ muddy ground.

### **Clothing:**

- Waterproof jacket and trousers (goretex or similar). For use if it rains or snows during the trek.
- Trekking trousers. Minimum two pairs of trousers.
- Long sleeve synthetic shirt. Minimum two shirts.
- Micro fleece.
- Mid to heavyweight fleece.
- Sleeveless/ gilet or body warmer type fleece. This will help keep your core warm while not bulking when layering up. Gilet fleece can be used in combination with base layers, other fleeces and down jacket to provide maximum warmth and insulation.
- Thermals or baselayer for top & bottom (merino wool or synthetic).
- Fleece pants. To be worn around camp or added as an additional layer when the temperatures start to drop higher up.
- Medium weight down jacket (eg. The North Face Nuptse jacket 700 fill).

### **Handwear:**

- Fleece gloves.

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- Warms mittens and/or gloves.

### **Headwear:**

- Wool or fleece hat.
- Sun hat.
- Bandana or scarf (eg. Buff Headwear check out <http://www.buffwear.com>).
- Headtorch. Bring extra batteries.
- Sunglasses. These need to have side protection or should be wraparound design to prevent light getting through to your eyes that could cause sun blindness.

### **Personal Equipment:**

- Sleeping bag. Maximum overnight lows will be around -15 Celsius.
- Fleece or silk liner for your sleeping bag. A liner protects your sleeping bag from getting dirty and helps by adding extra insulation to keep you warm at night.
- Sleeping mat (eg. Thermarest).
- Backpack. Recommended size is 40 litres or larger as you need to have enough space to carry water bottles, camera, lunch and extra clothing as well as micro spikes, trekking poles and down jacket for days crossing the high passes. It is also a good idea to bring a pack cover to keep the contents dry.
- 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).
- Pee bottle. Highly recommended as means you do not have to get up to find toilet tent at night! For men you can use an old water bottle for women take a look at SheWee at <http://www.shewee.com/>
- Sunscreen and lipsalve with a high SPF.
- Insect repellent.



- Water purification tablets (Pristine, Biox Acqua or Acqa Mira). You will be provided with boiled water at camp however if you refill water bottle at a water tap or stream during the day you should use water purifiers.
- Favourite snack food.
- Books, ipod and cards etc.
- Umbrella (you are very likely to get some rain on this trek....)
- Camera with spare batteries and memory cards.
- Insurance certificate.
- Earplugs (optional).
- Baby wipes (optional).
- Hand sanitizer. We suggest you keep this in your day pack for use after a toilet break during the trek or before eating any snacks.

### **Travelling:**

- Duffle bag or large backpack for your personal gear on the trek (carried by a pack animal). Bring a small combination padlock to secure the bag.
- Travel clothes. You will need casual clothing for air travel days and time spent in Paro and Thimphu.
- Toiletry bag include toilet paper, soap, towel, toothbrush, etc. We provide toilet paper so you do not need to bring this with you.

### **Personal first aid kit:**

Note: we provide a comprehensive group first aid kit but please bring personal medications and other items you might use regularly such as:

- Any personal medications.
- Blister treatment (Compeed patches are the best).
- Rehydration powder eg Dioralyte.
- Analgesics (paracetamol, ibuprofen and aspirin).

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- Plasters and zinc oxide tape.
- Throat lozenges.
- Diamox (helps with acclimatisation).