



Itinerary for Snowman Trek - from Damji through Lunana to Bumthang passing Gangkhar Puensum and Dur Hot Springs: September/October 2008

<p>DAY 1 Sunday 21st Sept</p>	<p>Arrive at Paro International Airport from Delhi, Kathmandu, Calcutta or Bangkok. Paro is situated in a beautiful valley and is a fitting introduction to this charming kingdom.</p>
<p>DAY 2 Monday 22nd Sept</p>	<p>Test your trekking legs with a hike to the 'Tiger's Nest', the sacred Taktshang monastery which clings to the rock face 900 metres above the valley floor. Guru Rinpoche is said to have flown to the site riding on a tigress. He subsequently meditated here for three months. It is one of Bhutan's most holy sites and draws pilgrims not only from Bhutan but also from neighbouring Buddhist countries. You can have lunch at the Taktshang cafeteria from where you get a spectacular view of the monastery. On the way back you can visit Dumtse Lhakhang, a temple built by Thangtong Gyalpo, the iron bridge builder. There may also be time to visit the impressive Paro Dzong, one of the finest examples of Bhutanese architecture. This evening you can sort out your luggage for the trek. Anything you don't need to carry with you will be taken safely to Bumthang to await your arrival.</p>
<p>DAY 3 Tuesday 23rd Sept</p>	<p>Paro to Damji. This morning we will drive along the Paro and Thimphu river valleys to Thimphu, Bhutan's capital where we will have lunch. After lunch we will drive to the old capital, Punakha, via Dochu La pass at 3050 metres where we will stop for a hot drink and enjoy spectacular panoramic views of the Eastern Himalaya ranges. From Punakha drive up the valley, following the Mo <i>Chu</i> (river) to Damji, our first camp.</p>
<p>DAY 4 Wednesday 24th Sept</p>	<p>SNOWMAN TREK - DAMJI TO BUMTHANG. Day 1. Damji to Gasa. The trail descends from the high agricultural terraces above the river into a gorge filled with semi-tropical vegetation. The path continues on through subtropical forested areas and villages up to Gasa Tsachu (hot spring). The Tsachu is famous for its curative powers, and people come from all over the country to bathe here. There are four pools, with temperatures ranging from warm to hot. After a hot lunch near the spring, we have a stiff climb of about two hours up to Gasa Dzong (2,900m) where we camp overnight. (15 km, 6 to 7 hours)</p>
<p>DAY 5 Thursday 25th Sept</p>	<p>Day 2. Gasa to Chamsa. After breakfast we visit the Dzong, which was built in the 17th century to protect the valley against Tibetan invaders. Today's trek begins with a steep climb up to Bele-la pass (3,700m) through bamboo, rhododendron, juniper and fir forests. We then descend for about half an hour to our forest camp at Chamsa (3,650m). (13 km, 6 to 7 hours)</p>

<p>DAY 6 Friday 26th Sept</p>	<p>Day 3. Chamsa to Laya. The day begins with a descent to the bank of the Mo <i>Chu</i> river. After lunch by the bridge we have a gradual climb to Laya where our camp is at 3800 m. (22 km, 8 to 9 hours). Today we should meet up with the group coming from Shana.</p>
<p>DAY 7 Saturday 27th Sept</p>	<p>Day 4. Rest day at Laya. Today allows an opportunity to explore the culture and traditions of the Laya community. It is possible to visit village houses and meet the friendly local people who will be pleased to offer you some yak butter tea. Women of Laya wear special dress and bamboo hats, both of which are decorated with turquoise and silver ornaments. An evening of dances performed by local women can be arranged.</p>
<p>DAY 8 Sunday 28th Sept</p>	<p>Day 5. Laya to Rodophu. From Laya we descend to the army camp and continue following the trail along the river till the turn off point for Rodophu. After lunch we continue climbing gently upwards through rhododendrons until we reach a hanging valley where there are yaks grazing. We may continue past the usual camping place to a higher camp below Tsome La (4350m). (19 km, 9 hours)</p>
<p>DAY 9 Monday 29th Sept</p>	<p>Day 6. Rodophu to Narethang. Today we cross the Rodophu <i>Chu</i>, walk upstream through wet areas and then continue uphill to today's high pass, Tsome La (4700 m), which we should reach about 3 hours' walk from camp. After crossing the pass and a small summit, there are superb views of Lunana, Mount Jomolhari and Jitchu Drake. Thereafter we follow a level path for the next four hours, along a flat barren plateau, before stopping for the night at our first really high camp (4940 m) where we should get some splendid views. Remember to drink plenty of fluids! (16 km, 7 to 8 hours)</p>
<p>DAY 10 Tuesday 30th Sept</p>	<p>Day 7. Narethang to Tarina. We start with a climb of about an hour or an hour and a half to Karakachu La (5080 m) below the spectacular peak of Gangla Karchung (6395 metres). The view from the pass is breathtaking, with a whole range of unclimbed 7000 metre mountains including Masa Gang, Tsende Gang and Teri Gang visible, providing one of the finest mountain panoramas in Bhutan. Once we have crossed the pass we are in Lunana proper. There follows a long and at times very steep descent to Tarina valley and then a leisurely walk for 2 to 3 hours along the valley bottom past several waterfalls to our camp at Tarina (3940 m). (16 km, 8 hours)</p>
<p>DAY 11 Wednesday 1st Oct</p>	<p>Day 8. Tarina to Woche. This is one of the most beautiful valleys in Bhutan - snowy mountains, virgin forest and clear mountain streams. Today's hike is fairly easy as the trail leads down through pine forests, following the upper reaches of the Pho <i>Chu</i>. After traversing a ridge we drop down to the village of Woche, a small settlement consisting of only 3 or 4 dwellings (3800 m). (17 km, 7 hours)</p>

<p>DAY 12 Thursday 2nd Oct</p>	<p>Day 9. Woche to Lhedi. Today's trek begins amongst juniper and fir trees. Then the path opens out with some more superb mountain views - we can see the unclimbed mountains of Kangphu Gang and Jeje Kangphu (7300 metres) to the north. After climbing for three hours we will reach Keche La (4480 m), after which we drop down to the river and walk through a village with a stunning view of 'Table Mountain' (Zongphu Gang - 7094 metres). The river leading to Lhedi village is one of the main sources of the Pho <i>Chu</i>, and we walk upstream to the campsite at Lhedi, a string of houses on high ground above the river, with a small temple (3650 m). (17 km, 6 to 7 hours)</p>
<p>DAY 13 Friday 3rd Oct</p>	<p>Day 10. Lhedi to Thanza. The trek continues along the river and rises gradually to Chozo village. On the way we will pass Chozo Dzong, one of the oldest in Bhutan and the only one in Lunana district. It is thought to be more than 600 years old but is still in use despite its condition. After crossing a bridge it is an easy walk to Thanza, a village in the heart of Lunana, where our camp is at 4100 metres. (17 km, 5 to 6 hours)</p>
<p>DAY 14 Saturday 4th Oct</p>	<p>Day 11. Rest day at Thanza. A welcome day of leisure for reading, catching up with the washing, or just strolling around. If you are feeling really energetic, you can climb up to the ridge for yet another splendid view of the mountains, or walk up to the lakes above the village.</p>
<p>DAY 15 Sunday 5th Oct</p>	<p>Day 12. Thanza to Dangey Koma. Today we begin with a steep ascent of the ridge with a great view of Table Mountain and the Thanza valley below. We follow a tributary of the Po <i>Chu</i> along a wide valley, which offers very pleasant walking. We pass a small shepherd's hut at Dangey and then climb gradually along a ridge for an hour or so beyond that to Dangey Koma (4700 m) where we will camp. Others stop at Dangey for lunch and continue to Tshorim, but we have opted to stop earlier to avoid too steep a rise in altitude between camps. (15 km, 8 hours).</p>
<p>DAY 16 Monday 6th Oct</p>	<p>Day 13. Dangey Koma to Zanam. Today after climbing a series of further ridges we cross a small pass to Tshorim. From there we have a short climb to Tshorim Lake, a real highlight of the trek, with a panoramic view of the Gophu La range. The final ascent to Gophu La (5230 m), which is the highest pass on the trek, takes only an hour and a half. En route we will get our first glimpses of Gangkhar Puensum, the highest unclimbed peak in the world. Walking up to the pass offers the most splendid scenery - two enormous turquoise lakes, a cirque of snowy peaks and the promise of even better views of Gangkhar Puensum still to come make for a great day's trekking. You can't see the mountain from the pass, but if you climb a little bit beyond you will see stunning views of it. After the pass, we follow a path down the valley to the left of the glacier to the upper part of the Sasha <i>Chu</i> valley where we camp below the southwestern face of Gangkhar Puensum at Zanam (4900 m). (13 km, 7 hours)</p>
<p>DAY 17 Tuesday 7th Oct</p>	<p>Day 14. Zanam to Minchugang. Today we leave the big mountains behind. The trail continues along the Sha <i>Chu</i> on a long and gradual descent to Geshe Woma. From there we continue along the river for a further two and a half hours to camp at Minchugang (4210 m). (16 km, 8 hours)</p>

<p>DAY 18 Wednesday 8th Oct</p>	<p>Day 15. Minchugang to Warathang. Today we begin with a stiff climb. Visibility along the Saka La trail is poor and the top of the ridge will guide us. There are three passes to test us today. The first at 4550 metres is unnamed. After lunch near a yak herder's camp, we reach the second, Saka La (4800 m). A descent to the lakes is followed by another stunning but short climb to the third pass, Warathang La at 4590 metres, with views of small lakes and mountain peaks. Then we descend to camp at 4455 metres in the upper pastures of the Bumthang valleys. (11 km, 9 hours)</p>
<p>DAY 19 Thursday 9th Oct</p>	<p>Day 16. Warathang to Dur Tsachu. A half-hour climb takes us to the Uli La (4400 m) just above our camp. Then we drop 1000 metres down through a spectacular forest of dense rhododendron, juniper and conifer, and then broad-leafed trees, to the river. After the bridge a further short ascent for an hour and a half leads to <i>Dur Tsachu</i> hot spring where <i>Guru Padmasambhava</i> is supposed to have bathed. There are several pools here, all at a pleasant temperature and not too sulphurous. (3300 m) (14 km, 7 hours)</p>
<p>DAY 20 Friday 10th Oct</p>	<p>Day 17. REST DAY AT DUR TSACHU If we are still on schedule we have a spare day to rest and relax in the hot springs.</p>
<p>DAY 22 Saturday 11th Oct</p>	<p>Day 18. Dur Tsachu to Tshochenchen. From the spring it is a long and steady climb with wonderful views of the mountains in Lunana to reach Djule La, the last pass of the trek. Blue lakes and yak herding encampments can be seen. After an initial descent from the pass the valley runs sharp right to follow a tributary of the Bumthang <i>Chu</i>, passing a sacred lake where speech is forbidden. Camp is at 3850 metres, just below the village of Tsochenchen. (16 km, 7 to 8 hours)</p>
<p>DAY 23 Sunday 12th Oct</p>	<p>Day 19. Tshochenchen to Gorsum. Today we exchange yaks for pack ponies as we descend on our way to Gorsum. We pass a variety of scenery on the way to our last camp at 2679 metres. (15 km, 7 hours)</p>
<p>DAY 24 Monday 13th Oct</p>	<p>Day 20. Gorsum to Dur Zam and then to Bumthang. Today we continue the long walk to the road head at Dur village where waiting transport will take us to the lodge in Bumthang (Jakar). (12 km, 5 to 6 hours). If you have the energy for it we can arrange some sightseeing this afternoon. Otherwise we will relax at the hotel.</p>
<p>DAY 25 Tuesday 14th Oct</p>	<p>Drive to Gangtey (at 3500 metres). Enjoy the views of the immense and remote Phobjikha valley and the black mountain ranges. Visit Gangtey Gumpa (one of Bhutan's oldest monasteries and currently under renovation). Overnight in Phobjikha where the villagers continue to live a traditional Bhutanese rural lifestyle. This is the site where black-necked cranes visit in their hundreds in November each year after spending the summer in Tibet. As a result no electricity is run to the valley to avoid disturbing their habitat. Drive to Punakha for the night.</p>

<p>DAY 26 Wednesday 15th Oct</p>	<p>Today we return to Paro. On the way you can stop to visit the imposing Punakha Dzong, "Palace of Great Happiness". Built in 1637, it is strategically placed at the confluence of two rivers, the Po <i>Chu</i> and the Mo <i>Chu</i>. After lunch continue on your way. If you feel like it you can visit the ruined Drukgyel Dzong (fortress of victory), constructed to commemorate the victory over Tibetan invaders in 1644 and destroyed by a butter lamp fire in 1951. Nearby you can also visit the 7th century Kyichu Lhakhang, a temple of historical significance and one of the most sacred shrines in Bhutan.</p>
<p>DAY 27 Thursday 16th Oct</p>	<p>Early in the morning your guide will accompany you to the airport to see you off onto your flight and wish you Tashi Delek (goodbye and good luck).</p>