



Itinerary for Snowman Trek - from Drukgyel Dzong via Lingshi/Laya and through the remote Lunana valley to Bumthang, passing Gangkhar Puensum and Dur Hot Springs: September/October 2008

<p>DAY 1 Monday 15th 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 Tuesday 16th 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 Wednesday 17th Sept</p>	<p>SNOWMAN TREK - DRUKGYEL DZONG TO BUMTHANG.</p> <p>Day 1. Paro to Shana. Drive to the end of the road at Drukgyel Dzong where the trek begins. While we are waiting for the ponies to load up there will be time to visit the ruined Dzong constructed to commemorate the victory over Tibetan invaders in 1644 and destroyed by a butter lamp fire in 1951. Today's trail follows the river uphill through a cultivated valley. After about 3 hours' walk we stop for lunch by a bridge across the river next to a chorten. Soon we enter the forest, passing several small hamlets with houses built in traditional style. After passing through Shana village and crossing the river on a cantilever bridge, we camp by a stone shelter in a meadow at about 2800 metres. (17 km, 6 hours)</p>
<p>DAY 4 Thursday 18th Sept</p>	<p>Day 2. Shana to Soi Thangthangkha. We ascend through the river valley and beautiful pine and rhododendron forests. We stop for lunch by the first bridge over the river and then continue to follow the right bank for a couple of hours until we reach a junction of two valleys, marked by a stupa. Here we turn north towards Mount Jomolhari, which can be seen from the top of the valley. Our camp will be at 3680 metres. (19 km, 8 to 9 hours)</p>

<p>DAY 5 Friday 19th Sept</p>	<p>Day 3. Soi Thangthangka to Jangothang. The path passes a small, border army post where the valley begins to widen again and we leave the forest behind. Enjoy views of snow-capped peaks, high mountain ridges and yaks and yak herders. We will stop for lunch in a small hamlet where the family will welcome us. From here it is not far to reach camp, which is in a beautiful grassy meadow beneath a ruined fortress at the base of Mount Jomolhari (4040 m). (19 km, 6 hours)</p>
<p>DAY 6 Saturday 20th Sept</p>	<p>Day 4. Rest day at Jomolhari base camp. An opportunity to explore the glacier, do some washing in the stream (icy cold!) or just take it easy. If you feel like going further afield the guide will discuss the options with you.</p>
<p>DAY 7 Sunday 21st Sept</p>	<p>Day 5. Jangothang to Lingshi. The trail climbs gradually and then more steeply to Nyeli La (4850 m). On the way you will be rewarded when you stop for breath with tremendous views toward Jomolhari and Jitchu Drake. If the weather is clear, Lingshi Dzong can be clearly seen as we descend into the Lingshi basin, and Tserim Kang with its glaciers can be seen to the north. Follow the ridge for a long way until you drop through the forests to our camp just outside Lingshi village beside a stone shelter at 3915 metres. (19 km, 7 to 8 hours)</p>
<p>DAY 8 Monday 22nd Sept</p>	<p>Day 6. Lingshi to Chebisa. This is one of the shortest trekking days. Before we set off there should be time for a visit to Lingshi Dzong and a quick tour of the village. Then we start walking once more on a path along the hillside with views across the valley. A couple of hours later you will catch a splendid view of Tserim Kang, before descending to Gang Yul ('village at the pass'), a picturesque village of about 150 people. From here it is only an hour or so on a path which runs along the hillside until we reach our camp at Chebisa (3910 m), where it is possible to visit some village houses and a waterfall just behind the village. (10 km, 5 hours)</p>
<p>DAY 9 Tuesday 23rd Sept</p>	<p>Day 7. Chebisa to Shomuthang. The trail climbs gradually at first, getting steeper and steeper through wild pastures where yaks graze. You may also catch sight of blue sheep and eagles. Eventually we cross Gobu La (4350 m). From here it is a short walk down through rhododendron forest to the stream where we will stop for lunch. The afternoon's walk is through pine and rhododendron forest, descending to the river from where the path traverses the hillside before climbing steeply once more to reach Shomuthang (3985 m). The camp is near a tributary to the Mo <i>Chu</i>, which emerges below the Gasa Tsachu (Hot Spring). From here you can see the helipad, sometimes used if the passes get snowed in. (17 km, 7 hours)</p>
<p>DAY 10 Wednesday 24th Sept</p>	<p>Day 8. Shomuthang to Robluthang. We start with a climb to Jhari La (4600 m) where we are rewarded with quite stunning views, then descend again through forest to Tsharithang, the valley where herds of takin can normally be seen. Today's scenery is absolutely breathtaking. Cross the river and clamber up the hillside for an hour or so to camp at Robluthang (4160 m). (18 km, 7 to 8 hours)</p>

<p>DAY 11 Thursday 25th Sept</p>	<p>Day 9. Robluthang to Limithang. Above camp the yak trail which is our path today can be seen, taking us through a hanging valley and past a yak herder's hut after about two hours' walk. From here we take the left side of the valley and soon the Shinge La comes into view. It is a tough climb to the pass, which marks the boundary of the Laya district (4870 m). From here the path descends rapidly through the valley to a huge bank of moraine on the edge of a lake, and behind the Kang Che Da ('Great Tiger Mountain') can be seen. We camp here in a meadow by the river at Limithang in the Laya district, where the locals will be seen wearing unique regional dress (4090 m). (19 km, 8 hours)</p>
<p>DAY 12 Friday 26th Sept</p>	<p>Day 10. Limithang to Laya. The path goes downhill at first through a winding river valley with forest of spruce and juniper. We climb gradually from the river until we enter the eastern end of Laya village (3820 m). (10 km, 5 to 6 hours). Here we should meet up with the group coming from Damji to set up camp together in a village field.</p>
<p>DAY 13 Saturday 27th Sept</p>	<p>Day 11. 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 14 Sunday 28th Sept</p>	<p>Day 12. 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 15 Monday 29th Sept</p>	<p>Day 13. 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 16 Tuesday 30th Sept</p>	<p>Day 14. 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 17 Wednesday 1st Oct</p>	<p>Day 15. 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 18 Thursday 2nd Oct</p>	<p>Day 16. 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 19 Friday 3rd Oct</p>	<p>Day 17. 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 20 Saturday 4th Oct</p>	<p>Day 18. 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 21 Sunday 5th Oct</p>	<p>Day 19. 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 22 Monday 6th Oct</p>	<p>Day 20. 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 23 Tuesday 7th Oct</p>	<p>Day 21. 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 24 Wednesday 8th Oct</p>	<p>Day 22. 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 25 Thursday 9th Oct</p>	<p>Day 23. 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 26 Friday 10th Oct</p>	<p>Day 24. 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 27 Saturday 11th Oct</p>	<p>Day 25. 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>

DAY 28 Sunday 12 th Oct	Day 26. 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)
DAY 29 Monday 13 th Oct	Day 27. 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.
DAY 30 Tuesday 14 th Oct	Drive to Gangtey (at 3500 metres). Enjoy the views of the immense and remote Phobjikha valley and the black mountain ranges. Visit Gangtey Gompa (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.
DAY 31 Wednesday 15 th Oct	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 <i>Po Chu</i> and the <i>Mo 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.
DAY 32 Thursday 16 th Oct	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).