



Trekking in Bhutan is unlike anywhere else in the world. Walking along the rolling Himalaya can be hard work at times. It's rarely flat – more a succession of ascents and descents, often steep. But it's certainly worth it for the crystal-clear air, little-frequented paths, flora and fauna, and incomparable views. You will see snow-peaked mountains, alpine meadows, rhododendron forests, crystal mountain lakes, traditional farmhouses and villages.

The main descriptions in our itineraries are of the treks themselves, but of course they can be combined with your choice of sightseeing before and/or after the trek – we've included some suggestions to give you an idea of what can be arranged. We recommend you take two to three days to acclimatise on arrival before beginning any trek, as you will need to get used to the altitude and relax after your journey to Bhutan. All trekking in Bhutan involves overnighting in tents and we don't have local inns or tea houses.

Most of the treks are in the region of *3000m (9000ft)* to *5000m (16,400ft)*, varying from short four-day hikes over relatively low altitudes to three-week long treks taking you over some of the highest passes in Bhutan. Depending on altitude *a trekking day is usually about 6 to 7 hours in length* (including stops).

The staging of our treks is designed to ensure that you don't climb too high too fast, to minimise the risk of altitude sickness. Walking at altitude should always be approached with caution, however. Be aware of how your body is reacting and make sure you keep your guide informed of any concerns. Our treks give details of altitude, distance and average walking time each day – there can be a huge variation between a walker with a slow measured pace who takes the hills gently and a fitness fanatic who aims to get to camp by lunchtime! But either way we will make sure you have someone to walk with you to keep you on the right trail.

On all treks, we will provide one or more *experienced guides, professional cooks, cook's assistants or helpers* (depending on the size of the group) and *horses or yaks* (for transporting luggage). You won't need to carry more than a daypack. Our trained staff will take every precaution to ensure your safety and comfort while in our care and you should listen carefully to their advice while on trek.

We don't provide insurance, so it is your responsibility to make sure that you have adequate insurance cover depending on the type of trek you are doing. For longer treks we also ask that you provide us in advance with details of your insurance cover and contact details for next of kin, just so we are fully prepared in the event of emergency.

Trekking SEASONS

The *best months* for trekking in Bhutan are *March to May* and *September to November*. Come in April and May to enjoy the deep pinks and reds of rhododendron blossom or in Autumn for beautifully clear views after the monsoon has passed. Trekking in winter can be difficult, but some treks are manageable in early December – make sure you are properly prepared with warm clothing and equipment and be prepared for an alternative arrangement to be suggested if the paths are too snowy or icy to continue as planned.

At any time of year *the weather can change from warm or hot days to very cold days especially at high altitudes*; and at *higher elevations night temperatures drop well below zero*. *You need to make sure you bring plenty of warm and waterproof clothing!*

Food ON TREK

All your food will be provided for you and you shouldn't need to carry any extra foodstuffs with you unless you want to. We employ experienced cooks who can produce western as well as local style meals. That said, some chocolate bars, biscuits, trail mix or dried fruit are often welcome after a few days away from town.

You will have a full breakfast with porridge, egg and toast, juice, tea and coffee. Lunch will be on the trail and this will either be a packed lunch (sandwiches, boiled eggs, potato, juice and tea/coffee) or more usually the cook will make a meal of rice and vegetables and one of the helpers will bring it to you on the trail. When you reach camp there will be tea and snacks and then a three-course evening meal with soup, rice and three or four meat and vegetable dishes and then some fruit or dessert, followed by tea/coffee. Many people say the food on trek was the best of their whole trip!

TREKKING *Equipment*

Ask us for a *detailed list* of ideas of what to bring. We will provide the essential equipment (tents, foam mattresses, eating utensils and kitchen equipment). But you may like to bring an inflatable pillow and *you will need to bring your own sleeping bag*. A four-season bag is advisable, especially for the higher treks and in winter. People often tell us it was colder on trek than they had anticipated – *please make sure you bring plenty of warm clothes, particularly for night-time – it can be well below freezing in camp—even as low as -5 to -10C at times. Note that it is not often possible to have a campfire* as we are not allowed to burn wood from beside the trail.

Thermal underwear is generally appreciated at any time of year and you will also need a *down jacket* and *woollen hat* and *gloves* to wear in camp at very high altitudes. Don't forget *rain gear* for the occasional wet (or snowy) day you may encounter. Generally, we advise a selection of *layered clothing* to cope with wide temperature fluctuations. You will probably be walking in T-shirts while the sun is out, but then need to wrap up quickly when you stop for lunch or for photos at the top of a pass!

A good tip is to bring a *metal water bottle* – it can be filled for you after dinner with boiled water which serves a dual purpose – you can use it as a sleeping bag warmer during the night and it then provides chilled potable water during the day!

A *head torch* is useful for night-time forays between your tent and the dining tent or elsewhere and also to enable you to read in the evenings as it does get dark early. *Don't forget spare bulbs and batteries if you are on a long trek*. You should also bring strong, *well broken-in hiking boots, a sun hat, and sunglasses (with side protection if you are walking at high altitudes)*. *Don't forget sun block if you will be trekking at altitude – the cool air can be deceptive*.

If you have a film camera – does anyone still have a film camera?! – bring all the film you need as it can be difficult to obtain good quality film in Thimphu. Ditto *toiletries*! For a more comprehensive list of what to bring see the Lonely Planet on Bhutan – or ask us if you are wondering about what will be necessary for the particular trek you have chosen – we would be happy to help.

There is now one good trekking shop in Thimphu, but this will not be accessible if you start your trek in Paro at the beginning of your trip and they do not yet rent out any equipment.

For any questions
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