

THE LAYA TREK



Discover the remote Eastern Himalaya on foot in Bhutan

- Trek to Chomolhari Basecamp at Jangothang (4040m)
- Cross 4 passes over 4500m - including the Shinge La (4900m)
- Descend the Punakha Gorge & the enjoy the hot springs at Gasa
- Meet the charming people of Laya Village near the Tibetan border



HOLIDAY CODE LAY



Bhutan, Trek & Walk, 19 Days

13 nights camping, 5 nights hotel, 18 breakfasts, 17 lunches, 18 dinners,
max group size: 16, 14 days trekking, max altitude - 5000 metres



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



Introduction

This absolutely classic Bhutan trekking holiday, from Paro to Thimpu via the village of Laya and the Punakha Valley, is widely acknowledged to be one of the world's great treks. It certainly has all the right ingredients; from picturesque farmland and ancient forest, to alpine pasture and challenging high mountain passes including the Shinge La (4900m). The spectacular campsites beneath some of Bhutan's most impressive peaks, including Chomolhari and Jitchu Drake, are amongst the many highlights of this trekking circuit. Whilst visits to a number of strategically located fortress-monasteries (dzongs) and scattered settlements including Laya Village, close to the Tibetan border, provide a full measure of cultural appeal. The friendly people of Laya present a most unusual and striking picture, with their pointed hats, hair covered in mustard oil and highly decorative jewellery, this will be a highlight of the holiday. The magical descent of the Punakha Gorge, via the imposing dzong and refreshing hot springs at Gasa, is a fitting climax to the trek. With time for sightseeing in the Paro Valley, including the Tiger's Nest monastery, the winter and summer capitals of Thimpu and Punakha, and a city tour in Kathmandu, this is a superlative 3 week trekking adventure.

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. We strongly advise booking a year in advance where possible.

Is this holiday for you?

Trekking conditions on this circuit are reasonably straightforward, since the trail has been well prepared for the ponies or yaks which are traditionally used to carry supplies on the route. In general this trek offers easy walking conditions, as there are no glaciers to negotiate and the passes that we cross should not be heavily snow covered. However, the trekking is sustained and does involve some long days and the crossing of four passes over 4500 metres, including the Shinge La at 5000 metres. There are some quite strenuous days and a good degree of fitness is a necessity. This route presents a great variety of landscape types; ranging from fertile and intensively terraced farmland, through some of the finest mixed forest in the world, to open, alpine pastureland and high mountain valleys and passes.

Holiday Itinerary

Day 1: Meet at the group hotel in Kathmandu. Transfers from Kathmandu Airport are provided.

Arriving in Kathmandu we are met outside the arrivals hall by a local KE representative who will arrange the transfer to the group hotel in the heart of the city. KE Land Only package services begin with this transfer. Depending on flight times there may be time to look around the area of Thamel before rendezvousing with the group for dinner, where you will also be given information on timings for tomorrow's flight to Bhutan.



ACCOMMODATION
HOTEL



MEALS D

Day 2: Fly to Paro in the Kingdom of Bhutan

We transfer to the airport for the Druk Air flight to Bhutan's only airport, at Paro. The flight from Kathmandu to Bhutan is one of the most spectacular of all mountain flights. From the left side of the plane Everest, Makalu and Kangchenjunga, three of the world's highest mountains, are clearly visible. The total flying time is only 45 minutes

and soon we are descending into the Paro Valley, enjoying the splendid views of alpine forests, small monasteries, temples and flat-roofed farmhouses. You will receive a warm welcome from our Bhutanese hosts who will assist with the transfer to the hotel. The Paro Valley is enchanting. A single road lined with willows, clear mountain streams, families working in the roadside fields and one of Bhutan's most impressive Dzongs (fortress monasteries) creates a memorable first impression. After checking into our hotel in Paro the rest of the day is free to look around the town. Overnight at the group hotel.



**ACCOMMODATION
HOTEL**

MEALS BLD

Day 3: Hike to the Taktsang (Tiger's Nest) Monastery (3120m).

Today we enjoy a walk up to the most iconic site in the whole of Bhutan and one of the most important religious sites in the entire Himalaya, The Taktsang Temple, or Tiger's Nest Monastery (3120m). This spectacular monastery has a most stunning location, perched on a ledge of a cliff high above the valley. It was partly destroyed by a fire in 1998 but, thanks in part to international aid, is now completely restored to its former magnificence. To reach the monastery involves a return trek of around 4 hours. High up, there is a classic viewpoint for Taktsang, looking across the gorge to the monastic buildings which cling to the cliff wall opposite. There is a small café located at this viewpoint and this makes an excellent lunch spot.

The whole day is dedicated to this hike, not only to allow for the trying ascent, but so we have ample time to enjoy our surroundings, the flower lined pathways, pine forests, waterfalls, we'll also be sure to pass some smiling monks along the way. In the afternoon we return back to Paro where we will have some time to explore or to do a little last minute shopping ahead of our trek. This evening we will want to take some time to repack our bags ahead of our trek, we can leave any items not required on trek here at the hotel.

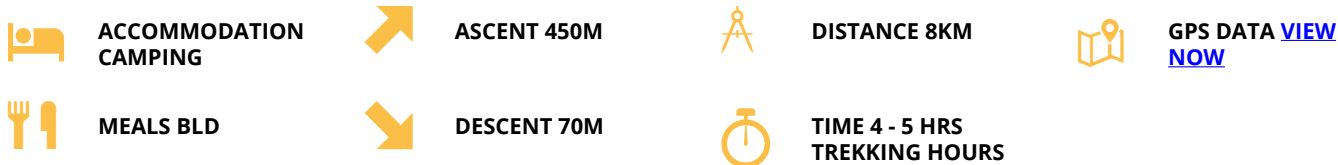


**ACCOMMODATION
HOTEL**

MEALS BLD

Day 4: Drive to Shana (2860m) to begin our trek. Hike to Thongbu Samba (3104m)

From Paro we drive west for 30 minutes to the end of the surfaced road at the ruins of Drugyel Dzong (2530m). From here we continue following a farm road for around 1 - 1.5 hours, passing through small hamlets of houses built in traditional Bhutanese design. Arriving at the end of the farm road at Shana (2860m), we will be happy to stretch our legs. While our bags are loaded on the ponies we will set off following a path beside the river before climbing through beautiful lush forest of oak, rhododendron, bamboo and pine to our first night's camp at Thongbu Samba (3104m).



**ACCOMMODATION
CAMPING**

ASCENT 450M

DISTANCE 8KM

GPS DATA [VIEW NOW](#)

MEALS BLD

DESCENT 70M

**TIME 4 - 5 HRS
TREKKING HOURS**

Day 5: Trek to Soi Thangka (3650m).

Today we will gain height slowly as we continue along the river through a magnificent forest of pine and spruce, mixed with oak, birch and maple. The autumn colours of the leaves contrasts with the Pale Spanish moss (old man's beard) festoons many of the trees. After rain the trail can be muddy in places and where we cross streams there will possibly be slippery rocks to contend with, however, our local guides will be on hand to assist anyone if necessary. There are several small ups and downs today as we follow the river north and after crossing a bridge at 3560m. we make a short steep climb to reach a junction of two valleys, marked by a large chorten. There is a

bridge here from where, weather permitting, we can see Chomolhari at the head of the valley. Our trail stays on the west bank of the Paro Chu and our next camp at Soi Thangka is only a half an hour's walk away.

 ACCOMMODATION CAMPING	 ASCENT 300M	 DISTANCE 14KM	 GPS DATA VIEW NOW
 MEALS BLD	 TIME 5 - 6 HRS TREKKING HOURS		

Day 6: A day for acclimatisation.

An important day for acclimatisation ahead of reaching Chomolhari Basecamp and crossing the Nyele La (4850m). We will either spend a second night camping at Soi Thangka or we can continue following the ancient mule trail that keeps to the left of the PaChu up to a camp at around 4000m. This trail slowly rises through old juniper trees and meadows in which yaks graze. We pass a small Royal Bhutan Army outpost and then in about 1.5 hrs we reach a large meadow with a lone white chorten. From the chorten in the meadow we take the trail on the right that starts with a steep climb up a small hill. In about a half hour we reach a beautiful meadow decorated with small birch trees and rhododendrons. A further 2hrs hiking will take us to the upper part of this scenic meadow, where lunch will be served. After lunch, we hike on past a few meditation centres or drup khang. The complete solitude of this region has in the past drawn several important historical figures to this area to meditate, such as the great saint Guru Rinpoche who travelled here in the 8th century and in recent times a highly-respected Thai Burmese Monk, Kuba Rinpoche who spent time meditating here.

 ACCOMMODATION CAMPING	 DISTANCE 12KM	 MEALS BLD	 TIME 6 - 7HRS TREKKING HOURS
--	---	---	--

Day 7: Trek to Jangothang (4100m).

If we camped at 4000m yesterday, we must first back track a little on the previous day's trail before continuing our hike on the trails of the cow herders up to the small hamlet of Jumphu. From here we re-join the main trekking trail to today's camp at Jangothang, a beautiful grassy at the base of Mt Chomolhari. We have lunch in a meadow at Tikithang, just before we reach the school at Soi, The school children here have developed a habit of conversing with trekkers to practice their spoken English and, if the school is open, they may sing some nursery rhyme for us. From the school it is another hour's hike to the camp. Our camp tonight is next to a ruined dzong (4100m) beneath the huge east face of Chomolhari.

 ACCOMMODATION CAMPING	 MEALS BLD	 TIME 6 - 7 HRS TREKKING HOURS
---	--	--

Day 8: A rest day at Jangothang.

Today is a scheduled rest day, intended to aid everyone's acclimatisation before the crossing of the Nyele La to Lingshi. There are plenty of options for a walk, and one possibility is a hike up the ridge behind the ruined dzong to a grassy summit at approximately 4500m, from where there is an incredible close-up view of Chomolhari. Alternatively, a 2-hour hike to a lake above camp provides a stunning location for photographs of Jitchu Drake. Green grass, grazing yaks, stunning mountain scenery - it doesn't come much better than this. For a spectacular view of Jitchu Drake closer to camp (even better at sunrise if you can get up sufficiently early), follow the river for 20 minutes to a lone house and here the mountain is presented before you. No matter what you choose to do today, the cooks will have had all day to prepare dinner and a veritable banquet will be waiting at the end of the day.



Day 9: Day 9. Cross the Nyele La (4850m) to Lingshi and descend to camp.

One of the longest days of the trek, as we climb to cross the Nyele La to reach Lingshi. We follow the river for a while, crossing on a bridge close to the house at the end of the valley where Michael Palin met with the old Bhutanese composer during the filming of his Himalaya series. Climbing steeply at first, this path offers views toward Chomolhari and Jitchu Drake which are some of the finest of the trip. We are now very near the Tibetan Border as we make our way along a broad hanging valley to the final steep slopes leading to the Nyele La (4850m), which is adorned with prayer flags. From the pass we descend, steeply at first, to follow a long ridge before finally dropping through forests of rhododendron and pine to our camp beside the river.



Day 10: Trek to Chebisa (3850m) via Gang Yul.






Today is a shorter day, yet one of the most fascinating. After a leisurely breakfast, we climb up to Lingshi Dzong. The dzong is currently abandoned due to damages suffered from earthquakes and the monks have taken refuge in the nearby village. From the dzong, a delightful path contours the hillside, passing numerous farms. There are good views across the valley to the Basingthang Peaks and we have plenty of time to sit and watch the kestrels (almost identical to the European variety) 'wind hovering' above the ridges. After a couple of hours the path turns a corner and there is a fine view of Tserim Kang, before we descend to Gang Yul (meaning 'village at the pass'). Set beneath enormous limestone cliffs and dwarfed by the enormous east face of Jitchu Drake, Gang Yul's situation is one of the most impressive in Bhutan. Home to about 150 people, living in a dozen or so beautifully designed houses, this village offers endless photo opportunities and it is worth spending some time here - you may even be lucky enough to be invited into a house to try chang (locally brewed drink) and roasted rice. Leaving the village, the path continues along the hillside for another hour to Chebisa, only a few hours from Tibet. Try climbing the hill by the side of the entrance chorten for an even better view of this fairytale setting. There are two parts to the village, with the upper section seeming to be the oldest, consisting of four houses. The architecture in this valley is particularly interesting, with traditional windows, wooden slatted roofs, an assortment of intricately carved ladders, and an ingenious system of insulation which involves packing the roof-spaces with straw and wood.



Day 11: Cross the Gobu La (4445m) to Somothang (3985m).




From Chebisa, the path gradually climbs steep slopes high above the river to the Gobu La at 4405 metres. Although climbing for most of the morning, this is a lovely walk and there are some excellent views. In this part of Bhutan, bharal (blue sheep) are very commonly sighted. Resting on the pass, watching the eagles soar by (over 20 were spotted in less than an hour on one of our previous trips) is very memorable and it is difficult to leave such a picturesque spot. The pass also offers specular view of Tiger Mountain (Gangchen Taag). A short walk down through the rhododendron forest leads to our lunch spot by a stream, which is followed by a very pleasurable afternoon's walk through forest of silver fir and juniper. Bushes of yellow and crimson berberis make particularly

vivid foregrounds for photography. Descending to the main river (Shagipasa), the scenery is reminiscent of British Columbia with forests, clear streams and stunning mountain scenery - we are entering some of the finest scenery in Bhutan. From the river, the path contours across the hillside and then climbs steeply into a side valley, where we set up camp at a site known as Somothang (3985m).

 ACCOMMODATION CAMPING	 ASCENT 600M	 DISTANCE 17KM	 GPS DATA VIEW NOW
 MEALS BLD	 DESCENT 325M	 TIME 6 - 7 HRS TREKKING HOURS	



Day 12: Cross the Jhari La (4720m) to Robluthang (4200m).

We start early for the climb up to the Jhari La (4720m). The views from the pass are stunning, especially the view of Tiger Mountain (Gangchen Tagg) (7000m). Our next objective, the Shinge La, is the lowest point of the horizon opposite, which presents a daunting prospect, high above the valley. As we descend through more glorious pine forest into Tsharithang, we keep a look out for takin, the national animal of Bhutan (similar to musk deer), which are quite common in this part of Bhutan. The scenery on this day's walk is absolutely breathtaking - it inspired Victor Saunders, one of Britain's most travelled Himalayan climbers, to comment that this was the best walking he'd ever done! We cross a river and camp in a very scenic position just half an hour's walk up the hillside, at a place known as Robluthang (4200m).

 ACCOMMODATION CAMPING	 ASCENT 500M	 DISTANCE 18KM	 GPS DATA VIEW NOW
 MEALS BLD	 DESCENT 500M	 TIME 6 - 7 HRS TREKKING HOURS	

Day 13: Cross the Shinge La (5000m) to Limithang (4050m).








An obvious yak trail, scarring the hillside, can be seen directly above the camp. This is followed to a beautiful hanging valley with a lone yak herders hut, two hours above the camp. The path takes the left side of the valley and soon the Shinge La (5000m) is visible. The final climb is quite strenuous, but save some energy to place a small stone on one of the four cairns that mark the end of the climbing. Prayer flags and dried leaves enhance the fascination of this pass which marks the boundary of the Laya District. Our descent follows an obvious path into the centre of the valley, to a clearing by a huge rock. We continue descending until we see a bank of moraine, which is holding back a very picturesque lake. The backdrop to this beautiful valley is Kang Che Da, the Great Tiger Mountain. We camp a short way down the valley at Limithang (4050m), in a meadow by the river.

 ACCOMMODATION CAMPING	 ASCENT 850M	 DISTANCE 19KM	 GPS DATA VIEW NOW
 MEALS BLD	 DESCENT 800M	 TIME 8 - 9 HRS TREKKING HOURS	

Day 14: Arrive into Laya (3800m).

A beautiful morning's walk today through a bird spotter's paradise. Although shorter than some of the days so far, there is quite a lot of up and down. We cross a bridge and follow the left bank of the river on an undulating trail through more forest of spruce and juniper. As we descend we start to see Spanish moss once again hanging from the trees. The path then gradually climbs above the river and soon we see the first houses on the outskirts of Laya (3800m). The people of this fascinating village are very friendly and they present a most unusual and striking picture, with their pointed hats, hair covered in mustard oil and highly decorative jewellery. We aim to arrive in Laya in time for lunch and have the afternoon free to look around the village and to visit the hillside monastery. We

set up camp on one of the village fields. In the autumn season the fields have been harvested and finding a camping place is easy.

	ACCOMMODATION CAMPING		ASCENT 100M		DISTANCE 11KM		GPS DATA VIEW NOW
	MEALS BLD		DESCENT 400M		TIME 4 - 5 HRS TREKKING HOURS		

Day 15: Trek to Tongchu Drak (3300m)








This morning we have the option to explore Laya village in the morning. Laya, one of the most distinctive villages in Bhutan, located on a shelf. As with most villages in the high Himalaya, cultivation is difficult. The villagers are semi-nomadic and rely on yak herding for a livelihood. They spend most of the year in black tents woven from yak hair, but they also build drystone-walled houses, which serve as shelter during the coldest months and as storehouses for their goods and grains, which they use to barter for goods with the central valleys.

From Laya, we descend to the Mo Chu to begin our walk-out to Gasa. The main path from the village descends to the lowest house, passes through a large entrance chorten and drops down to the river. During the monsoon, from June to September, this valley receives a great deal of rainfall and as a result the forest and jungle is particularly lush and impressive. We pass through a small army outpost and continue on a trail alongside the Mo Chu (mother river). Although the overall tendency is to descend, there are many places where the path has to climb quite high above the river to negotiate steep spurs. We will camp at Tongchu Drak near the Mo Chu river in a meadow.

	ACCOMMODATION CAMPING		DISTANCE 14KM		MEALS BLD		TIME 4 - 5HRS TREKKING HOURS
---	------------------------------	--	----------------------	--	------------------	--	-------------------------------------

Day 16: Trek to Gasa (2500m).

From our camp we walk about 2hrs to Koina. The Saint Shabdrung from the 17th Century took a rest day here when he made his journey from Tibet. From the Koina old camp we trek through bamboo, fir, maple and larch tree to the road head in Ponjochang. We continue dropping down through splendid sub-tropical forest, the trekking on this part of our route is a sheer delight. Huge banana plants, bamboo and an array of exotic plant life make this part of the trek a botanist's paradise. If the road conditions are good, our vehicle can pick us up halfway through the hike. Passing Gasa Dzong, which used to control the routes to the religious areas of Lunana and Laya with its dominating position high above the Mo Chu, we reach the Gasa Tsachu (hot spring) where many people from all over Bhutan come to bathe. We also have the option to soak after long days of walk. We camp nearby the hot springs.

	ACCOMMODATION CAMPING		ASCENT 700M		DISTANCE 12KM		GPS DATA VIEW NOW
	MEALS BLD		DESCENT 800M		TIME 6 - 7 HRS TREKKING HOURS		

Day 17: Drive to Thimphu, via Punakha en route.

Getting an early start we drive alongside the Mo Chu through Damji and across several ridges steadily descending. As the valley becomes more populated we begin to encounter rice fields, scattered little hamlets and villagers about their work. Eventually we reach Punakha (1350m), which was the winter capital of Bhutan for more than 300 years. Punakha Dzong lies at the junction of the Mo (mother) Chu and the Po (father) Chu and, in winter, is home to over 1000 monks. From Punakha we drive to Thimphu on Bhutan's remarkable east-west highway, which winds its way up to the Dochu La (3050m). The pass is marked by many prayer flags and a large chorten. The road winds its

way down from the pass, passing through Hongsto, an ancient village founded in 1525 by the 14th Drukpa hierarchy of Tibet, to arrive at the relatively modern capital of Thimpu. We check into our hotel where we can clean up before sitting down to a celebratory evening meal.



ACCOMMODATION
HOTEL



MEALS BLD

Day 18: Fly to Kathmandu. Half day sightseeing tour.

We transfer to Paro Airport to catch the flight to Kathmandu. The flight takes only 45 minutes and on arrival we transfer to our comfortable hotel. As part of the holiday package we have arranged an optional sightseeing tour which will visit two or three major sites of interest in Kathmandu such as the great stupa at Bodhnath and the temple to Shiva on the ghats of the Bagmati River at Pashupatinath. In the evening, we will have a celebratory meal in one of the city's finest restaurants. Overnight at our Kathmandu hotel.



ACCOMMODATION
HOTEL



MEALS BLD

Day 19: Departure day. Transfers to Kathmandu Airport are provided.

KE Land Only package services end after breakfast. Transfers to Kathmandu airport are provided. There are lots of extensions that can easily be added to your holiday. Why not pre-book a simple full day-tour in the Kathmandu Valley, or a multi-day excursion to wildlife reserve at Chitwan. Contact the KE office for more details.



MEALS B

Extend Your Holiday

Extensions

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.

Chitwan Jungle Extension

3 days

From **US\$1095** 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.

Kathmandu Tour - Nagarkot and Bhaktapur

1 day

From **US\$145** per person**Tiger Mountain Pokhara Lodge (Join Kathmandu)**

Tiger Mountain Pokhara Lodge sets the standard for comfortable and luxurious mountain lodge accommodation with its relaxed atmosphere, tranquil setting, eco-tourism and conservation ethos. Located on a spectacular hilltop ridge, it has panoramic views of 'Fishtail Mountain and Himalayan giants, Dhaulagiri, Annapurna and Manaslu. It has won several prestigious awards including the PATA Heritage and Culture Gold Award and the Conde Nast Traveler magazine Ecotourism Award.

Tiger Mountain Pokhara Lodge (join Kathmandu)

3 days

From **US\$1065** per person**Holiday Information****What's Included**

- An experienced English-speaking local guide plus support crew
- Kathmandu Airport transfers
- Bhutan flights and transfers
- All accommodation as described in the trip dossier
- All meals
- Once on trek a full service including food and all equipment (excluding personal equipment)
- All land transport involved in the itinerary
- A guided sightseeing tour of Kathmandu

What's Not Included

- Travel insurance
- Nepalese visa costs
- Tips for drivers and trek staff
- Departure taxes on leaving Bhutan
- Miscellaneous expenses - beer and souvenirs etc

Food

Typically the food in Bhutan is not very spicy though the Bhutanese do themselves eat a lot of chillies both raw and cooked. Hotels in Thimpu and Paro generally offer a range of dishes including those designed for the Western palette. On trek the emphasis is on providing a high-carbohydrate and largely vegetarian diet, which we have found to be easily digestible at high altitude. Breakfasts will consist of cereal or muesli, eggs, toast, beans, sausage or bacon with tea and coffee. Lunch is usually a hot meal which is cooked at breakfast time and carried in insulated pots. Dinner is a 3 course meal starting with soup and finishing with a sweet. The main dish is a mixture of local and Western cuisine, with the ingredients mostly purchased in Bhutan and cooked for us by highly trained trek cooks. In Kathmandu we take our meals in some of the finest restaurants the city has to offer. All meals while on trek and while staying in hotels are included in the trip price.

Meal Plan

All meals are included from dinner on day 1 to breakfast on day 19.

Joining Arrangements & Transfers

The group will rendezvous at the group hotel in Kathmandu. Airport transfers are provided for all clients arriving and departing Kathmandu. Land Only clients must provide their full flight details and should let us know if the complimentary transfers are NOT required. Hotel contact details and an emergency telephone number will be provided with your booking confirmation.

Accommodation

This trip has 2 nights in Kathmandu, one en route to Bhutan and one on the return journey. We use a comfortable, centrally located hotel. In Bhutan, we use the best available standard of hotel accommodation at Paro and Thimpu. Whilst on trek there are 12 nights camping. All accommodation is allocated on a twin sharing basis. If you are travelling by yourself you will be paired up with another single client of the same sex. It is possible to hire a single tent while on trek for an additional cost. (Please note single tent hire does not include single rooms in hotels). It is also normally possible to book a single room for the 2 hotel nights in Kathmandu, or extra nights if you plan to arrive early or depart later than the group trip dates (subject to availability). In Bhutan, single rooms are much more difficult to pre-book. However, if there is availability, single rooms for the 4 hotel nights in Bhutan can be

arranged at an additional cost. Please note that it will not be possible to book single rooms in Bhutan for festival trips. For Single tent hire costs, Single room Supplements and additional hotel night costs please refer to our website (note that hotel prices are subject to change)

A Typical Day

Shortly after first light one of the cook crew will wake you with a cup of tea or coffee brought to your tent. You will have plenty of time to get up and pack your kitbag before sitting down to a hot breakfast, during which camp will be struck and the pack-horses will be loaded. Setting off in the cool of the morning, we will generally reach our lunch stop by mid day. A lunch transported in insulated pots, is served on route, or at the camp-site if the day is sufficiently short. The horses or usually catch up with the group during lunch and are well on their way to camp which we hope to establish well before dusk. It is usual for the afternoon's walk to be shorter than the morning session. On arrival at camp, the trek staff will quickly put the tents up and a hot drink will soon follow. Dinner is a 3-course meal served in the mess tent. This is a great time of day for reliving the events of the trek so far and for general socialising. After dark, the temperature quickly falls and everyone will soon be tucked up in their sleeping bags.

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

A professional English-speaking local leader will accompany the group in Bhutan. The leader will be assisted by a full trek support crew including camp assistants, cooks and baggage animals and their handlers.

Spending Money

Approximately \$250-300 should be allowed for miscellaneous expenses including porter and trek crew tips and soft drinks 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 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 ATMs in Kathmandu. In Bhutan money can be easily exchanged but you cannot rely on withdrawing money from ATMs.

Guidance On Tipping

Tips are the accepted way of saying 'thank you' to your local guides, drivers and trek crew. They do not form part of their wages. KE always pays local crews the best rates of pay, no matter what country they are in and any tips they receive are seen as a personal thank you from group members. For our part, we advise local teams that tips are not a duty or a prerequisite but are a bonus and entirely dependent on the service that was given. For your local

guide and trek crews we recommend that you give a tip if you feel that their services have met your satisfaction. We recommend that these tips are given by the group as a whole rather than individually and you should decide as a group on how much you wish to give. As a rough guide we suggest that each group member contributes around US\$150 (in local currency equivalent) to a group tipping pool.

Baggage Allowance

Your baggage on trek will be carried by pack animals. The packed weight of your trek bag whilst trekking should be no more than 15 kg / 33lbs. It is possible to leave travel clothes or other items not required on the trek at the group hotel in Kathmandu.

Free KE Gift When You Book

As a way to thank all our clients we offer a Free Gift for every holiday that you book with us. The range of gifts available is related to your [KE Explorers Club](#) status and the number of trips you have completed. Choose from KE T-shirts, Buffs, Trek bags plus many more. Alternatively, instead of selecting a free gift, you can choose for KE to make a £10 donation to the [Juniper Trust Charity](#) on your behalf. Simply select your Free Gift or choose to make a donation in your [My KE account](#) once you have booked your holiday.

** Please note that postage & package costs will be charged for Trek Bags sent outside of the UK. For current costs please [view details on Free Gifts](#).*

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.

Group Size And 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 'Dates and Prices' table. Other than in exceptional circumstances, we will not cancel a trip once it has achieved this guaranteed to run status and so you are free to proceed with your international flight booking and other travel arrangements.

General Information

Passport & Visas

A passport with 6 months remaining validity at the end of your stay is generally required. The information that we provide is for UK passport holders. Please check the relevant embassy or consulate for other nationalities. It is your responsibility to ensure that you have the correct travel documents and visas for your holiday. Visa requirements and charges are subject to change without notice. If you are travelling outside the EU you should have at least 2 blank pages in your passport for each country that you visit.

Transit Via India

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 Nepal

All nationalities require a visa. The visa fee is \$25 for 15 days, \$40 for 30 days, \$100 for 90 days and is obtainable on arrival. Payment must be made in cash and USD, GBP or Euros are accepted. You will require 2 passport photos.

Trekking Permits - What Do We Need From You ?

For treks in the Everest region – EBL, EVL, EHW, EJB, EJJ, ENF, ELL - we need your passport details and we need you to take with you to Nepal 2 passport photographs. You will hand these over to your local leader on Day 1.

For treks in the Annapurna region – ASL, ACL, UAT, ATC – we need your passport details and we need to send through to Nepal ahead of your departure a scan of a passport-style photograph of yourself. Please make sure we have this one month ahead of your trip.

For treks which combine the Everest and Annapurna regions – AEL, AEB – we need your passport details and we need to send through to Nepal ahead of your departure a scan of a passport-style photograph of yourself. Please make sure we have this one month ahead of your trip. We also ask that you to take with you to Nepal 2 passport photographs. You will hand these over to your local leader on Day 1.

For these Conservation Area treks – KAN, DLG, MAK – we need to send through to Nepal ahead of your departure a scan of the information pages of your passport. We also need you to post to us 2 passport-style photographs of yourself which we will send on to Nepal. Please make sure we have these one month ahead of your trip.

For these treks requiring Special Permits – NAP, NTM, MUS - we need to send to Nepal ahead of your departure, a scan of a passport-style photograph of yourself and a scan of the information pages of your passport. Please make sure we have these one month ahead of your trip.

For those trips requiring Climbing Permits – MER, ETP, CTL - we need to send to Nepal ahead of your departure, a scan of a passport-style photograph of yourself and a scan of the information pages of your passport. Please make sure we have these one month ahead of your trip.

Visa Bhutan

All nationalities require a visa. KE will apply for the visa for you. The visa fee is included in your holiday cost.. We require copy of the information page of your passport in order to make the arrangements for your Bhutanese visa. A colour scan must be emailed or posted to us at the earliest opportunity.

Health & 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.

Electricity Supply & Plug

We recommend you check if you require an adaptor for your electrical items at:

<http://www.worldstandards.eu/electricity/plugs-and-sockets/>

Preparing For Your Trip

It makes a lot of sense to spend some time before coming on a trekking trip getting some additional exercise. The fitter you are, after all, the more enjoyable you will find the experience. For this trip you need to be aerobically fit and also comfortable with walking up to 7 hours per day or longer on some days. We would suggest that you adopt a weekly exercise regime leading up to your trip. Regular hiking in hill country is the best training but jogging, squash and swimming are also good for developing cardio vascular fitness and stamina. Whatever your chosen method for getting in shape, before departure we suggest that you try to fit in a number of long walks in hilly country.

Know Before You Go

As a reputable tour operator, KE supports the British Foreign & Commonwealth Offices 'Know before you go' campaign to enable British citizens to prepare for their journeys overseas, and we recommend that all KE travellers take a look at the FCO Travel Advice for their chosen destination on the official FCO website: www.fco.gov.uk. North Americans can also check out the U.S. Department of State website: 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 FCO advise against travel for any reason, we will contact everyone booked to travel to discuss the situation. We receive regular updates direct from the FCO and are in constant touch with our contacts on the ground. If you have any questions about government travel advice, please call our office.

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 mid 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 December are the best months to visit Bhutan. These months outside of the monsoon generally give good weather, with bright, sunny mornings and a moderate build up of cloud in the afternoons. However, mountains do produce their own weather, and rain, snow and even storms cannot be ruled out. Day-time highs of around 20°C / 68°F can be expected at altitudes around 2000 metres with average daytime temperatures at 3000 metres around 10 to 15°C / 50 – 6°F. Night-time temperatures at any time can reach or dip below freezing. December departures will be between 5 to 7°C lower than the above temperature ranges and in December the overnight temperatures at our highest camps can reach -10°C / 14°F.

Books

- Bhutan. A Trekker's guide. Bart Jordans. Cicerone.
- Bhutan. Lonely Planet Guide.
- Bhutan. Insight Guides
- Bhutan, Land of the Thunder Dragon. Owen Edmunds.

Maps

Bhutan Himalaya. 1:390,000 Nepa Maps (Himalayan Maphouse)

This map gives a general overview of the main trekking routes. Relief is indicated by shading and selected altitudes of peaks and passes. Highways, main roads, minor roads, and trekking routes are marked. Symbols denote campsites, post offices, dzongs, monuments, places of interest etc. The map is indexed for place names, dzongs, passes and peaks. Inside the map cover are printed some geographical notes on the country and driving and trekking times between selected locations.

Flight Information

Flight Inclusive Or Land Only?

On our website we display a UK Flight inclusive package price and Land only package price for the majority of our holidays.

Flight Inclusive Notes

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. Regional departures and/or alternative carriers are available on request.

Please be aware that there are often only a limited number of seats available at the advertised price. To avoid paying flight supplements, we recommend that you book as early as possible, especially during peak times. If we are unable to secure seats at the price shown, or you have requested regional departures, we will contact you with an alternative quote. Please note that you may be asked to pay for your flights in advance of your final holiday balance. Note that if you book a package including flights with KE you will benefit from full financial protection.

Land Only Notes

The LAND ONLY dates and prices are for the itinerary joining in Kathmandu, Nepal. For clients making their own flight arrangements, Kathmandu International airport is the most convenient for transfers to the group hotel. Please refer to the 'Joining arrangements & transfers' for further details.

Flights SHOULD NOT be booked until you have received your booking confirmation and the departure is showing 'Guaranteed to Run' or 'Limited'.

Flight Options From The US

For help and advice with booking your flights, we recommend you consult our friends at Exito Travel, airfare specialists since 1994. The air team at Exito are familiar with our destinations and know the airports, best airlines and potential pitfalls. If there is ever a flight change, cancellation or air-related issue before or during your travels,

it's nice to know you have someone on the Exito air team looking after you. Visit their website at: www.exitotravel.com or contact the team on: keadventure@exitotravel.com &/or via phone at: 800.655.4053 ext. 8507.

Why Choose KE Adventure Travel?

Why Choose KE Adventure Travel?

Experience

KE has 31 years experience of adventure travel worldwide. All of our holidays are accompanied by an experienced leader, some of whom have worked with KE groups for many years. Many are professional guides and instructors with an unrivalled knowledge of the areas in which they work. In many parts of the world, we recruit local guides with appropriate training and experience. In addition to having the technical skills to ensure your safety, KE expects its leaders to be active members of the group. A leader should be fun to travel with and ready to share with you their enthusiasm for adventure travel and their knowledge of the area. Alongside the group leader, there will be a local support crew, which could be just a driver, or a complete team of guides, drivers, porters, mule-herders and cooks. The hard work of our support crews, along with the fascinating insight they can offer into their local culture, is integral to providing you with the very best adventure travel experience.

The team of KE office staff is amongst the most experienced in the business, with the proven ability to set up and operate a worldwide programme of adventures. Every one has adventure travel at heart and joins at least one trip a year. It is this depth of experience that makes KE stand out from other adventure travel operators. When you contact KE, by phone or e-mail, or visit our office, you will find the help and advice you need, from someone who has actually done the trip and can give you the benefit of their first-hand experience.

KE can guarantee the very best in trek support, excellent food, a good standard of hotel and camp accommodation, plus the back up of one of the most respected companies in the business. Client satisfaction is at the top of our agenda and almost 50% of our bookings each year come from repeat business. If you are looking for adventure then look no further than KE.

RESPONSIBLE TOURISM AND AWARDS

Responsible Tourism has always fitted naturally with KEs travel ethic. It is important to us that our clients are not the only beneficiaries of the travel experience, but that we share a two-way relationship with the areas that we visit. We make sure that our local staff are well treated and well paid, we respect indigenous cultures, take care to protect the environment and make the most of every opportunity to make a positive contribution wherever we travel.

In addition to holding an AITO 5-star Sustainable Tourism rating, we are recipients of AITO's Achievement in Sustainable Tourism Award in recognition of the work carried out over the past 20 years, giving back to the communities and areas we visit. We have been awarded Highly Commended status in the Best Tour Operator category of the Virgin Holidays Responsible Tourism Awards, and were named Best Trekking Operator on Earth by National Geographic Magazine, whose criteria included commitment to responsible tourism.

We continue to travel responsibly, and more information on our policy, practice, and specific projects can be found at www.keadventure.com, and on the website of our partner charity the Juniper Trust: www.junipertrust.co.uk. KEs Mountain Code is issued to our staff, trek leaders and overseas agents, and we recommend it to our clients, too!

Your Complete Financial Protection

KE Adventure Travel is a fully licensed and bonded tour operator. We are a member of the Association of Independent Tour Operators (AITO), bonded with the CAA (ATOL 2808) and ABTA licensed (W4341). You can book your trip with KE Adventure Travel in complete confidence that all monies you pay for a trip are fully protected.

BOOKING YOUR HOLIDAY

Making a Booking

The easiest way to make your booking is online. You will need to pay a deposit at the time of booking. This is normally £200 but for some holidays with special permit fees or internal flights, this may be more. The amount of deposit required for an individual holiday is given on the dates and prices page of the holiday. Late bookings will require full payment. We cannot confirm any booking until we receive your fully completed booking form.

Adventure Travel Insurance

IMPORTANT - It is a condition of joining any of our trips that you are insured against medical and personal accident risks (to include repatriation costs, air ambulance and helicopter rescue services). We also strongly recommend that you take out holiday cancellation insurance, as all deposits paid are non-refundable. Please ensure that your insurer is aware of your KE Adventure itinerary and can agree to cover the activities being undertaken. You will then need to advise us of your policy details and complete an Insurance Declaration Form.

CAMPBELL IRVINE DIRECT travel insurance is available to **EU residents** and will cover the majority of KE Adventure holidays. It has been designed to provide cover for activities normally excluded by other insurers such as trekking, mountain biking and climbing. Please note that certain activities may attract a higher premium. In addition 'Campbell Irvine Direct' cannot provide cover for KE climbing trips above 6000m. Cover for these can be obtained through either the British Mountaineering Council (BMC) or Snowcard.

TRAVELEX is a **USA** based insurer offering travel insurance, which can be used by US citizens and US residents only. KE recommends the "Travelex Select" package for our holidays. If your holiday involves using mountaineering equipment (ropes, harness or crampons), for climbing or glacial travel, you should consider the "Adventure Plus Pak" optional upgrade on the Travelex Select Plan. Please refer to the 'Description of Coverage' for a summary of the terms, conditions, exclusions and limitations of the applicable Protection Plan. This policy will also cover KE climbing trips above 6000m.

We hope that this trip notes has answered most of your questions.

Please feel free to contact us and speak to one of our experts.



Equipment List

The following checklist should help you with your packing. As a general rule, you should always try to keep the weight of your equipment to a maximum of 15 kgs.

You Must Bring The Following Items:

- Hiking boots
- Smart shoes (if your trip includes visiting a festival)
- Socks
- Waterproof and windproof jacket
- Waterproof and windproof overtrousers
- Trekking trousers
- Thermal baselayer leggings
- Thermal baselayer shirts
- Fleece jacket
- Warm jacket (down)*
- 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 1 Litre (x2). (Note that the tube on camelback / platypus type systems can be prone to freezing in cold conditions)
- Selection of dry bags (to keep trek bag contents dry)
- Sleeping bag (comfort rating -15°C)*
- 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)
- Small padlock (to lock your KE trek bag)
- Camera
- Small travel towel
- A selection of dry bags (to keep trek bag contents dry)

Notes

Equipment hire / rental

Items marked * can be hired / rented through KE Adventure Travel. Please make all requests at least 6 weeks prior to the trip departure date. Please 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

Bhutan Festivals

- FESTIVAL DRESS CODE

If your holiday involves visiting any of the 'tsechu' or festivals in Bhutan, we would like to advise you that there is a dress code that you need to be aware of when attending any festival. The Bhutanese always come dressed in their finest for a festival and it is important that you to bring a smart set of clothes if you plan to attend. You will need to wear long sleeves, long trousers (no jeans) and no trainers, boots or open toed sandals. Hats should not be worn and umbrellas are not acceptable.

- FESTIVAL ETIQUETTE

Festivals are religious events. The ground where they are held is purified and consecrated by lamas, so when you are watching a festival you are, in essence, on the perimeter of an outdoor religious ground. The conduct of the onlooker should be governed with this in mind. The dancers, whether monks or laymen, are in a state of meditation. They transform themselves into the deities which they represent on the dance ground. They generate a spiritual power, which cleanses, purifies, enlightens and blesses the spectators.

Any behaviour which may be deemed obtrusive, disrespectful or discourteous is out of place at such an event. The dance ground is not a place to eat, drink, smoke, talk or laugh loudly at inappropriate times. You should not use flash photography or intrude on the dance space. Common courtesy should rule one's action when photographing dances or onlookers.

Festivals are not pageants or entertainment events. They are not held as tourist attractions. They are genuine manifestations of religious traditions thousands of years old which outsiders are given the privilege of witnessing. We would like to see that privilege retained. In the past, the actions of a few unthinking visitors have caused shock and dismay to the local people. Any recurrence of such unfortunate events may lead to future restrictions on attendance at festivals. We hope that KE groups will always display courtesy, sensitivity and respect to the people of Bhutan who have welcomed them to attend these beautiful and sacred events, and will visibly demonstrate their respect by dressing as well as their circumstances permit on such occasions.

Please note: This document was downloaded on 21 Feb 2017, and the trip is subject to change.