

Bhutan Laya Gasa Lingshi Trek

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This trek is considered one of the most spectacular in the Himalaya. The attractions of this trek are diverse and many. The semi tropical and alpine forests at lower altitude give sanctuary to a wealth of bird life and flora, while above the tree line there is every chance of seeing blue sheep and various species of eagles and vultures.

Throughout the trek, there are magnificent views of the mountains, with Chomolhari (22,500ft), Jitchu Drake and Tsering Gang being particularly prominent.

This trek also provides fascinating insight into Bhutan's ethnic Diversity. The most important villages of Laya, Gasa and Lingshi fall on this trekking route and these villages are home to a mountain people of Tibeto — Burmese origin who are famous for their yak hair clothing and conical bamboo hats. You will also meet semi-nomadic families grazing their yaks on the high summer pastures.

Beginning upstream along the Paro chu, we follow the ancient caravan route to Tibet, through the Seo valley in the shadows of Chomolhari and Jitchu Drake, over the Nyele la pass and into the Lingshi valley. The numerous lakes in the Seo valley abound with fish. At Lingshi, we get to visit the picturesque Dzong from where it is actually only a day's walk to Tibet. Heading east over the three high passes of Gobula, Jarila and Shinjela and we then enter the famous Laya valley. The ethnic diversity of the nomads here can be seen in the villages. We then continue on to the well known hot springs of Gasa ending our trek at Tashitang - the road head where we'll meet our vehicles and drive to Thimphu, the capital of Bhutan.

The trek involves some 150 miles of rugged walking across passes up to 4960m. Our efforts will be well rewarded in this outstanding trek in one of the most remote and beautiful corners of the Himalaya.

IMG ran their first trip to Bhutan in the fall of 2005. What a trip and what a success! The relationships we established will endure for years. If you're looking for an absolutely unique trek in a region still undiscovered by the masses, Bhutan is the place and now is the time.

No short cuts on this program. We want everyone to see sunrise on Chomolhari, the villages of Lingshi, Laya and Gasa, and explore the monasteries and sights of Paro and Thimpu. And, wait until you see Tiger's Nest! Words cannot do it justice. We will travel over 150 miles. The views and memories will be worth every step. And remember, an IMG Senior Guide will be your leader. Don't wait another year.

Bhutan: Just The Facts

By Any Other Name:

The Bhutanese call their country Druk Yul (which means land of the thunder dragon).

Too Far for Missionaries:

The population of Bhutan is predominantly Buddhist, followed by Hindus.

Auspicious History:

The earliest transcribed event in Bhutan was the passage of the Buddhist saint Padma Sambhava (Guru Rinpoche) in 747 CE.

What's Your GNH?

In 1972, Bhutan became the only country to define and incorporate Gross National Happiness (GNH) into the development plan of their nation. It is based on the promotion of equitable and sustainable socio-economic growth, preservation and promotion of cultural values, conservation of the natural environment, and establishment of good governance.

Simpsons & eBay Good for GNH:

In 1999, the government lifted a ban on television and the Internet, making Bhutan one of the last countries to get these technologies.

They Don't Care How Cool It Is:

Bhutan is the only country in the world to have banned the sale of tobacco.

No Peak Baggers Either, Thanks:

Mountain climbing is not allowed on the sacred peaks of Bhutan.

Of the People, By the People:

In Dec of 2006, the popular king announced he would abdicate the throne to his son, and that a parliamentary democracy would be established. Bhutan held their first ever election for 2008, though with some concern over the pitfalls of democracy in neighboring countries. The king created an anti-corruption team to help safeguard the transition.

DATES: October 9-31, 2010 (led by Phil Ershler)

LANDCOST: \$5,500 US

With a \$500 application fee required to confirm a reservation. Final payment must be received **NO LATER** than 90 days prior to the departure of the trip. Failure to do so may result in the loss of your deposit and reservation.

Costs included:

Guide fees, all meals and all hotels in Bhutan, all meals while trekking, a shared tent on the trek, all porters, cooks and assistants during the trek, all group equipment

Costs not included:

All flights to and from Bhutan, visa fees, any nights required going to and from Bhutan, personal equipment, items of a personal nature.

CANCELLATION/REFUNDS

Cancellation and refund policies are discussed in the General Terms and Conditions sheet that was included in the sign up documents package. We encourage you to read that information carefully. Business realities force us to strictly adhere to the conditions outlined in that document.

FLIGHT INFORMATION AND TRAVEL PLANS

We encourage you to make your reservations early and we **strongly** urge you to contact CTT Destinations. They are linked from our web site or you can contact them at: 800 909 6647 or by email at: img@cttdestinations.com. This is an agency that specializes in group travel. We've worked with them for years and we can highly recommend them to help make your travel arrangements. By knowing our programs, they can do a lot to facilitate your travel plans. It is also beneficial for us to have knowledge of everyone's travel arrangements. Do yourself a favor and check in with them.

Remember, you are responsible for making all of your own flight arrangements.

PASSPORTS

If you do not already have a passport, or if your current passport is due to expire before the trip, you must obtain a new one. **A CURRENT PASSPORT IS REQUIRED FOR ENTRY INTO Bhutan.** Also, if your passport is 'well-traveled', make sure there are blank pages available. Passport information is available from your main post office.

“You surpassed all my expectations as a guide and as a human being. You are one of the lucky individuals who make it possible for people like me to live their dreams. Thanks for a memorable adventure...”

—Hank W.

For more comments from IMG climbers, please see our website at: www.mountainguides.com/comments.shtml

PACKING AND TRAVELING SUGGESTIONS

Most of us will pack our gear in two duffle bags. Put your day pack in one of these bags. Most airlines limit checked luggage to two pieces each weighing no more than 20-30 kg., depending on the airline. New security measures make it impossible to lock luggage. Use zip ties to close the zipper tabs on your bags. The TSA can easily cut those off if necessary and they will then replace it if they have done so. Then, we suggest you get two small combination locks that you can put on the zipper tabs once we are in Bhutan. These are nice for your peace of mind. They help to prevent pilfering. In addition to these two bags, it's nice to use a small rucksack as your carry on luggage. You'll then have this small rucksack available for while traveling.

We also would suggest that you purchase one of the many light money belts that are available or get one of the pouches that you can hang around your neck and place inside your shirt. This is a little safer way to carry your money and travel documents.

Experienced travelers will also carry a couple of extra passport photos with them as well as a copy of the first pages of your passport. These should be carried in a place separate from your passport. Having them available will greatly facilitate the replacement of your passport if you ever lost it.

Get to the airport early and make sure your luggage gets checked through to the correct destination. Also, make sure that your flight connections aren't too tight. Lost luggage is a pain. Try to keep the number of connections to a minimum when you are making travel plans and use the same airline as much as possible. Leave expensive jewelry and watches at home. We would like everyone to have a wrist watch with an alarm along. They are quite handy. It's convenient to have a pen with you for filling in travel forms. We also like a small flashlight (like a Mini Mag)

EQUIPMENT

The enclosed Equipment List is for your guidance. Most items are **REQUIRED**, a few are optional. Please consider each item carefully and be sure you understand what its function is before you make any substitutions. Keep in mind that this list has been carefully compiled after years of experience. If you have questions, please call.

MISCELLANEOUS INFORMATION

Casual attire is the rule for most of our activities. T-shirts and jeans work well. It's nice to have a clean shirt with a collar and a pair of pants for evenings just in case we ever wound up at someplace a bit fancier.

Cash should be carried in the form of U.S.dollars. Bring small bills. Well-known credit cards are also accepted at better business establishments throughout the world. Plan to take about \$500. That's probably more than you'll spend but it's always nice to have extra dollars. We also ask everyone to bring one blank check. It's easy for us to simply put all group restaurant meals on one bill and divide that by the number of participants and guides at the end of the trip.

Also, remember that final payment must be received no later than 90 days prior to the departure date of the trip. All checks should be made payable to International Mountain Guides and sent to our Ashford office.

We hope all this information will be helpful. Please don't hesitate to contact us if you have any questions.

Bhutan Trek Itinerary

- Day 01** Leave US.
- Day 02** Arrive Bangkok and overnight there.
- Day 03** Transfer to International airport for flight to Paro (2200m) in the morning. On arrival, transfer to hotel. Afternoon sightseeing of Paro valley . O/N hotel on full board.
- Day 04** Full day sightseeing of Paro including the famous Taktsang monastery (Tiger' s nest) clinging on the hill top - one of the highlights of this trip. O/N Paro.
- Day 05** Drive to Drukgyul Dzong (2300m) and begin trek to Shana village (2575m) along the Pahchu (Paro river). Approx. 5-6 hrs of walking.
- Day 06** Shana to Soithangka (3520m): Today's walk is through rich forrests of juniper, pine, conifers - approx. 7 hrs.
- Day 07** Soithangka - Jangothang (Chomolhari Base camp) (4040m): Another lovely walk passing yak herders settlements with great views of Chomolhari and Jichu Drake from camp. 5-6 hrs of walking.
- Day 08** Rest day: An excellent place to relax or take excursions for better views.
- Day 09** Jangothang - Lingshi (3980m): Climb gradually to Nyelela pass (4800m) from where we descend to the beautiful village of Lingshi. 5-6 hrs.
- Day 10** Lingshi - Chebisa (3850m): Morning visit to the Lingshi Dzong and take a leisurely walk to our next camp at Chebisa - 3-4hrs, another lovely village where we get to visit the villagers in their homes.
- Day 11** Chebisa - Shomuthang (3960m): We cross the Gobula pass (4365m) and another unnamed pass (4110m)and descend to camp at Shomuthang. 5-6hrs.
- Day 12** Shomuthang - Roluthang (4130m): We cross the Jarila pass (4600m) from where we descend to the river and then climb another 300m to camp at Roluthang. 7-8hrs.
- Day 13** Roluthang - Lamithang (4100m): Cross the Shingela pass (4960m). It is worthwhile to take a walk up to the ridge at 5000m for better views. Descend to Lamithang. 6 hrs.
- Day 14** Lamithang to Laya (3720m): A lot of up and down walking today as we descend to the wonderful village of Laya. Approx. 5 hrs.
- Day 15** A day' s rest to visit the village where the village folk will entertain us with some local singing and dancing.
- Day 16** Laya to Konea(3220m): We walk through forests today going up and down several times to Konea . Various bird species can be seen here including the musk deer if you are lucky. Approx 7 hrs.
- Day 17** Konea - Gasa (2210m) Cross another pass - Balela (3780m) and descend to the wonderful hot spring of Gasa - 5-6 hrs. Here we also see the Gasa Dzong which use to be an outpost fort guarding the trade route to Tibet. A dip in the Gasa hot springs is a pleasure here.
- Day 18** Gasa Springs - Damji (2250m) We climb back up to 2500m and then down to Damji - 5 hrs.
- Day 19** Damji - Tashitang - Thimphu. Trek to the road head at Tashitang (3½ hrs) and drive to Thimphu, the capital of Bhutan.
- Day 20** Full day sightseeing of Thimphu. Evening drive to Paro.
- Day 21** Fly to Bangkok and overnight there.
- Day 22** Flights to the States.

Bhutan Trek Required Equipment List

Please Read Carefully

- Two large duffel bags with locks and name tags. Also, write your name in large block letters directly on the duffel bags with a permanent marking pen.
- A secure travel wallet
- Internal frame pack for the trek. Not too small. You will need to carry clothes, water bottle, camera, snacks, etc. for each day. I usually carry a smaller rucksack as my airline carry-on, in addition. (Lowe packs are still our choice)
- Sleeping bag. Reasonably warm. Rated to about 0 degrees.
- Thermarest pad.
- Comfortable hiking boots. You'll be walking for several hours every day. (Look at Asolo boots)
- Camp shoes. A tennis shoe is fine.
- Gaiters. Not a bad idea if we encounter any snow or mud.
- Four sets of socks for your hiking boots.
- Collapsible ski poles. Not required but lots of people find these very nice for trekking.
- Down or synthetic parka. Doesn't have to be too heavy but you will want one for evenings in camp.
- Shell jacket with hood. Gore-tex or equivalent. (Look at offering by Lowe)
- Heavy fleece jacket. (Look at the Outer Limits jacket from Lowe)
- Two polypro shirts. Zip neck turtle necks are the way to go.
- A couple of t-shirts and/or a Supplex nylon trekking shirt.
- Shell pants with full length leg zippers. Gore-tex or equivalent. (Look at Lowe)
- Fleece type pants.
- Polypro long john bottoms.
- Supplex nylon hiking pants/shorts are also nice.
- Wool or fleece stocking hat.
- Bandana and baseball hat.
- Ski gloves (Like the Alti by Outdoor Research) and a pair of light polypro gloves.
- Headlamp with extra batteries and spare bulb.
- Good sunglasses.
- Two rolls of toilet paper and consider a pee bottle.
- Light weight toilet articles.
- Two wide mouth water bottles.
- Iodine tablets or crystals for water purification.
- Small hand towel.
- I like to bring my own insulated drinking mug.
- Earplugs are not a bad idea.
- Camera and film.
- Pocket knife, alarm wrist watch (Suunto) and a Bic lighter.
- Personal first aid kit. This should include moleskin, a couple of band-aids, aspirin or Motrin, etc. Prescription drugs. I would bring an antibiotic for upper respiratory infections (such as Augmentin), an antibiotic for GI problems (Ciprofloxacin), Imodium for diarrhea, and some cold tablets. You may also want to bring a few 125 mg. Diamox tablets for altitude problems. Please talk to your physician.
- Stash or personal munchie foods. This can include candy bars, energy bars, powdered drink mixes, etc.

ADDITIONAL MEDICAL INFORMATION

While we always strive to have a doctor as a participant on our trips, we cannot guarantee one's presence and you should be aware of this. It's important that everyone fills out the Medical Information form in the application documents carefully so that we can be made aware of any possible medical problems

In addition to the first aid items listed on the equipment list, there are a few additional medications that you should consider. These should be discussed with your personal physician and will require his prescription. We suggest you discuss the use of Ciprofloxacin for prevention and/treatment of traveler's diarrhea with your physician and you should have a course of this antibiotic with you. You also want to bring some Imodium for treatment of diarrhea. Please consider both of these medications as part of your required equipment list. A mild sleeping medication can also be discussed with your physician. We do not recommend the automatic use of Diamox for altitude sickness but you can also discuss this with your physician and he can make this available to you if you and he deem it appropriate. Any medication should be used only if necessary and use should be discussed thoroughly with your physician and with your guide before you take the medication.

Water purification is also very important. An efficient and effective and inexpensive method is the use of iodine crystals. These are available commercially at mountaineering stores as a product called 'Polar Pure'. Iodine tablets, such as 'Potable Agua' are also available and work well. Filters, such as those made by MSR, are also good. Either can be used or both can be used in combination.

There are some immunizations that you should consider. Your local health department is the best source of information. They are cheap insurance. Start preparations now so that these vaccinations can be spaced out. We **STRONGLY** suggest getting tetanus and hepatitis vaccinations. We would be current with these vaccinations regardless of whether we were traveling or not

We also strongly recommend that each participant brings a small bottle of a hand disinfectant such as Purell. Do bring a bottle. Anything that we can do to stay healthy is worthwhile.

Health issues will be discussed during the expedition and we encourage you to contact us if you have any questions before or during the trip.

Please honestly inform us of any allergies or chronic medical problems on the Medical Information Form that was part of the sign up forms package from the web site.

“Phil, you did a great job at providing superb leadership, and it’s only in hindsight that I realized how much I did learn in the several days that we all worked together. Your concern for safety and the well-being of the group was certainly expressed succinctly and in the end it paid dividends. But, what I particularly liked was your strong emphasis on the fact that we participate together as a team up to the top and back down. We succeeded, and in large part I think, it’s due to the fact that you emphasized that we all do it together...”

—Todd H.

For more comments from IMG climbers, please see our website at: www.mountainguides.com/comments.shtml

IMMUNIZATIONS

No immunizations are currently required for entry into Bhutan. Please consult your local health department for their recommendations. I do recommend that you consider the following:

- **Tetanus/Diphtheria:** You should already have. Do you need a booster? There is no natural immunity to the tetanus toxin and since it is found throughout the world, immunization is a universal recommendation regardless of age. A combined tetanus/diphtheria booster is available, good for ten years.
- **Polio:** You should already have. Do you need a booster?
- **MMR:** You should already have. Do you need a booster?
- **Meningitis:** Recommended. Consult your physician.
- **Hepatitis A:** Recommended. Consult your physician.
- **Hepatitis B:** Not a bad idea. Ask your physician.
- **Cholera:** Ask your physician.
- **Typhoid:** Not a bad idea to be safe. The tablet form, Vivotif Berna, is good for five years.

Please consult your physician or local health department for their recommendations. You should also ask your physician for a prescription for a course of the antibiotic Ciprofloxacin. Please consider this to be part of your **REQUIRED** equipment.

We recommend that you visit the travel clinic at a major University Hospital or your local Public Health Department for the most up to date info on travel requirements, or check the Center for Disease Control Website at www.cdc.gov.

“Spending time with you is always a lesson. The things I learn and all the experiences of new and strange and unique adventures become indelible images, memories I will carry with me till the end of my life...”

—Andrea F.

“We awoke each morning surrounded by some of the world's most pristine natural beauty. The sharp peaks and deep crevasses of the Himalayas surrounded us on all sides and the narrow trails underfoot were pounded smooth by the hooves of countless yaks and ponies... I don't think I will ever forget watching one of our herders, hands gripped firmly to the tail of his yak, skidding across the grassy valley as if on water skis. 2000 pounds versus 120 pounds — the odds lay in favor of the yak but I had to give the herder credit for tenacity. My mother turned sixty that evening and we were fed our second cake of the day, still warm and buttery from being tipped by Raj Kumar, only moments before, from its baking tin...”

—Kari L.

Read Kari's [Bhutan Trip Report](#)

“Anyone can guide a climb, but you have the ability to surround the trip with the right atmosphere and a sense of adventure, and accomplishment, and make it a true vacation...”

—Dave P.

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