

Snowman Trek (Bhutan)



Snowman Trek is among the top draw trek in the world. Undoubtedly, its rugged and unforgiving terrain, hostile climate and weather-beaten trail that traverse through Lunana, one of most remote region in the world, is a challenge in every sense. Generally, only seasoned trekker vied for this trek which dictate you to be the best in physical shape and also squeeze the best out of you. Trek as such, is the test of endurance, tenacity to persevere against the elements and also three weeks in complete wilderness, in the remotest region of the world can be a real challenge psychologically. One of guests, who is the seasoned trekker himself said **“We are aware that the trek is extremely challenging but we believe that we have good chances to complete it. We summited several mountains, to name but a few Mont Blanc, Ama Dablam, Aconcagua, Denali, Elbrus, Island Peak and accomplished several treks in Nepal namely Everest Base Camp, Annapurna circuit, Langtang, but Snowman Trek was always our dream”**.

Typical trekking day in Bhutan

On a typical trek in Bhutan, you are provided a bed tea/ Coffee (Nescafe). Then you are provided with a bowl of warm water to wash and brush. Breakfast is served in your dinning tent. After breakfast, crews take down the tents, clean the campsite, pack the bags/boxes and begin loading the animals, at which time you and your guide set-off on the trail. During the day, for most part of the time, you walk at your own pace and stop to take pictures or admire landscapes. All you carry is a personal backpack with only a water bottle, camera and jacket and accessories you need during the day. Around noon, hot lunch or packed picnic lunch with tea, coffee and juice is served.

Checklist for Clothing & Equipment/Gears for Snowman Trek (Bhutan)

“Travel light” is the phrase which we often hear in our trade. This expression hold water as it’s the bare essence of travelling. However, there are many aspects to consider when we prepare for trekking. One singular most important consideration that dictates our welfare is how to be suitably equipped to combat with elements of nature that we may come across like inclement weather and rugged and unforgiving terrains whilst on trek.

Though our intent is to provide check list with appropriate information however we ask you to examine and exercise discretion in most resilience manner based on your own outdoor experience and preference.

As mentioned, the art lies in maintaining finer balance between taking not too much or too little, especially considering that you need to equip yourself for all extremes of climate

Basic, Necessary & Light

Head Gears (Trekking Hat)



On a clear, sunny day, the sun burnt will be an issue, at altitude; the sun rays are particularly strong. Bring a hat that shade your head, face and neck from the sun and also consider using Arab type scrap for further protection. You should bring a plentiful supply of sunscreen cream – a couple of large tubes of factor 6-10 (depending on your skin sensitivity).

Warm Hat



On this particular trek, you will cross many passes over 5000 m, which can be very cold. A comfortable, warm hat such as one made from Polar Fleece or wool that covers your ears. Make sure that it fits well and, if applicable to your trip, can fit under a climbing helmet.

Sun Glasses



At altitude, the sun's rays are particularly strong, and sunglasses with 100% ultraviolet and infrared filtration are recommended. These glasses are available with detachable leather or plastic side pieces, which give increased protection, especially from reflected glare, and you should give serious consideration to such "glacier glasses" for Snowman trek with possibilities of walking or climbing on snow. Make sure they are dark enough to keep your eyes comfortable on the brightest day

Headlamp



Bring a good headlamp for this trek. It should be bright enough to use on the trail if we have a day that is longer than usual, an early start for a pass or climb, or for reading in your tent. L.E.D. Headlamps are sufficient. Make sure you bring at least 2 extra bulbs and extra batteries.

Hand Gears



Warm Glove Liner with waterproof outer shell

At higher passes it can get cold and windy. You should bring 2 pair of properly-fitted Wind Shields fleece glove liners and a pair of warm gloves with a waterproof outer shell to protect you from wind,

Feet Gears

Liner Socks (2 Pairs)



If you prefer to wear two pair of socks your inner liner socks Liner (A thin wicking sock that repels moisture. Liner socks help to reduce the likelihood of blisters. The socks should be thin wool, nylon. NO COTTON.

Hiking Socks (3 pairs)



You should bring a thick woolen sock to use as an extra layer over the liner sock or some may prefer to wear just the hiking sock, in such case ensure it's thick mainly natural fibers and of loop stitch construction for maximum warmth and comfort.

Thor-Lo is an example of a sock manufacturer, which markets a wide range of technically advanced trekking/walking socks.

Hiking Boot



This is one of the most important considerations, as blisters and sore feet will spoil your trek. We recommend that you take a pair of light to mid weight trekking boots, well broken -in, provide good ankle support and suitable for walking over rough terrain and comfortable over long distances. Good quality fabric boots are recommended.

Gaiters



Gaiters are an important piece of equipment, which will help to keep your feet warm and dry in wet and snowy conditions. The simple "alpine" style of gaiter which hooks onto the bootlaces and is held under the instep by a strap or lace is fine for most trekking applications. These "alpine" gaiters are widely available.

Upper Body Gear



Mid -Weight Top

A mid to heavier weight thermal layer. Fitted, light-weight and quick drying. As we recommend to adopt the principle of layering, this light to mid weight top can be used as base layer.



Warm Jacket

As it can get cold at higher passes and during morning and night specifically at camp. You should incorporate a Polar guard or fleece jacket. This can be a very warm fleece or Polar guard jacket. Full zip is recommended.



Shell Jacket

As for Snowman trek specifically, it requires protection from the chill of the wind more often than protection from rain, especially at higher passes over 5000 m. Shell garments made from breathable fabrics (GoreTex or equivalent) are recommended.



Down Jacket

This is certainly not optional for Snowman trek. This is what will keep you warm at higher passes and at night.

Leg Gears



Light or mid-weight (2 pair)

A light or mid weight thermal bottom base-layer that will get you through a wide range of temperatures.



Warm pants

A pair of comfortable fleece or similar material warm pants are great for higher passes and camping at night.



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Gears



Day packs: A 2500 cubic inch pack should be large enough to carry the following items on trek. a) shell jacket and pants. b) fleece jacket, pants, extra pair of socks, gym shoes. c) Two water bottles, with at least 2 quart total capacity. d) camera plus accessories, binoculars, etc. e) first aid kit. You should test-pack your daypack before leaving home.



Duffel Bags (2 nos): You'll need one large duffel bag to hold everything you do not put in your day pack, including your sleeping bag and mattress, while on trek. This bag should be durable, as it will be carried by porters and/or pack animals. A second smaller bag can be used to store items not used on trek at the group hotel.



Sleeping Bag: You will need a 4-season sleeping bag rated to at least zero degrees. A full-length side zip is essential to facilitate ventilation on warmer nights. A cotton or fleece liner adds to the warmth and comfort of a bag and prevents it from becoming excessively soiled.



Sleeping Mattress: A mattress is needed primarily to insulate you from the cold ground, and you should take a quality closed-cell foam mat. On all camping treks, we provide light trekking mattresses. However, if you care for extra comfort and have a sensitive back, bring a self-inflatable trek mat.



Trekking Poles: Trekking poles can be good if you need extra support for your knees and/or ankles. Must be collapsible poles. Make sure that they are durable, lightweight + easily adjustable.

Accessories & Miscellaneous :

- **Travel Wallet Pouch** (waist or neck)
- **Locks For Duffle Bags**
- **Leather man / Swiss Army Knife**
- **Water Purification Tablets** (iodine or equivalent)
- **Underwear:** (men- polypro boxers or briefs / women- poly-pro sports bras, cotton or polypro briefs are fine) 3 rotating pairs. As with socks and shirts, you'll be wearing one, one will be drying from washing and one will be clean and packed.
- **Sunscreen: SPF 30** (or higher) LOTS
- **Lip Balm with SPF 15** (or higher)
- **Insect Repellent**
- **Personal First Aid Kits:** (Band-aids, Ibuprofen, Cough Drops, Moleskin, Pepto-bismol, Immodium, Diamox Personal Medications)
- **Toiletries:** Toothbrush, Toothpaste, Bio-degradable Soap/Shampoo Quick Dry Towel, Moisturizer, Purel Hand Sanitizer,
- **Antiseptic Hand Towlettes, Toilet Paper** (a small emergency stash)]
- **Water Bottles:** Two liter capacity
- **Snack food:** (trail mix, protein bars, GU, candy, powdered drink mixes – don't bring a whole suitcase, but bring a variety of things you know you can eat while in the mountains to supplement your diet.)
- **Power Adapter:** for electrical gadgets (round pin socket- 220v)
- **Reading Glasses:** or contact lenses
- **Photography equipment:** with extra films, extra memory cards and an extra battery
- **Clothing & Gears :** as per the list detailed
- **Sleeping Bags Liner:** Sleeping bag Inner liner made of fleece or cotton is highly recommended that can be easily washed and dried while in the trek. Most importantly it provides additional warmth, if the temperature should drop and keeps the sleeping bag clean.

- **Pillow:** Small blow pillow is provided. However you may consider bringing your own comfortable small trek pillow.
- **Optional:** Ipad, Ipad, ear plugs, books, journals, a deck of cards, binoculars, whistle for safety, phone (multiband phone, you can buy local sim-cards and get free incoming calls)

Weight allowance for trekking in Bhutan

Please try to keep the weight of your equipment to a minimum. Choose items of clothing that can be used in multiple situations. At the start of the trek, you will be carrying your day pack loaded with just the items you will need during the day of hiking. **Your packed trek/duffle bag will be carried by pack animals (ponies or yak) and should weigh no more than 33 pounds.**

Notes on Personal Clothing and Gears

Clothing: Your clothing needs to be adaptable to suit a wide range of conditions, including extremes of weather and varying levels of physical activity. We recommend adopting the principle of “layering” which involves the use of several thin layers of thermally efficient clothing, which can be worn in a number of combinations, according to the prevailing circumstances. Where it is warm enough you can trek in either shorts or lightweight trekking trousers (natural fibers) (a long skirt is an option for the ladies) and a long sleeve cotton shirt or T-shirt. For colder conditions, you can add layers of thermal clothing. And that the clothes you bring wash well in cold water and dry quickly.

Trip Expectations

Bhutan existed in self-imposed isolation up until the 1950’s when China took over Tibet and the King realized he would need alliances to fend off any future threats. The first tourist group came in 1974, but tourism remained minimal. TV and the internet were introduced in Bhutan in 1999, followed by cell phones in 2003. Modernization is relatively slow here, but that is precisely Bhutan’s charm. It remains unblemished by Western ways. Buddhism here means people ‘go with the flow’ and strive for serenity. Enjoy the simpler, slower pace of life.

Hotels: Primarily 3 stars, clean, comfortable, all with Western bathroom amenities and touches of Bhutanese textiles and wall-paintings. Most of the Tourist standard Hotels particularly in Thimphu and Paro provide Wi-Fi internet connection. Nothing fancy, but you come for the magical kingdom, not for a 5 star hotel. Just as there is currently only one international airport, the number of tourist hotels is modest. Furthermore, around the time of the Tsechus (Festival), there is much pressure on room availability and travel companies have to adjust rooms for large group often in more than one hotels and guest houses. Sometimes, one may land up attending festival in one town and staying in different town. While on the trek, we provide a tent, mattress, small blow pillow, hot water bag, and all Kitchen and dining equipment and a small toilet tent (pit dug out)

For the camping on trek : We have recently upgraded our trekking gear, which are up to date and state of art, consequently made it as comfortable as possible for you deserve to have sound rest after the hard day trek

Food: Bhutanese food always contains a goodly variety of fresh vegetables and fruits, rice/potatoes with some meat. It is substantive, simple fare. A set of meals or Buffet meals are served in all or most of the places, including on the trek and it can get pretty monotonous. On the treks the food is simple with fewer dishes. Especially on a long trek like this, as supplies are brought from Thimphu and not available for purchase along the way, the fresh vegetable and meat will be limited. Many of our guests, like to bring along some dried fruits, nuts, energy bars and packaged food items.

Food on Trek: During the trek our cook will serve you well with local food and also our cook and staffs are well trained in European, Chinese and Continental style of food, so we know well what to serve you during the trek. We will also ask you for your like and special need and will try all our best to arrange it if it within our reach.

The major thing to watch is **water**. Be sure to drink bottled water at all times. Even if the water is good where you are, you are not accustomed to the local microbes. Remember to stay well hydrated. It is very important in high altitude situations to drink at least 4 quarts of liquid a day, excluding tea.

Important Notes on Itinerary

Although we will do our very best to adhere to the itinerary and its schedule, this itinerary should be considered an approximate indication of the schedule and scope of activities, and trip routing. It is likely that there will be changes in terms of anything from the exact hotel used to the villages we may stop in for the night.

There are a few key points to remember while traveling through Bhutan.

Even though we do our very best, it is important to acknowledge that some things are simply out of our control: weather, people and their concepts and culture. Bhutanese by nature are very laid back and take opportunities as they come and very rarely take the “bull by the horns”. In Bhutan, you simply have to hang loose, be open-minded, and allow the culture and experience to enhance your life.

The best way to look at a trip is with an open mind. This is not to say that you should not expect good service. However, it does mean that you should be flexible and let things happen.

John Steinbeck says it well: *“We do not take a trip; a trip takes us.”*

I hope this helps you keep in perspective the reason you visit the Himalayas is not really for the comfort and sophistication, but for its culture, nature and its people.

Checklist Guide

- **Valid passport** (valid for six months after your date of entry into Asia. Bring the one that was used for Bhutan visa) Optional: One other picture ID, such as driver’s license is useful (in case of emergency and for use as a substitute of passport or in case of loss of your passport) Photocopy of your passport page to carry in your wallet.
- **Visa:** Bhutan Visa clearance letter will be emailed to you or attached at the end. Please print and bring a copy with you to show at the airport. Please check the visa requirements

of other countries you may be travelling prior or after Bhutan. Some countries such as India and China do not provide Visa upon arrival.

- **Air tickets:** You must print and bring a copy of your Bhutan Air ticket for check-in at the airport.
- **Money** (Cash and some in Traveler's checks) Credit cards are only accepted by some Souvenir Shops for larger purchases only. There are ATMS in Bhutan, but as it relatively new and hence it is not very reliable.
- **Travel Insurance** (recommended). Bring a copy of the certificate, if you have purchased.

Baggage allowance on Flights

On Druk Air is 20 Kilograms & Bhutan Airline is 30 Kg. Two pieces max per passenger to check-in and one hand-carry (cabin bag) that fits into overhead luggage compartment. Usually Laptops and cameras may be allowed to carry on in addition to cabin baggage. Business class passengers are permitted additional 10 Kilograms to check-in. Excess baggage is charged on a basis of kilograms and so the rates vary by sector and times

Link & Resources that can help to prepare well for the trip.

1. Please visit link for General Pre-departure Guide for Bhutan:
http://www.windhorsetours.com/wa/images/tourcost/2013SepThu_Predeparture-Bhutan13.pdf
2. Useful tips and overview on how to prepare and train for the trek/Hike, please visit the link below;
<http://windhorsetours.com/blog/?p=1127>
3. Questions about temperature & weather & Clothing and other FAQ;
<http://faq.windhorsetours.com/questions/categories/bhutan>
- 4.. For detail structure on weather, climate, temperature and altitude of Bhutan
<http://windhorsetours.com/blog/?p=913>
5. Link for different species of Flora found in Bhutan
<http://www.biodiversity.bt/species/list>
6. Please watch Wind Horse Tours You Tube
<https://www.youtube.com/user/ugenwindhorse>
7. FAQ for Bhutan
<http://faq.windhorsetours.com/questions/categories/bhutan>

Travel Resources /References

Following are very useful websites when planning or preparing for your trip.

US State Department Travel Advisories www.travel.state.gov

Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade www.smartraveller.gov.au

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Atlanta, GA U.S.A <http://www.cdc.gov/travel>

Foreign and Commonwealth Office (British government official travel advice and warnings for all countries) <http://www.fco.gov.uk>

Official travel advice of New Zealand government <http://www.safetravel.govt.nz/>

Canadian government's official travel advice <http://www.voyage.gc.ca>

Trip Comments



When you return from your trip, please share with us your experience. Any photos, suggestions will be appreciated. Although we try our best, Tourism is a trade, which cannot be perfect and there will always remain a room for improvement. Your comments (both criticism and compliments) are invaluable to us and we look forward to hearing from you, upon your return.