

Best Months: March – May, September – November

Trek Grade: Moderate.

Maximum Altitude: 4,900m/16,000ft.

Maximum Camp Altitude: 4,150m/13,615ft.

Duration: 14 days

Trek Highlights: Hamlets, Monasteries, Glacial lakes, Temperate Forests, splendid views of the Bhutan Himalayas, Alpine Pastures and Yak herders, Alpine forests of rhododendrons, juniper and fields of edelweiss.

This is the most popular trek in Bhutan. This trek follows the Pa-chu to the base of Mount Jhumolhari and the northern frontiers of Bhutan. Close encounters with nomadic yak herders, spectacular views of the Bhutan Himalayas, day walks to turquoise green glacial lakes and hiking through flower-dotted alpine meadows are the highlights of this trek.

DAYS ITINERARY

1. Arrival in Paro by Druk Air

If you are flying in from Kathmandu or Delhi, you will enjoy spectacular views of some of the highest mountains in the world (Everest, Lhotse, Nuptse, Kanchenjunga, Chomolhari, Kitchu Drake). Our tour representative will pick you up at the airport and take you to your hotel. Spend the evening strolling through Paro town.

2. Sightseeing in Paro

After breakfast visit the ruins of Drukgyel Dzong, a fortress built in the 17th century to commemorate Bhutan's victory against Tibetan army intruders. On the way back stop at the viewpoint of Taktsang (Tiger's nest). We also visit a farm house. After lunch visit Ta-Dzong (National Museum) and walk down to the Paro Dzong with its traditional cantilever bridge over the Pa-chu (Paro River).

3. Paro – Shana

Distance: 17Kms.

Walking Time: 5 – 6 hours.

Start: Drugyel Dzong, 2,580m

Camp: Shana Zham, 2,870m

Your trek starts at Drugyel Dzong. The trail passes through the village of Tsentso and follows the Paro river. Temperate forests soon replace the farmlands of Paro. Blue pine, larch and oak are common tree species along the trail. Today's walk is a pleasant one with no major climbs. You will camp beside an army outpost.

4. Sharna – Thangthangka

Distance: 22kms

Walking Time: 6-7 hours.

Camp: Thangthangka, 3,630m.

Today you will continue uphill through the river valley. The trail is a tedious one but one is mostly engrossed in the surrounding vegetation. Overnight in camp.

5. Thangthangka – Jangothang

Distance: 19kms

Walking Time: 5-6 hours

Camp: Jangothang, 4,090m.

You will trek up the valley towards the source of the Pa Chu. This is a light walking day and most refreshing after the previous day's walk. On the way you will see a small army post from where the valleys widen again. High ridges and snow-capped peaks surround you and the lush temperate forests are replaced with hardy alpine flora, mostly rhododendrons. It is estimated that there are more than 50 species of rhododendrons in Bhutan. You will also walk through a

yak herders' settlement. Small, scattered herds of Blue sheep are often sighted. Camp at the base of Mt. Jhumolhari.

6. Halt at Jangothang

You can spend the day relaxing in camp or exploring the beautiful surroundings. We recommend the short hike to either Tsophu (glacial lake) or along the ridge towards Mt. Jhumolhari or Jitchudrake. You can also spend the day visiting the few yak herders who live in the area.

7. Jangothang – Lingshi

Distance: 18kms

Walking Time: 5-6 hours

Camp: Lingshi, 4,010m

We cross our first major pass today. The Nyile-la pass is located at 4,890m. Nomadic yak herders are camped at the base of most of these passes at certain times of the year. Tsheringang and its descending glaciers at the north end of the valley are a constant sight. If the weather is clear, you will get great views of the Lingshi Dzong and the Lingshi basin. Herds of Blue Sheep may also add the thrill. After lunch, the walk is all the way downhill. The area around Lingshi is full of medicinal plants. Plans are underway to build a herbarium in Lingshi in order to make the collection of medicinal plants more sustainable. Overnight at camp.

8. Halt at Lingshi

Visit Lingshi Dzong or take the 4 – 5 hours excursion to Tsokha at 4500m. at the base camp of Jichu-Drake. Herds of Blue Sheep and Musk Deer, and various bird species add to the thrill.

9. Lingshi – Shodu

Distance: 22kms

Walking Time: 8-9 hours.
Camp: Shodu, 4,110m.

The first part of the trek is gradual and easy along the base of the valley. The most difficult part of today's walk is the climb to Yeli-la pass at 4,820m. On a clear day views of Mt. Jumolhari, Mt. Tsheringang and Mt. Masagang provide respite from the arduous walk.

10. Shodu – Barshong

Distance: 16 kms.
Walking Time: 5-6 hours.
Camp: Barshong, 3,680m.

Today's trail is along the banks of the Thimphu Chu. We cross the river at least six times. The Thimphu Chu meanders through the bottom of a magnificent canyon. The most arduous part of the trek is the final climb to Barshong Dzong.

11. Barshong - Dolam Kencho

Distance: 15 kms.
Walking Time: 5-6 hours.
Camp: Dolam Kencho, 3,430m.

The trail from Barshong descends down to the Thimphu Chu through dense forests of rhododendron, birch, conifer trees and across patches of pastureland. Camp is in a meadow.

12. Dolam Kencho – Thimphu

Distance: 8km.

Walking Time: 3 hours

End of trek at Dodina , 2,600m.

Today's trek is mostly downhill through rich temperate forests of oak and conifers. The trail head is located at Dodina at the base of Tangu and Cheri monasteries. It is just half an hour's drive from Dodina to Thimphu.

13. Sightseeing in Thimphu - Paro

Driving time to Paro: Approximately 2 hours

Visit the Folk Heritage Museum, the Textile Museum, the Institute of Zorig Chusum, Zelukha Nunnery, National Library, Memorial Chorten of the Late King, Handicrafts Emporium and walk around Thimphu city picking up souvenirs.

On a Saturday or Sunday, visit the Weekend Market.

Drive to Paro after lunch. Stop at the Semtokha Dzong for a short visit.

14. Departure