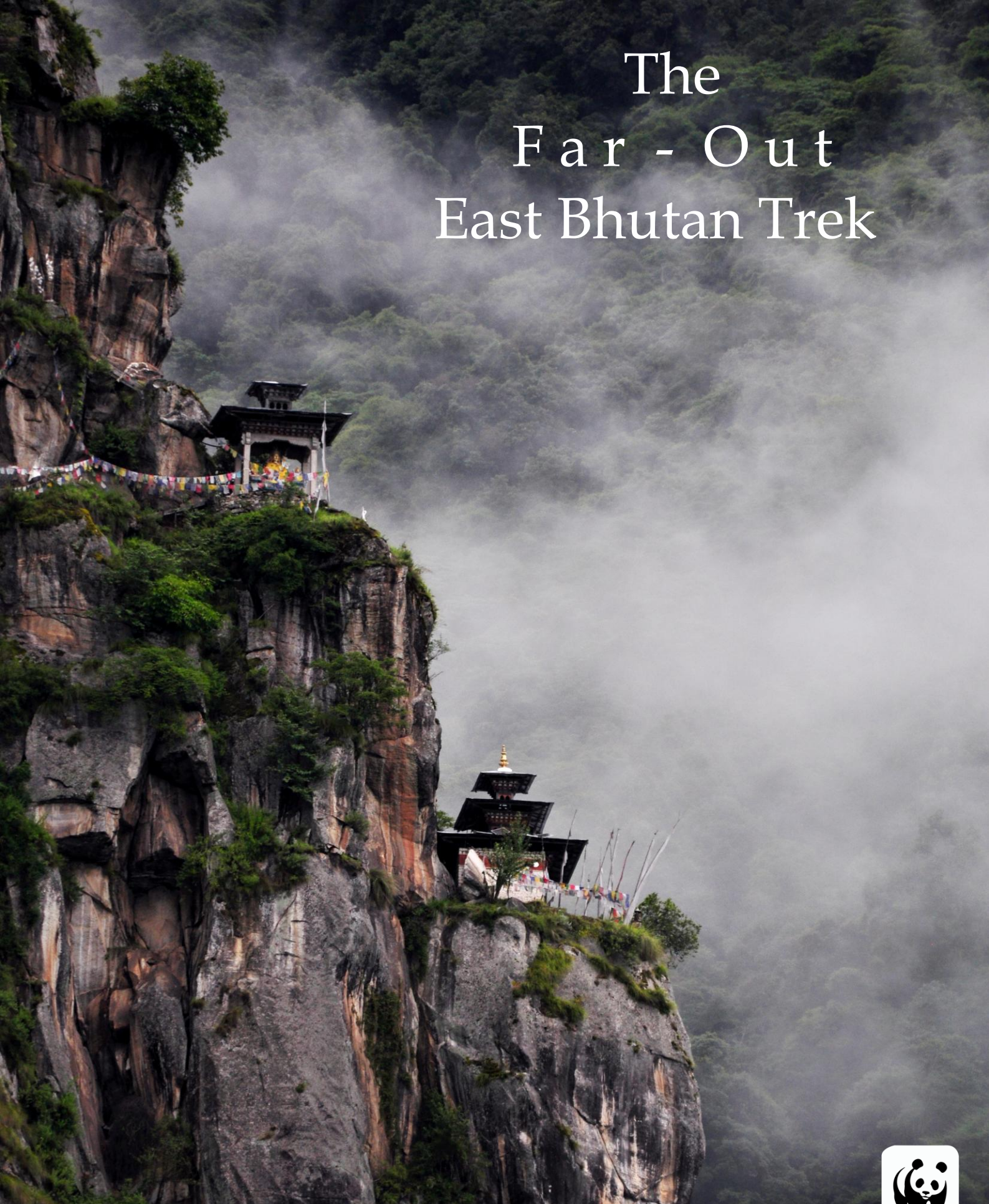


# The Far - Out East Bhutan Trek

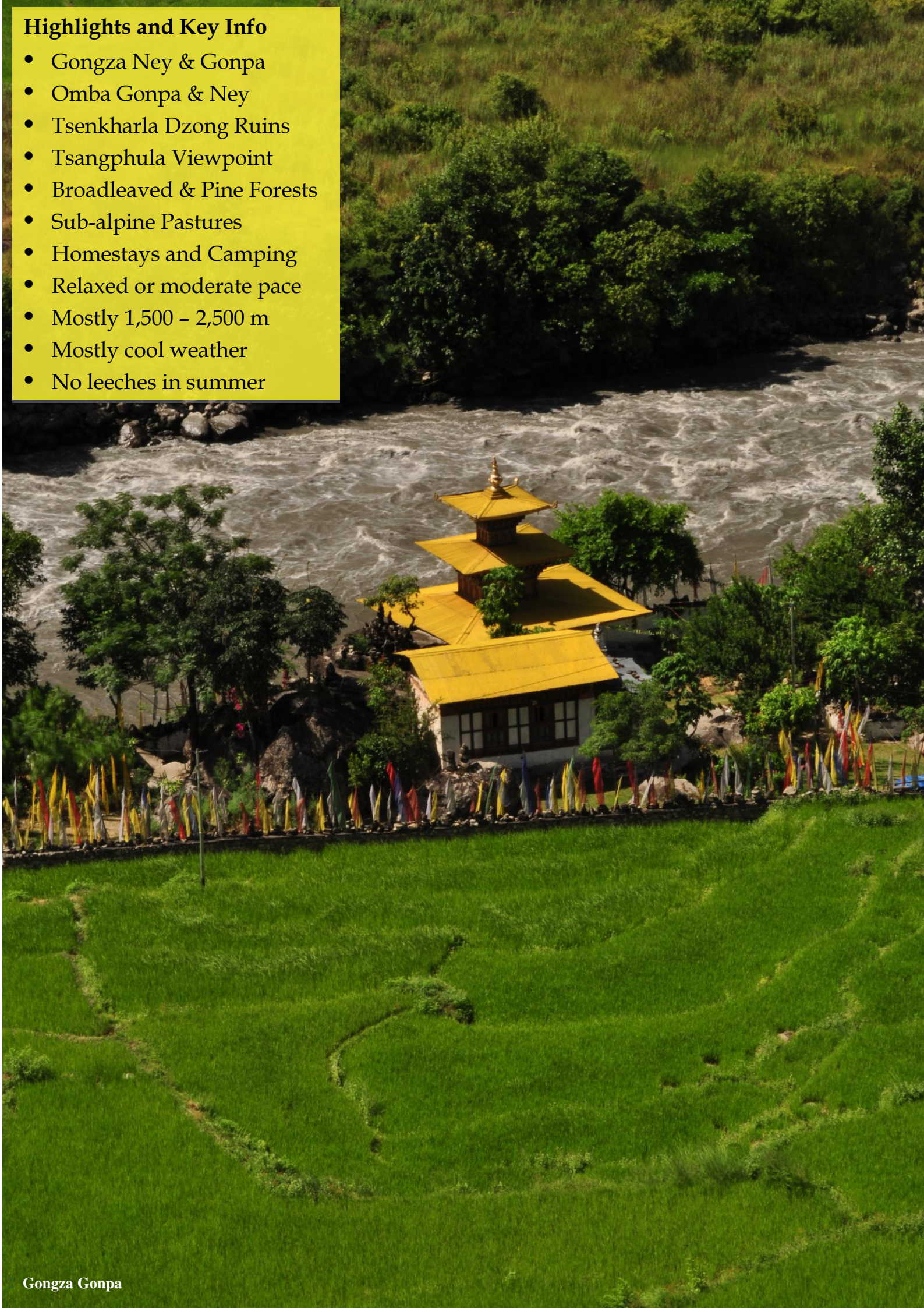


An all year round trek with pristine nature, authentic culture and unique history of **Trashi Yangtse**



## Highlights and Key Info

- Gongza Ney & Gonpa
- Omba Gonpa & Ney
- Tsenkharla Dzong Ruins
- Tsangphula Viewpoint
- Broadleaved & Pine Forests
- Sub-alpine Pastures
- Homestays and Camping
- Relaxed or moderate pace
- Mostly 1,500 - 2,500 m
- Mostly cool weather
- No leeches in summer



# 1. Introduction

East Bhutan and certainly Trashigang is little known and little explored. However, it offers a wealth of nature, culture and history. The first Dzong in the country was Tsenkharla. Omba Ney is one among three unique pilgrimage sites where holy letters can be seen in the rocks and Omba gonpa has been called the Taktshang of East Bhutan. At Gongza ney you find one of the most peaceful monasteries in Bhutan, set among paddy fields and naturally sculptured rocks at the banks of the Gongri river.



Monk at Darchen Gonpa

The trek passes through broadleaved forest, chir pine savannah with lemon grass, sub-alpine pastures, agricultural areas and small villages and ends along the Gongri river. The trek can be done in 3-6 days, at a moderate or very relaxed pace. It can also be done the whole year round as Khamdang and Toedtsho Gewogs are among the driest in Trashigang and most of the rain falls at night, while only the highest viewpoint receives some snow in winter. Moreover, there are no leeches. Existing camping sites and homestays will be improved as more tourists visit.

# 2. Best times of the year

The trek can be done all year round. Night time rain occurs in summer and clouds move in and out of the valleys, while the Gongri valley gets hot in daytime. Snow in winter at higher



View of Tshongtshongma from Toedtsho on a sunny summer day

elevations will hardly affect the trek or the area with snow can be left out. Spring and fall are best for views and weather in general.

- If you hate rain or muddy trails, avoid the months of June to September.
- If you do not like snow but want to reach the 3000m Shangphula viewpoint come from April to November.
- If you do not like heat, come from November to March.



### 3. Where to stay?

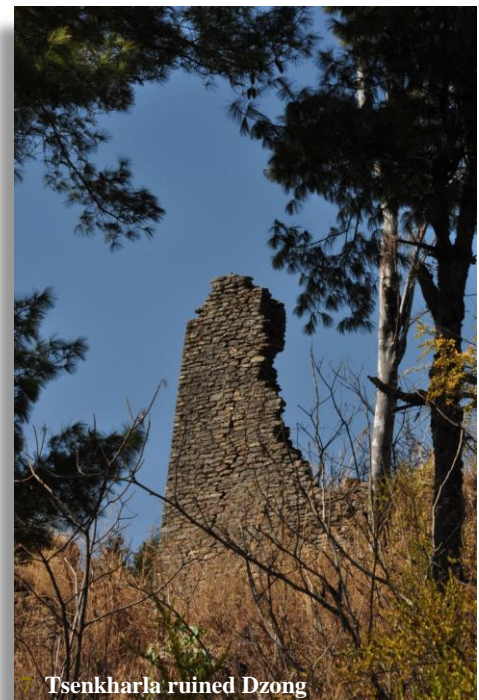
There are *camping* sites in or near most of the villages. Facilities are to be improved over time, but for sites where no toilets are in place a toilet tent can be built nearby by your support crew. Camping near Shangphula is recommended to see the sun rise over Arunachal Pradesh and set in southern Bhutan. If you want to enjoy the local hospitality, there is a *homestay in Omba* which offers good food, including pancakes, while another one is planned in Jangphu.

### 4. Itinerary

#### Short descriptions

*Day 1: 8 km between 1,950 and 2,650 m.*

Start walking just below the first Dzong built in Bhutan in the 9<sup>th</sup> century (Tsenkharla) and follow the ridge with excellent views past several gompas to Shakshing Gonpa.



If you are late, you can walk directly to the campsite near Nangkhar Gonpa. Otherwise continue up the ridge past a small lake to Darchen Gonpa and several sacred sites in the pastures above. Descend from Darchen through broadleaved forest to Nangkhar Gonpa and your campsite.

***Day2: 12 km between 2,400 and 1,800 m***

From Nangkhar Gonpa walk down past maize fields and 3 chorten to the irrigation channel of Sep, which you follow to Septshekhong Lhakhang on a steep ridge.

Back-track to a trail down through a sokshing (leaf litter oak) forest and a bigger trail to a river. After crossing another small stream you climb back up to a chorten just above the neat village of Omba, which has a pleasant homestay and a small camping site. In the afternoon visit Omba Ney and Gonpa (the Taktshang of East Bhutan) and the Gonpa at the cave where Guru Rimpoche meditated.



Septshekhong Lhakhang

***Day 3: 8 km between 1900 and 2650 m.***

Follow your local guide to the hamlet of Phekti, from where there is a small trail up a ridge with views of the Omba cliffs and Gonpa. You emerge from the forest into pastures and keep climbing until you reach Shangphula, just above 3000m. From the "border-egg" at Shangphula, you have excellent views of parts of Bhutan and Tawang in Arunachal Pradesh. Camp in the pasture and enjoy the flowers, sunset and sunrise.



Shangphula peak in subalpine pasture

***Day 4: 8 km between 3000 and 2100 m.***

Enjoy the views and your breakfast at your leisure and make your way down the pastures along the ridge into the forest below. You emerge at a lookout point of the village and the Gongri valley. Find your way to the campsite at the school or near the army camp or to the homestay after it has been

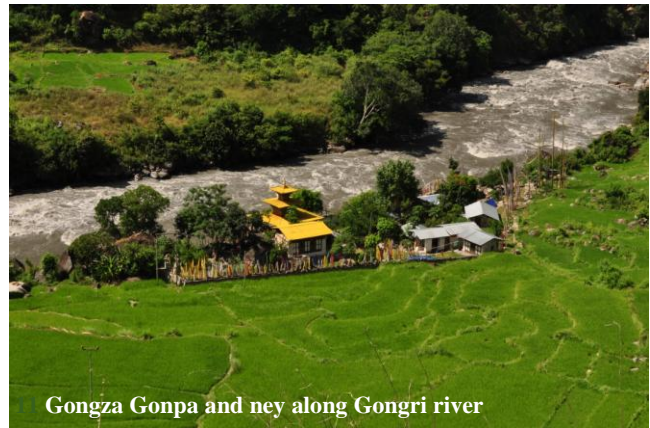


Jangphu village

established. Shop for local bags mainly produced for the Tawang market, visit the lhakhang and relax.

***Day 5: 9 km between 2,100 and 925 m***

Follow your guide through the maze of trails to a larger trail through broadleaved forest to Kheni. Just before a chorten on a ridge turn left down a steep small trail. After Changmashing and Chemkhar village it improves and reaches a small saddle from where you



Gongza Gonpa and ney along Gongri river

can find your way to Phamkhar ruins (mainly defense walls and trenches left; built to defend Tsenkharla against attacks from Tibet. Then descend to the paddy fields and the peaceful Gongza Ney and Gonpa along the Gongri river with lots of sacred rocks and stones. The gonpa holds a petrified treasure chest, a demon's heart, a shoe of Guru Rimpoche and a devil's egg.

***Day 6: 7 km between 925 & 860 m.***

Start early if you want to avoid the heat and make your way down the valley past some paddy areas and sand beaches to the end of the road near Doksum, a couple of km from Gom Kora. From there continue to your next destination. If that is the natural rock bridge (dozam) in



Gongri river

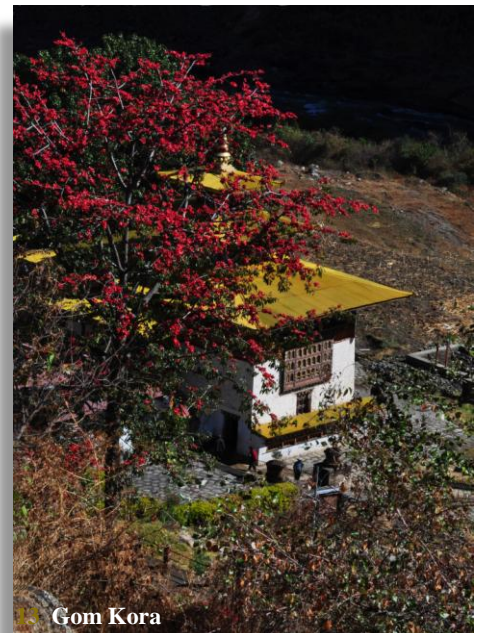
Thragom you can in a few years walk upstream to and get picked up at the Melongkhar bridge, and dropped at the school and walk along a gentle trail with chortens and mani walls to Thragom village, 1.5 hrs above which you find the dozam.



Trail to Thragom

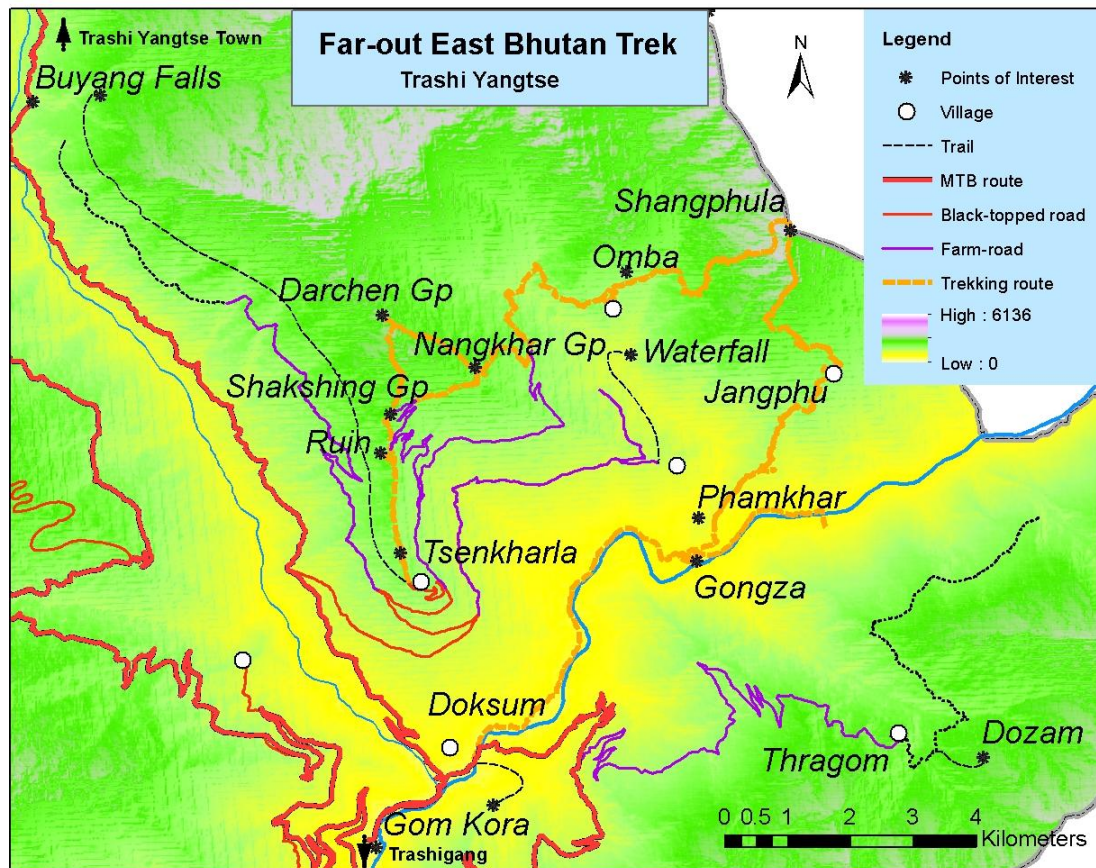


Capped Langur



Gom Kora

## 5. Map and info



### How to book?

Contact a tour operator in Bhutan or in your own country.

For **more information** contact your tour operator or

Tourism Council Bhutan: [info@tourism.gov.bt](mailto:info@tourism.gov.bt) web: <http://www.tourism.gov.bt/>

Tashi Yangtse Dzongkhag website: <http://www.trashiyangtse.gov.bt/>

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