

● Travel Information

DESTINATION: BHUTAN

- In keeping with the Royal Government's cautious and balanced approach to all aspects of development and modernisation, the tourism industry in Bhutan is run on the principle of sustainability. This means that tourism must not only be economically viable but also sensitive to the local culture and environment.
- Income generated from tourism tax goes toward the Tourism Development Fund and is used by the Royal Government for:
 1. Environmental protection work
 2. Setting up foundations to ensure that the country's natural resources are being used efficiently
 3. Actively protecting its rich culture and profound Buddhist traditions
 4. Contributions towards Education and Health
- There is no restriction imposed on the number of tourists to Bhutan. However, the policy of low volume, high quality tourists ensures that Bhutanese tradition and culture can be preserved and numbered without exception.
- Travellers can only reach Bhutan through all-inclusive packages for which the government of Bhutan sets the tariff. All tours are booked through recognized Bhutanese tour operators and the entire trip's arrangements are provided for by the same agent, with visas processed by the tour operator. The Department of Tourism, Ministry of Trade & Industry has laid down a few guidelines and rules for foreign visitors.

GETTING TO BHUTAN:

BY AIR

- Druk Air, Bhutan's national airline is the only airline service in the country. The airport is in Paro. During monsoons and winter, unpredictable weather can delay flights and travellers should consider allowing an extra day in their itinerary for this eventuality.

BY ROAD

- The nearest Indian airport is in Bagdora, which can be reached by plane from Calcutta and Delhi. The road from Bagdora connects to Phuentsholing, a border town in Bhutan. It is a 3-4 hour drive from the airport. It takes approximately 6 hours from Phuentsholing to Thimphu (capital city) or Paro (airport).

VISAS

- Visas are obtained by your local Bhutanese tour operator and must be confirmed before departure for Bhutan. Tickets for Druk Air (the only airline flying in and out of Bhutan) cannot be purchased



without visa clearance, which is issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Thimphu. The actual visa is stamped on arrival in Bhutan, while the visa is cleared in advance and a visa clearance number is issued. Visa extensions can be obtained in Thimphu.

It is important to note that visas cannot be obtained at Bhutanese embassies.

TOURIST TARIFF

- The international tourist tariff is set by the Royal Government of Bhutan and is valid for all-inclusive packages. The tariffs for tourists visiting in a group of 3 persons or more are as follows:

PEAK SEASON - US\$200.00 per day:
Jan/Feb/Mar/Apr/May/June/Sept/Oct/Nov/Dec

LOW SEASON – US\$165.00 per day:
Jul/Aug

These rates are the same for cultural tours, treks or any other special interest tours.

TOURIST ENTITLEMENTS

The above minimum daily tariff/package rates are inclusive of the following services:

1. Accommodation on a twin-sharing basis
2. All transfers and sightseeing within Bhutan
3. The services of an accompanying guide
4. All meals
5. 35% royalty and taxes payable to the Bhutanese government
6. Riding ponies and pack animals on treks
7. Access fees for temples and monuments in Bhutan

The rates given above are applicable per tourist, per night's stay in Bhutan. On the day of departure, the local agent's obligations shall be limited to providing breakfast only and any extra requirements shall be payable as required.

The rates apply uniformly, irrespective of locations and the type of accommodation provided/asked for. These accommodation establishments shall be approved by the Tourism Authority of Bhutan (TAB).

TARIFF FOR INDIVIDUAL AND SMALL GROUPS (FIT)

Individual tourist and smaller groups of less than three persons shall be subject to surcharge as follows:

Single individual: US\$40.00 per night stay
Group of 2: US\$ 30 per person, per night stay

These FIT surcharges are net payable. All tourists are required to pay an additional US\$10.00 per visit as a Tourism development contribution.

DISCOUNTS ON THE TOURIST TARIFF

1. Diplomats from foreign embassies/missions accredited to Bhutan shall be given a 25% discount on the daily rates.

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2. There shall be no charge for children up to the age of 5 years. However, those between the ages of 6-12 years, accompanied by parent or guardian shall be given a 40% discount on the daily rate.
 3. Full-time students below the age of 25 years, holding valid identity cards from their academic institutions shall be given a 25% discount on daily rates.

EXCLUDED FROM THE PRICE OF TOURS

- Druk Air airfare US\$ for airport tax
- Tourism Development Fund (US\$10.00 per visit)
- Visa Fees (US\$20.00)
- Excess baggage and Airport Tax (US\$10.00)
- Personal items – e.g. laundry and toiletries
- International air fare
- Medical, evacuation and Trip Cancellation Insurance

CANCELLATION

Trips can be cancelled at any time without obligation.

A cancellation fee for tours booked, paid for and later cancelled (plus additional wire-transfer fees) applies.

The penalty charges for the land cost are as follows:

- 45 days or more prior to the planned arrival date in Bhutan – no penalty
- 30-22 days prior to the planned arrival date in Bhutan – 20% penalty
- 15-21 days prior to the planned arrival date in Bhutan – 30% penalty
- 14-7 days prior to the planned arrival date in Bhutan – 50% penalty
- Less than 7 days prior to arrival or after arrival in Bhutan (or without notice) – no refund
- Druk Air tickets once confirmed and purchased are not refundable
- Passengers who fail to show up for a flight will not be eligible for a refund
- Lost tickets are non-refundable

Passengers who reschedule their flights will be subject to the following rebooking fees:

- 48 hours before departure: US\$11.00
- 24 hours before departure: US\$33.00

Due to the limited availability of Druk Air seating and the nature of travel to Bhutan, Tour operators cannot vary from this standard cancellation policy on confirmed and issued Druk Air tickets, regardless of the guest's situation. They strongly recommended the purchase of trip cancellation and trip-related insurance upon booking a tour programme.

DELAYED ARRIVAL/DEPARTURE

1. There shall be no fixed charge for the number of days of delay in arrival of visitors due to weather conditions, Druk Air problems or road blocks, except for minimum charge on hotel cancellation, transport and guide.
2. There shall be no charges for the number of days of delay in departure of visitors due to the weather conditions, Druk Air problems or road blocks. They will be charged only the actual expenses on accommodation, food transport and any other services required.



SINGLE ROOM SUPPLEMENTS

The quoted package rates are valid for accommodation on a twin sharing basis and the following supplements will be applicable in case of single room accommodation:

Festival Season: US\$50.00 per night

Other Season: US\$25.00 per night

REMITTANCE OF TOUR PAYMENT

Tour payment must be settled one month prior to the date of arrival in Bhutan and VISA is cleared by the government subject to advance payment only. For high seasons (Jan, Feb, Mar, Apr, May, Jun, Sept, Oct, Nov and Dec) it is advisable to remit payment for Druk Air flights 3 months in advance. This will help in getting your seats confirmed and secured.


PRE-TRAVEL PLANNING

If you are visiting Bhutan you will know that you are one of the fortunate few. We've put together important information that will come in handy as you begin planning your trip.

PACKING LIST FOR TREKKING

In preparation for your trip we recommend that you review the suggested packing list which includes seasonal options:

- Boots – worn in, pre-trip
- Teva or similar sandals
- 2 pairs of inner sox
- 4 pairs of thick socks
- Lightweight long skirts and trousers
- Warm trousers
- Waterproof jackets and trousers
- 2 lightweight long sleeved shirts (quick dry)
- 2 short sleeved T-shirts (quick dry)
- 1 set of thermal underwear
- Large headscarf
- Fleece jacket
- Fleece vest or gilet
- Very lightweight windproof jacket
- Fleece gloves and waterproof over gloves
- Broad-brimmed sun hat
- Bathing suit (for hotel and hot springs)
- Sleeping bag (at least 3 season)
- Liner
- Thermarest sleeping mat
- Pillow case of a size to take your fleece (useful as a substitute pillow)
- Washing kit
- Towel
- Personal hygiene/medical kit (see suggested medical kit content list)
- Sp 25UVA and UVB suncream
- Platypus/camel back water bottle/s – at least 2 litres (4 pints) capacity

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- Head torch and spare batteries
 - Sunglasses
 - Spare prescription glasses
 - Pocket knife
 - Binoculars
 - Camera (and back-up disposable camera)
 - Notebook and pen wallet
 - 35 minimum and preferably 45 litre capacity day sack
 - Books and guide books (see suggested reading list)
 - Passport
 - Tickets
 - Insurance certificate
 - Money in U.S. dollars
 - List of emergency contacts
 - Trek details
 - Repair kit for equipment
 - Kit bag
 - Ziplock plastic bags (handy for keeping items dry)
 - Trekking poles
 - A set of comfortable clothes which can be left in a spare bag at the hotel for return after the trek

MONEY AND CURRENCY EXCHANGE

Bhutan's unit of currency is the **Ngultrum (Nu.)** 1Nu. = 100 Cheltrum. The Ngultrum is at parity with the Indian currency Rupee.

The most current exchange rate of US\$ against the Ngultrum can be found at the Royal Monetary Authority website: www.rma.org.bt

Visa and American Express credit cards are accepted only at a few places.

Visitors are advised to carry travellers' cheques (preferably American Express) with some cash in US Dollars.

HEALTH INFORMATION

Currently there are no vaccinations required for travelling to Bhutan. However, visitors coming from an area infected with Yellow Fever are required to get a Yellow Fever vaccination which must be administered at least 10 days before arrival in the country.

Likewise, visitors arriving from Cholera infected areas should be vaccinated and anti-malarial medication is strongly recommended for travellers visiting rural areas bordering India.

Pure spring water, locally bottled from the high mountains is available at almost all shops.

Imported bottled water, imported from India, is also available at most stores.

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SUGGESTED MEDICAL KIT CHECKLIST

- The following medical kit has been developed over some 20 mountain and desert treks.
- It should cover the everyday needs of a group of up to 10 people for up to 3 weeks. On the basis of 1 tube or package of each item, the kit should fit in 4 plastic boxes and a canvas bag of approximately 12"x12"x12".
- This medical kit should be packed as hold luggage and marked clearly as First Aid Medical Kit.
- On a trek, it should be carried by the person at the rear of the trek at all times on the move, and returned to the same person each day on arrival in camp.
- Medical advice should be taken prior to the use of any recommended medication on the list.
- A range of non-prescription drugs and medical/personal supplies can be purchased in Bhutan.

SUGGESTED MEDICAL KIT

ITEM	USE	CHECK
COMPEED 71510	Blister plaster Instant pain & pressure relief. Repels water, dirt and bacteria. Stays firmly in place for up to 3 days. Suitable for larger blisters on the heel.	
ELASTOPLAST	Standard issue protective plasters	
MICROPORE	Micro porous tape, hypoallergenic	
STERISTRIP	First aid skin closure strips	
DIAMOX	Altitude tablet (seek doctor's advice)	
CIPROLOXACIN x 2 packets	Antibiotic (seek doctor's advice)	
AMOXCYLLIN x 2 packets	Antibiotic (seek doctor's advice)	
COMTREX/CONTAC	Non-prescription cold relief	
LOPERAMIDE	Treatment for severe diarrhoea (non-prescription)	
SENOCOT	Anti-constipation (non-prescription)	
PIRITON	Antihistamine (non-prescription)	
BENADRYL	Antihistamine (non-prescription)	
ADVIL	Ibuprofen (non-prescription)	
PARACETAMOL		
CODYDRAMOL		
DIORALITE 8	Electrolytes	
FISHERMEN'S FRIEND	Sore throat lozenge	
NITRADOS	Sleeping pills	
LIP BALM		
SUN CREAM		
NEOSPORIN	Antiseptic cream	
BROLENE	Eye ointment	
LAMISIL	Fungal cream	
ZAMBUK	Burns	
REXEME	Severe dry skin	
NEW SKIN	Antiseptic liquid bandage	
CREPE BANDAGES		
KNEE ELASTIC		
ANKLE ELASTIC		
SCISSORS		
TWEEZERS		
THERMOMETER		
POTASSIUM PERMANGANATE	For hand washing before meals	
WATER PURIFYING KIT		

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WEATHER

Schedule your trips to take advantage of Bhutan's most favourable seasons – Nature, however, decides what the weather will be like during your trip!

SEASONS

WINTER	Noted for occasional snowfall only at higher elevations. Ideal time for trekking at lower elevations, generally below 3,000m	December – February
SPRING	Different varieties of wild flowers, specially the rhododendrons make the hillside a haunting paradise during this season.	March – May
SUMMER (MONSOON)	Warm and wet travel. Excellent time for keen botanists as the higher valleys and meadows blossom with flowers and lush vegetation.	June – August
AUTUMN	Excellent weather and tantalizing mountain views	September – November

RECOMMENDED READING LIST

Maps

As visitors to Bhutan will be on guided treks, detailed maps are not needed – nor do they exist. The best planning map is Berndtson & Berndtson 1:500,000 Bhutan Road Map (ISBN 3-929811-21-9). Detailed agricultural survey maps are held in the Society's map collection, together with some relevant older India Survey maps. The various guide books have maps of treks and towns which are of practical use.

Books

A selection of books recommended for study pre-trip. Many of these titles are available from the Society's Collections, along with historic photographs taken in the early part of the 20th century. For more information, or to search the Collections catalogue, please visit: www.rgs.org/collection

TITLE	AUTHOR	DESCRIPTION
An Introduction to the Traditional Architecture of Bhutan	Bhutan Dept of Works	Detailed review of the iconography and design of dzongs, monasteries, chortens and temples.
Bayonets to Lhasa	Sir Francis Younghusband	Description of the first expedition to Lhasa
Bhutan: A Trekker's Guide	Bart Jordans	Popular Cicerone trekking guide
Bhutan – Footprint Travel Guide	Gyurme Dorje	



Bhutan – Lonely Planet Guide	Richard Whitecross	Most comprehensive guide for the main treks
Bhutan and its Natural Resources	Sherubtse College, Bhutan	A collection of essays on the environment of Bhutan
Bhutan and the British	Peter Collister	A comprehensive account of the relationship between the two countries
Bhutan – Mountain Fortress of the Gods	Christian Schicklgruber	Accompanied 1998 Bhutan exhibition in Vienna
Bhutan, the Early History of a Himalayan Kingdom	Michael Aris	The most authoritative history of Bhutan
Birds of Bhutan	Inskipp, Inskipp & Grimmett	A comprehensive field guide
Divine Madman, The	Keith Dowman	Translation of the poems and works of Lama Drukpa Kunley
Dreams of the Peaceful Dragon	Katie Hickman	Traveller's account of a walk across Bhutan in the 1970s
From the Land of the Thunder Dragon	Diana K. Meyers	Study of Bhutanese textiles
Geology of the Bhutan Himalaya	Augusto Gansser	Large format and comprehensive guide
In the Kingdom of the Thunder Dragon	Joanna Lumley	Book published to accompany the 1997 BBC series tracing her grandfather's career on the North East Frontier
Indigo	Jenny Balfour-Paul	The definitive book on the study of indigo dye across cultures
Land of the Thunderbolt	Earl of Ronaldshay	Past RGS President's account of a British Expedition to Bhutan
Raven Crow, The	Michael Aris	A definitive history of Bhutan's monarchy
Treasures of the Thunder Dragon	Queen Ashi Dorji Wangmo Wangchuck	A portrait of Bhutan



Trees and Shrubs of Nepal	Adrian and Jimmie Storrs	The best available field book on the forests of Bhutan
Sikhim and Bhutan, 21 Years on the North-East Frontier	J Claude White	Historical account of White's 1905 expedition to Bhutan