



off to BHUTAN travel
we take you to the birds

Simtokha | Hontsho Lam
P.O Box No: 772 | Thimphu 11001
BHUTAN

Visitor Questions and Answers

1. Do visitors need a visa to visit Bhutan?

1.1. Yes, all visitors will need a visa to visit Bhutan, except for visitors from India, who will require a permit.

1.2. Nationals of Bangladesh and the Maldives shall be eligible for a visa on arrival at the port of entry.

1.3. Nationals of Switzerland and Thailand holding diplomatic and official passports shall be eligible for a visa on arrival at the port of entry.

1.4. Visitors from India will need a permit to visit Bhutan. This applies to anyone holding an Indian passport, or an Indian voter ID card. For Indian nationals aged under 18 years, a passport or a birth certificate will suffice, and they must be accompanied by legal guardians.

2. How can visitors process their visa or permit?

2.1. Visitors can process a visa or permit online from the website of the Department of Immigration. Visitors can also engage tourism service providers (see www.bhutan.travel for more details) to process the travel documents and plan a trip. The Tourism Council of Bhutan (TCB) will also offer customer service to help answer questions regarding visa applications and to answer questions about travel within the country.

2.2. Although visitors from Bangladesh and Maldives can process visas on arrival and visitors from India can process permits on arrival at the port of entry, it is recommended that these be applied online to reduce wait time and for faster clearance at the port of entry.

3. What are the documents required to process the visa?

3.1. A passport copy is required. The passport must be valid for six months from the intended date of departure from the Kingdom;

3.2. Travel insurance valid for the duration of the trip; and

3.3. A recent passport size photograph.

4. How much is the visa fee and how long does it take to issue?



+975 17 11 96 64



www.bhutanbirding.com



bhutanbirding@gmail.com



off to BHUTAN travel
we take you to the birds

Simtokha | Hontsho Lam
P.O Box No: 772 | Thimphu 11001
BHUTAN

4.1. The visa fee is USD 40 per person and it is non-refundable. While the process to issue the visa is usually quick, the visa can take up to five working days to process.

5. What are the documents required to process the permit (for Indian guests)?

5.1. Visitors from India can use a passport or voter ID card. Children under 18 years of age can use a birth certificate or passport, and must be accompanied by a legal guardian.

5.2. Passport size photograph is also required.

5.3. Travel insurance is required and should be valid for the whole duration of the trip.

6. How can I purchase insurance if I don't have any?

6.1 There is also an option to purchase domestic travel insurance from Bhutanese insurance providers at the port of entry during arrivals. There are also tourism information officers stationed at all ports of entry who can assist travellers. [Click here](#) to get details on the insurance from Bhutan Insurance Limited.

Sustainable Development Fee

7. What is the Sustainable Development Fee (SDF)?

7.1. From our reopening on September 23, visitors to Bhutan will make an active contribution to Bhutan's economic, social and cultural development. The Sustainable Development Fee enables investment in transformative programmes that preserve our cultural traditions, protect our heritage and environment, upgrade infrastructure, create opportunities for our young people, and build resilience. For more on the SDF, visiting Bhutan and our plans, visit www.bhutan.travel.

8. How much is the SDF and where do the funds go?

8.1. Guests from India are levied SDF of Nu. 1,200 or equivalent amount in INR per person per night, which will remain in effect for two years, following which time it may be reviewed and revised in keeping with the principle of the preferential rate after two years.

8.2. Visitors from all other countries are levied SDF of USD 200 per person, per night.

8.3. There will be a concessionary levy of 50% on the SDF for children between the ages of 6-12 years and exemptions of SDF for children aged 5 years and below.



+975 17 11 96 64



www.bhutanbirding.com



bhutanbirding@gmail.com



off to BHUTAN travel
we take you to the birds

Simtokha | Hontsho Lam
P.O Box No: 772 | Thimphu 11001
BHUTAN

8.4. The SDF funds go to the national exchequer and are allocated to various projects that enhance facilities, services and infrastructure for nationals and guests who visit Bhutan, as well as funding free healthcare and education.

9. How can the SDF payment be made?

9.1. The SDF must be paid during the visa or permit application via wire transfer or using a credit card.

9.2. The SDF must be paid in USD; however, Indians can also pay in INR.

9.3. A guest who is eligible for a visa on arrival, should also pay the applicable SDF in USD at the port of entry.

10. Will day visitors be levied SDF?

10.1. The SDF will be waived for visitors to the Bhutanese towns bordering India, until the first designated point identified by the Government. The SDF will be levied on visitors spending the night within border towns.

Planning a trip

11. How does one plan a tour or trip to Bhutan?

11.1. While visitors to Bhutan can plan their own trip, they can also engage local tourism service providers [see www.bhutan.travel for more information] who can provide more assistance. However, it is mandatory to stay in certified accommodation for the whole duration of the trip.

11.2. Guests visiting Bhutan shall arrange:

- (1) Accommodation;
- (2) A tour guide (see question 25)
- (3) Travel insurance, and;
- (4) Transportation around the country, including airport transfers.

12. How can a visitor find the best tour operator in Bhutan?

12.1. All the tour operators listed on www.bhutan.travel are licensed by the Government of Bhutan and guests can select the best tour operator based on their requirements.



+975 17 11 96 64



www.bhutanbirding.com



bhutanbirding@gmail.com



off to BHUTAN travel
we take you to the birds

Simtokha | Hontsho Lam
P.O Box No: 772 | Thimphu 11001
BHUTAN

13. How can the tour payments be made?

13.1. All payments can be made directly to the business accounts of the service providers as per the policy of the service provider.

14. How long can a visitor stay in Bhutan on a visitor visa or permit?

14.1. The visa or permit will be issued for a maximum of 90 days.

15. How can I extend a visa or permit while in Bhutan?

15.1. The visa or permit extension can be processed by the Department of Immigration before the expiry of the visa or permit, whichever is applicable. The applicable SDF and visa or permit extension fees shall be paid to the Department of Immigration.

16. How long does it take to extend the visa or permit?

16.1. While the process is usually quite quick for visa or permit extensions, it can take up to five working days.

17. How does one make SDF payment for visa or permit extension while in Bhutan?

17.1. Visitors can extend their stay via the online visa application portal, using the same log-in details that were used to process the original visa. The SDF payment can also be made via the same portal.

18. Who can apply for visa or permit extension?

18.1. A guest or a service provider can process an application for a visa or permit extension.

19. Is there a refund on SDF if the trip is cancelled or shortened?

19.1. Yes, the SDF will be refunded by the Department of Immigration for any cancelled or shortened trips and any bank charges will be deducted from the amount that is refunded. A refund request of the SDF shall be submitted online using the immigration system. The refund will be processed only after the exit of the visitors from the Kingdom.



+975 17 11 96 64



www.bhutanbirding.com



bhutanbirding@gmail.com



off to BHUTAN travel
we take you to the birds

Simtokha | Hontsho Lam
P.O Box No: 772 | Thimphu 11001
BHUTAN

Getting to Bhutan

20. What is the best way to get to Bhutan?

20.1. Visitors can travel to Bhutan by taking flights from Bangladesh (Dhaka), India (Delhi, Kolkata, Guwahati, Bagdogra), Nepal (Kathmandu), Singapore (Changi) and Thailand (Bangkok).

20.2. For now, there are two airlines that fly into Bhutan - namely, Drukair and Bhutan Airlines.

20.3. Private jets can fly into Bhutan after getting the relevant approvals from the competent authorities.

20.4. All visitors can also enter via land from Phuentsholing. Indian guests can enter Bhutan via other land entry points (Gelephu, Samdrup Jongkhar and Samtse).

Traveling within Bhutan

21. What is the best way to travel to a hotel from the airport?

21.1. Visitors can pre-arrange a pick-up service from the airport with their accommodation or tour operators.

22. How to travel within Bhutan?

22.1. There are domestic flights to Bumthang (Central Bhutan), Gelephu, Sarpang (Southern Bhutan) and Yongphula, Trashigang (Eastern Bhutan).

22.2. Visitors can also book helicopter services for special itineraries.

22.3. The other option is to hire a local tourism service provider who can arrange all the internal transfer and tour programs.

23. What is the most convenient local transport?

23.1. The most convenient transport facility is to hire a vehicle and driver from a car rental company or a tourism service provider. It is not possible to hire a vehicle without a driver in Bhutan.

23.2. You can also use an online app to book local transport (<https://www.drukride.com/>).



+975 17 11 96 64



www.bhutanbirding.com



bhutanbirding@gmail.com



off to BHUTAN travel
we take you to the birds

Simtokha | Hontsho Lam
P.O Box No: 772 | Thimphu 11001
BHUTAN

24. Can visitors go trekking on their own?

24.1. It is mandatory to arrange trekking trips that require overnight stays through a local tour operator. The local tour operator can help you with all the logistical support for the hiking or trekking trip.

25. Do visitors need a guide?

25.1. A guide is strongly recommended for all visitors to Bhutan. This is to ensure that all visitors have a good experience while visiting our country, and see the best that Bhutan has to offer. Guides also help look after the safety and security of the visitors, as there are wild animals in the countryside, and the altitude and landscape can sometimes pose unique challenges. While the guides do not have to accompany visitors for all experiences (such as restaurants and shopping), it is recommended that guides accompany visitors for experiences such as visiting temples and local places of interest, and it is mandatory to have a guide for all trekking activities and for any journeys that extend beyond Thimphu and Paro. For any visitors who enter Bhutan via the land borders, guides are mandatory when the visitors leave the border towns.

25.2. If visitors follow the itineraries or journeys set by hotels, they will not need a guide as they will already have a guide who will be arranged by the hotel.

26. How can visitors find the best guide for their trip?

26.1. All the tour guides listed on www.bhutan.travel are licensed by the Government. Visitors may also ask tour operators or hotels to help arrange a guide for them.

Accommodation

27. What types of accommodation are available in Bhutan?

27.1. Bhutan offers a wide range of accommodation facilities, from luxurious 5-star hotels to cosy homestays in traditional village settings.

28. Where can I find information about accommodation?

28.1. Visitors can request a list of certified accommodation from bhutan.travel host service.



+975 17 11 96 64



www.bhutanbirding.com



bhutanbirding@gmail.com



off to BHUTAN travel
we take you to the birds

Simtokha | Hontsho Lam
P.O Box No: 772 | Thimphu 11001
BHUTAN

29. Can the visitors stay in a private home or camp at campsite areas?

29.1. Guests must stay in an accommodation certified by TCB or if trekking, camp at the designated areas only.

COVID-19 Protocols

30. Is there a vaccination requirement to visit Bhutan?

30.1. Although we recommend all visitors to be vaccinated against COVID-19 to help stop the spread of the disease, there are now no COVID-19 vaccination requirements for adults or children to enter Bhutan from September 23, 2022.

However, all individuals (12 years and above) entering Bhutan may be subjected to random RT-PCR testing at the formal points of entry or at the worksite to maintain COVID-19 surveillance for new variants. No fee shall be charged for the RT-PCR testing for surveillance.

32. Can unvaccinated guests enter Bhutan? If so, what is the procedure?

32.1. Yes, unvaccinated guests can enter Bhutan and there will be no quarantine period.

33. If someone gets COVID-19 while travelling in Bhutan, what happens?

33.1. If a guest tests positive for COVID-19 during their stay in Bhutan, they will be required to quarantine in their hotel until they test negative. The cost for the additional quarantine nights and PCR tests will be borne by the guest. The SDF will be waived during the quarantine period.

34. Will there be any COVID-19 protocols for leaving Bhutan?

34.1. There will be no COVID-19 protocols to leave Bhutan, unless they will be required by the country the guest is travelling to.

Payment Options

35. What currency can the visitor use in Bhutan?

35.1. The official currency of Bhutan is Ngultrum (Nu.) and only the local currency is accepted in the country.



+975 17 11 96 64



www.bhutanbirding.com



bhutanbirding@gmail.com



off to BHUTAN travel
we take you to the birds

Simtokha | Hontsho Lam
P.O Box No: 772 | Thimphu 11001
BHUTAN

36. Can visitors use international visa cards to make payments?

36.1. International credit cards are widely used in the urban areas in Bhutan. However, this service may not be available in other parts of the country.

36.2. Visitors can also use the digital wallet app called goBoB that can be operated with a local sim card and is also widely accepted throughout the country.

36.3. Visitors are recommended to inform their card issuer banks about their trip to Bhutan, in order to avoid card usage restrictions by the issuing bank.

37. Where can currency be exchanged?

37.1. There is a currency exchange facility at the airport, and currency can also be exchanged at the banks, hotels and at the authorised money changers in the city areas.

Other Essential Information

38. Are there any restrictions on dress code?

38.1. There are no restrictions on dress code in general. However, respectable dress code covering your knees and shoulders (smart casual) is recommended while visiting temples and religious places.

39. Where can visitors get a sim card from?

39.1. Visitors can get a sim card from visitor information centres on arrival, branch offices of Bhutan Telecom and Tashicell or from authorised agents in towns.

40. How much cash can visitors bring to Bhutan?

40.1. Visitors can bring cash equivalent up to USD 10,000.

41. Where can visitors shop for Bhutanese products?

41.1. The Cottage and Small Industries (CSI) outlet, handicraft shops, the OGOP outlets, and the Centenary Farmers Market are some of the popular shopping areas for visitors.



+975 17 11 96 64



www.bhutanbirding.com



bhutanbirding@gmail.com



off to BHUTAN travel
we take you to the birds

Simtokha | Hontsho Lam
P.O Box No: 772 | Thimphu 11001
BHUTAN

41.2. Guests are required to process export permits online [<https://mocp.doc.gov.bt/>] for non-antique products such as statues, ritual objects and religious handicrafts from the Department of Culture before exiting the country.

42. Where can visitors find essential customs information?

42.1. For a detailed list of prohibited, restricted or declarable items, please visit the website of the Ministry of Finance [<https://www.mof.gov.bt/>].

43. When is the best time to visit Bhutan?

Bhutan is a year-round destination.

Spring is a botanist's delight with nature in full bloom and wild flowers covering the meadows like a carpet. It's a remarkable time of the year to explore nature.

Summer is green, fresh and revitalising. The low hanging clouds draped over the head, hazy mist covering the green carpeted valleys, the place stems right out of the mystery. Most of the farming activities also take place in summer.

Autumn is a merry season of feast and festivals. As farmers reap the fruits of their work, the streets are covered with healthy harvests of the year.

Winter is crisp and clear. You can get the glimpse of the high snow glistening in the Himalayan mountains and view the highest unclimbed mountain in the world.

44. Is Bhutan a safe destination to visit?

44.1. Yes, Bhutan is a very safe destination for visitors and crime is uncommon. However, petty crime sometimes happens and visitors should take care of themselves and their belongings.

44.2. Flooding and landslides can happen. In the monsoon season from June to September, transport and services can be affected. Check with your hotel or tour operator for possible disruptions.

44.3. There are a number of stray dogs that roam freely around the city areas. While normally the dogs keep their distance and do not bite humans, sometimes dog attacks happen. It is recommended that visitors to Bhutan do not feed or pat the stray dogs. It is also recommended that guests take care around the stray dogs and keep their distance, especially if they have children.



+975 17 11 96 64



www.bhutanbirding.com



bhutanbirding@gmail.com



off to BHUTAN travel
we take you to the birds

Simtokha | Hontsho Lam
P.O Box No: 772 | Thimphu 11001
BHUTAN

45. Where should visitors contact for grievance redressal?

45.1. Visitors can always contact the Tourism Council of Bhutan through info@tourism.gov.bt or call +975 17122257 or 2300 within Bhutan.

46. What are the emergency contact details?

46.1. The hotline number for general enquiries about tourism is +975 17122257 or 2300 if within Bhutan

Medical emergency - 112

Police - 113

Disaster Communication helpline - 999

47. Are there any visitor information centres at the airports and land entry points?

47.1. Yes, there are visitor information centres at the arrival area just before immigration check at the airport and in all entry points.



+975 17 11 96 64



www.bhutanbirding.com



bhutanbirding@gmail.com