

How to Book a Tour to Bhutan: Complete Step-by-Step Guide

Planning

8 min read

Booking a trip to the "Land of the Thunder Dragon" has changed significantly in recent years. While the process is now more flexible, it still requires a specific sequence of steps to ensure your visa is approved. Here is your step-by-step guide to booking a seamless Bhutanese adventure.

Step 1: Choose Your Arrival Gateway

You have two distinct ways to enter the country. Your choice will dictate which part of the kingdom you see first.

- **Option A: Paro (PBH)** - The classic mountain landing. Best if you want to see Thimphu, Punakha, and the Tiger's Nest immediately.
- **Option B: Gelephu (GLU)** - The new southern gateway. Best for those entering from Kolkata, India, or travelers interested in the new [Mindfulness City](#) project.

Step 2: Secure Your Flights

Because only [Drukair](#) and [Bhutan Airlines](#) fly into the country, seats are limited and sell out months in advance.

- **Book First:** Do not book your international long-haul flight (to Bangkok, Delhi, etc.) until you have confirmed your seats on the Bhutanese carriers.
- **Official Sites:** Only book through [Drukair](#) or [Bhutan Airlines](#) official websites.

Step 3: Booking

You book a tour through licensed Bhutanese operator like Byways Tours and Travels who handles your hotel bookings, guide, vehicle, and visa.

Step 4: Pay the SDF and Visa Fee

Before your visa can be issued, you must settle the government fees. These payments are mandatory for all international visitors.

- **The SDF:** \$100/night (12+ yrs), \$50/night (6-11 yrs), Free (5 & under)
- **The Visa Fee:** \$40 USD (one-time)
- **The 5% GST:** Note that for 2026, a 5% GST applies to your hotel and tour components (but not to the SDF)

Step 5: Receive Your Visa Clearance

Once payment is confirmed, the Department of Immigration will issue a Visa Clearance Letter. This is your essential travel document.

Important

You **cannot board your flight** to Bhutan without a printed copy of this letter. Your actual visa stamp will be placed in your passport upon arrival at Paro or Gelephu.

Frequently Asked Questions

How far in advance should I book?

Minimum 1 month, ideally 3-4 months. For festival dates or peak season (March-May, Sept-Nov), book 4-6 months ahead. Drukair flights fill up quickly during festivals.

What's included in a typical tour package?

Licensed guide, transportation, accommodation, all meals, entry fees, internal permits, SDF and visa fee.
NOT included: international flights, tips, alcohol, personal expenses, and travel insurance.

Can I extend my trip while in Bhutan?

Yes, but it requires coordination with your operator. They must extend your visa, rebook accommodations, and pay additional SDF. Give at least a few days notice. Spontaneous extensions are harder during peak season.

Need More Information?

Contact our Bhutan travel experts for personalized advice.

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