

Bhutan Entry & Travel Guidelines for the Indians in Brief:

Indian citizens do not need a visa to visit the best places in Bhutan. However, they are required to obtain a permit to enter the country.

1. Visa & Permit Requirements:

- Indian citizens **do not need a visa** to visit Bhutan.
- However, they **must obtain a permit** to enter Bhutan, which can be applied for:
 - **Online** before your trip.
 - Through your **tour operator or hotel** (they can apply on your behalf).
 - **On arrival** at the entry points (Phuentsholing, Samtse, Samdrup Jongkhar, or Sarpang/Gelephu).

2. Permit Application Options:

- **Online Application:** Apply in advance to avoid waiting times.
- **On Arrival:** Apply upon arrival, but be prepared for potential waiting times depending on the number of applicants. Ensure you carry:
 - Passport-size photographs.
 - Valid documents (Passport or Voter ID).

3. Sustainable Development Fee (SDF):

- Indian tourists are required to pay the **SDF of ₹1,200 per person per night**.
- The fee is payable when applying for your permit, either online or in person.

4. Accommodation:

- Stay in **Department of Tourism certified accommodations** throughout your trip.

5. Tour Guide:

- It is recommended to hire a **certified tour guide** for insights into Bhutanese culture, history, and attractions.

6. Travel Insurance:

- While not mandatory, it is advisable to have **travel insurance** covering medical emergencies, trip cancellations, and other unforeseen events.

7. Transportation:

- Arrange transportation through a tour operator or rent a car with a driver for convenient travel within Bhutan.

8. Declaration of Travel Plan:

- Indian tourists traveling to Bhutan must declare their intended travel plan when applying for a permit. This includes providing details of the places you plan to visit, the duration of your stay at each location, and your accommodation details.

These guidelines ensure a smooth and enriching experience for Indian travelers exploring the beauty and culture of Bhutan.

Documents Required for the Indians to Obtain the Bhutan Entry Permit:

1. **Sponsor Letter:** A letter from a local host or counterpart (travel agent/hotel/guide) in Bhutan is required. Sponsor
2. **Valid Passport or Voter Identity Card:** The passport should have a minimum validity of six months from the intended date of departure from Bhutan. Either a passport or a voter ID can be used as an identification document.
3. **Birth Certificate:** Required for children below 18 years of age.
4. **Completed Entry Permit Application Form:** The application form must be filled out accurately.
5. **Additional Documents (if required):** The Department of Immigration may request additional documents during the assessment process.

Make sure all documents are prepared and meet the above requirements for a smooth entry into Bhutan.

Online Bhutan e-Permit Application for Indians

For Indian nationals applying for an **e-Permit** to visit Bhutan, the process involves the following steps:

1. **Create an Account:**
 - Visit the official Bhutan Department of Immigration portal and create an account.
 - Website: <https://visit.doi.gov.bt/register>
2. **Add Application:**
 - After logging in, start a new application for the e-Permit.
3. **Add Guest Information:**
 - Provide details for all travelers, including passport or voter ID information. For children below 18, a birth certificate is required.
4. **Pay Fees:**
 - Make the payment for any applicable fees, including the Sustainable Development Fee (SDF), if required. Ensure that your bank/card issuer is notified beforehand to avoid transaction issues.
5. **Submit Application:**
 - After filling out all the necessary information and making the payment, submit the application for processing.

Important Notes:

- Indian nationals can use either a passport (with a minimum of six months validity) or a voter ID for entry into Bhutan.
- Always double-check your application details and documents before submission to avoid delays.

Contact Information for Queries:

- **For Indian Nationals:**
Email: permit@moha.gov.bt | dorjiz@moha.gov.bt

For more detailed guidance or to access the application portal, visit the official Bhutan Immigration website.

Offline Bhutan Permit Application Process for Indian Tourists at Phuentsholing

The **offline application process** for Indian nationals at the Jaigaon-Phuentsholing border to enter Bhutan is straightforward. Here are the steps:

1. **Arrival at the Pedestrian Terminal:**
 - Visit the **Pedestrian Terminal** at the Jaigaon-Phuentsholing border, which operates 24×7.
2. **Pre-registration System:**
 - Enlist your name and details in the **Pre-registration System** at the terminal. This is required even if you are only planning to stay in Phuentsholing.
3. **Document Submission:**
 - Submit the necessary documents such as:
 - Passport or Voter ID (for adults)
 - Birth certificate for children under 18
 - Carry passport-sized photographs in case they are needed.
4. **Permit Issuance:**
 - For traveling beyond Phuentsholing (past the Rinchening Check Post), you need to apply for a permit at the **Regional Immigration Office** -200 meters from Pedestrian Terminal (Beside Druk Hotel), in Phuentsholing.
 - Bhutan Entry Permit Application Form for the Indians:
 - Fill out the application form and submit it with the required documents.
 - The permit will be issued after verification.
5. **Sustainable Development Fee (SDF):**
 - Once you receive the permit, the applicable **SDF** (Sustainable Development Fee) must be paid for the duration of your stay in Bhutan beyond Phuentsholing.
6. **Verification and Entry:**
 - After obtaining the permit, you can proceed past the Rinchening Check Post and continue your journey into Bhutan.

Key Points:

- The offline process is quick and straightforward, especially for travelers only visiting Phuentsholing.
- The permit is mandatory if you wish to explore areas beyond Phuentsholing.
- Keep all your documents, including ID proof, ready to avoid delays.

This offline process is especially useful for travelers who prefer not to apply online or for those making spontaneous trips to Bhutan from India.

Other Entry/Exit Points:

Apart from Phuentsholing, other entry/exit points on the southern Indo-Bhutan border include Samtse, Samdrup Jongkhar, and Sarpang/Gelephu.

Bhutan's Sustainable Development Fee (SDF) for the Indian Travellers:

Indian tourists are required to pay a **Sustainable Development Fee (SDF) of INR 1,200/- per person per night**. However, children aged 5 years and below are exempted from SDF, and children between 6-12 years receive a 50% concession. Certain towns such as Samtse,

Phuentsholing, Gelephu, and Samdrup Jongkhar offer exemptions for tourists visiting for 24 hours.

Hiring a Guide Must for Your Bhutan Trip from India

Tourist Guide charges in Bhutan typically range from 2500 Rs to 4500 Rs per day. This fee covers the services of a knowledgeable and experienced guide who will accompany you throughout your trip, offering insights into Bhutanese culture, history, and traditions. Guides ensure a deeper understanding and appreciation of the country's unique way of life, making your journey more enriching and memorable.

Travel Insurance Requirement and Costs for Indians Travelling Bhutan

Update: As of April 23, 2024, the mandatory requirement for travel insurance has been lifted. This policy was initially introduced during the COVID-19 pandemic to cover unforeseen emergencies, including medical expenses related to the pandemic. While travel insurance is no longer mandatory, it is still recommended for tourists as a precautionary measure against any potential emergencies during international travel.

Earlier (before 23rd April, 2024) for Indian travelers visiting Bhutan, it was essential to have valid travel insurance for the duration of their trip. Typically, for a 7 to 10-day visit to Bhutan, travel insurance costs around Rs 800 per person.

When arranging insurance, it's advisable for Indian travelers to opt for reputable travel insurance companies for comprehensive coverage. This insurance provides financial protection against unforeseen events such as medical emergencies, trip cancellations, or lost luggage, offering peace of mind throughout your Bhutanese adventure.

Indian-registered Vehicles Touring Bhutan:

Indian tourists traveling with their vehicles are allowed within designated zones without charges. However, if a vehicle goes beyond the Rinchening Check Post in Phuentsholing, a Green Tax of Nu 4,500 per day is applicable. Necessary documents including the original driving license, vehicle registration certificate (not more than 10 years old), vehicle insurance, emission, and road worthiness certificate must be carried.

Vaccination Requirement for the Indian Visitors:

As of January, 2024, there are no Covid-19 vaccination requirements for adults or children to enter Bhutan. However, carrying a vaccination certificate is advised. Individuals above 12 years of age may undergo random RT-PCR testing at entry points. No fee shall be charged for the RT-PCR testing for surveillance purposes.
