

Bhutan Trip Cost 2026: Prices, the SDF & What's Included

Planning

16 min read

A week in Bhutan costs most visitors US\$1,900-US\$2,400 per adult. Children cost less — the SDF line below gives their rates. International flights are the main thing you add on top.

That price is three separate costs added together:

- **SDF** — US\$100 per adult per night, held at that rate until 31 August 2027. Children aged 6–11 pay US\$50, under-6s pay nothing, and Indian nationals pay INR 1,200.
- **Visa** — US\$40, paid once, however long you stay.
- **Tour cost** — hotels, all three meals, your licensed guide, a driver and private vehicle, ground transport, and museum and monument entry fees.

This guide starts with the SDF — the part that puzzles people most — then sets out what the tour cost covers and what moves it up or down. Last updated 19 September 2026.

How Much Is the SDF?

The SDF is **US\$100 per night** for adults from all countries except India — a rate that is **guaranteed until 31 August 2027**. Children aged 6 to 11 pay US\$50 per night, and children under 6 pay nothing.

Indian nationals (showing a valid Indian passport or Voter ID card) pay **INR 1,200** per person per night — a rate locked in until September 2028 — with children 6–11 at INR 600 and under-6s exempt. The first 15,000 guests from Bangladesh each year are eligible for a concession rate of US\$15 or INR 1,200 per person per night.

The arithmetic is simple: a couple spending 6 nights in Bhutan pays $2 \times 6 \times \text{US\$100} = \text{US\$1,200}$ in SDF; a family with a 9-year-old and a 4-year-old adds US\$300 for the older child and nothing for the younger. The SDF is paid up front with your visa or permit application, for the entire duration of your stay.

Pro Tips

- The US\$100 rate is locked until 31 August 2027 — trips completed before then are guaranteed this rate.
- The SDF is collected with your visa application — it is not paid on arrival.
- Byways all-inclusive package prices already include the SDF.

Bhutan Entry Fee by Nationality

"What is the Bhutan entry fee?" is really a question about the SDF plus a one-off visa or permit fee — and the answer depends on your passport. Here is what entering Bhutan costs for every nationality:

NationalitySDF (per adult, per night)Visa / PermitForeigners (all countries except India)**US\$100**US\$40 visa, one-offIndian nationalsNu./INR 1,200Free permit (passport or Voter ID)Bangladeshi citizens**US\$15** or INR 1,200 (first 15,000 guests/year)US\$40 visa, one-offMaldivians (Dhivehin)US\$100 (standard rate)US\$40 visa, one-off

Bhutan entry fee for foreigners: international visitors from every country except India pay the standard SDF of US\$100 per adult per night (children 6–11 pay US\$50, under-6s are free) plus the one-off US\$40 visa fee, applied for online before travel.

Bhutan entry fee for Bangladeshi citizens: the first 15,000 guests from Bangladesh each year qualify for the concession SDF of US\$15 or INR 1,200 per person per night — the same rate Indian nationals pay — plus the US\$40 visa fee. Once the annual quota is filled, the standard US\$100 rate applies. Bangladeshi citizens can apply online or process the visa on arrival.

Bhutan entry fee for Maldivians (Dhivehin): Maldivian citizens can process their visa on arrival like Bangladeshi and Indian travelers, and pay the one-off US\$40 visa fee — but unlike Bangladesh, the Maldives has no SDF concession quota, so the standard US\$100 per night rate applies, with the usual child concessions.

For required documents, processing times and the application walkthrough, see our full guide to the [Bhutan visa cost and entry requirements](#).

Pro Tips

- Children under 6 pay no SDF regardless of nationality; children 6–11 pay half the applicable rate.
- All rates are locked until 31 August 2027 — see the history section below for what happens after.

What the SDF Is — and What It Funds

The SDF is a daily levy paid by visitors to support Bhutan's development. Since the kingdom first opened its doors in 1974, guests have played a critical role in the country's growth. The fee is collected by the national exchequer and allocated to projects that create long-term, sustainable opportunities for the Bhutanese people: free healthcare, education and training, upskilling the tourism and hospitality industry, improved infrastructure, environmental preservation and conservation, cultural preservation programmes, and initiatives that support local businesses and economies.

The SDF is also a vital means of maintaining the exceptional forest cover and carbon-neutrality for which Bhutan is world-renowned — and it ensures the kingdom can keep offering guests tranquillity and an intimate experience: a Tiger's Nest without ten thousand people on the trail.

The 24-Hour Border-Town Waiver

New from **2 June 2026** and running until **August 2027**: tourists visiting the border towns of **Samtse, Phuentsholing, Gelephu, and Samdrup Jongkhar** for up to 24 hours pay **no SDF at all** — as long as they stay within the designated zones:

- **Samtse:** SDF applies beyond Gurung Basti
- **Phuentsholing:** SDF applies beyond Rinchending Checkpost
- **Gelephu:** designated zone ends at Aipoli Bridge
- **Samdrup Jongkhar:** designated zone ends at Pinchinna Checkpost

Travel beyond these points and the normal SDF applies. Note that the waiver **cannot be combined** with the other SDF incentive rates — it is one or the other.

Pro Tips

- The waiver is ideal for a first taste of Bhutan from the Indian border towns of Jaigaon or Gelephu's Assam side.
- Crossing beyond the designated checkpoint even briefly makes the full SDF payable — plan your 24 hours accordingly.

A Short History of the SDF — and the August 2027 Question

Bhutan's fee has moved more in the last four years than in the previous forty. Knowing the trajectory helps you judge the current rate:

- **1974–2022:** Visitors paid a Minimum Daily Package (roughly US\$200–290 per day including accommodation, meals and guide), of which about US\$65 was the government royalty.
- **September 2022:** Bhutan reopened after the pandemic with a standalone SDF of **US\$200 per night** — and visitor numbers stayed well below expectations.
- **September 2023:** The rate was halved to **US\$100 per night** as an incentive.
- **2024–2026:** The US\$100 incentive was extended and is now guaranteed until **31 August 2027**; the 24-hour border-town waiver was added from June 2026.
- **1 September 2027:** The locked rate expires and is due for review. No announcement has been made — the rate could be extended, raised, or restructured.

Booking implication

Trips completed before 31 August 2027 are guaranteed the US\$100 rate. If the 2022 precedent teaches anything, it's that the rate can double overnight — booking inside the locked window removes that risk entirely. We update this page whenever the Department of Tourism announces changes.

SDF Refunds, Extensions & Edge Cases

The questions that matter most right before you pay:

- **Cancelling your trip:** The SDF is refunded by the Department of Immigration for cancelled or shortened trips, minus bank charges. Requests go through the online visa portal, and refunds are processed after visitors leave Bhutan.
- **Leaving early:** SDF is refunded for any nights not spent in the kingdom.
- **Extending your stay:** Extensions are applied for through the same online visa portal used for your original application, and must be requested before your current visa expires. A processing fee for the extension and the daily SDF for the extra nights are both payable there. See our [visa guide](#).
- **After arrival or departure:** SDF payments cannot be refunded once you have arrived in or departed Bhutan, except for the unused-nights rule above.

If I cancel my trip, is the SDF refunded?

Yes. The Department of Immigration refunds the SDF for cancelled or shortened trips, with any bank charges deducted from the total. Submit refund requests online through the visa portal; refunds are processed after visitors leave Bhutan. The US\$40 visa fee is non-refundable.

What's Included, and What Isn't

Bhutan prices work differently from most destinations: almost everything is bundled, so the quoted figure is close to the figure you actually spend. This is what sits inside a Byways price:

- Accommodation, in 3-star hotels as standard
- All three meals every day, with lunch at a local tourist restaurant
- Your licensed English-speaking guide, and a driver
- A private vehicle for the whole trip, airport to airport
- Museum and monument entry fees, and sightseeing
- The US\$40 visa fee, government taxes, and the nightly Sustainable Development Fee
- Bottled water in the car

What is not included in a Bhutan tour price?

[International airfare](#), travel insurance, and tips for your guide and driver are the three that catch people out, and for most visitors the flights are the single largest line in the budget. Personal spending is also outside the price — laundry, soft and alcoholic drinks, bottled water in hotels and restaurants, camera charges at some sites, portage, and anything arranged on a personal basis. Costs arising from events outside anyone's control, such as weather disruption or a chartered flight after an emergency, sit outside it too.

Which leaves the practical question: how much cash to carry for the things outside the price. Our [money and currency guide](#) sets out what a day of souvenirs, snacks and tips actually costs, where cards work, and the limits on what you may bring in and out.

Where the Money Goes

A quoted price is one number with two quite different things inside it, and one large thing outside.

- **The Sustainable Development Fee — US\$100 per adult, per night.** This goes to the government, not to us. On a seven-night trip it is US\$700 of what you pay. It is explained in full further down this page.
- **The land cost — roughly US\$175 to US\$190 per person, per night.** Hotels, every meal, your guide and driver, the vehicle, and entry fees. This is the part a tour operator actually competes on.
- **International flights — outside the price.** Yours to book, or ours to arrange on request, and the figure that varies most by where you start.

Is the Sustainable Development Fee included in the tour price?

Yes. This is the single most common misunderstanding about Bhutan pricing. The SDF is already inside the figure we quote you — it is not added at the end, and it is not paid separately on arrival. When you see a price of US\$1,960 per person for seven nights, US\$700 of that is the SDF being passed to the government on your behalf.

What Moves the Price

Four things account for nearly all the variation between one quote and another.

- **How many of you are travelling.** The largest single factor. A guide, a driver and a vehicle cost the same whether one person or six are using them, so the per-person price falls steadily as the group grows. Travelling alone costs roughly a fifth more per person than travelling as a pair.
- **How long you stay.** The SDF is a flat nightly charge, so a longer trip costs proportionally more in total — though the land cost per night eases slightly on longer itineraries.
- **Where you sleep.** Our standard prices are built on comfortable 3-star hotels. Bhutan also has some of the most expensive lodges in Asia, and choosing them changes the arithmetic entirely rather than adjusting it at the margins. We will quote either honestly.
- **When you come.** Spring and autumn are peak season: hotels fill first and the best rooms go months ahead, particularly around the festivals. The monsoon and deep winter are quieter and easier on the budget. See [choosing your season](#).

Frequently Asked Questions

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Need More Information?

Contact our Bhutan travel experts for personalized advice.

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