

How to Get to Bhutan: A Step-by-Step Guide

Planning

15 min read

Reaching the Kingdom of Bhutan is becoming easier with the opening of its second international gateway. While the country was previously served only by Paro International Airport, travelers can now also fly into the newly operational **Gelephu International Airport**. Currently, two carriers—[Drukair \(Royal Bhutan Airlines\)](#) and [Bhutan Airlines](#)—operate all flights into the country. Whether you are aiming for the iconic mountain landing in Paro or the southern entry point via Gelephu, here is your updated step-by-step guide for reaching Bhutan from major global hubs.

Key Entry Points

Bhutan now offers two international airport gateways for travelers, providing more flexibility in planning your journey to the Thunder Dragon Kingdom.

- **Paro International Airport (PBH):** The main hub for flights from Bangkok, Delhi, Singapore, Kathmandu, and Dhaka
- **Gelephu International Airport (GLU):** The new southern gateway, currently offering direct connectivity to **Kolkata, India**

General Step-by-Step Travel Planning

Follow these steps to plan your journey to Bhutan.

1. **Choose Your Gateway:** Decide if you want to start in Western Bhutan (Paro) or the Southern/Central region (Gelephu).
2. **Select Your Carrier:** Check schedules on the official [Drukair](#) or [Bhutan Airlines](#) websites, as these are the only two airlines authorized to fly into Bhutan.
3. **Book via Transit Hubs:** Most international travelers book a flight to a "hub city" (like Bangkok, Delhi, or Kolkata) and then purchase a separate ticket for the final leg into Bhutan.
4. **Secure Your Visa/Permit:** Ensure your visa or entry permit is processed through a licensed tour operator or the official portal before booking your flights.

Pro-Traveler Tips

Essential advice from experienced travelers to make your journey to Bhutan smoother and more enjoyable.

Pro Tips

- **Seating for Views:** When flying into Paro from the west (Delhi, Kathmandu), **ask for a window seat on the left side** to see Mt. Everest and the Himalayan range
- **The "Gelephu Advantage":** If you are visiting the new [Mindfulness City](#) project in Gelephu, flying directly from Kolkata can save you nearly 8 hours of driving from the capital

- **Buffer Time:** Always allow at least 6-8 hours between your international arrival in a hub city (like Delhi or Bangkok) and your Bhutan flight, as mountain weather can shift schedules

From USA to Bhutan

There are no direct flights from North America. Most U.S. travelers choose the Bangkok or Dubai routes. Because there are no direct flights from outside of Asia, your journey will always involve a two-leg trip: first to a regional "hub" and then a final flight into Bhutan.

Pro Tips

- East Coast travelers often prefer Dubai or Delhi, while West Coast travelers find Bangkok or Singapore more convenient

Step-by-Step Guide

1. Fly from major hubs (JFK, LAX, SFO, ORD) to Bangkok (BKK), Delhi (DEL), or Dubai (DXB)
2. Connect to a [Drukair](#) or [Bhutan Airlines](#) flight

From Singapore to Bhutan

Singapore is one of the most streamlined gateways, with direct (though limited) service.

Note: These flights typically operate 2-3 times a week and often include a brief 40-minute "technical stop" in Guwahati, India (passengers do not deplane).

Step-by-Step Guide

1. Head to Changi Airport (SIN) Terminal 3
2. Fly directly to Paro (PBH) via [Drukair](#)

From Australia to Bhutan

Most Australians transit through Southeast Asia for the best connections.

Pro Tips

- Alternative: You can also fly via Kolkata (CCU) if you wish to be one of the first to use the new **Gelephu International Airport** gateway

Step-by-Step Guide

1. Fly from Sydney, Melbourne, or Perth to Bangkok (BKK) or Singapore (SIN)
2. Catch the connecting flight to Paro

From Germany to Bhutan

European travelers typically find the Nepal or India hubs the most cost-effective.

Pro Tips

- If you choose the Delhi route, ensure you have an Indian Transit Visa if your airline requires you to re-check bags outside the international zone

Step-by-Step Guide

1. Fly from Frankfurt or Munich to New Delhi (DEL) or Kathmandu (KTM)
2. Board your final leg to Paro

From Kathmandu to Bhutan

This is widely considered the most scenic flight in the world.

Pro Tips

- **The View:** This route flies directly past Mount Everest. Ensure you sit on the left side of the plane when flying to Bhutan for the best Himalayan views

Step-by-Step Guide

1. Arrive at Tribhuvan International Airport (KTM)
2. Take a 1-hour flight to Paro

Essential Travel Checklist

Before booking your flights, make sure you have these essentials in order.

- **Visa First:** You cannot board your flight to Bhutan without a visa clearance letter. This is obtained by paying the Sustainable Development Fee (SDF) (\$100/night) and booking through the official Bhutan Visa Portal or a tour operator.
- **Two Airports:** Check if your itinerary is better suited for Paro (Western/Central Bhutan) or Gelephu (Southern Bhutan/Kolkata connections).
- **Airlines:** Only [Drukair](#) and [Bhutan Airlines](#) are permitted to land in Bhutan. Book these tickets directly on their official websites.

Frequently Asked Questions

Which airlines fly to Bhutan?

Only two airlines: Drukair (Royal Bhutan Airlines) and Bhutan Airlines. Both operate flights from Bangkok, Delhi, Kathmandu, Kolkata, Singapore, and other regional hubs. Book directly on their websites or through your tour operator.

Can I fly directly from USA/Europe/Australia?

No direct flights exist. Connect through hub cities like Bangkok (most popular), Delhi, Singapore, or Kathmandu. Budget 24-36 hours total travel time from Western countries.

What is special about landing at Paro?

Paro is one of the world's most challenging airports - only certified pilots can land there. The approach through narrow valleys with steep banks is thrilling. Request a window seat on the left side from Delhi/Kathmandu for Himalayan views.

Is there another airport in Bhutan?

Yes! Gelephu International Airport opened recently in southern Bhutan. It offers an alternative entry point with connections from Kolkata. Useful if you're visiting the new Mindfulness City or southern/central Bhutan.

What happens if my flight is cancelled due to weather?

Weather-related delays are common. Airlines reschedule to the next available flight. Have flexible travel plans and travel insurance covering delays. Allow buffer days at the start and end of your trip.

Can I enter Bhutan by land?

Yes, from India at designated border crossings (Phuentsholing, Gelephu, Samdrup Jongkhar). Not available from other countries. Land entry requires the same visa as flying. Popular for budget travelers from India.

Need More Information?

Contact our Bhutan travel experts for personalized advice.

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