Solo Travel in Bhutan: How It Works, What It Costs and How Safe It Is

Planning 15 min read

Yes, you can travel to Bhutan alone, and many of our guests do. What a solo trip looks like here is different from most countries. There is no backpacking between hostels and no bus timetable to work out, because every visitor travels with a licensed Bhutanese guide, and a trip for one is a private trip with your own guide and driver.

This guide explains how that works in practice, what a solo trip costs compared with travelling as a pair, how safe Bhutan is for people travelling alone, including women, where you can walk on your own, and which of our tours suit one traveller.

Can You Travel to Bhutan Alone?

Yes. Bhutan has no minimum group size and no restricted nationalities, so a single traveller on any passport can book a trip. What you cannot do is arrive and make it up as you go. The Department of Tourism requires every visitor to be accompanied by a certified guide, hotels must be on its approved list, and yourvisa is applied for online against fixed travel dates. In practice, a solo trip to Bhutan is a private tour for one. You have a guide and a driver to yourself, the itinerary is yours to shape, and nobody else's pace sets the day.

The booking itself is simple. You choose dates and a route, a licensed Bhutanese tour operator applies for your visa and pays the Sustainable Development Fee on your behalf, and you arrive to a guide holding your name at Paro airport. Our guide to booking a Bhutan tour walks through each step, and the first-time visitor guide covers the ground rules every traveller should know before landing.

"Solo" here means no other tourists in your car, not that you are on your own. Your guide is with you on the road, at every dzong and temple, and on every hike. Many solo guests tell us afterwards that the guide was the trip: a week of conversation with a Bhutanese host rather than a seat on a coach.

Good to know

- Treks and long drives are never done alone in Bhutan. The rule is a certified guide at all times, and every trek goes with an accredited operator.
- Indian passport holders travel on a permit rather than a visa and pay a different daily fee. There is a section for Indian solo travellers further down.

What a Solo Trip to Bhutan Costs

A solo trip costs more per person than the same trip for two, because the guide, the car and the hotel room cost the same whether one person or two share them. The Sustainable Development Fee of US$100 a night and the US$40 visa are per person and do not change. What changes is the land cost: the share of guide, driver and room that a pair would split.

Our prices are all-inclusive and published per person for one traveller, for two, and for three or more, so the difference is in plain sight. These are the live figures from our pricing matrix, the same ones shown on each tour page:

Trip lengthTravelling aloneAs a pair, eachThree or more, each

4 days (3 nights)US$1,050US$810US$780

5 days (4 nights)US$1,400US$1,050US$1,015

6 days (5 nights)US$1,675US$1,280US$1,240

7 days (6 nights)US$1,890US$1,560US$1,510

10 days (9 nights)US$2,785US$2,290US$2,200

Every figure is per person in US dollars and includes the Sustainable Development Fee for the whole stay (US$600 on a seven-day trip), the visa, 3-star hotels, all meals, a licensed English-speaking guide, and a private car and driver. There is no separate single supplement: the solo column is the whole price. On a seven-day trip the land cost works out at about US$208 a night travelling alone against US$153 a night each as a pair, and that gap is the entire difference.

The Bhutan trip cost guide takes the price apart line by line, and the money and currency guide covers what to carry for the small extras that sit outside it, such as drinks, tips and souvenirs.

> **Good to know**
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> - If you would be happy to share a car with another solo guest on the same dates and route, say so when you enquire. It is not always possible, but when it is, both of you pay the pair rate.
> - Festival weeks and treks are where a solo trip costs the most relative to a pair, because camp crews and festival-season hotels are priced per party. A cultural tour in an ordinary week is the gentlest way to travel alone on a budget.

Is Bhutan Safe for Solo Travellers, Including Women?

Bhutan is one of the safest countries a person can travel in alone. Violent crime against visitors is close to unknown, petty theft is rare, and you are never making your own way between towns: your guide and driver take you door to door, which removes most of the situations that make solo travel elsewhere feel exposed. Bhutanese culture is Buddhist, courteous and unhurried, and women travelling alone are treated with the same respect as anyone else. Harassment is very unusual.

Women who would prefer a female guide can ask for one when booking. Bhutan has a growing number of licensed women guides, and travelling with one is an easy way to hear about daily life, family and work from a

Bhutanese woman's side. Tell us when you enquire and we will arrange it where one is available for your dates.

The practical risks are the ordinary ones of a mountain country rather than anything to do with being alone: altitude on the passes, long winding drives, stray dogs that bark at night in the towns, and few pharmacies outside Thimphu. The health and safety guide covers altitude, insurance and what to put in a first-aid kit, and the dos and don'ts guide explains temple etiquette and dress so you feel at ease from the first dzong.

Good to know

- Tell your guide early how you like to travel: a full day of conversation, or quiet time at the sites. Guides adjust readily, and clear preferences make the week better for both of you.
- Keep your guide's phone number from the first day. Hotels and shops will happily call them for you if you ever need to.

Where You Can Go on Your Own

The rule is a guide at all times on the road and at every monument, and all our itineraries follow it. Within that, a solo trip still has plenty of time that is yours. Your guide's day usually runs from after breakfast to the end of the last visit, around six in the evening. Early mornings and evenings are your own: a walk along the river in Paro, the main street and cafés of Thimphu, the hotel garden, or the prayer-wheel corner outside a temple at dawn. Strolling the town streets alone is entirely normal, and shopkeepers are used to visitors wandering in by themselves.

If you want an afternoon to yourself in the middle of a day, ask. Guides are glad to drop you at a café, the farmers' market or a viewpoint and collect you later, and nobody will think it odd. What does need the guide is everything on the itinerary: dzongs and temples, drives between valleys, hikes and treks, and anything beyond the two main towns.

Our top destinations guide describes each valley, and the Thimphu and Paro pages show what sits within walking distance of the hotels we use.

Good to know

- The Centenary Farmers' Market in Thimphu is busiest at the weekend and is the easiest place to spend an unhurried hour among locals.
- Paro town is small enough to cross on foot in fifteen minutes, with the river path and the Kyichu Lhakhang road both easy evening walks from most hotels.

Solo Tour Packages: 4, 5 and 7 Days

Every tour on this site can be booked for one traveller at the solo rate shown on its page. Three are the ones solo guests choose most often:

- 4 Days Bhutan Tour, US$1,050 for one. Thimphu, Paro and Tiger's Nest. The right length when Bhutan is a side trip from Bangkok, Delhi or Kathmandu.
- 5 Days Bhutan Tour, US$1,400 for one. Adds Punakha and the drive over the Dochula pass, the single biggest addition to the four-day route.
- 7 Days Bhutan Tour, US$1,890 for one. Adds the Phobjikha valley, a slower pace and a second hike. The length most solo guests settle on when their dates allow.

Walkers can look at our hiking tours, which put a trail into each day with a hotel bed every night, and the full list of cultural tours runs up to two weeks and into the east. Every itinerary is a starting point. As a solo traveller you can add a farmhouse night, swap a museum for a walk, or stay a day longer in a valley you like, and the price moves only with the number of nights.

> **Good to know**
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> - A tshechu is the one time a solo traveller sits in a crowd for hours, and the easiest way to meet other visitors. The festival guide explains what happens on each day, and our festival tours are built around the main dates.

A Seven-Day Solo Itinerary

This is the shape of the week most solo guests take. Timings are loose on purpose: with no group to wait for, each day moves at your pace.

1. **Arrive Paro, drive to Thimphu.** Your guide meets you at the airport. An hour's drive up the valley, an afternoon walk to the Buddha Dordenma, and an early night at altitude.
2. **Thimphu.** The weekend market, the textile museum, Tashichho Dzong at the end of the day when the offices empty. Evening on the main street on your own.
3. **Dochula pass to Punakha.** The 108 chortens and, on a clear morning, the Himalaya along the horizon. Punakha Dzong at the river confluence in the afternoon.
4. **Punakha to Phobjikha.** A short walk through rice terraces to Chimi Lhakhang, then the climb to the glacial valley and Gangtey monastery. The quietest night of the trip.
5. **Phobjikha to Paro.** A morning walk on the valley floor, then the long drive back west with a stop at a farmhouse for lunch.
6. **Tiger's Nest.** The hike the trip builds towards. With no group timetable you can sit at the viewpoint as long as you like.
7. **Departure.** A last temple or a last shop, and your guide sees you to the airport.

The 7 Days Bhutan Tour page has this route in full, with the hotels and the day-by-day detail, and the typical itineraries guide shows how it stretches to ten days or shrinks to five.

Good to know

- Ask for a farmhouse dinner on the Punakha or Phobjikha night. Eating with a family is the warmest evening of a solo week, and there is no extra charge for the company.

Trekking and Hiking Alone

Treks follow the same rule as everything else: you go with an accredited operator, and on a multi-day trek that means a guide, a cook and a horseman with pack animals, all for one person. It is the most private way to walk the Himalaya and also the most expensive per head, because the camp crew costs the same for one as for four. Day hikes from a hotel are the economical alternative, and most of Bhutan's best walks, Tiger's Nest first among them, are day hikes.

For a first solo trek, the Druk Path Trek between Paro and Thimphu is the usual choice: a few days above the treeline past high lakes, demanding but not technical, with a hotel at either end. The Jomolhari Trek is the step up for experienced walkers who want days without seeing another party. The trekking guide compares every route, and the treks page lists them with prices.

If you want to walk every day without a tent, our 9 Days Bhutan Hiking Tour links the valleys with a trail each day and a hotel each night, which for one traveller is far cheaper than a camping trek of the same length.

Good to know

- Even on a multi-day trek you are never truly alone. The solo part is that there are no other tourists; your Bhutanese crew is with you from the first camp to the last.

Meals, Hotels and Company

The question solo travellers ask most is whether they will eat alone. Mostly not. Your guide joins you for lunch on sightseeing days, which is when the real conversations happen, and will happily join you for dinner if you ask, or leave you to a quiet evening if you prefer. Breakfast is at the hotel, usually a buffet, and the breakfast room is where you meet other guests. Eating alone in a Bhutanese restaurant carries no awkwardness at all. The food guide explains what will be on the table.

Hotels are 3-star unless you upgrade, and a solo traveller gets the same room a pair would. If you would rather be near reception or on the ground floor, say so and the hotel will usually oblige. A night in a farmhouse, which our accommodation guide describes, is the easiest way to spend an evening in company, with the family at the table and a hot stone bath afterwards.

For company beyond your guide, the breakfast room, the cafeteria halfway up the Tiger's Nest trail, and the festival grounds during a tshechu are where solo travellers tend to find each other. If you prefer solitude, Bhutan respects that too: outside festival weeks you can go a whole day without another visitor at the sites.

Good to know

- Tips are given at the end of the trip and are entirely at your discretion. Travelling alone you cover them yourself, so set a little aside for the guide and driver when you plan your cash.

Staying in Touch and Taking Time for Yourself

A local SIM from the counter at Paro airport gives you data in the towns and along the main road, and WhatsApp is how everyone in Bhutan, your guide included, stays in touch. Hotel Wi-Fi is fine for messages and patchy for video calls, and Phobjikha and the trekking routes have little signal at all. The internet and SIM card guide covers the practical details.

Many solo guests find that limited signal is part of the point. With no group to keep up with, a solo trip leaves room for the quieter side of Bhutan: a dawn walk around a chorten with the locals spinning prayer wheels, a hot stone bath after the Tiger's Nest hike, or a meditation session that your guide can arrange at a monastery with a day's notice. The quietcations guide gathers the slowest valleys and the retreats that welcome sincere visitors, and our wellness experiences page lists what can be built into a trip.

Good to know

- Download offline maps and a Dzongkha phrasebook before you fly. Kuzuzangpo la (hello) and kadinchey la (thank you) open more doors than any app.

Solo Travellers from India

Indian nationals do not need a visa. You enter on a permit issued against a passport or a voter ID card, and you pay the Sustainable Development Fee at Nu 1,200 per person per night, or the equivalent in rupees, rather than the US$100 rate. The permit can be arranged in advance by your operator, and the guide rule applies as it does to everyone: beyond the border town you travel with a certified guide, so a solo trip from India is a private trip in the same way as any other.

Most Indian solo guests fly into Paro or drive in through Phuentsholing, and a long weekend is enough for Thimphu, Paro and Tiger's Nest. The visa guide has the permit details by nationality, and the how to get to Bhutan guide covers the flights and the road border.

Good to know

- Children under eighteen travelling from India need a passport or a birth certificate and must be with a legal guardian, so the solo rules here are for adults.

Frequently Asked Questions

Can I travel to Bhutan alone?

> Yes. There is no minimum group size and no nationality is restricted. A solo trip is a private trip with your own licensed guide and driver, booked through a Bhutanese tour operator who applies for your visa and pays the daily fee on your behalf. You cannot travel independently between towns or visit dzongs without

a guide, but you can walk around Thimphu and Paro and spend your evenings as you like.

Do I need a guide if I travel solo in Bhutan?

Yes. The Department of Tourism requires every visitor to be accompanied by a certified guide, and all treks go with an accredited operator. For a solo traveller that means a guide and driver to yourself for the whole trip. Early mornings, evenings and strolls around the town centres are your own time.

How much does a solo trip to Bhutan cost?

A four-day trip for one costs US$1,050 all-inclusive, against US$810 each as a pair. A seven-day trip for one costs US$1,890, against US$1,560 each as a pair. The price includes the US$100-a-night Sustainable Development Fee, the US$40 visa, 3-star hotels, all meals, your guide, and a private car and driver. The difference between the solo and pair rates is the share of guide, car and room that a second traveller would split.

Is there a single supplement in Bhutan?

Not as a separate charge. Bhutan tours are priced per person by group size, and the rate for one traveller already covers a room to yourself and the guide and vehicle on your own. The solo rate shown on each tour page is the whole price.

Is Bhutan safe for solo female travellers?

Yes. Bhutan has very low crime, harassment of visitors is very, very rare, and a woman travelling alone is driven door to door by her guide and driver rather than finding her own way between towns. Women who prefer a female guide can ask for one when booking, and we arrange it where one is available for the dates.

Can I walk around Thimphu or Paro on my own?

Yes, within the towns. Walking the main streets, cafés and markets of Thimphu and Paro by yourself is normal, and your guide can drop you somewhere for a few hours during the day if you ask. Dzongs, temples, drives between valleys and hikes are done with your guide.

Can Indian citizens travel to Bhutan solo?

Yes. Indian nationals enter on a permit issued against a passport or voter ID rather than a visa, and pay the Sustainable Development Fee at Nu 1,200 per night instead of US$100. The guide rule is the same, so a solo trip from India is a private trip with a certified guide beyond the border town.

Can I join a group tour to cut the cost of travelling alone?

Sometimes. We do not run fixed-departure coach tours, but if another solo guest is travelling the same route on the same dates we can occasionally pair you for the car, and both of you then pay the pair rate. Festival dates are the likeliest time. Tell us when you enquire and we will say whether it is possible for your dates.

How many days should a first solo trip to Bhutan be?

> Five to seven days suits most first solo visits. Four days covers Thimphu, Paro and Tiger's Nest and works as a side trip from Bangkok or Delhi. Five adds Punakha. Seven adds the Phobjikha valley and a slower pace, and is the length most solo guests settle on.

Need More Information?

Contact our Bhutan travel experts for personalized advice.

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