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

Planning 16 min read

A week in Bhutan costs US$1,720–US$2,240 per adult, depending on how many of you travel together. Children cost less — the Sustainable Development Fee (SDF) line below gives their rates. International flights are the main thing you add on top.

That price is three separate costs added together:

- **Sustainable Development Fee (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.

What is Bhutan's Sustainable Development Fee (SDF)?

The Sustainable Development Fee (SDF) is a nightly charge that every visitor pays to the Bhutanese government for each night spent in the country. None of it goes to the tour operator: it is paid into the national exchequer, and the operator only collects it on your behalf. Bhutan has run tourism this way since the first visitors were admitted in 1974, on the principle that fewer guests, each contributing more, serve the country better than crowds.

The money goes into public spending: free healthcare and schooling for Bhutanese citizens, training for people who work in tourism and hospitality, roads and other infrastructure, forest and wildlife conservation, and the upkeep of the dzongs, monasteries and festivals you come to see. Some of it supports small local businesses, so part of what you pay stays in the valleys you visit.

For you as a guest, the fee is also what keeps Bhutan the way it is: about 70 percent of the country still under forest, a carbon-negative economy, and a Tiger's Nest trail without ten thousand people on it.

How Much Is the SDF?

The Bhutan entry fee is two charges: the Sustainable Development Fee, paid per night, and a one-off visa fee. Both depend on your passport.

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 half the applicable rate and children under 6 pay nothing, whatever their nationality.

NationalitySDF (per adult, per night)Visa / PermitForeigners (all countries except India)**US$100**US$40 visa, one-off, applied for onlineIndian nationalsINR 1,200Free permit (passport or Voter ID), on arrival or onlineBangladeshi citizens**US$15** or INR 1,200 (first 15,000 guests a year)US$40 visa, one-off, on arrival or onlineMaldivians (Dhivehin)US$100 (standard rate)US$40 visa, one-off, on arrival or online

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. The first 15,000 guests from Bangladesh each year qualify for the concession rate of US$15 or INR 1,200 per night; once the annual quota is filled, the standard US$100 rate applies. The Maldives has no concession quota, so Maldivian citizens pay the standard rate.

The arithmetic is simple: a couple spending 6 nights in Bhutan pays 2 × 6 × US$100 = **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. It is not paid on arrival. For required documents, processing times and the application walkthrough, see our full guide to the Bhutan visa cost and entry requirements.

Good to know

- 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 and the US$40 visa fee.

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.

Good to know

- 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.

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, porterage, 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$140 to US$150 per person, per night in a party of two or more, and about US$214 travelling alone.** 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$1,790 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

Is the Sustainable Development Fee included in the tour price?

> Yes. The SDF is already inside the figure we quote - it is not added at the end, and it is not paid separately on arrival. On a seven-night trip priced at about US$1,960 per person, US$700 of that is the SDF being passed to the government on your behalf.

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. Personal spending sits outside the price too - laundry, soft and alcoholic drinks, bottled water in hotels and restaurants, camera charges at some sites, and porterage.

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.

Need More Information?

Contact our Bhutan travel experts for personalized advice.

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