Bhutan with Kids: Things to Do, What Children Pay and an 8-Day Family Itinerary

Planning 11 min read

> Children of every age are welcome in Bhutan, and families are a growing share of the guests we host. There is no minimum age for visitors, the Sustainable Development Fee (SDF) is waived for children under 6 and halved for 6 to 11-year-olds, and you travel with your own guide and driver at your family's pace. This guide covers what children actually do here, valley by valley and with the ages each activity suits, what under-12s pay, how to handle the mountain drives and the altitude, and an 8-day itinerary we run for families. The fee rules are taken from the Department of Tourism's published FAQs, last checked 28 October 2026.

Can You Visit Bhutan with Kids?

Yes. Children need the same visa as adults, which your tour operator applies for with yours, and there is no age below which a child cannot enter. What changes with age is the cost: under-6s pay no SDF, children from 6 up to their 12th birthday pay US$50 a night instead of US$100, and everyone pays the one-off US$40 visa fee. Children aged 5 and under also enter dzongs, temples and museums free, and under-18s pay half the adult monument fee. The table above sets it out, and the trip cost guide covers what the SDF funds.

Day to day, Bhutan is an easy country to travel with children. You are never in a crowd or a queue, crime against visitors is close to unknown, there are no touts, and the people you meet are openly fond of children. Hotels and restaurants are used to cooking plain food for young eaters. The things children enjoy here were not built for tourists: fortress-sized dzongs, masked dancers, archery matches in every village, and the legend of a tigress that flew a saint up a cliff are simply part of Bhutanese life.

Two things deserve planning. The roads wind, so long drives are better split into shorter hops with stops. And most of the country sits between 1,250 m and 3,100 m, which children handle well if the first day is kept gentle. Both are covered below.

Good to know

- Children aged 5 and under enter dzongs and temples free; 6 to 17-year-olds pay half the monument fee.
- Indian nationals' children aged 6 to 11 pay INR 600 a night; under-6s pay nothing. Under-18s can enter on a birth certificate with a legal guardian.
- Travelling with grandparents as well? Our guide for older travellers covers pace, stairs and altitude for the other end of the family.

Things to Do in Bhutan with Kids, Valley by Valley

Bhutan with children is about doing rather than looking. Almost everything below is free or costs a few dollars, your guide arranges it on the day, and none of it needs booking months ahead except a festival. The ages are

the ones we have found work, not rules.

Thimphu with kids

- **Print stamps with your own faces** at the Bhutan Postal Museum. The stamps are legal postage, so children can mail a postcard home with themselves on it. All ages; a sheet costs a few hundred ngultrum.
- **Meet the takin**, the national animal that looks like a goat crossed with a cow, at the Motithang Takin Preserve. A flat 20-minute loop; toddlers manage it.
- **Make paper from tree bark** at the Jungshi handmade paper factory. Messy, hands-on and quick; best from about 4.
- **Stand under the Buddha Dordenma**, a 51-metre bronze Buddha on the ridge above town, with lawns to run on and the whole valley below. All ages.
- **Try the national sport** at an archery range with lighter bows for children, or simply watch a village match, which comes with singing and dancing between shots. From about 5.
- **Dress up in a gho or kira** and try a bow at the Simply Bhutan living museum, or visit the weekend farmers' market (Friday to Sunday) for dried cheese and chilli mountains.
- **Visit a school**. Ask us in advance and your guide can arrange a short visit to a local school, where your children meet pupils their own age. Term time only.

Paro with kids

- **Tiger's Nest, with a pony** for the first two-thirds. Children from about 8 walk the whole way; younger ones ride to the cafeteria and look up at the monastery from there. Details in the Tiger's Nest section below.
- **Rinpung Dzong and the cantilever bridge**, the fortress from the film Little Buddha, reached across a roofed wooden bridge over the Paro river. All ages; shoulders and knees covered inside, children included.
- **Kyichu Lhakhang**, a 7th-century temple with a courtyard of prayer wheels for small hands to spin, and orange trees that fruit all year.
- **A farmhouse evening** in the Paro valley: a hot stone bath, dinner by the stove, and a chance to feed the cows. Often the night children talk about most.

Punakha with kids

- **Gentle rafting on the Mo Chhu**, grade I to II water through rice fields with Punakha Dzong at the take-out. Operators usually take children from about 7; the trip is roughly 90 minutes on the water and costs around US$40 a person.
- **Cross the Punakha suspension bridge**, about 160 m of swaying walkway strung with prayer flags above the river. Thrilling for 5-year-olds, reassuring for parents because the mesh sides are high.
- **Walk through the rice paddies to Chimi Lhakhang**, a 20-minute flat stroll from the road to a temple whose founder is painted on every house in the village. All ages.
- **Punakha Dzong**, the most beautiful fortress in the country, with a jacaranda-lined courtyard and a covered bridge. Children aged 5 and under enter free.

- **Dochula pass** on the drive in: 108 white chortens at 3,100 m, hot chocolate at the cafe, and the high Himalaya on a clear morning from October to February.

Phobjikha with kids

- **Black-necked cranes** winter in the valley from late October to early March. The crane centre has telescopes and a rescued crane, and the Black-Necked Crane Festival on 11 November has schoolchildren dancing in crane costumes.
- **The Gangtey nature trail**, a flat 90-minute walk down through pine forest and across the marsh. Comfortable from about 5.
- Phobjikha adds two long drives, so we include it on trips of seven nights or more. The valley page has the detail.

Everywhere, there are festivals. A tshechu, the masked dance festival each district holds once a year, is the single thing children remember longest: see taking children to a tshechu below for timing.

> **Good to know**
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> - Dzongs and temples ask all visitors, children included, to cover shoulders and knees and to remove shoes and hats inside.
> - Photography is not allowed inside temples. Children are usually happier for it: they look instead of posing.
> - Our top ten things to do in Bhutan covers the adult list; the destination pages for Thimphu, Paro and Punakha have maps and drive times.

Which Valleys Work Best for a Family Trip?

For a first family trip we keep to the three western valleys: Paro (2,200 m), Thimphu (2,320 m) and Punakha (1,250 m). They hold most of the activities above, the best hospitals, and the shortest drives: Paro to Thimphu is about an hour, Thimphu to Punakha two and a half to three hours over the Dochula pass.

With seven nights or more, Phobjikha (3,000 m) is worth the extra three-hour drive each way, especially in crane season. Bumthang and the east mean a day on the road in each direction, or a domestic flight, and we suggest saving them for a second trip or for teenagers who travel well.

Punakha, the lowest and warmest of the three, is a good place to spend two nights in winter or with very young children. The valley is mild when Thimphu is frosty, and the farmstays there are the ones families rate highest.

> **Good to know**
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> - Give your first day to Paro at walking pace. Nearly every arrival lands by mid-morning, and an afternoon of gentle sightseeing settles children into the altitude better than a drive.

Can Children Hike to Tiger's Nest?

The hike to Taktsang climbs about 500 m over roughly two hours each way, with a long flight of steps at the end. Children from about 8 generally do the whole thing and are proud of it. Children of 5 to 7 manage it with a pony for the first two-thirds and encouragement for the last part. Below 5 we suggest the cafeteria viewpoint, which is where the pony stops and where the monastery first appears across the gorge.

Ponies are hired at the trailhead on the day, go up only (riders walk down), and stop at the cafeteria: there are no ponies on the stairs. A parent walks beside a small rider. Start by 7:30 am so the climb is in the shade, carry water and snacks, and give the children the next day off. The Tiger's Nest hike guide has the trail stage by stage.

Good to know

- Read the children the legend first: Guru Rinpoche flew to the cliff on the back of a tigress. The monastery makes sense to them once they know who the tiger is.
- Strollers and carriers: a hiking backpack carrier works to the cafeteria; above it, the steps are too steep to carry a child comfortably.

What a Family Trip to Bhutan Costs

The government fees are fixed and easy to work out. For two adults and two children aged 8 and 5 on a seven-night trip:

FeeAmountHow it is worked outSDF, two adultsUS$1,400US$100 × 2 × 7 nightsSDF, child aged 8US$350US$50 × 7 nightsSDF, child aged 5US$0Under 6, exemptVisas, four peopleUS$160US$40 each, children includedGovernment feesUS$1,910Paid up front with the visa application
The tour itself covers hotels, all meals, your guide, driver and vehicle, and entry fees. Our seven-night private tours start at US$1,720 per adult for a party of three or more, with the SDF and visa already inside that figure, which works out to about US$140 a night for everything on the ground. Children are quoted below the adult rate because their SDF is lower or nil and under-12s usually share their parents' room; send us the ages and we price the family as a whole.

Flights to Paro are the one cost outside the package. One-way fares from Kolkata start around US$190 and from Bangkok around US$360 per seat on Bhutan Airlines' published tariff, with child fares usually discounted. The how to get to Bhutan guide has every route, and the trip cost guide explains what is and is not included.

Good to know

- The SDF is collected with the visa application, not on arrival, and the US$100 rate is held until 31 August 2027.
- A child who is 5 on the day you enter pays no SDF for the whole stay. A week before a sixth birthday saves US$350.
- Budget separately for tips (US$15 to 25 a day for guide and driver together), rafting, and souvenirs.

Mountain Roads, Motion Sickness and Altitude

The drives, not the altitude, are what families find hardest. Bhutan's roads bend continuously, and the Thimphu to Punakha stretch over Dochula is the one most children feel. What helps: motion-sickness medicine or acupressure bands given 30 to 60 minutes before leaving, the queasiest child in the front seat if old enough, plain dry snacks rather than a big breakfast, a stop every 45 to 60 minutes for air (your guide will suggest viewpoints), and looking out rather than down at a screen. A long break at the Dochula cafe turns the worst drive into two short ones.

Family itineraries stay between about 1,250 m in Punakha and 3,100 m at Dochula, and children usually adjust faster than their parents. Keep the first day gentle, keep them drinking water, and watch for an unusually tired, headachy or off-their-food child, which is the signal to slow down. Nobody sleeps above 3,000 m on our family routes.

Child car seats are not standard in Bhutanese tour vehicles. If your child uses one at home, bring a lightweight travel seat; our vehicles have rear seatbelts to fix it to, and we can sometimes source a seat locally if you ask well ahead.

Good to know

- Keep a change of clothes and a plastic bag within reach on every drive. It is rarely needed and always missed when it is.
- Window games work: spot the prayer flags, count the chortens, look for langurs in the trees below Dochula.

Food for Children in Bhutan

Bhutanese food is built on chilli. Ema datshi, the national dish, is chillies cooked in cheese, and most home cooking is hotter than children expect. Hotels and tourist restaurants know this well and serve a milder spread alongside: red rice, dal, steamed momos, fried rice, noodles, eggs, chicken without chilli, vegetables, and usually pasta or chips. Tell your guide what your children eat and it will be on the table.

Tap water is not for drinking. Bottled and filtered water is everywhere and included on our trips. Fresh fruit, biscuits and crisps are easy to find in Thimphu and Paro; familiar snack brands from home are not, so pack the ones that matter for the drives. A momo-making session in a farmhouse kitchen is a good rainy-afternoon activity, and the food guide has the full menu.

Good to know

- Ask for ezay, the chilli relish, to come on the side. The same dish without it is usually child-friendly.

Health, Safety and Medical Care

Bhutan is one of the safest countries in Asia for a family, with very little crime, no street hustle, and a guide beside you throughout. The practical health questions are about distance from a hospital. Thimphu has the Jigme Dorji Wangchuck National Referral Hospital with a paediatric department; Paro and Punakha have district hospitals for minor treatment; serious cases are evacuated to Bangkok or Delhi, so your travel insurance must cover children and medical evacuation.

No vaccinations are required to enter. Routine childhood vaccinations should be current, and your paediatrician may suggest hepatitis A and typhoid. Pharmacies in Thimphu and Paro stock adult medicines but few children's formulations, so bring a children's fever reducer, antihistamine, rehydration salts, plasters and antiseptic, plus any prescriptions. Tell us about allergies and conditions before you travel so hotels are briefed. The health and safety guide goes into more depth.

Good to know

- The mountain sun is strong even on cool days. Hats and high-factor sunscreen for every child, every day.
- Stray dogs are everywhere and mostly placid. Teach children not to approach or feed them.

Best Time to Visit Bhutan with Kids, and Taking Them to a Tshechu

Spring (March to May) has warm days, rhododendrons in bloom and the Paro Tshechu, usually in late March or April; festival dates sell out hotels six months ahead. **Autumn (September to November)** has the clearest skies and the Thimphu Tshechu in September or October, with the same booking pressure. **Winter (December to February)** is cold at night but bright by day, quiet, cheaper to fly, and the season for the cranes in Phobjikha; Punakha stays mild. **Monsoon (June to August)** brings daily rain, leeches on trails and the odd road closure, and we steer families away from it unless the dates are fixed. The seasonal guide and the festival calendar have the dates.

A tshechu is a day of masked dances in a dzong courtyard, with clowns called atsaras working the crowd, and families from the whole district in their best clothes. Children are entranced for about two hours and restless after that. Arrive early for a spot on the steps, bring cushions, water, snacks and hats, stay for the morning, go for lunch and a rest, and come back late afternoon if they have energy. Paro and Thimphu are the easiest festivals with children because of the facilities; the tshechu guide explains the dances. With under-5s, consider whether a festival is worth the crowds at all, since everyday Bhutan may hold them better.

Good to know

- For December or summer school holidays, book six months ahead. Flights into Paro and family rooms fill first.
- Winter mornings start below freezing in Thimphu and Paro and reach 15 °C by lunch. Layers, not one big coat.

Where Families Stay in Bhutan

Three- and four-star hotels in Paro, Thimphu and Punakha have family rooms or connecting rooms, cots on request, heating and reliable hot water. At the top end, Amankora, Six Senses and COMO Uma offer family suites, babysitting and activity programmes. In between are the farmstays: a night with a Bhutanese family in a traditional house, with farm animals to feed, a hot stone bath, and dinner around the stove. The bathrooms are simple and the welcome is not. We include one farmstay night on most family trips, usually in Punakha or Paro.

When you book, tell us the children's ages and we will request ground-floor rooms, rooms away from the road, extra beds or cots, and a kettle. Most hotels of three stars and above have WiFi, often slow. The hotels guide describes the properties we use.

> **Good to know**
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> - Download films and games before you fly. Evenings are quiet and WiFi is not something to count on.

What to Pack for Children

Beyond the general packing list, families need a few extras:

For every child

- Layers: mornings and evenings are cold, afternoons warm
- Broken-in walking shoes with grip
- Sun hat and high-factor sunscreen
- Refillable water bottle
- Motion-sickness medicine or bands
- Familiar snacks for the drives
- A small daypack of their own
- Travel journal, pencils, a card game

For babies and toddlers

- Nappies for the whole trip: local choice is limited
- Formula from home
- A baby carrier or hiking backpack carrier
- A lightweight travel car seat if you use one
- A travel booster seat; high chairs are rare

Leave the stroller at home. Cobbled dzong courtyards, temple steps and dirt trails defeat wheels within a day; a carrier does everything a stroller would.

> **Good to know**
>
> - A children's book of Bhutanese folk tales, read on the flight, turns every temple mural into a story they already know.

An 8-Day Bhutan Itinerary with Kids

This is the shape of the family trips we run most often: the three western valleys, no drive longer than four hours, one farmstay night, and afternoons left open. It is our six-day western valleys tour with two extra nights so nothing is rushed.

DayWhereWhat the family doesDay 1ParoArrive by late morning, lunch, Kyichu Lhakhang and a walk by the

river. Early night at Paro's altitude.Day 2Paro to ThimphuOne-hour drive, takin preserve, stamps with your faces at the Postal Museum, Buddha Dordenma at sunset.Day 3ThimphuPaper factory, archery, Simply Bhutan, farmers' market if it is Friday to Sunday. Afternoon free.Day 4Thimphu to PunakhaDochula pass with hot chocolate and the chortens, Chimi Lhakhang rice-field walk, farmstay evening.Day 5PunakhaGentle rafting on the Mo Chhu, suspension bridge, Punakha Dzong in the soft late light.Day 6Punakha to ParoFour-hour drive broken at Dochula and lunch in Thimphu. Rinpung Dzong and the cantilever bridge. Rest.Day 7ParoTiger's Nest with ponies to the cafeteria, late lunch, hot stone bath, farewell dinner.Day 8ParoSlow breakfast and the short drive to the airport.

With toddlers, drop Punakha's rafting for a second farm afternoon. With teenagers, swap days 5 and 6 for a night in Phobjikha, or add a two-day walk from the trekking guide.

Like this plan? Make it yours

Tell us your travel dates and your children's ages, and we will tailor this 8-day itinerary to your family and hold your seats.

Request to Book This Family Itinerary

Free, with no payment until you confirm

Good to know

- Fly in on a morning flight if you can. Arrivals before noon give the children a full, gentle first afternoon rather than a late check-in.
- Give each child a job: the journal, the photographs, the count of prayer wheels spun. Ownership keeps older children engaged.

Frequently Asked Questions

Is Bhutan safe for children?

> Yes. Bhutan has very little crime, no touts or street hustle, and you travel throughout with a licensed guide and driver. The practical risks are the winding roads, which cause motion sickness, strong mountain sun, and distance from a large hospital outside Thimphu, so travel insurance with medical evacuation is essential.

What is the best age to take kids to Bhutan?

> Around 6 to 12 is the easiest: old enough to walk the trails, sit through part of a festival and enjoy archery and rafting, while paying half the SDF. Toddlers do well on a slower Paro, Thimphu and Punakha route with farm visits, and teenagers can add Phobjikha, longer walks or a short trek.

Can I take a toddler or a two-year-old to Bhutan?

> Yes. There is no minimum age, under-6s pay no SDF, and the three western valleys are low enough and short enough between stops to suit very young children. Bring a carrier rather than a stroller, a travel car seat if you use one, nappies and formula for the whole trip, and plan one activity a day with long afternoons at the hotel.

Do children pay the Sustainable Development Fee in Bhutan?

> Children under 6 pay nothing. Children aged 6 up to their 12th birthday pay US$50 a night, half the adult rate. From 12 the full US$100 applies. All ages pay the one-off US$40 visa fee. Indian nationals pay INR 600 a night from 6 to 11 and INR 1,200 from 12, with no visa fee.

How much does a family trip to Bhutan cost?

> For two adults and two children aged 8 and 5 on a seven-night trip, government fees come to US$1,910: US$1,750 in SDF and US$160 in visas. Our private seven-night tours start at US$1,720 per adult with the SDF and visa included, and children are quoted below that rate. International flights to Paro are extra.

Can children hike to Tiger's Nest?

> Children from about 8 usually walk the whole trail, roughly two hours each way with steps at the end. Younger children ride a pony to the cafeteria viewpoint two-thirds of the way up and walk the rest with encouragement, or stop there. Ponies go up only and do not go beyond the cafeteria.

Need More Information?

Contact our Bhutan travel experts for personalized advice.

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