

#TRAVEL

# LAND OF THE THUNDER DRAGON

## Check out 6 must-visit sites in Bhutan

Learn all about Bhutan's revised policy for Bangladeshi Tourists and why you should make the most out of it.

Bhutan has revised its tourism policy for Bangladeshi tourists by substantially reducing the Sustainable Development Fees (SDF) to USD 15 per day. This is a reflection of the country's strengthening relationship with Bangladesh and has been done to enhance cultural, social and tourism exchanges.

Under the new fees, around 15,000 Bangladeshi tourists will get to visit Bhutan annually. This essentially means that Bhutan is one of the most attractive and affordable destinations for us to explore!

Given its unique culture and immense natural beauty coupled with the new policy which significantly reduces prices, the time for you to explore Bhutan is now!

### WHY VISIT BHUTAN

Bhutan's beauty is unparalleled. It is filled with unique architecture, lush forests, and towering mountains that have been religiously preserved and conserved to ensure that they remain unspoiled.

It primarily offers tourists an avenue to escape the hustle and bustle of city life and immerse themselves in the serenity and tranquillity of its natural beauty. It can also be a wonderland for those with an adventurous heart. From trekking, archery, kayaking and cycling, thrill seekers will be spoiled for choices!

There is also the proposition of cleansing your mind and giving yourself a much-needed reset with meditation retreats and hot stone baths. It also has a pretty bustling nightlife for those who are simply looking to get their party on. In short, it has something for everyone.

### 6 MUST-VISIT SITES

Now that we are acquainted with why you

should visit Bhutan, let's check out some of the must-see places while in the country.

### Paro Taktsang (Tiger's Nest Monastery)

This iconic monastery is located on the edge of a cliff offering views that you simply cannot get anywhere else. It symbolises Bhutan's heritage and is one of its most sacred sites and is also an aesthetical marvel so your eyes will have a field day both inside and outside the monastery.

The journey to the monastery also involves a very challenging yet delightful hike.

Paro in general is also the adventure hub of Bhutan and has a few other tantalising trekking spots. It also offers activities such as archery, which is Bhutan's national sport, white-water rafting/kayaking and also has several excellent routes for cycling enthusiasts.

### Punakha Dzong

Known as the "Palace of Great Happiness," Punakha Dzong is a majestic fortress situated at the confluence of the Pho Chhu and Mo Chhu rivers. It is the second oldest and second-largest dzong in Bhutan. It also hosts the coronation of Bhutan's kings and the annual Punakha Tshechu festival.

One of the distinct features of this palace is the blooming jacaranda trees in spring, which makes the entire surrounding look like it came out of a fairy tale. It also features intricate woodwork and murals. Given its historical significance, stunning architecture and relaxing nature, visiting it is a must.



### Thimphu

As the capital and largest city of Bhutan, Thimphu is the country's cultural and political heart. It merges Bhutan's cultural heritage and tradition with modernity, offering a range of activities and attractions.

Thimphu also has the most vibrant nightlife in Bhutan with a plethora of cafes, restaurants and clubs.

Spots like Mojo Park, Space 34 and Vivacity are extremely popular among tourists to enjoy live music and dancing. Places like Ambient Cafe and The Zone will take you on a gastronomic journey of a lifetime. It also hosts frequent traditional dance and musical performances and is also home to several cultural sites.

### Phobjikha Valley

One for nature lovers and bird watchers among us, this glacial valley is renowned for its scenic beauty and is also home to the endangered black-necked crane. The valley offers a unique insight into Bhutan's deep connection with nature and its commitment to preserving it while also giving you the opportunity to explore traditional Bhutanese villages.

It is also home to the Gangtey Monastery, offering panoramic views and a spiritual atmosphere.

### Bumthang Valley

Considered to be the spiritual heartland of Bhutan, Bumthang Valley is home to several ancient temples and monasteries. It comprises four picturesque valleys: Chokhor, Tang, Ura, and Chhume.

Home to holy sites such as the Jambay Lhakhang and Kurje Lhakhang, it takes you to the heart of Bhutan's beliefs. It also allows you to experience Bhutan at its core with traditional villages and apple orchards. The valley is also home to several vibrant festivals across the year making it a cultural hubspot.

### Dochula Pass

Located at an altitude of 3,100 metres (10,200 feet), the pass offers panoramic views of the Himalayan mountain range. It is adorned with 108 chortens (stupas), known as the Druk Wangyal Chortens, built to honour Bhutanese soldiers who died in a 2003 military operation.

The Dochula Pass is also home to the Druk Wangyal Lhakhang, a temple that commemorates the stability and prosperity brought by the monarchy. It is a site which uniquely blends nature with history and culture.

By **Irfan Aziz**  
Photo: **Collected**

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