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DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM

Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Employment

Tarayana Center, P.O.Box 126, GPO Thimphu, Bhutan
T +975 2 323251 | F +975 2 323695 | hosts@tourism.gov.bt

Press Release

A new chapter in sports: Bhutan's focus on becoming a cricket destination

60,000 people across Bhutan have been trained in cricket, playing on the highest altitude pitches in the world



Image caption: Bhutan Cricket Association has recently donated 500 bats and balls to all students in Merak and Sakteng, located in the far eastern corner of Bhutan

(Thimphu, Bhutan, January XX, 2024): Bhutan is now establishing itself as a premier destination for enthusiasts seeking a unique cricket experience. Guests now have the opportunity to enjoy the thrill of cricket matches amidst the backdrop of majestic mountains and a serene environment. Bhutan provides a cricket experience like no other, with the highest cricket grounds in the world, and where the love for the sport intertwines with the tranquility of its surroundings. The country's cricket grounds boast stunning views that create an unforgettable atmosphere for both players and spectators.

Cricket is now considered one of the fastest growing sports in Bhutan. Numerous efforts in terms of training, infrastructure & tournaments have spread throughout the country, penetrating even remote areas such as Merak and Sakteng in the far east of Bhutan. Now the Bhutan Cricket Association conducts many school tournaments and grass roots programmes for schools and coaching across the country.

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The emergence of cricket in Bhutan dates back to 1999 when televisions were first introduced in Bhutan, giving people the opportunity to watch the 1999 Cricket World Cup. Gradually, Bhutanese started to play in the stadiums and even played in various international tournaments.



Image caption: The Bhutan Cricket Association has trained 60,000 people in Bhutan from youth to senior age, across 18 dzongkhags (districts) in Bhutan, including training 1070 monks and 60 nuns.

Bhutan Cricket has come a long way since its admission to the ICC in 2001. Today, there are seven active districts for cricket. The new Gelephu International Cricket Ground, which will soon be inaugurated, will become the first cricket ground in Bhutan that will meet the international standards. So far, the Bhutan Cricket Association has trained 60,000 people in Bhutan from youth to senior age, across 18 dzongkhags (districts) in Bhutan, including training 1070 monks and 60 nuns.

Bhutan Cricket also collaborates with local tour operators to facilitate cricket matches in various picturesque locations across the Kingdom. One of Bhutan's primary venues, the Gelephu ground, situated in the southern part of Bhutan bordering India, offers a unique experience for clubs or teams from India seeking to play in Bhutan. Despite the hot weather, Gelephu ground provides a convenient and proper-sized playing field, making

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it an ideal choice. Additionally, cricket matches are offered in Thimphu and Punakha, each offering its own charm and appeal. While the ground sizes may vary, the experience gained in these locations is bound to be mesmerizing. Particularly notable is the Punakha Ground, located near the majestic Dzong, enhancing its appeal and accessibility for cricket enthusiasts. Guest can have unforgettable cricket experiences amidst Bhutan's breathtaking landscapes.

“On behalf of the Bhutan Cricket Family, I extend a warm invitation to all cricket enthusiasts worldwide to join us in experiencing the joy of cricket amidst the breathtaking backdrop of Bhutan's natural beauty. Every stroke of the bat and every delivery you bowl will transform into a unique and unforgettable cricketing experience in the majestic Himalayan landscape. We wholeheartedly welcome you to be a part of the spirit of the game and immerse yourself in the serenity of Bhutan while relishing the thrill of cricket. Cricket-Happiness is a Game,” said Damber Gurung, the Chief Executive Officer of the Bhutan Cricket Council Board.

Gelephu International Cricket Ground is the first cricket ground in Bhutan that will meet international standards. Located at a comfortable five-minute drive away from the main town of Gelephu, the facility covers 6 acres of land and has two entrances. The playing field spanning 3.5 acres is equipped with 6 turf pitches for matches, net facilities (2 artificial pitches and 4 turf), washrooms (male/female) and natural seating for up to 2000 spectators.

Jigmethang Cricket Ground in Thimphu is located in the north of the Thimphu city. A leisurely walk of around five minutes, alongside the Raidak River will take you to this hidden gem. Sporting a synthetic wicket, the ground is 126.82 meters in length, 85.8 meters in breath and is any amateur cricketer's paradise! Lush green pine trees, a breath-taking view of the mountains, the constant sound of flowing water, and the chirping birds will make for a unique setting for your cricketing experience. Furthermore, feel draped in Bhutan's culture, sitting in a colourful Bhutanese tent as the pavilion!

“Bhutan is not just a cricket destination; it's an experience that combines the love for the game with the unmatched beauty of our country. We welcome cricket enthusiasts from around the world to enjoy the unique cricketing experience in Bhutan,” concluded Dorji Dhradhul, the Director General of the Department of Tourism.

To cater to the growing interest in cricket tourism, travel agencies in Bhutan are now offering specialized packages for cricket enthusiasts. These packages include the ground fee, match officials, equipment, lunch, refreshment, cricket opponent, first aid and even trophies.

To view a short documentary about cricket in Bhutan, visit [this link](#).

For more information about cricket in Bhutan, please visit this [link](#).

For more information about Bhutan's Department of Tourism visit www.bhutan.travel

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About the Department of Tourism

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The Department of Tourism of Bhutan is responsible for the development and promotion of sustainable tourism in Bhutan. It works to share the Kingdom's remarkable places, people and experiences with conscious travellers, guided by the principles of high-value, low-volume tourism.

Bhutan Believe

Bhutan's new national brand: "Bhutan Believe", underscores our nation's belief in a better future, led by wisdom from our past. The national tagline for Bhutan – Believe – is about believing in the future of Bhutan, as well as the potential, possibilities and opportunities that Bhutan offers in a rapidly evolving world. It's also about believing in the values, the capabilities, the contributions and the potential of our citizens.

Our visitor manifesto sums up this optimism with the message:

"We see a bright future. And we believe in our ability and responsibility to realize it together, and shine as a beacon of possibility in the world."

The hope is we become what we believe in. We are asked to believe in ourselves, in our worth, and in Bhutan's future, with hope and conviction.

Bhutan Visas and SDF

Applying for a visa (or permit) to Bhutan is simple. All visitors must have a visa and permit before traveling to Bhutan (except for tourists from India who can obtain a permit on arrival and those from Maldives and Bangladesh who can also obtain a visa on arrival). Visitors [apply online](#) for a visa or permit or via a Bhutanese Tour Operator or hotel.

It takes around five days to process a visa.

All guests must pay Bhutan's Sustainable Development Fee (SDF) of USD 100 per person per night (Concessionary rates apply for children) and a non-refundable, one-off visa application fee of USD 40. Indian guests pay SDF of Nu/INR. 1,200 per person per night.

The SDF funds important cultural, environmental, health and educational projects across Bhutan. More information is available at: www.bhutan.travel

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