



DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM

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PRESS RELEASE

Bhutan introduces new travel incentives for guests to discover more and stay longer

- ***Bookings made for holidays to Bhutan between 1 June 2023 and 31 December 2024 can benefit from exclusive long-stay incentives on the Sustainable Development Fee in return for tree planting***
- ***Taking advantage of this incentive allows families and nature lovers to venture into the farthest corners of Bhutan to spot some of the world's rarest birds and mammals; avid trekkers can explore the newly restored Trans Bhutan trail or Snowman Trek; or the culturally inclined can sample all the flavours, festivals and restorative pace of life in remote villages***
- ***The incentives are available for US dollar SDF-paying tourists***

(Thimphu, Bhutan, May 31, 2023): Bhutan's Department of Tourism (DoT) has announced that a range of exclusive incentives on Bhutan's Sustainable Development Fee (SDF) have recently been confirmed, which are designed to encourage longer stays that enable greater exploration of all 20 provinces in the Kingdom. Bhutan's SDF is currently set at USD 200 per person, per night for all guests (excluding Indian nationals, who are charged 1,200 Rupees per night, per guest). Concessions are made for children below the age of 12.

The SDF is a way that visitors support Bhutan's [ongoing development and sustainability projects](#). Collected by the national exchequer, the funds raised through the SDF are allocated to various projects that enhance facilities, services and infrastructure for Bhutanese nationals and visitors, as well as funding free healthcare, education and upskilling the tourism and hospitality sector. The funds also contribute to the preservation of the nation's rich heritage and pristine landscapes, by funding conservation, preservation and other sustainable initiatives that support the attainment of [UN Sustainable Development Goals](#).

In this mountainous terrain, however, short distances can require long journeys. To enable guests to discover more of what this diverse kingdom offers and encourage more long-stay travellers, exclusive SDF incentives for US Dollar SDF-paying guests have been confirmed for bookings made from June 01, 2023 onwards, and are valid for stays in Bhutan between June 01, 2023 until December 31, 2024.

Depending on their planned itinerary, visitors can choose any of the following options with effect from June 01, 2023:

- **4 + 4:** Pay the SDF of USD 200 per night, per person, for four nights, and receive up to four additional nights without the daily levy.
- **7 + 7:** Pay the SDF of USD 200 per night, per person, for seven nights, and receive up to seven additional nights without the daily levy.
- **12 + 18:** Pay the SDF USD 200 per night per person, for twelve nights, and receive up to eighteen additional nights without the daily levy.



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As per the Tourism Levy Act of Bhutan 2022, the SDF is exempt for children of 5 years and below; and there is a concessionary levy rate of 50% for children between the ages of 6-12 years. Anyone aged 12 and above pay the full SDF rate. The same long-stay SDF incentives outlined above can be applied to US dollar SDF-paying children.

All incentives 'reset' after the timeframe ends. An online tool to help calculate the total SDF payable per person is available to view on the Department of Immigration's website at: <https://visit.doi.gov.bt/> and also on the Department of Tourism's website: <https://bhutan.travel/faqs>

An extended stay allows guests to explore more of Bhutan's 20 dzongkhags, from pristine highland communities to cultural villages and nature hotspots. Taking advantage of this incentive allows nature lovers to venture into the farthest corners of Bhutan's wilderness to spot some of the world's rarest birds and mammals; avid trekkers to explore the newly restored Trans Bhutan trail or the famed Snowman Trek; or the culturally inclined to sample all the flavours, festivals and restorative pace of life in Bhutan's remote villages – from east to west, and north to south.

Visitors are also being given another opportunity to meaningfully contribute to Bhutan's progress. Each visitor to Bhutan will be offered the chance to plant a tree towards Bhutan's goal of one million new trees, helping to maintain the kingdom's carbon-negative status and exceptional forest cover. Tree saplings will be provided to guests who wish to plant them during their stay in Bhutan, before being maintained by Bhutan's De-suung national service project.

"These SDF incentives are designed to encourage longer stays in the country," said H.E. Dr. Lotay Tshering, the Honourable Prime Minister of Bhutan. "In forming these options, we have listened to the feedback of the industry, to the recommendations of ABTO and other stakeholders, while also balancing the original vision behind the revisions to our tourism strategy in the first place, to ensure that we focus on high value, low volume tourism," he added.

"We are delighted to welcome guests to share in the wonder and wilderness of Bhutan," said Dorji Dhradhul, Director General of Bhutan's Department of Tourism. "We are proud of our kingdom, and proud of the contribution that our guests make to the pursuit of our sustainable development projects. These incentives are an opportunity for our friends from around the world to experience more, travel further and stay longer – and by doing so, to actively participate in progress and preservation that benefits our citizens and the wider world. We hope that with these incentives, together with the recent reduction in the monument fees and the 24-hour SDF waiver for border towns, Bhutan will be a more accessible destination for a wider range of guests," he concluded.

The Department of Tourism recently announced that a total of 52,173 tourists have arrived in Bhutan since Bhutan's reopening to tourism after the Covid-19 pandemic on 23rd September 2022 until 10th May 2023. Out of this figure, 32,517 are Indian guests who have paid Nu. 1,200 per person, per night, while 19,656 are other international guests who have paid USD 200 per night. The tourist arrival data for April was around 47% more than what was forecasted. The Department of Tourism is predicting 98,245 tourists to arrive in Bhutan in 2023.

More information on the SDF promotion, including how to access and pay for the incentives, are available at <https://bhutan.travel/faqs>

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TERMS

1. These incentives come into effect for applications submitted from June 01, 2023 onwards, and is valid for stays in Bhutan between June 01, 2023 until December 31, 2024. Guests staying in Bhutan from January 01, 2025 onwards will not be eligible for any SDF incentive unless otherwise communicated.
2. The SDF incentives are only applicable for US Dollar SDF paying tourists.
3. Each different SDF option will reset at the end of the designated time period. For instance, after four days, option one will 'reset' where the guest pays USD 200 per day again from day five onwards.
4. The SDF incentives cannot be combined with the 24 hour SDF waiver for border towns.
5. The SDF incentives may be retracted or extended at any time.

Q&A

Q. Does this offer represent a lowering of the SDF?

A. No. Bhutan's SDF is still fixed at USD 200 per person, per day. This incentive extends complimentary nights to reward long-staying guests.

Q. What will my total payable SDF be if I wish to stay 3, 5, 7, 11, 17 or 30 nights?

A. An online calculator to calculate the total SDF payable per person is available at <https://bhutan.travel/fags>

Q. Can this exclusive rate be combined with the SDF waiver for border towns?

A. No. This incentive is not combinable with the SDF waiver for border towns. So, if guests wish to visit the border towns before or after receiving the SDF incentive, the guests will need to apply for another visa to do so.

Q. How much is the SDF normally?

A. For all visitors except those from India, the SDF is USD 200 per person, per night.

For guests from India (who have an Indian passport or Indian voter ID card), the SDF is 1,200 ngultrum, or the equivalent amount in Indian rupees, per person, per night. Indian children aged between 6 and 12 at the time of travel receive a 50% concessionary discount on their SDF. Those children who have not yet turned six are exempt from any SDF.

Q. How long does my visa allow me to stay in Bhutan?

A. The visa allows you to remain in Bhutan for a maximum of 90 nights from the date of entry.

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