



WORLD TOURISM DAY 2026

Digital Agenda and AI to Redesign Tourism



Milarepa Lhakhang, Phuntsholing



27 SEPTEMBER 2026

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DEPARTMENT
OF TOURISM



PROSPEROUS PHUNTSHOLING



UN Tourism



BHUTAN CELEBRATES WORLD TOURISM DAY 2026

The Kingdom of Bhutan joined the global tourism community in celebrating World Tourism Day 2026 under the theme “Digital Agenda and Artificial Intelligence to Redesign Tourism.” The Department of Tourism, Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Employment, in collaboration with tourism partners, commemorated World Tourism Day on 27 September 2026 in Milarepa Lhakhang, Phuntsholing.



The event brought together more than 180 participants to mark the occasion. Among them were 55 Indian tourists who came as the first group of visitors under the Regulatory Sandbox, along with participants from Sikkim and Alipurduar. The remaining participants comprised officials and tourism stakeholders from Chukha, Phuntsholing and Thimphu.

As part of the celebration, the Department in collaboration with the Chukha Dzongkhag Administration launched four key initiatives aimed at strengthening digitalisation, sustainable tourism development, destination promotion, and recognition within the tourism sector.



1. LAUNCH OF PHUENTSHOLING THROMDE ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM (PTEP) REGULATORY SANDBOX

The Phuentsholing Thromde Enhancement Programme (PTEP) Regulatory Sandbox for Managed Tourism was launched as a pilot initiative designed to provide structured and high-quality tourism experiences for visitors entering Bhutan through its principal gateway. This launch represents one of six distinct priority delivery clusters under PTEP Phase I, which runs from March 2026 to March 2027, alongside other crucial clusters including the Media and Communication Strategy for Tourism Branding and Promotion, the PSA ground redevelopment, the Kaja Throm Chanyul Park model, Youth Skilling and Placement, and Mega Events Hosting.

The Regulatory Sandbox aims to transform Phuentsholing from a transit point into a vibrant destination by offering visitors structured itineraries under the up to 24-hour Sustainable Development Fee (SDF) waiver framework. Following intensive stakeholder consultations, two specific sandbox arrangements have been approved for implementation. The first is the Milarepa Lhakhang Sandbox, which will operate as a one-year pilot period from 27 September 2026 to August 2027, facilitating guided visits for the regional tourist to the sacred site. The second is the Pachu Harvest Festival Sandbox, approved specifically for the Pachu Harvest Festival on 8 November 2026.



The initiative is a core component of the broader PTEP, which was instituted by the Hon'ble Prime Minister in December 2025. The Regulatory Sandbox pilot marks a significant milestone in promoting managed responsible tourism, cultural and environmental stewardship, and local economic opportunities, ensuring that Phuentsholing's journey from a gateway to a destination is both sustainable and enriching for all stakeholders.



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2. LAUNCH OF PROSPEROUS PHUENTSHOLING BRAND WITH MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

The initiative unveils a complete suite of branding and promotional tools to establish a distinct destination identity for Phuentsholing, with a very relatable brand "Prosperous Phuentsholing".

The vision of a "Prosperous Phuentsholing" goes beyond economic prosperity, encompassing both the inner well-being of its people and the outward development of the town. It envisions a Phuentsholing where people can experience healing, mindfulness, peace and a stronger sense of community, while the town itself grows through greater economic opportunities, a clean and sustainable environment, and a safe and welcoming atmosphere. The vision seeks to revitalise Phuentsholing and restore its identity as a vibrant, experiential and thriving town, one that is welcoming to residents, businesses and visitors alike, while preserving the spirit that makes Phuentsholing an important gateway to Bhutan.

The Media and Communication Strategy for PTEP is a comprehensive initiative designed to reposition Phuentsholing "From Gateway to Destination". To support this vision, the initiative introduces the full collateral package including a new destination brand identity, a

dedicated website and active social media pages, a comprehensive media kit and brand guidelines, promotional collaterals and digital content, as well as a Special Online Payment Feature and Booking Platform.

The collaterals include:

1. Phuentsholing Media Kit
2. Phuentsholing Brand Guidelines
3. Phuentsholing Tourist Guide (Brochure)
4. Phuentsholing Factsheet

The digital platforms comprise of a destination portal and booking platform along with social media:

Destination Portal: www.phuentsholing.travel

Social media - Facebook, Instagram, TikTok and YouTube @visitphuentsholing

These practical tools are designed to equip tourism businesses and stakeholders with modern resources to effectively promote the unique offerings of Phuentsholing, fostering greater collaboration and economic opportunity within the region. The strategy is a key component of the broader PTEP, which was instituted by the office of the Hon'ble Prime Minister.



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Bhutan Tour Guides Network

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The official platform for licensed Bhutanese tour guides.

Your digital guide ID, assignments, live crowd levels, guest
check-in and certification — in one place. Open it in
Telegram or sign in here and use it in your browser.

 Open in Telegram

 Sign in with your CID

Licensed guides can sign in right here in this browser — same
platform, same account. Or **message the bot** if you need help.

  bgn.privatejourneys.bt  

3. LAUNCH OF THE BHUTAN TOUR GUIDES NETWORK (BTGN)

Today, we are proud to launch the Bhutan Tour Guides Network (BTGN), an innovative, Telegram-based mini-app designed as every guide's ultimate map to excellence.

More importantly, to support professional development, the platform includes quizzes and maintains a digital record of guides' accomplishments and achievements. It also enables guides to access reviews, report issues and submit suggestions, providing a direct channel for communication and feedback. The launch programme featured the unveiling of the Bhutan Tour Guides Network application with a digital khadar ceremony, a presentation on the platform's objectives and key features, and a video demonstration of its functions. BTGN will primarily be available on Telegram mini app and it will soon be accessible on www.tourguides.gov.bt as well.

<https://bhutan.travel/>



4. LAUNCHED THE TOURISM RECOGNITION PROGRAM (TRP)

The Tourism Recognition Program (TRP) was launched on World Tourism Day 2026 as an initiative of the Department of Tourism to acknowledge individuals, businesses and organisations whose dedication and contributions had made a meaningful difference to the tourism industry of the Kingdom of Bhutan. The program recognised that tourism was a collective endeavour, shaped not only by those directly employed in the sector but also by communities, institutions, creatives, conservationists and others whose efforts supported visitors, promoted Bhutan, preserved culture and heritage, advanced sustainability and enriched the overall tourism experience.

The program invited nominations from the industry and recognised individuals and organisations for their contributions to the development of tourism in Bhutan. It provided an opportunity to acknowledge those who had gone above and beyond in supporting the development of tourism. Launched as part of World Tourism Day 2026, the program was envisioned as an annual initiative that could grow and expand in the years ahead.

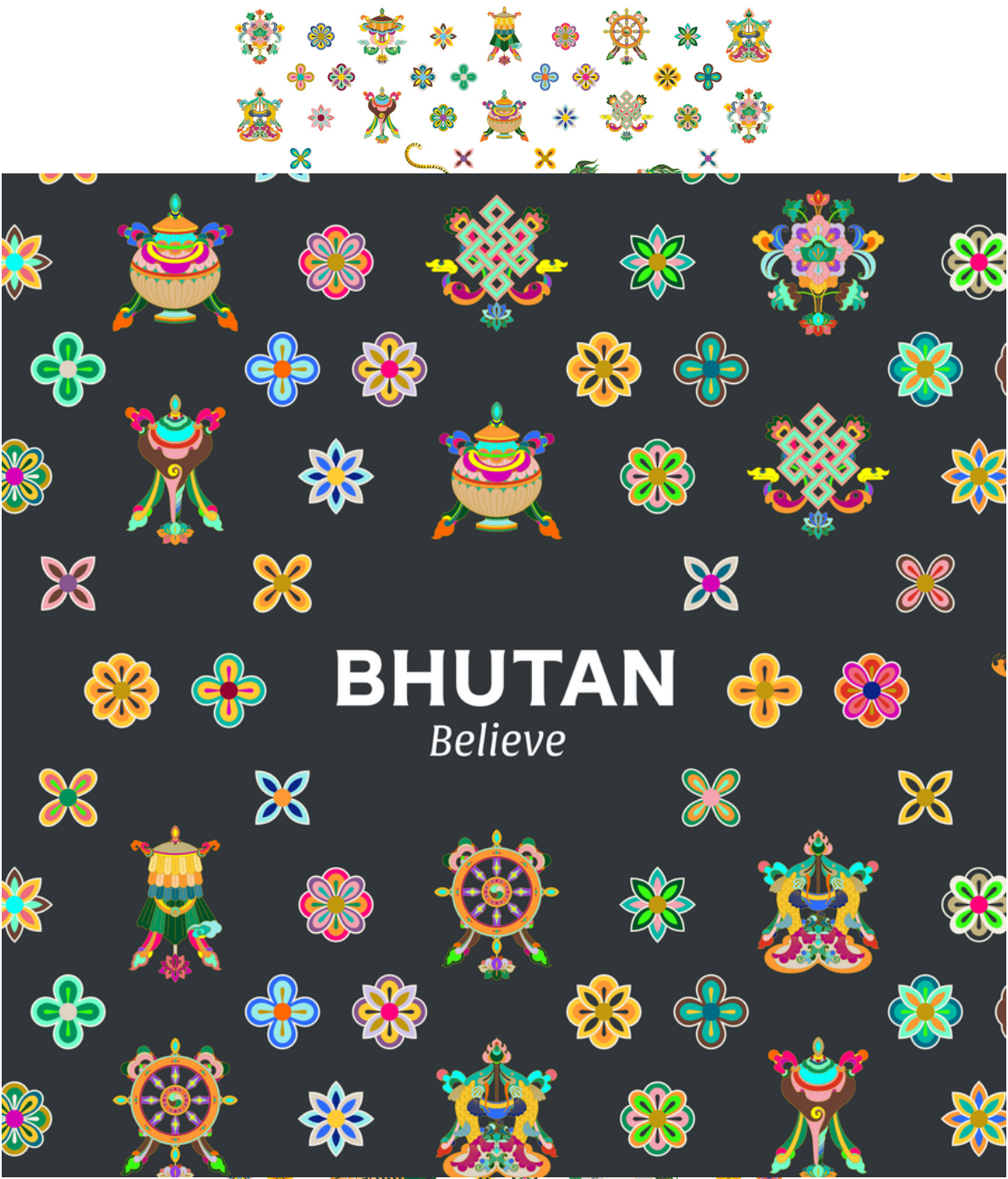
Through the program, the Department of Tourism aimed to foster a culture of appreciation and recognition while encouraging continued dedication and meaningful contributions to the development of Bhutan's tourism sector.

"This program is far more than a ceremony of awards; it is a national tribute to excellence, sustainability, hard work, commitment, and integrity. It is designed to spotlight the trailblazers who elevate our standards of service, the environmental stewards who safeguard our ecosystems, and the local champions who keep our living culture vibrant.

Yet, what we launch today is just the start. Crucial as this beginning is, recognition cannot remain a rare, top-down gesture - it must become a shared culture. We must work together, collectively, to recognize and uplift each other in our daily work. As this program evolves, we will widen our horizon even further - opening doors in the future to recognize not only our homegrown heroes, but also the mindful tourists and international supporters who travel with deep respect for our values and champion Bhutan on the global stage.

By celebrating leadership today, we set the benchmark for tomorrow. We remind ourselves and the world that world-class tourism is built on passion, responsibility, and an unyielding commitment to our Bhutanese identity" - Damcho Rinzin, Director, Department of Tourism.

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