

Bhutan - Important Information

If you intend to visit Bhutan, for planning purposes, it is very useful to know the information contained in this document. This document provides information on:

- Getting to Bhutan
- The country's pricing policy

Getting To Bhutan

General

You can only travel into Bhutan using a recognised Agent; you cannot organise it yourself. How is this controlled? Your Agent will issue you with your visa and Druk Air flight tickets (if appropriate) into Bhutan. The Bhutanese Govt will not deal with anyone other than a recognised Agent for the visa and Druk Air will do the same.

You can either fly or drive in and out of Bhutan. Bhutan's only international airport is Paro (PBH). The Bhutanese Government monitors visitors into and out of Bhutan; they do not restrict.

You are strongly recommended to engage with your Agent at an early stage of your trip planning to take advice on dates and the number of nights that you intend to stay in Bhutan. Druk Air for example do not fly into Bhutan on a daily basis from each of the cities that it serves.

Travel and Trek's extensive experience of organising and adjusting itineraries will take this into account.

On entry into Bhutan, you will be met by your Guide. He will be with you until you depart Bhutan (even if you have a UK Leader too).

Druk Air. Druk Air is Bhutan's National airline and is the only airline that serves Bhutan.

Page 3 shows Druk Air's routes. Please note that it does not serve each of those cities on a daily basis. It's schedule can be downloaded from the Druk Air website (www.drukair.com.bt).

Druk Air can change their schedule and routings without notice (see Buffer Time).

Visual Flight Rules (VFR). Paro airport is located in a fairly mountainous area. The aircraft routinely have to make sharp banking turns on the approach to landing or shortly after take off. The weather in this area is unpredictable and VFR simply means that if the pilot has no clear vision of the local mountain tops, he will not take off or land. Delays are therefore always possible.

Buffer Time. For the reasons stated above, Travel and Trek strongly recommends that you factor in a buffer time zone of at least one night (two if you have the time) on primarily on the end of your time in Bhutan to counter any changes or delays. It is far better to factor in two inexpensive nights in Kathmandu than to risk missing a costly international flight to the UK.

Driving. It is possible to drive in/out of Bhutan using one of three road crossings. All are on the Bhutanese southern border with India. By far the most convenient is at Puntesholding, 5hrs driving south of the capital Thimphu.

Puntesholding is approx 4hrs from the Indian airport of Bagdogra (or Bhadrapur in Nepal (they are just across the border from each other)), from which you can fly to Kolkata or Kathmandu. You can also drive up through West Bengal to Darjeeling and or Sikkim thereby making what can be a good circuit.

Travel and Trek can design an itinerary that combines Bhutan, India and/or Nepal.

Travel and Trek's Easy Guide to flying into Bhutan

ACCESS TO BHUTAN

Understanding how to access Bhutan is key to your planning. Some facts:

- You cannot organise a trip into Bhutan without the use of an Agent.
- Bhutan does not allow 'independent travellers' into Bhutan; you will be escorted throughout by a Guide.

FLYING

Druk Air is Bhutan's National airline and is the ONLY airline that serves the country.

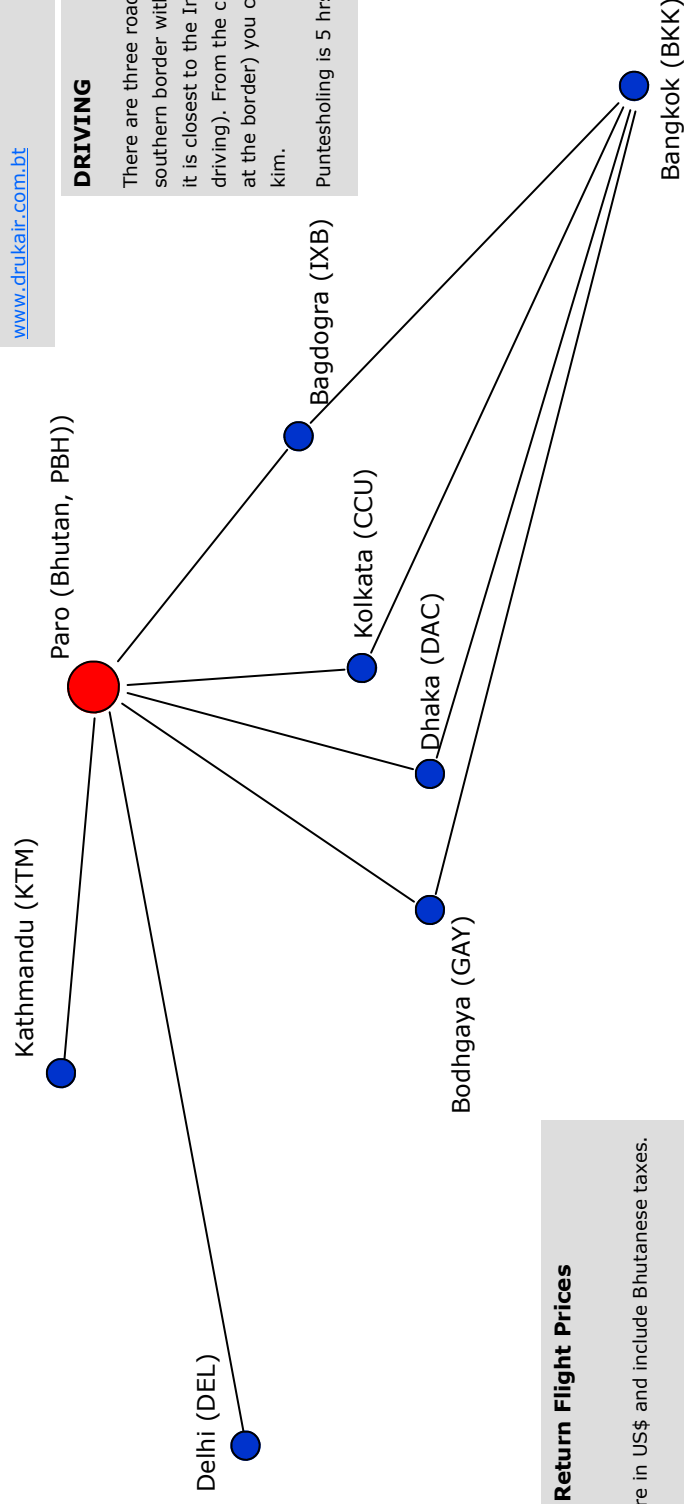
It has two A319 aircraft.

With the exception of BKK, flights do not run on a daily basis from each of the other cities outside of Bhutan. For example, access to PBH from KTM is on a Tue, Thu and Sat only.

The Druk Air flights will be booked for you by your Agent. Your e-ticket will come from your Agent.

Druk Air's schedule and prices are subject to change without notice.

www.drukair.com.bt



DRIVING

There are three road crossings into/out of Bhutan, all on the southern border with India. Puntesholing is the most useful as it is closest to the Indian airport of Bagdogra (less than 4hrs driving). From the crossing point (you would change vehicles at the border) you can also drive north to Darjeeling and Sikkim.

Puntesholing is 5 hrs driving south of the capital of Thimphu.

Druk Air Return Flight Prices

All prices are in US\$ and include Bhutanese taxes.

Route	Economy	Business
KTM - PBH - KTM	442	522
DEL - PBH - DEL	704	923
BKK - PBH - BKK	788	948
CCU - PBH - CCU	545	600

Prices correct on publication, 13 May 09

VISAS

After providing your Agent with the information required, your visa will be processed and sent to you by e-mail. The visa costs \$20.

Bhutan's Pricing Policy

Bhutan's pricing policy is set by the Bhutanese Govt; not by Agents. It was originally set to restrict the number of tourists coming into the country and it has worked.

For your all inclusive stay in Bhutan (see page 4 for general inclusions and exclusions), the Bhutanese Govt charges a flat rate fee per person per night (pppn) (not per day) regardless of what you are doing in Bhutan.

All figures are US\$

- \$200 pppn provided that you in a group of 3 or more.
- \$230 pppn if the group consists of 2 persons.
- \$240 per night for a single person travelling alone*.

*It should be made clear that a lone traveller joining two other people (or more) for the entire time in Bhutan would constitute a group of 3 and therefore the \$200 fee would apply to all.

There is a reduction of those figures for the low season months of July and August to \$165, \$195 and \$205 pppn respectively.

A reduction of \$18 pppn is given on stays of longer than 9 nights. It applies to the 10th night onwards.

35% of the fees quoted above go directly to the Bhutanese Govt, which pays for free medical care and education for the entire country. The remainder of the fee goes to the Company in Bhutan providing the service to you.

Why are the prices for Bhutan shown in US\$ and not UK£?

Despite the fact that Bhutan has its own currency (Ngultrum), it quotes US\$ to foreign visitors. Regardless of what the exchange rates are doing, whatever your fee amounts to for your trip to Bhutan (in US\$), that figure must arrive in the bank in Bhutan. If you see a figure being quoted in UK£, the company charging that figure has got to offset the potential exchange rate fluctuation and will therefore likely be charging you a higher rate than necessary. By showing you the US\$ figure, you know precisely what you need to pay; it is the cheapest and most transparent method.

International Banking fees

Whether you pay direct to Bhutan using your own bank or through Travel and Trek, you will incur international banking fees. These vary from bank to bank but typically range from £20 - £30 per transaction. You can cut the cost of these fees by paying the total cost of the trip in one go (see deposit below). If there are several of you in a group, pool the money and transfer it together.

Paying for your trip

There are two methods that you can use to pay for your trip:

- Direct to Bhutan using your own bank account
- Through Travel and Trek (in UK£)

Direct to Bhutan. Travel and Trek will provide you with the international banking details and you instruct your bank to make the transfer in US\$. This is strongly recommended for non UK based clients (to avoid unnecessary exchange rate conversions through the UK) but applies equally if you are UK based.

Through Travel and Trek. Travel and Trek will transfer the money on your behalf. Given the US\$ figure, you will be asked to transfer the UK£ equivalent to Travel and Trek's UK bank account. We will then transfer it for you and confirm the US\$ rate (and include the international banking fees). Any adjustments in UK£ will then be made. All figures will be confirmed with the client prior to transfer. This is a client friendly method for those without access to international transfer facilities or are not confident with the banking system.

Deposit

The deposit required to secure your trip per person is \$300 + the full Druk Air fare (this figure will vary depending on which airport you fly from). The remaining balance is due 10 weeks prior to departure. You can pay the whole fee in one go as described above if you wish.

Summary of General Inclusion and Exclusions:

The downloadable itinerary for each trip will be more specific where appropriate.

For the nightly rate charged per person:

Included:

- All hotel accommodation (good standard), sole occupation of a room is an additional \$15 per person per night
- All ground transport (from pick up at the airport to return to airport)
- All meals and mineral water (bottled) whilst 'out and about'. Mineral water in hotels is chargeable.
- The services of your Bhutanese Guide, full time. Large groups may have a UK Leader with them
- All staff and pack ponies for the trek (if applicable)
- All accommodation for the trek (tents)
- Fees to monuments, monasteries, etc...

Not included:

- International return airfare into Bhutan from your chosen city (charged separately)
- International flights from UK to the access city
- Mineral water inside hotels
- Tourist Visa fee (currently US\$20), payable on arrival in Bhutan
- Tourist Development fee (currently US\$10), payable on arrival in Bhutan
- Accommodation/food/transport in your chosen access city. Travel and Trek will gladly organise your transit through Kathmandu and/or Delhi
- Local trek staff gratuities

CONTACT DETAILS

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