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TOURISM COUNCIL OF BHUTAN  
ROYAL GOVERNMENT OF BHUTAN

*Vision: A green, sustainable, inclusive and a high value tourism destination*



## **Bhutan will reopen borders in September with renewed focus on sustainability**

*At the center of the sector's revamp are three areas – upgrading of infrastructure and services, the elevation of tourists' experiences, and maintaining carbon-neutral tourism*

**BHUTAN, 29.06.22:** The Kingdom of Bhutan will be reopening its borders to tourists from 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2022. But it will do so with a renewed focus on the sustainability of the sector.

The tourism sector will be undergoing a revamp, which will focus on three key areas. They are infrastructure and services, the travel experiences of tourists, and the sector's environmental impact.

“COVID-19 has allowed us to reset – to rethink how the sector can be best structured and operated, so that it not only benefits Bhutan economically, but socially as well, while keeping carbon footprints low. In the long run, our goal is to create high-value experiences for visitors, and well-paying and professional jobs for our citizens,” said Dr. Tandi Dorji, Foreign Minister of Bhutan and Chairperson of the Tourism Council of Bhutan.

Among the slew of changes are revised standards for service providers, including hotels, guides, tour operators, and drivers, which will soon be subjected to a more robust certification process before they can engage tourists. Employees will be required to participate in skilling and reskilling programmes, where necessary, to boost service quality.

Amid the intensifying threat of climate change, Bhutan will also be stepping up its efforts to keep the country carbon-negative and a green destination for tourists. The nation is keenly vulnerable to the effects of climate change, such as frequent rain and floods.

As such, it will be raising the Sustainable Development Fee (SDF) of USD65 per person per night for tourists to USD200, which will go towards activities that promote carbon-neutral tourism and building a more sustainable tourism sector. This includes offsetting the carbon footprint of tourists and upskilling workers in the sector. Indian tourists will pay a previously stipulated fee, which will be revised at a later date.

At the same time, the Minimum Daily Package Rate (MDPR) will be removed. The rate refers to the minimum sum paid by all tourists for an all-inclusive package tour to Bhutan. The MDPR has in the past often limited the tourist experience, as travelers could only choose packaged tours provided by tour operators. Going forward, tourists will have the flexibility to engage service providers directly, and pay for their services accordingly.

The fee changes came into effect on 20 June, 2022.

The revamp of the tourism sector comes amid a widespread transformation across the country, from the civil service to the financial sector. The changes are geared towards developing Bhutan's human capital by equipping the population with more proficient skills, knowledge, and experiences.



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“Our strategy for the revamp of the tourism sector brings us back to our roots, of ‘High Value, Low Volume’ tourism, where we meet the needs of tourists while protecting our people, culture, values, and environment. Tourism is a strategic and valuable national asset, one that does not only impact those working in the sector but all Bhutanese. Ensuring its sustainability is vital to safeguarding future generations.” Dorji Dhradhul, Director General, Tourism Council of Bhutan.

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