

BHUTAN AIMS TO TRIPLE ITS TOURIST NUMBERS



Despite charging tourists hundreds of dollars per day just for the pleasure of being in the Himalayan kingdom, Bhutan plans to increase its inbound tourism. They are aiming for 100,000 visitors by 2012.

Bhutan expects to welcome 30,000 foreign visitors this year, including the less lucrative Indian visitors and the more lucrative dollar spending Americans. This may not seem too many for such a mysterious and interesting place, which attracts mountain lovers and those interested in Buddhist culture. However, one should not forget that **the kingdom opened its borders to foreign visitors only in the 1970s and, more importantly, charges non-Indian tourists hundreds of dollars per day just for the privilege of being in Bhutan.**

If the Indian tourists are included in the 100,000 then the figure is realistic. **Indians do not pay the tariffs**, which are compulsory for westerners, **and are allowed to pay in their own currency, rupees**, which are of similar value as Bhutanese Ngultrum. Western tourists are not so lucky and have to pay much higher amounts for everything, including the right just to be there.

A lot depends on two factors: whether the Bhutanese are willing to reduce the financial burden on western tourists and whether the tourists are still willing to continue to pay for not being Indian or Asian. **The Bhutanese have promised that**, whatever the outcome of new attempts to attract more tourists, **the quality of their services shall remain the same** and shall not be compromised. The high quality of tourism is said to be the reason for the high prices in the first place and this must not be jeopardized.

Date: 2010-09-27

Article link: <http://www.tourism-review.com/bhutan-plans-to-increase-its-tourist-numbers-news2413>