

BHUTAN LOOKS TO INDIA FOR TOURISM HELP



The small landlocked country Bhutan has been reliant on Western countries in terms of tourism. It now wants to turn to India to reach its goals and attract Indian people to the kingdom of happiness.

Although Bhutan has been enjoying an average annual growth of 27% in recent years, it is still heavily reliant upon just a few countries. **Out of the approximate 28,000 incoming tourists per annum, typically 20% come from the USA, 13% from Japan and 8% from the UK.** Japanese tourists may stop coming for obvious reasons, yet the Americans and British should continue to contribute heavily to Bhutanese tourism.

Bhutan has long prided itself on the gross national happiness and has gained an international reputation for happiness and peace. Indeed, the vast majority of the small country's population belongs to the Buddhist faith. **The challenge is now for the Bhutanese people to promote tourism without jeopardizing this reputation.** In other words, we should not expect to see huge hotels appearing in forests or the destruction of natural elements to make way for capitalist gain. However, if 100,000 tourists are to arrive in Bhutan by 2020, certain steps need to be made.

The emphasis has been placed on Indian tourists and with the Indian population having reached almost 1.2 billion; they seem a reasonable target. India is also one of the world's fastest developing nations, with its outgoing tourists spending more and more time and money elsewhere. The fact that Indians are able to reach Bhutan by land is seen as an advantage, as is the proximity to eastern India.

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