

# BHUTAN'S TOURISM REPORTED EXCEPTIONAL REVENUES



Bhutan recorded more tourist revenue in 2023 than ever before. According to the latest report by the World Tourism Organization, tourism in Asia and the Pacific region has only reached 65% of pre-pandemic levels in 2023. Even though international tourism is recovering from the pandemic, Asia is still lagging.

However, Bhutan's tourism has performed exceptionally well. The tiny Himalayan country **between India and China welcomed over 103,000 visitors in 2023**, thus exceeding its forecast target for tourist arrivals.

## **Bhutan's Tourism Is Booming**

Around 70% of the visitors to Bhutan in 2023 were from India. They paid a Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) fee of 1,200 rupees per night (approximately US\$15). The remaining 30% were international guests who had to pay a fee of \$100 per night. Overall, the SDF revenues in 2023 were approximately \$26 million, which exceeded the highest revenues recorded before the pandemic. The top ten source markets for Bhutan in 2023 were India, the U.S., the UK, Singapore, China, Germany, Vietnam, Malaysia, Australia, and Canada.

According to Kinley Gyeltshen, Chairman of the Association of Bhutanese Tour Operators (ABTO), their goal is to increase visitor numbers and improve the quality and sustainability of the travel experiences offered by Bhutan's tourism facilities. They aim to welcome the world to discover their country's beauty, culture, and spirit with the support of the entire tourism community.

It was recently announced that Bhutan plans to build a new city in the south of the country, emphasizing education, green energy, and environmental friendliness. The city is intended to become a destination for spirituality, wellness, and regeneration. After its planned completion in 2029, it is expected to attract even more tourists to the small kingdom.

## **A Strong Year Start of Bhutan's Tourism**

Bhutan has been named a trending travel destination for 2024 in various media. The country has had a great start to the year, with 4,414 guests arriving between January 1st and 31st, 2024, almost twice the number of guests in January 2023 (2670 arrivals). **Most guests in January 2024 came from India, the U.S., China, the United Kingdom, Brazil, Australia, and Germany.**

Despite the winter season, Bhutan's tourism received good arrivals from several important source markets, almost reaching pre-pandemic numbers. Tourists expressed their satisfaction with Bhutan's suitability as a winter travel destination, characterized by predominantly sunny days and cool evenings. This suggests that winter could develop into a promising tourist season in 2024.

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