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DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM

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PRESS RELEASE

Government announces three new SDF incentives to encourage long-stay visits

The incentives are available for full US dollar SDF-paying tourists, and for stays in Bhutan between June 01, 2023 and December 31, 2024

(**Thimphu, Bhutan, May 31, 2023**): The Cabinet has today announced three different SDF incentives for US dollar SDF-paying tourists that are designed to encourage longer stays and greater exploration of all 20 dzongkhags. The incentives come into effect for bookings made from June 01, 2023 onwards, and are valid for stays in Bhutan between June 01, 2023 until December 31, 2024. This notification is in reference to the approval granted by the 7th Special Session of the Lhengye Zhungtshog (LZ), which was held on May 30, 2023.

Depending on their planned itinerary, visitors can choose any of the following options with effect from June 01, 2023:

- **4 + 4:** Pay the SDF of USD 200 per night, per person, for the first four nights, and receive up to four additional nights without the daily levy.
- **7 + 7:** Pay the SDF of USD 200 per night, per person, for the first seven nights, and receive up to seven additional nights without the daily levy.
- **12 + 18:** Pay the SDF USD 200 per night per person, for the first twelve nights, and receive up to eighteen additional nights without the daily levy.

As per the Tourism Levy Act of Bhutan 2022, the SDF is exempt for children of 5 years and below; and there is a concessionary levy rate of 50% for children between the ages of 6-12 years. Anyone aged 12 and above pay the full SDF rate. The same long-stay SDF incentives outlined above can be applied to US dollar SDF-paying children.

All incentives ‘reset’ after the timeframe ends. An online tool to help calculate the total SDF payable per person is available to view on the Department of Immigration’s website at: <https://visit.doi.gov.bt/> and also on the Department of Tourism’s website: <https://bhutan.travel/faqs>

“These SDF incentives are designed to encourage longer stays in the country,” said H.E. Dr. Lotay Tshering, the Honourable Prime Minister of Bhutan. “In forming these options, we have listened to the feedback of the industry, to the recommendations of ABTO and other stakeholders, while also balancing the original vision behind the revisions to our tourism strategy in the first place, to ensure that we focus on high value, low volume tourism,” he added.

The Government has also confirmed that the SDF will only be applicable to those guests who visit Bhutan on a tourist visa. Other visitor types who fall under the ‘non-tourist’ category will be as per the regulations issued by the Department of Immigration, details of which are available to view on [this link](#).

Furthermore, visitors will also soon be given another opportunity to meaningfully contribute to Bhutan’s progress. Each visitor will be offered the chance to plant a tree towards Bhutan’s goal of one million new trees, helping to maintain the kingdom’s carbon-negative status and exceptional forest cover. Tree saplings will be provided to guests who wish to plant them during their stay in Bhutan.

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“These exclusive incentives are an opportunity for our friends from around the world to experience more, travel further and stay longer – and by doing so, to actively participate in progress and preservation that benefits our citizens and the wider world,” said Dorji Dhradhul, Director General of Bhutan’s Department of Tourism. “We hope that with these incentives, together with the recent revision of the monument fees, the 24-hour SDF waiver for border towns, and other measures, Bhutan will be a more accessible destination for a wider range of guests.”

TERMS

1. These incentives come into effect for applications submitted from June 01, 2023 onwards, and is valid for stays in Bhutan between June 01, 2023 until December 31, 2024. Guests staying in Bhutan from January 01, 2025 onwards will not be eligible for any SDF incentive unless otherwise communicated.
2. The SDF incentives are only applicable for US Dollar SDF paying tourists.
3. Each different SDF option will reset at the end of the designated time period. For instance, after four days, option one will ‘reset’ where the guest pays USD 200 per day again from day five onwards.
4. The SDF incentives cannot be combined with the 24 hour SDF waiver for border towns.
5. The SDF incentives may be retracted or extended at any time.

Q&A

Q1. Does this offer represent a lowering of the SDF?

- A. No. Bhutan’s SDF is fixed at USD 200 per person, per day, and these incentives should not be communicated or sold as being an SDF of USD 100 per person, per day.

Q2. What will my total payable SDF be if I wish to stay 3, 5, 7, 11, 17 or 30 nights?

- A. An online tool to help calculate the total SDF payable per person is available online at the Department of Tourism’s website: <https://bhutan.travel/faqs>

Q3. If my guest takes the 4+4 SDF incentive (or any other incentive) and then spends a night in the border town, can they only pay for three nights SDF and still get four nights free?

- A. No. This incentive is not combinable with the SDF waiver for border towns. So, if guests wish to visit the border towns before or after receiving the SDF incentive, the guests will need to apply for another visa to do so.

Q4. Can guests who have made future bookings to Bhutan take advantage of the new SDF incentives?

- A. Yes, guests who have already booked their trips to Bhutan can take advantage of the new SDF incentives. They will need to cancel their existing visa application and re-apply. Please note that guests will forfeit their original visa fee (USD 40) and will be required to pay the USD 40 visa fee again when they process their new visa application. The SDF that they have already paid can be used when applying again.

Q5. How can I find more information about the terms and conditions of the new SDF incentives?

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A. Please visit <https://bhutan.travel/faqs>

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