

## Travel and Visa arrangements for ICTAM VII in Thimphu, Bhutan

Please print the following information and read it carefully

You will need a prior approved visa letter to enter Bhutan. Follow the instructions given below to process your visa first.

You can reach Thimphu either on the Bhutan's national carrier *Druk Air* from Delhi, Kathmandu, Bangkok, Dacca or overland from India (via Phuntsoling). *Druk Air* is the only airline that flies into Bhutan. It arrives in Paro, the only international airport in Bhutan. If you travel overland, you need to take a Jeep or Bus from the Indian / Bhutanese border town called Phuntsholing (northwest of the Indian state of West Bengal).

We recommend in either case, that all participants make arrangements to arrive **on the 6th of September 2009 in Thimphu**, i.e. one day before the conference, which starts in the morning of the 7th of September 2009. Delays on the flights to Bhutan, due to unpredictable weather conditions are not unusual, and Druk Air does not assume any responsibility for delays. If you arrive late for the conference we cannot reimburse the fees already paid for the entire period of the conference. We will arrange accommodation and food from the dinner on the **6<sup>th</sup> of September until the lunch on 11<sup>th</sup> September 2009, including 5 nights in hotels**. Also, due to the timing of the conference at the end of the monsoon and ongoing construction work, there can be major delays on the road.

Therefore you need to book your flights in such a way that you arrive in Kathmandu, Delhi, Bangkok, Kolkatta or Dacca AT THE LATEST on the 5th of September 2008.

All minority world conference participants (US, Europe, Japan etc) are required to travel to Bhutan **at least one way by plane** (with Druk Air). This does not apply for participants arriving from South Asia.

If you plan to travel one way overland, we recommend that you enter the country by plane and leave overland through the border post of Phuntsoling, the road being very scenic and worthwhile.

### Visa, length of Stay and travel arrangements within Bhutan

#### Visa for Bhutan

The Royal Government requires that every traveller, both official and tourists, travel to Bhutan only on **prior approved visa**. As you are conference participants, the Royal Government would grant you **official visa**, which would exempt you from paying the daily tourist royalty and taxes in Bhutan.

Here are the steps in visa application for Bhutan:

### Step 1

- Fill out the **visa application form** which you can find attached on the website of IASTAM
- E-mail scanned **visa form, passport copy** and **passport photo** to Alpine Bhutan Travel:

[alpinebhutan@yahoo.com](mailto:alpinebhutan@yahoo.com)

[alpinebhutan@gmx.net](mailto:alpinebhutan@gmx.net)

Both are Email addresses of Alpine Bhutan Travel and will be checked regularly by Mr Kelzang Wangchuk and his staff!

- For official visa, we require your passport pictures. You can send us your passport pictures as Jpeg file. The passport picture file should have **your name so that we can identify it!!!** The size of your picture should be about 3 inch x 3 inch, with good resolution and the picture file size should have size of about 300 KB. (If it is larger, it takes much time to download and if it is smaller the resolution is low.).

### Step 2

We will apply for visa on your behalf. Once we get the visa approval letter from the government, we will scan and send you a PDF copy of the visa letter by email.

### Step 3

You will print a copy of the visa approval letter and carry it with you to Bhutan border or airport. You will only be allowed to board the plane at Bangkok/Kathmandu/Delhi/Kolkata airport if you have the visa approval letter.

### Step 4

The visa would be stamped at the border or at Paro Airport upon payment of **US\$ 20**.

Note:

**Visa is required for all except Indian citizens. Indian citizens are required to bring their voter registration or driving license or other identification cards, and apply at the border for route permit.**

PLEASE MAKE SURE YOU HAVE 20 US DOLLAR IN CASH TO PAY THE VISA FEE. (this fee applies to ALL participants, regardless of country of origin and whether you are subsidised by IASTAM or not)

**The deadline for visa application submission is July 31<sup>st</sup> 2009!!!**

All conference participants are allowed to stay up to 14 days in Bhutan during which time they are NOT required to pay the 250 US Dollar daily fee for tourists. However, IASTAM is not going to arrange any sightseeing, travel or accommodation before the 6<sup>th</sup> of September or after the end of the conference on the 11<sup>th</sup> of September. (You can contact **Alpine Bhutan Travel** (alpinebhutan@yahoo.com, <http://www.alpine-bhutan.com>) for pre-conference sightseeing tours or post conference tours.) Also, any extra night – apart from the five nights from the 6<sup>th</sup> September- 11<sup>th</sup> September - will have to be paid for by the conference participants themselves directly to the local travel agent.

If you wish to stay longer at the conference hotel after the 11th of September 2009 please make sure you make a reservation through the travel agent (**Alpine Bhutan Travel**).

### **Visa Extension**

If you plan to stay/travel longer in Bhutan on the official visa and take advantage of the exemption of the Bhutan Tourist Traiff, then you will have to apply for extension when you are in Bhutan. The visa extension, usually up to 10 days would cost US\$ 11 or Nu. 520, and this can be arranged through the local travel agent.

## **Travel by flight or landway**

### **Druk Air flight schedule**

We ask you to time your flights in such a way that you can take the following connecting flights to Bhutan (Paro airport):

**On Sunday, the 6th of September, the booking of following alternative routes is possible and recommended:**

#### **Bangkok to Paro / Bhutan, via Dacca, Flight Number KB131**

Bangkok (BKK) Departure 0550 to Paro / Bhutan (PBH): Arrival 0900

#### **Delhi to Paro / Bhutan, via Kathmandu, Flight Number KB203**

Delhi (DEL) – Kathmandu (KTM) Departure 1250 – Arrival 1445

Kathmandu (KTM) - Paro / Bhutan (PBH) Departure 1525 - Arrival 1640

Find the full draft flight schedule uploaded on the ICTAM website. For latest flight schedule, please contact **Alpine Bhutan Travel**

### **Prices for 2009 of Druk Air flights (NEW!)**

1. Delhi-Paro-Delhi - US\$ 706 (return economy, new fare)
2. Kathmandu-Paro-Kathmandu - US\$ 442 (return economy, new fare)
3. Kolkata-Paro-Kolkata - US\$ 442 (return economy, new fare)
4. Bangkok-Paro-Bangkok- US\$ 788 (Return economy)

Price-list for **SAARC passengers:**

Delhi-Paro-Delhi US\$ 409 (return)  
Kathmandu-Paro-Kathmandu - US\$ 233 (return)  
Kolkata- Paro-Kolkata - US\$ 229 (return)  
Dakha-Paro-Dakha - US\$ 260 (return)

There is no SAARC discount for SAARC passengers from and to Bangkok as it is not in a SAARC country. Please remember that flight frequency from Dhaka to Paro and back is only one flight per week.

The conference is held in high tourist season, so we recommend you book your flights to Bhutan sooner rather than later.

**The deadline for sending travel requirements is June 15, 2009!!!**

Contact to our travel agent Alpine Bhutan Travel:

**ALPINE BHUTAN TRAVEL**

P.O. Box 1382  
Thimphu: Bhutan

Web: [www.alpine-bhutan.com](http://www.alpine-bhutan.com)

E-mail: [alpinebhutan@yahoo.com](mailto:alpinebhutan@yahoo.com)  
[alpinebhutan@gmx.net](mailto:alpinebhutan@gmx.net)

Tel: +975 1761 2210  
Fax: +975 2 334911

All transport to and from Bhutan has to be arranged by conference participants themselves, that is either to Paro airport and back, or if you are coming overland, to and from Thimphu. Pick up from the airport will be arranged by the organisers of the conference. If you have any queries and the travel agent cannot help please do contact us on [iastam.org@hotmail.com](mailto:iastam.org@hotmail.com).

For those who are arriving on 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> September at Paro Airport and leaving on 11<sup>th</sup> September or 12<sup>th</sup> September from Paro Airport, **Alpine Bhutan Travel** would arrange all airport transfers in Bhutan free of charge. Toyota Coaster 16-Seaters and Hiace 8-Seaters would be arranged to the airport.

## **If you intend to travel overland to Thimphu:**

The only border post where foreigners are allowed to enter the country is Phuentsholing.

To reach Phuentsholing you can either fly with one of the cheaper Indian airlines (such as Kingfisher, [www.flykingfisher.com](http://www.flykingfisher.com) etc. from either Kolkata or Delhi to the airport of Bagdogra (IXB), in West Bengal or take a train to the station called New Jalpaiguri Station in Siliguri City. From either place, you have to take a Jeep to the Indian/Bhutanese border town called Phuentsholing, which takes at least 4 hours in a good Jeep. Immigration on the Indian side of Phuentsholing is open until 5 pm (but if you wish to cross that day you need to arrive at 4 pm at least). If you arrive before that, go through immigration, cross the border and spend the night in Phuentsholing (there are many hotels of different ranges). On the next day, take a Jeep or bus to Thimphu. This takes between 6 and 12 hours, depending on the road conditions.

The transport from and to Phuentsholing can also be arranged by **Alpine Bhutan Travel**. However, as participants would have to gather in Phuentsholing and stay one night there, it would mean an extra night in Phuentsholing - which is one night charge extra as we will have to arrange hotel room, food and vehicles with guide for reception and help with visa processing at India-Bhutan border (for both Bhutan visa as well as for India exit stamping).

**Strikes and Bandhs in India:** Please beware that when you are travelling in India, your journey might be disrupted by strikes or **bandhs** in India. Bandhs are common in India, used frequently to agitate or protests political, social or economic issues affecting the people. Bandhs can be on a nationwide scale or confined to a small local area. Either way, bandhs usually target transport networks, and vehicle traffic are the first to be affected. So, it is advisable to keep an allowance for such a situation where you might be stranded. If you find yourself in a bandh, it would be advisable to follow the bandhs and stay put, so as not to attract mob ire.

## **Money**

There is NO possibility to retrieve money with an international credit or debit card in Bhutan. Some hotels accept payments by card, but it often takes a long time and is inconvenient.

**WE RECOMMEND YOU BRING CASH FOR YOUR ENTIRE STAY IN BHUTAN.**

Indian Rupee is widely accepted in Bhutan as it is on par value. It is recommended that you bring money in US dollar cash as it is easy to change into Bhutanese Ngultrum. But in recent months, a few authorized money-exchanges have opened in Bhutan which can change you GBP Pounds or Euros. We recommend you bring Indian Rupees or US Dollars. The Bhutanese currency is called Ngultrum, and has the same exchange rate as the Indian Rupee.

To check exchange rates: [www.xe.com/ucc/](http://www.xe.com/ucc/)

## **Internet**

There are several Internet cafes in Thimphu and the connections are usually reasonably good.

**EFFECTIVE 19JUN 2009 TO 24 OCT2009**

DAY	FLIGHT NO	SECTOR	DEP	ARR	REMARKS
MON	KB202	PBH-KTM KTM-DEL	0855 1030	0950 1200	
	KB203	DEL-KTM KTM-PBH	1250 1525	1445 1640	
	KB125	BKK-CCU CCU-PBH	0620 0800	0720 0940	
	KB126	PBH-DAC DAC-BKK	1035 1215	1135 1545	
TUE	KB127	BKK-DAC DAC-PBH	0550 0800	0720 0900	
	KB130	PBH-IXB IXB-BKK	0805 0840	0800 1320	
WED	KB131	BKK-IXB IXB-PBH	0650 0900	0820 0955	
	KB124	PBH-CCU CCU-BKK	1055 1215	1135 1620	
THU	KB125	BKK-CCU CCU-PBH	0540 0725	0645 0905	
	KB126	PBH-DAC DAC-BKK	1035 1215	1135 1545	
	KB202	PBH-KTM KTM-DEL	0855 1030	0950 1200	VALID UNTIL 30JUN 2009.
	KB203	DEL-KTM KTM-PBH	1250 1525	1445 1640	VALID UNTIL 30JUN 2009.
FRI	KB127	BKK-DAC DAC-PBH	0550 0800	0720 0900	
	KB120	PBH-CCU CCU-BKK	1015 1135	1055 1540	
	KB202	PBH-KTM KTM-DEL	0855 1030	0950 1200	
	KB203	DEL-KTM KTM-PBH	1250 1525	1445 1640	
SAT	KB121	BKK-CCU CCU-PBH	0540 0730	0645 0910	
	KB130	PBH-IXB IXB-BKK	0805 0840	0800 1320	
SUN	KB131	BKK-IXB IXB-PBH	0650 0900	0820 0955	
	KB124	PBH-CCU CCU-BKK	1105 1230	1145 1620	
	KB202	PBH-KTM KTM-DEL	0855 1030	0950 1200	
	KB203	DEL-KTM KTM-PBH	1250 1525	1445 1640	

TIMING IN LOCAL

AIRCRAFT: A319-115

Note: Schedule is subject to change. Therefore, no responsibility can be assumed for delay, cancellation or unavailability of flight or missed connections.

Flight KB202/203 on Thursday will be reinstated effective 1Sept 2009 until the end of the summer schedule 2009.