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**TOURISM COUNCIL OF BHUTAN**



## COVID-19: QUESTION AND ANSWER FOR TOURISM PARTNERS

### What travel advisories have been issued by other countries?

The following are some of the travel advisories issued by the respective governments:

#### 1. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh





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## 2. Bureau of Immigration, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India

**Dinesh Adhikari**  
Deputy Director



No.1/Comm/Bol/2020- 81  
**BUREAU OF IMMIGRATION**  
(Ministry of Home Affairs)  
Government of India

New Delhi, the March 11, 2020

**Subject : Visa restrictions related to COVID-19**

Following instructions have been issued by Bol in pursuance of the meeting of GOM on March 11, 2020.

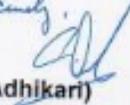
2. In supersession of all earlier advisories issued on this subject, the following visa restrictions are issued for implementation.

- i. All existing visas issued to nationals of any country except those issued to Diplomats, Officials, UN / International organizations, Employment, Project visas stand suspended till April 15, 2020. This will come into effect from 1200 GMT on March 13, 2020 at the port of departure of any foreigner for onward journey to India.
- ii. Visas of all foreigners already in India remain valid. They may contact the nearest FRRO/FRO through e-FRRO module for extension/ conversion etc of their visa or grant of any consular service if they choose to do so.
- iii. Visa free travel facility granted to OCI card holders shall be kept in abeyance till April 15, 2020. This will come into effect from 1200 GMT on March 13, 2020 at the port of departure of any foreigner for onward journey to India.
- iv. Any foreign national who intends to travel to India for compelling reasons may contact the nearest Indian Mission for fresh visa.
- v. All incoming travellers, including Indian nationals, arriving from any destination and having visited China, Italy, Iran, Republic of Korea, France, Spain and Germany on or after Feb. 15, 2020 shall be quarantined for a minimum period of 14 days. This will come into effect from 1200 GMT on March 13, 2020 at the port of departure of such travellers.



## अवुग'वडु'वणव'केणव'शु

- vi. International traffic through land borders will be restricted to designated Immigration Checkposts with robust medical screening facilities. These will be notified separately by Ministry of Home Affairs.
2. In addition to the above visa restrictions the following travel advisory is hereby issued in accordance with instructions of Ministry of Health and Family Welfare
  - i. Indian nationals presently abroad are advised to avoid non-essential travel. They are hereby informed that they can be quarantined for a minimum period of 14 days on their arrival in India.
  - ii. All Indian nationals are strongly advised to avoid all non-essential travel abroad. On their return they can be subjected to quarantine for a minimum period of 14 days.

Yours sincerely,  
  
(Dinesh Adhikari)



# अनुवाचकत्व वपय केंगस श्रे

### 3. Department of Immigration, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of Nepal



#### Updated Notice on 9<sup>th</sup> March, 2020 (21:30 hrs) regarding the Suspension of Visa-on-arrival and Entry-exit Control Measures

The Government of Nepal is monitoring the spread of Corona Virus (COVID-19). Taking into account the global recommendations and measures of the WHO, the Government of Nepal has decided to temporarily suspend visa-on-arrival for the nationals which will be in effect from 10<sup>th</sup> March 2020, for the first five countries from serial number 1-5, whereas the countries listed in number 6, 7 and 8 will be effective from 13<sup>th</sup> March, 2020 to till the date of further notice:

1. People's Republic of China, including Special Administrative Regions
2. Islamic Republic of Iran
3. Italy
4. Republic of Korea
5. Japan
6. France
7. Germany
8. Spain

However, nationals from these countries, willing to visit Nepal can obtain visa beforehand from the Nepali missions abroad. Those applicants and also the nationals transiting from these countries bound to arrive Nepal are required to submit a recently issued health certificate stating that they are not infected by COVID-19 along with their visa applications. The aforementioned health certificate will be scrutinized both at the immigration at the airport in Kathmandu and the land border entry-exit points of Nepal.

Nationals from aforementioned eight nationalities are strongly recommended to use the Tribhuvan International Airport, Kathmandu, the only entry-exit point that will be remaining open for arrival and departure in Nepal. Rest of the land POE (Point of Entry and Exit) in Nepal are temporarily suspended till the date of further notice. The Airlines operators and travel/tour operators bound to Nepal are strongly directed to manage the travelling route accordingly.

The Nationals of those eight countries who already got the prior visa from the missions and embassies of Nepal abroad are also suggested to produce health certificate that proves COVID-19 Negative is must be carried along with the travel documents. The Health certificate must be recently produced, maximum seven days earlier before the time of arrival in Nepal.

The Nepali Missions abroad are requested to deal the visa matters accordingly. A specific directive and circular for the Missions will be shortly circulated through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in purview of this Notice.

#### Note:

- Because of travel restrictions imposed by some countries we recommend to re-route the onward journey via those countries that still facilitate transit, for example Singapore.



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### What if tourists want to depart early?

- ✿ Tourists can depart early and in fact we recommend them to leave early because some countries are imposing new restrictions on entry and transit.

### Can new tour bookings still be submitted?

- ✿ Yes, new bookings can still be submitted but the actual entry will depend on the situation of COVID-19.

### When can tourist enter Bhutan again?

- ✿ Since 6<sup>th</sup> March, tourist entry is not allowed until further notice.

### What happens to the upcoming tours to Bhutan?

- ✿ The upcoming tours can be cancelled or postponed either through online cancellation process by the local tour operator or by the visa section under TCB upon submission of signed application in the company letterhead by the local tour operator through email – [twangchuk@tourism.gov.bt](mailto:twangchuk@tourism.gov.bt) and [dechen@tourism.gov.bt](mailto:dechen@tourism.gov.bt)

### What is the process for the cancellation of a tour?

- ✿ The tour operator can submit an application to TCB with supporting documents as proof. For example, an email from their clients requesting the cancellation or a copy of their airline cancellations. The signed application should be in the company letterhead and can be sent through email.
- ✿ However, if there is more than 48 hours from the arrival date, the tour operator can submit the application for cancellation online on Tashel System.

### What will be refunded by TCB upon a tour cancellation?

- ✿ The tour payment originally received by TCB will be refunded in full, including any visa fees paid as well as any amount paid as Sustainable Development Fee (SDF) during the application of restriction period.

### How long will it take to process the refund?

- ✿ Refund take place on a first come, first serve basis. TCB aims to process each refund at the earliest possible after a complete application was made, but requests for the involved parties' understanding if this might take more time.



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## What is the refund procedure?

- ✿ Tour operator must submit an application in hardcopy or signed application in the company letterhead to TCB with beneficiary banking details and the exact amount in USD to be refunded. The application must include initial approved entry and exit dates, group name, and remittance copy of the initial payment made by tourists for their tour. TCB will then give the tour operator a letter advising the bank to refund the amount to their clients abroad. This letter is to be used by the tour operator for follow-up with the bank for their necessary action. The tour operator has to then submit the bank's acknowledgement receipt to TCB for record keeping. The signed applications can be emailed to [krishna@tourism.gov.bt](mailto:krishna@tourism.gov.bt) and [jamyangpeldon@tourism.gov.bt](mailto:jamyangpeldon@tourism.gov.bt)

## Can tours be postponed ?

- ✿ Yes, they can. It is possible for a Bhutanese tour operator, on behalf of their clients, to postpone any tour while the entry restriction is still in place.

## What is the process to follow for the postponement of a tour?

- ✿ The tour operator can submit a hardcopy application or signed soft copy through email to TCB with the relevant tour information such as tentative itinerary, confirmed air ticket, hotel & guide details.
- ✿ However, if there is more than 48 hours from the arrival date, the tour operator can submit the application for postponement online on Tashel System.

## What are the travel restrictions for those tourists already in Bhutan?

- ✿ As of today there is no travel restrictions. However, we highly recommend and kindly request the tour operators to do their utmost best to only travel within Thimphu, Paro and Punakha.

## Are sightseeing activities allowed during the travel restrictions period?

- ✿ Yes, sightseeing is allowed, but we recommend avoiding crowded places.
- ✿ Some sites may be closed as a precautionary measure, so please call the sites of interest a day ahead to get an update on their current status.

## Is it possible to change travel itinerary when in Bhutan?

- ✿ Yes, it is possible to change travel itinerary when in Bhutan. Itinerary change can only be done by TCB Visa Section when in Bhutan. During the travel restriction period, please call TCB Visa Section at 02323251/2 for change in itinerary.



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## What to do if a service provider refrains from providing the agreed services?

- ✿ Please report such case to the Tourism Council of Bhutan via one of TCB telephone numbers shared at the end of this document.

## What is the status of outgoing flights?

- ✿ Airlines are rescheduling/cancelling their flights in order to accommodate passengers affected by the travel restriction. Therefore, we recommend you to directly contact the airlines for the latest information:
  - ✓ Bhutan Airlines: toll free number 1234
  - ✓ Drukair: toll free number 1300.

## What about having to stay an additional day due to rescheduling of flights?

- ✿ Those flying with Drukair, Royal Bhutan Airlines will be provided one night stay in TCB certified following list of hotels only. However, the hotel bookings must be approved and routed through Drukair. All bookings must be routed through the following officials of Drukair:

- Mr. Sonam Wangchuk, Mobile No 17997576
  - [Email: sonam.wangchuk@drukair.com.bt](mailto:sonam.wangchuk@drukair.com.bt)
- Ms Sonam Choden, Mobile No 16937334
  - [Email: corporate@drukair.com.bt](mailto:corporate@drukair.com.bt)
- Ms. Sonam Wangmo, Mobile No 17239868
- Ms. Karma, Mobile No 17520919
- Ms. Eden, Mobile No 17882838
- 

### ✿ **Thimphu**

1. Hotel Phuntsho Pelri
2. Hotel Migmar
3. Pedling Hotel & Spa
4. Hotel Amodhara

### ✿ **Paro**

1. Metta Resort
2. Khangku Resort
3. Hotel Drukchen
4. Tenzinling Resort



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What about the refund for tours booked directly without routing through TCB? This refers to the regional tourists.

- ✿ If you decide to cancel tour or postpone it, please get in touch with the Bhutanese ground handler. If the Bhutanese ground handlers do not agree to refund please get in touch with TCB via email [info@tourism.gov.bt](mailto:info@tourism.gov.bt).

Can tourists cancel tours?

- ✿ Yes, both tours routed through TCB and booked directly with Bhutanese ground handlers without routing through TCB can be cancelled. We encourage all Bhutanese ground handlers to accommodate refund as requested by tourists and refund to be made on time.

What about the fees for extension of visa?

- ✿ A fee of Nu. 1,000/- normally charged will not be charged for extension of visa due to rescheduling of flights or having to go through a medical test.

Can a departing tourist be issued a health certificate from Ministry of Health, Bhutan ? For example, the Government of Nepal issued notification on suspension of visa-on-arrival and entry-exit control measures asking travelers to produced health certificate stating that they are not infected by COVID-19.

- ✿ Such health certificate cannot be issued as a standard practice. Therefore, all tourists and ground handlers are requested to re-route via those countries who are not restricting entry or transit travel.

What to do if a service provider displays unfriendly behavior toward a tourist?

- ✿ Please report such case to the Tourism Council of Bhutan via one of TCB telephone numbers shared at the end of this document.

What to do if a tourist has symptoms of fever, tiredness and dry cough?

- ✿ Please take the following two actions:
  - ✿ Call the Health Help Centre at 2121
  - ✿ Inform the Tourism Council of Bhutan via one of TCB telephone numbers shared at the end of this document.



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What to do if a tourist is expected to extend his or her stay beyond the approved visa due to having to undergo health test?

🌸 Apply visa extension for required days which can be further extended as necessary.

What online sources can be referred for authenticated information with regard to COVID-19?

- 🌸 The Prime Minister Office (PMO) of the Kingdom of Bhutan
  - <https://www.cabinet.gov.bt/> (website)
  - <https://www.facebook.com/PMOBhutan/> (Facebook page)
- 🌸 Ministry of Health of the Kingdom of Bhutan
  - <http://www.health.gov.bt/> (website)
  - <https://www.facebook.com/MoHBhutan/> (Facebook page)

Who can be contacted at TCB for more information?

- 🌸 Please contact one of the following officials:
  - ✓ Mr. Damcho Rinzin: +975 17122257
  - ✓ Mr. Yeshey Wangchuk: +975 17124546

**Updated on 12<sup>th</sup> March 2020 by the Tourism Council of Bhutan**

