

# Bhutan

## Geography

Location: Southern Asia, between China and India.

Map references: Asia.

Area:

total area: 47,000 sq km.

land area: 47,000 sq km.

Land boundaries: total 1,075 km, China 470 km, India 605 km.

Coastline: 0 km (landlocked).

Climate: varies; tropical in southern plains; cool winters and hot summers in central valleys; severe winters and cool summers in Himalayas.

Terrain: mostly mountainous with some fertile valleys and savanna.

Natural resources: timber, hydropower, gypsum, calcium carbide.

Land use:

arable land: 2%.

permanent crops: 0%.

meadows and pastures: 5%.

forest and woodland: 70%.

other: 23%.

Irrigated land: 340 sq km (1989 est.)

Environment:

current issues: soil erosion; limited access to potable water.

natural hazards: violent storms coming down from the Himalayas are the source of the country's name which translates as Land of the Thunder Dragon; frequent landslides during the rainy season.

Note: landlocked; strategic location between China and India; controls several key Himalayan mountain passes.

## People

Population: 1,780,638 (July 1995 est.)

note: other estimates range as low as 600,000.

Age structure:

0-14 years: 40% (female 342,276; male 368,916).  
15-64 years: 56% (female 486,258; male 513,560).  
65 years and over: 4% (female 34,215; male 35,413) (July 1995 est.)

Population growth rate: 2.34% (1995 est.)

Birth rate: 39.02 births/1,000 population (1995 est.)

Death rate: 15.61 deaths/1,000 population (1995 est.)

Net migration rate: 0 migrant(s)/1,000 population (1995 est.)

Infant mortality rate: 118.6 deaths/1,000 live births (1995 est.)

Life expectancy at birth:  
total population: 51.03 years.  
male: 51.56 years.  
female: 50.48 years (1995 est.)

Total fertility rate: 5.39 children born/woman (1995 est.)

Nationality:  
noun: Bhutanese (singular and plural).  
adjective: Bhutanese.

Ethnic divisions: Bhote 50%, ethnic Nepalese 35%, indigenous or migrant tribes 15%.

Religions: Lamaistic Buddhism 75%, Indian- and Nepalese-influenced Hinduism 25%.

Languages: Dzongkha (official), Bhotes speak various Tibetan dialects; Nepalese speak various Nepalese dialects.

Labour force:

by occupation: agriculture 93%, services 5%, industry and commerce 2%.

note: massive lack of skilled labor.

## Government

Names:

conventional long form: Kingdom of Bhutan.

conventional short form: Bhutan.

Type: monarchy; special treaty relationship with India.

Capital: Thimphu.

Administrative divisions: 18 districts (dzongkhag, singular and plural); Bumthang, Chhukha, Chirang, Daga, Geylegphug, Ha, Lhuntshi, Mongar, Paro, Pemagatsel, Punakha, Samchi, Samdrup Jongkhar, Shemgang, Tashigang, Thimphu, Tongsa, Wangdi Phodrang.

Independence: 8 August 1949 (from India).

National holiday: National Day, 17 December (1907) (Ugyen Wangchuck became first hereditary king).

Constitution: no written constitution or bill of rights.

Legal system: based on Indian law and English common law; has not accepted compulsory ICJ jurisdiction.

Suffrage: each family has one vote in village-level elections.

Flag: divided diagonally from the lower hoist side corner; the upper triangle is orange and the lower triangle is red; centered along the dividing line is a large black and white dragon facing away from the hoist side.

# Economy

Overview: The economy, one of the world's least developed, is based on agriculture and forestry, which provide the main livelihood for 90% of the population and account for about half of GDP. Agriculture consists largely of subsistence farming and animal husbandry. Rugged mountains dominate the terrain and make the building of roads and other infrastructure difficult and expensive. The economy is closely aligned with India's through strong trade and monetary links. The industrial sector is small and technologically backward, with most production of the cottage industry type. Most development projects, such as road construction, rely on Indian migrant labor. Bhutan's hydropower potential and its attraction for tourists are key resources; however, the government limits the number of tourists to 4,000 per year to minimize foreign influence. Much of the impetus for growth has come from large public-sector companies. Nevertheless, in recent years, Bhutan has shifted toward decentralized development planning and greater private initiative. The government privatized several large public-sector firms, is revamping its trade regime and liberalizing administrative procedures over industrial licensing.

## Transportation

Railroads: 0 km.

Highways:  
total: 2,165 km.

Airports:  
total: 2.

Defence Forces

Branches: Royal Bhutan Army, Palace Guard, Militia, Royal Bhutan Police.