



TRANS BHUTAN TRAIL

CONNECTING BHUTAN: PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

Tour Operator Request for Proposal (RFP)

September 2021



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The Bhutan Canada Foundation
160 Avenue Road
Toronto, Ontario
M5R 2H8, Canada

27th September, 2021

Dear Tour Operator Partners,

Those of you who have participated in one of the sensitization programmes will already be aware of the work recently undertaken by the Bhutan Canada Foundation to help restore the Trans Bhutan Trail. In partnership with the Royal Government and the Tourism Council of Bhutan, the project saw over 900 individuals impacted by the pandemic come together to reinstate this ancient route, covering 403 kilometers between Haa and Trashigang and crossing 27 Gewogs along its way.

For the next phase of the project, the Bhutan Canada Foundation intends to invest in promotion of the Trans Bhutan Trail in major international markets. Our aim is to position the Trail as one of the world's greatest walks and to attract many new guests from around the globe to experience some – or even all – of the trail during a visit to Bhutan. All proceeds from this venture will be reinvested in the upkeep of the trail as part of our commitment to sustainability, by which we will strive to preserve the trail as a symbol of national unity for generations to come.

As part of this latest venture, we wish to partner with a selection of Bhutanese tour operators keen to assist in providing exceptional 5-28 day cultural trekking experiences for Trans Bhutan Trail guests. As such, we invite you to complete this RFP and return it to us as soon as possible. If you have any questions on the RFP itself, the tender process or the Trail, please contact Tshering Dolkar at dolkar.tbt@gmail.com.

From all of us at the Bhutan Canada Foundation, thank you in advance, and we will see you on the Trail.

Tashi Delek,
Sam Blyth



OUR MISSION, VISION & VALUES

Tour operator partners are expected to be familiar with and understand the Trans Bhutan Trail’s mission, vision, and values and follow the Trail Code at all times.

Our Mission

The Trans Bhutan Trail’s mission is to refurbish, protect, promote and sustain the ancient East-West route across Central Bhutan between Haa and Trashigang.

Our Vision

The Trans Bhutan Trail’s vision is the creation of a link between Bhutan’s past, present and future.

We preserve this trail out of respect for our ancestors, as a symbol of National Unity.

We celebrate this trail as a connection between communities across the Nation.

We protect this trail as a gift to future generations.

Our Values

The values of the Trans Bhutan Trail are based on the four pillars of Gross National Happiness:

Good Governance: The Trans Bhutan Trail maintains a thoughtful, engaged and inclusive governance structure to ensure the long-term sustainability of the trail.

Sustainable Socio-Economic Development: The Trans Bhutan Trail strives to ensure that the trail contributes to sustainable livelihoods for the people who reside in communities through which it travels.

Preservation and Promotion of Culture: The Trans Bhutan Trail preserves and celebrates the hundreds of sites of cultural significance along its way, connecting generations as a living experiential classroom for the sharing of knowledge, story and history.

Environmental Conservation: The Trans Bhutan Trail protects the delicate ecosystems through which it passes, ensuring that generations to come will be able to appreciate clean water, fresh air and diverse flora and fauna across Bhutan.



Trans Bhutan Trail Code

By walking the Trans Bhutan Trail, you become part of a *Trail Community*. As a community we commit to maintaining and enhancing the Trail out of respect to the ancestors who built it, and as a gift to future generations. We do this by adhering to the following:

1. Trek only along marked routes; avoid taking short cuts and walking across farm fields or private land.
2. Obey all blazing and signage.
3. Pass to the left of all chortens.
4. Respect the local community and do not disturb people living along the trail. Show gratitude that they have welcomed you to walk through their farms, forests and villages.
5. Respect local deities and spirits by making offerings.
6. Dress appropriately if you plan to visit monasteries, lhakhangs, dzongs or other sacred sites during your trek. National dress may be required. T-shirt, shorts and sandals are not allowed within these institutions.
7. Leave the trail cleaner than you found it. Carry out all litter.
8. Leave flowers and plants for others to enjoy.
9. Avoid disturbing wildlife and farm animals.
10. Contribute to local economies by purchasing local good and services including camping and homestays; as well as produce from farmers.
11. When you can, make the way easier for those who follow by clearing the trail of fallen branches and overgrowth.
12. Inform the TBT team of major trail issues such as fallen trees or damaged bridges.
13. Take responsibility for your own safety by planning your journey and carrying food, water, first aid and other necessities as appropriate.
14. Leave only your footprints and thanks, take nothing but pictures and memories.

Trans Bhutan Trail traverses rugged semi-wilderness and various wildlife habitats. Weather conditions can vary dramatically. Trail users should be prepared. You are responsible for your own safety and use the trail at your own risk.



TIMELINE





INSTRUCTIONS

- Read all of the questions carefully and provide all of the requested information. Failure to provide all of the information required may result in your response being disregarded.
- Refer to the Checklist on page 16 of this document before submitting your proposal to ensure that you are submitting all required supporting documentation with the form.
- The deadline for the submission of responses is 15th October 2021 at 23:59, Thimphu time. Late submissions will not be considered.
- Please submit your response and supporting documents either:
 - electronically, to dolkar.tbt@gmail.com;
 - in hard copy, to The Bhutan Canada Foundation, P.O. Box 201, Thimphu, Bhutan; or
 - by hand, to the Bhutan Canada Foundation, Doebum Lam, Thimphu.
- Please direct any questions on the RFP process to dolkar.tbt@gmail.com.

Note on Resources

In preparation for your proposal we highly recommend reviewing our Trans Bhutan Trail online resources including:

[2020 Annual Report](#)

[Monthly Blog and Newsletter](#)

[Druk Journal Article](#)

[Facebook](#)

[Instagram](#)

[YouTube](#)

Selection Criteria

In making selections for shortlisting, interview and final award of contracts, the Trans Bhutan Trail team will evaluate and score all answers submitted in response to this RFP. Particular emphasis will be placed on:

- evidence of a history of high quality operations within Bhutan;
- capacity to operate high quality trekking trips, including access to first-class camping equipment;
- evidence of commitment to sustainable and/or responsible tourism initiatives;
- alignment with and commitment to the Trans Bhutan Trail and its values.



RESPONSE TO REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP)

Name of tour operator	
License number	

CONTACT DETAILS

Principal contact person	
Office address	
Telephone	
Email	
Company website	
Social media accounts	



PROPRIETORS & OFFICERS

Name of proprietor(s)	
Names of key officers	

INSURANCE

Do you hold a valid public liability insurance policy to cover all of your tourism activities?	
Level of public liability cover	

HISTORY & STATISTICS

Month & year operations commenced	
Number of tourists carried in 2019 calendar year	
Primary tourist source markets (countries)	



EMPLOYEES & CONTRACTORS

<p>Number of office staff members employed pre-Covid crisis</p>	
<p>Other than Dzongkha and English, what other languages can your office staff provide services in?</p>	

TOURISM GUIDES

<p>How many tourism guides do you employ?</p>	
<p>Of your employed guides, how many are trekking certified?</p>	
<p>How many freelance guides do you work with?</p>	

TOURISM MOTOR VEHICLES

<p>Do you own your own tourism motor vehicles?</p>	
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<p>If yes, please give full details of age, make and model of all vehicles owned</p>	
<p>Number of drivers employed</p>	

TREKKING EXPERTISE

<p>Do you currently operate trekking tours in Bhutan?</p>	
<p>Approximately how many trekking clients did you carry in the 2019 calendar year?</p>	
<p>Which trekking routes did you operate on?</p>	
<p>Do you own your own trekking equipment?</p>	
<p>If yes, please provide a full list of trekking equipment owned, including quantities and make and age of tents</p>	



Please describe your ability to produce quality local food during camping trips, including capacity for vegetarian/vegan/organic.

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MOUNTAIN BIKING

Do you currently operate mountain biking tours in Bhutan?	
Approximately how many mountain biking clients did you carry in the 2019 calendar year?	
Do you own your own mountain bikes?	
If yes, please provide a full list of mountain bikes owned, including quantities, makes, models and age	



ACCOMMODATION

Please list your major accommodation partners

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CANCELLATION & PAYMENT POLICIES

Please outline your cancellation and payment policies. Would you be prepared to offer us credit?

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RESPONSIBLE & SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

<p>Please give details of any responsible and/or sustainable tourism initiatives your company is involved with</p>	
<p>Please describe how your operation strives to minimise its environmental impact</p>	



ALIGNMENT WITH & COMMITMENT TO THE TRANS BHUTAN TRAIL

Why are you interested in a partnership with us on the Trans Bhutan Trail?

Tell us why you believe TBT should choose your company as an operating partner.



Would you consider becoming a trail partner or benefactor if we were to award you a contract?

Would you consider using sections of the Trans Bhutan Trail for your own clients? How might your own clients contribute to the sustainability of the trail?



OTHER INFORMATION

Please include here any other information relevant to your application.

REFEREES (OPTIONAL)

Please provide the name and contact details of an overseas tour operator with whom you have worked in the last 3 years and who would be prepared to provide a reference for your services.



DECLARATION

I declare that the information provided in this response is accurate to the best of my knowledge. I understand that making a false declaration will disqualify my company from the tender process.

I have read the Trans Bhutan Trail Mission, Vision Values and Trail Code and commit our company to adhere to these principles.

I also certify that any conflicts of interest arising out of this application are set out in a separate letter attached to this response.

Signed	
Print Name	
Date	



CHECKLIST

When submitting your response, please ensure you attach the following documents:

- Response template, fully filled out and signed by an authorised officer.
- Letter declaring any conflicts of interest arising out of your application.
- Copy of licence.
- Copy of valid public liability insurance certificate clearly showing level of cover.
- For owned tourism motor vehicles, images of vehicles and copies of valid motor vehicle insurance certificate for each vehicle.
- For owned trekking equipment, images of equipment and particularly of tents.
- For owned mountain bikes, images of those bikes.
- Any other supporting document you feel would support your response.

Please ensure that your response and any supporting documents reach us by 23:59 on 15th October, 2021. We will not be able to consider responses submitted after this time.