

DRONE GUIDELINES FOR TRAVELLERS



INDIA

Bringing a drone into India involves adhering to strict import policies governed by the **Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA)** and the **Ministry of Civil Aviation**. Here are the key points to consider:

Import Requirements

- **Authorization:** Importing drones requires prior approval from the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT).
- **No Permission for Foreign Nationals:** Foreign nationals are not allowed to bring drones into India for personal use. However, they may lease drones from authorized Indian operators.
- **Customs Clearance:** All imported drones are subject to customs inspection to ensure compliance with Indian regulations.

Drone Registration

- After import, the drone must be registered on the **Digital Sky platform**, where a **Unique Identification Number (UIN)** will be assigned.
- Imported drones are classified into categories like **Nano, Micro**, and others, based on their weight.

Compliance with Local Laws

- **DGCA Compliance:** The drone must meet Indian standards for airworthiness and safety.
- **No-Fly Zones:** Importers must ensure the drone complies with operational restrictions, such as staying away from restricted areas like military zones and airports.

Exemptions and Special Cases

- Nano drones (below 250 grams) and certain drones used for research, development, or government projects may have relaxed import requirements.

The **Drone Rules, 2021** simplified procedures but emphasized strict control over imported drones to safeguard security concerns. Amendments in 2023 further refined the process, ensuring alignment with technological advancements.

BHUTAN

Bhutan has strict regulations for drones due to its focus on maintaining cultural heritage and environmental sanctity. Below are the requirements:

Import Restrictions

- Importing a drone into Bhutan is not allowed without prior approval from the Bhutan Civil Aviation Authority (BCAA) and relevant local authorities.
- Drones for personal or commercial use require detailed applications specifying the purpose of use and area of operation.

Permissions and Process

- Obtain clearance from the Ministry of Information and Communications and BCAA.
- Additional approvals may be needed from the Ministry of Home and Cultural Affairs, especially if filming involves heritage sites.
- Operators must coordinate with local government officials for community consent.

Operational Guidelines

- Drones are prohibited near temples, monasteries, dzongs, and wildlife sanctuaries.
- Flying in densely populated areas or close to Bhutan's borders requires special permissions.
- Maximum altitude and distance guidelines vary based on location and purpose.

Tourist Considerations

- Tourists planning to use drones must arrange necessary permits through a local tour operator.
- Drones are not allowed in hand luggage for flights; they must be declared and stored in checked baggage.

Strict adherence to Bhutan's drone policies ensures both compliance with the law and respect for its unique cultural and natural heritage.

SRI LANKA

Bringing a drone to Sri Lanka requires compliance with several regulations governed by the Civil Aviation Authority of Sri Lanka (CAASL). Here are the key steps and requirements:

Customs and Import Control

- Foreign travelers can bring drones for personal use but must comply with customs regulations, including obtaining an Import Control License.
- It is necessary to register the drone with CAASL upon arrival, particularly for drones equipped with data-collection tools such as cameras

Drone Registration and Permissions

- Drones heavier than 200 grams require registration with CAASL. Temporary registration is available for non-residents.
- Flying a drone in Sri Lanka mandates specific approvals from CAASL. Additional clearances may be needed if flying over sensitive locations like heritage sites, national parks, or sanctuaries.

Clearances from Other Authorities

- Before any flight, drone operators must obtain security clearance from the Ministry of Defense.
- Operations near restricted zones or at night require additional approvals

Operational Guidelines

- Drones must not be operated from moving vehicles or elevated structures.
- Flight speed must not exceed 100 mph, and drones must remain within the operator's line of sight.
- Flights over gatherings, railroads, highways, or protected areas are prohibited without prior authorization

For an enjoyable and legal drone experience in Sri Lanka, ensure thorough preparation by acquiring the required permits and understanding the specific regulations.

MALDIVES

If you plan to bring a drone to the Maldives, here are the key guidelines and policies to follow:

Permissions Required

- Maldives National Defence Force (MNDF): Approval from the MNDF is mandatory for all drone operations. This includes filling out a form and submitting it via email.
- Maldives Civil Aviation Authority (MCAA): Obtain a permit from the MCAA after receiving MNDF approval. This involves providing technical specifications and details about the intended flying area.
- Local Approval: Additional permissions might be required from resorts or local councils, as many private properties and islands enforce specific restrictions to maintain privacy and peace.

Usage Guidelines

- Drones must not fly near airports, seaplane routes, or military zones.
- The maximum altitude for drone operations is 400 feet.
- Operations are restricted to daylight hours and good weather conditions.

Special Considerations

- Filming for commercial purposes requires clearance from the National Center for the Arts.
- Resorts may entirely prohibit drones due to noise concerns or privacy issues. Always confirm with your accommodation in advance.
- Keep permits and documentation handy for airport and customs checks.

Preparation Tips

- Submit applications well in advance, as approval can take several weeks.
- Ensure your drone complies with safety standards and transport regulations, including the proper storage of batteries during travel.

By adhering to these policies, you can ensure a smooth experience capturing the Maldives' stunning landscapes from above.

NEPAL

Bringing a drone to Nepal requires careful planning due to the country's strict regulations. Drones are categorized as Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) and their use is controlled to maintain safety and privacy, especially in areas of cultural and military sensitivity.

Importing a Drone to Nepal

- Customs Clearance: You may bring a drone into Nepal through customs, but travelers have occasionally reported paying a fee, depending on the drone's type and intended use. It's advisable to declare your drone upon arrival.

Permissions Needed

- To operate a drone in Nepal, you must obtain clearance from the Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal (CAAN), the Ministry of Home Affairs, and the Department of Tourism, if applicable.
- A request form must be submitted detailing the purpose and location of the flight, with processing times and fees involved.

Operational Rules

- Drone flights are generally prohibited near airports, military installations, and sensitive cultural sites like temples.
- Drones weighing less than 1 kg or flown below 100 feet on private property may not require official permission, though local authorities or community restrictions might still apply.
- Unauthorized use of drones can lead to fines and penalties.

Practical Tips

- Check local policies for the specific regions you'll visit, as trekking routes like Annapurna and Everest Base Camp often have strict enforcement.
- Avoid using drones in crowded or sensitive areas to prevent conflicts or confiscation.

These regulations aim to balance safety and privacy while allowing responsible drone use for personal and commercial purposes. For the most updated and specific guidelines, consult the Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal or your local Nepali embassy before traveling

