



Standard Operating Procedure for online purchase of airline tickets

Department of Procurement and Properties
Ministry of Finance
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FOREWORD

To further enhance cost-effectiveness and efficiency across the Government, the Ministry of Finance, as approved in the 3rd Policy and Planning Committee Meeting held on August 13, 2024 is pleased to issue the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for online purchase of airline tickets. The SOP is designed to streamline the process of purchasing air tickets for officials travels, ensuring budgetary bodies secure the possible prices while minimizing the administrative burdens.

The transition from traditional tendering to online booking represents a significant step forward in our commitment to modernize government operations. By leveraging reputable online platforms, we aim to achieve greater transparency & convenience for the end users, and savings for the Royal Government of Bhutan. This initiative is envisioned to contribute to more efficient and effective travel management across the Government Agencies.

The Ministry of Finance will initiate reviews and updates to this SOP as deemed necessary to ensure it remains relevant and effective.

(Lekey Dorji)

Minister
Ministry of Finance
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1. Background:

Budgetary bodies currently purchase airline tickets through tendering, which is expensive and time-consuming. The budgetary bodies shall henceforth obtain airline tickets for travel of RGoB officials online using *the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)* and *Guideline for Operation of Official Credit Cards for the Government Budgetary Agencies* issued by the Department of Treasury and Accounts. The objective of online purchase of air tickets is to ensure cheaper airfares and reduce the administrative burden involved in the government tendering process.

2. Purpose:

This SOP outlines the steps for purchasing air tickets directly online to ensure a secure, efficient, and smooth transaction process.

3. Scope:

This SOP shall apply to all budgetary bodies obtaining airline tickets for official travel purposes.

4. Pre-booking Requirements:

Gathering Travel Details:

The budgetary bodies shall obtain each official's travel dates, destinations, and the entitlements of flight classes (as per Section 14.6.1 of BCSR-2023).

5. Online Booking Process:

Reputable Booking Platform:

The budgetary bodies shall use a trusted airline website or a reputable online travel agency (e.g., Expedia, Kayak, MakeMyTrip) to book airline tickets online. There shall be an official designated to use the credit card and undertake the online booking of tickets.

The budgetary bodies will buy directly from the airline offices in the sectors where Drukair and Bhutan Airlines are destined.

Selection of Flight:

The budgetary bodies shall choose the most direct and shortest route possible. To this effect, factors like layovers, flight duration, meal availability etc shall be considered in choosing the flight.

The airline ticket shall allow flexibility for change of dates and routes if required, baggage allowances (standard baggage allowances as per airline policy should be considered), cancellation policies, etc.

Price Comparisons:

The budgetary bodies must ensure that the ticket prices are reasonable by conducting due diligence, comparing a minimum of three flights' online prices, and documenting the comparative prices for future reference.

To take advantage of online bookings, the travel itinerary should be finalized as far ahead as possible, preferably at least one month.

Review Booking Details:

The budgetary bodies should double-check all travel details for accuracy and ensure the correct flight, date, and passenger information is selected.

6. Payment:

The budgetary bodies shall adhere to the guidelines set by the Department of Treasury and Accounts when processing payments.

7. Post-booking activities:**Confirmation:**

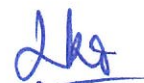
The designated official of the budgetary bodies shall ensure a confirmation email is received with the booking reference number and e-ticket and print out or save a digital copy of the e-ticket and travel itinerary for future reference.

Follow-Up:

The designated official of the budgetary bodies shall regularly check the flight status before the travel date for any changes or updates and inform the traveling officials accordingly.

8. Security and Compliance:**Data Security:**

The designated official shall ensure that all personal and financial information is entered only on secure websites. To avoid unauthorized access, do not conduct transactions over public Wi-Fi.



9. Troubleshooting:

Changes and Cancellations:

The budgetary bodies shall adhere to the airline's policy for changes and cancellations. The designated official must notify the official traveler of any changes in travel plans, if any.

Additional Cost for Changes and Cancellations:

The additional cost for changes and cancellations will be categorized as follows-

- a. The budgetary bodies shall be responsible for any additional costs incurred due to unavoidable changes or cancellations, with approval from the head of the agency.
- b. If changes or cancellations are made for personal reasons or the convenience of the official, and incomplete or incorrect information is provided, the official traveler is responsible for covering the additional costs.

10. Record Keeping:

The designated official must keep a log of all travel bookings and related documents for future reference and auditing purposes, as well as to ensure compliance with the audit record retention policy.

11. Review and Update:

This SOP shall be reviewed regularly and updated as necessary to ensure it remains relevant and effective.

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