



CAPITAL CITY

The capital city of Bhutan is Thimphu.

SIZE

Inland area: 38,394 km²

GEOGRAPHICAL SITUATION

Bhutan is a landlocked country situated in the eastern Himalayas in South Asia. It shares borders with China to the north and India to the south, east, and west. Bhutan is dominated by rugged mountains, with elevations ranging from 200 meters in the south to over 7,500 meters in the north, home to several towering Himalayan peaks, including Gangkhar Puensum (7,570 meters), the world's highest unclimbed mountain. Bhutan's total land area is 38,394 km², which is about the size of Switzerland or the Netherlands.

POPULATION

In 2024, Bhutan's population was estimated to be around 787,000 people. The population density is 20/km², making it one of the least densely populated countries in the world, largely due to its mountainous terrain and extensive forest cover. The capital, Thimphu, is the most populated city.

LANGUAGE

Bhutan's official language is Dzongkha, which is spoken primarily in the western part of the country and used in government, education, and administration. Dzongkha is written using the Tibetan script (Uchen script), which is similar to Classical Tibetan. Bhutan is linguistically diverse, with over 19 other languages spoken, including Tshangla (Sharchopkha) in the east and Lhotshampa (Nepali dialects) in the south. English is widely used in education and government, making it an important second language.

CURRENCY

The currency of Bhutan is the Ngultrum (BTN), abbreviated as Nu.. As of March 2025, the exchange rate is approximately:

- 1 USD = 85.87 Bhutanese Ngultrum (BTN)
- 1 EURO = 92.53 Bhutanese Ngultrum (BTN).

Foreign cards are accepted in ATMs, but they are less accessible outside the main towns. ATMs can be found in Thimphu (the capital) and Paro (the airport).

It is advisable to bring cash with you, preferably Indian rupees or US dollars, as ATMs are not always reliable in rural areas. Credit cards are accepted in a few shops in the capital (handicrafts, jewellery) and in luxury hotels, but not in provincial towns.

CLIMATE

- **Spring** (March–May) brings pleasant and mild weather, with temperatures ranging from 10°C to 25°C. The landscape comes alive with blooming rhododendrons, magnolias, and jacarandas, creating vibrant scenery.
- **Summer** (June–September) is warm and humid, with temperatures ranging from 15°C to 30°C. The season brings heavy monsoon rains, particularly in southern Bhutan (Phuentsholing, Samdrup Jongkhar), while the central and northern regions, including Thimphu, Paro, and Bumthang, receive relatively less rainfall, making travel still possible. Additionally, flights may experience delays due to poor weather conditions.
- **Autumn** (September–November) is cool and dry, with temperatures ranging from 5°C to 25°C, making it the best season to visit. The weather features clear skies and breathtaking Himalayan views, making it ideal for trekking.
- **Winter** (December–February) is cold, especially in higher altitudes, with temperatures ranging from -5°C to 15°C. Snowfall is common in regions like Bumthang, Haa, Gasa, and Laya, while Thimphu and Paro experience chilly mornings but sunny afternoons.

LOCAL TIME

Bhutan is 6 hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time.

ELECTRICITY



The standard voltage in Bhutan is 230 volts.

The country primarily uses Type D (three round pins, which is common in India and Nepal), Type F (Two round pins, which is used in Europe), and Type G (same as the UK with three rectangular pins) plugs.

Finding a multi-voltage travel adapter in Bhutan can be challenging due to limited availability. It's highly recommended that you purchase one before your trip to ensure compatibility with Bhutan's electrical system.

WATER

In Bhutan, the quality of drinking water varies between urban and rural areas. In cities like Thimphu and Paro, treated tap water is available, though residents often boil or filter it for safety. Rural communities primarily rely on spring water, streams, and small water supply schemes, but some face seasonal shortages and contamination risks.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

For calls to Bhutan, the country code is +975.

Bhutan's telecommunications sector is mainly dominated by two service providers: Bhutan Telecom and TashiCell. While urban areas enjoy good network coverage with 4G services, rural and remote areas still face connectivity issues. Despite improvements, internet speeds remain relatively slow and expensive by global standards.

Prepaid services can be purchased in the shops of the two main telecoms providers in major cities such as Thimphu, Paro and Phuentsholing.

Wi-Fi is available in hotels, cafés and public areas such as Paro International Airport, but speeds can be slow.

HEALTH & MEDICAL FACILITIES

Bhutan has several English-speaking medical facilities in major cities like Thimphu and Paro, where doctors and healthcare staff often speak English. Jigme Dorji Wangchuck National Referral Hospital (JDWNRH) in Thimphu, Paro District Hospital, and Phuentsholing General Hospital are recommended.

TRANSPORTATION

Bhutan has 1 international airport: Paro International Airport.

Bhutan's transportation system primarily relies on road travel, as the country has no domestic railways or public metro systems.

DRIVING

Self-driving is not allowed for foreign tourists unless they have a special permit. Most visitors must hire a car with a driver through a licensed Bhutanese tour operator.

CUISINE

Bhutanese cuisine is known for its spicy flavors, heavy use of cheese, and reliance on locally grown ingredients like red rice, chili peppers, and buckwheat, making it perfect for the cold mountain climate. Well-known dishes are Ema Datshi – Spicy chili and cheese stew (national dish), Kewa Datshi – Potatoes with cheese, Shakam Paa – Dried beef with chilies, Momos – Tibetan-style dumplings, and Puta – Buckwheat noodles. Popular alcoholic drinks are Ara (Traditional Bhutanese Alcohol) and Bangchang & Sinchang (Fermented Rice & Barley Beer).

CUSTOM AND HABITS

Bhutanese culture is deeply rooted in Buddhism, respect, and community values, shaping daily life and traditions.

Bhutanese greet each other with a bow and the word "Kuzuzangpo" (hello) as a sign of politeness. When entering temples or homes, it is customary to remove shoes to show respect for sacred and personal spaces. Additionally, when giving or receiving items, using both hands is considered a gesture of courtesy and appreciation.

While eating with the hands is common in rural areas, utensils are more frequently used in urban settings.

Littering is discouraged, and the use of plastic bags is banned to protect the country's pristine natural environment.

SHOPPING

Shopping in Bhutan offers a unique experience with traditional handicrafts, textiles, and locally made products that reflect the country's rich culture and heritage. Carry cash for small shops, local markets, and rural areas, as card and digital payments are mainly limited to urban centres. Bargaining is not common, as most prices are fixed in shops and markets. To ensure authenticity, it is recommended to shop at government-certified stores, especially when purchasing handicrafts and textiles. Additionally, travellers should be aware that certain high-value items, such as antique religious artifacts, cannot be taken out of the country.

TIPPING

Tipping in Bhutan is not mandatory but is appreciated, especially in the tourism sector. In local eateries, leaving 5–10% is a kind gesture. Tour guides and drivers often receive \$5–\$10 and \$3–\$5 per day, respectively, while porters and housekeeping staff may be tipped \$2–\$5 per day for their services. Tipping is not common in local shops or taxis, though rounding up the fare for excellent service is welcomed. Always give tips in cash and directly to the person as a token of appreciation.

ACCESS

Please find below a list of carriers offering services into Bhutan:

- ✓ Drukair – Royal Bhutan Airlines
- ✓ Bhutan Airlines (Tashi Air)

VISA AND PASSPORT

Most travelers need a visa to enter Bhutan (<https://visit.doi.gov.bt/>), except for citizens of India, Bangladesh, and the Maldives, who can obtain a permit on arrival. Independent travel is not allowed, as Bhutan requires tourists to book pre-arranged tours to ensure sustainable tourism.

Foreign travellers must pay the Sustainable Development Fee (SDF) of USD 100 per day.

BEFORE GOING

Travelers are advised to seek medical advice about vaccinations. Specialised travel medicine clinics are the best source of information. Most vaccines don't produce immunity until at least two weeks after they're given, so visit a doctor four to eight weeks before departure.

For safety reasons, we advise travelers not to leave valuables in vehicles during their journey.



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