Does Bhutan Have Internet? SIM Cards, eSIM & WiFi Explained

Practical Info 6 min read

> Does Bhutan have internet? Yes — a solid 4G network covers the towns and valleys, 5G is live in the cities, WhatsApp works without a VPN, and a tourist SIM or eSIM takes minutes to set up at the airport. The kingdom that famously connected to the internet last (1999) now lets you share the Himalaya in real time. Here is everything about staying connected: SIM cards, eSIMs, WiFi, the two networks compared, and what to expect on treks.

Does Bhutan Have Internet?

Yes — and better than most first-time visitors expect. Bhutan was famously the last country on Earth to introduce television and the internet (both arrived in 1999), but today a robust **4G network covers the towns and valleys** where travellers actually go, **5G is live in urban centres** like Thimphu and Paro, and fibre-connected cafes serve the capital's growing laptop crowd. You can post from Dochula Pass and video-call home from your hotel.

The honest caveats: speeds dip during peak evening hours, deep side-valleys and high trekking routes have patchy signal, and everything runs a beat slower east of Bumthang. For a two-week cultural tour in western Bhutan, connectivity is simply not the problem people imagine it to be.

Does WhatsApp Work in Bhutan?

Yes, perfectly. Bhutan blocks nothing — WhatsApp, Instagram, YouTube, Gmail, and video calls all work without a VPN. In fact, WhatsApp is **how Bhutan itself communicates**: your guide, your hotel, and your tour operator (including us) will happily coordinate your whole trip over it. Voice and video calls hold up well on 4G in the main valleys.

Good to know

- Download WhatsApp or Telegram before you fly - app stores work in Bhutan.

Buying a SIM Card in Bhutan

As a tourist you can pick up a local SIM within minutes of landing:

- **Where to buy:** B-Mobile and TashiCell counters sit in the arrival hall at Paro International Airport; shops in Thimphu, Paro, and other towns sell them too.
- **Requirements:** a copy of your passport and an **unlocked** phone.
- **Typical cost:** packages range from **Nu. 200 to Nu. 1,900**, from a basic starter to bundles with generous data and local talk time.

- **Top-ups:** recharge vouchers are sold in nearly every shop, and your guide can top you up in seconds.

Once your SIM is working, one tool worth having on hand: Bhutan's official English–Dzongkha machine translator, which you can try (and save for your trip) in our culture & traditions guide.

eSIM Options for Bhutan

Travelling with an eSIM-capable phone? **Both Bhutan Telecom (B-Mobile) and TashiCell offer eSIMs**, available at the same airport and town counters — same passport requirement, no physical SIM swap, and you keep your home SIM active for banking codes and calls.

International travel-eSIM apps also sell Bhutan data plans, which are convenient to install before you fly — but their per-gigabyte prices typically run well above local rates. Our advice: use a travel eSIM to cover your arrival day if you like, then switch to a local plan for the rest of the trip.

B-Mobile vs TashiCell: Which Network Is Better?

Bhutan has two mobile operators, and both are good where most itineraries go:

- **Bhutan Telecom (B-Mobile):** the state-owned provider with the **widest nationwide coverage**, especially in remote and rural areas — the safer pick for treks and eastern Bhutan.
- **TashiCell:** a private operator known for **high speeds and reliable 4G/5G** in urban hubs like Thimphu, Paro, and Phuentsholing — often the value pick for city-centred trips.

For a standard western circuit (Paro–Thimphu–Punakha), you'll be well served by either. Heading into the high valleys or the far east? Choose B-Mobile.

Is There WiFi in Hotels and Cafes?

- **Hotels:** almost all 3-, 4-, and 5-star hotels offer free WiFi in rooms and common areas. It's fine for email, social media, and calls, though speeds can vary during peak evening hours.
- **Cafes:** Thimphu and Paro have a growing laptop-friendly cafe scene, several with high-speed fibre connections.
- **Farmstays and remote lodges:** assume mobile data only — another reason the local SIM earns its keep.

Coverage on Treks & in Remote Valleys

Signals are intermittent in deep valleys and on high-altitude trekking routes — expect dead zones between passes and coverage windows near villages and ridgelines. Your trekking crew carries communication equipment for logistics and emergencies, so **you** being offline is a feature, not a risk.

Before you walk: download offline maps, tell family to expect quiet days, and pack a power bank — cold drains batteries fast at altitude. More preparation detail in our Bhutan trekking guide and packing guide.

Roaming, Power & Practical Tips

- **International roaming:** major global carriers (AT&T, Vodafone, Singtel and others) have roaming agreements in Bhutan, but the costs are astronomical. **Buying a local SIM is highly recommended.**
- **Power:** Bhutan uses Type D, F, and G plugs (the same family as India and the UK). Most hotels are multi-plug friendly, but bring a universal adapter for farmstays and rural guesthouses.

What voltage and plug type does Bhutan use?
Bhutan uses 230V/50Hz with Indian-style plugs (Type D, M, and G). Bring a universal adapter. Most hotels have USB charging points. Power cuts occur occasionally - hotels usually have backup generators.

Quick Connection Checklist

- ☐ Passport copy for SIM registration
- ☐ Unlocked smartphone (required for local SIMs and eSIMs)
- ☐ Pre-downloaded WhatsApp or Telegram
- ☐ Offline maps saved for trekking days
- ☐ Universal adapter and portable power bank

Frequently Asked Questions

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Need More Information?

Contact our Bhutan travel experts for personalized advice.

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