Bhutan Currency: The Ngultrum, Exchange Rates, ATMs, Cards and How Much Cash to Carry

Practical Info 10 min read

Bhutan's currency is the ngultrum, written Nu. and coded BTN, and it is worth exactly one Indian rupee. That single fact answers most money questions before they are asked: the exchange rate against the dollar is the rupee's rate, Indian notes spend in Bhutan at face value, and the ngultrum cannot be bought or sold outside the country. This guide covers what the notes look like, today's rates for the dollar, euro, pound and other currencies, where to exchange money, how far ATMs and cards reach, the goBoB wallet and UPI, how much cash a tour guest actually needs, the rules on carrying cash in and out, and tipping.

What Currency Does Bhutan Use?

The ngultrum (Nu., ISO code BTN) has been Bhutan's currency since 1974, issued by the Royal Monetary Authority in Thimphu. One ngultrum is 100 chhertum, though coins are so rarely used that most visitors never see one. The ngultrum is pegged at par to the Indian rupee, and the rupee circulates alongside it: shops take either, and your change may come back in a mix of the two.

Banknotes come in Nu 1, 5, 10, 20, 50, 100, 500 and 1,000. The higher notes carry portraits of the Kings and the Raven Crown; the lower ones show the great dzongs, among them Punakha, Paro Taktsang and Tashichho in Thimphu. In practice you will handle Nu 100 and 500 notes most, with 1,000s from the exchange counter and 10s and 20s as change.

Because the currency has no life outside Bhutan, there is nothing to buy before you fly. Arrive with dollars, euros, pounds or rupees and change what you need at Paro airport.

Good to know

- Ask the exchange counter for some Nu 100 and 500 notes rather than all 1,000s. Market stalls and taxis struggle to change a 1,000.
- The ngultrum is not convertible abroad. Change leftovers back before you clear immigration at Paro, and keep your exchange receipt to do it.

Bhutan Currency Exchange Rate: Ngultrum to Dollars, Euros, Pounds and Rupees

The ngultrum has no market of its own. Its value against every other currency is the Indian rupee's value, so when the rupee moves against the dollar, so does the ngultrum. The table below is the Bank of Bhutan's own board, refreshed from the bank's published rates: under Notes, the "buy" column is what you receive per unit when you hand over foreign cash, and "sell" is what you pay to change ngultrum back. TT rates apply to transfers and card settlements. The Indian rupee is fixed at one to one.

Two things the board shows that most guides miss. On 9 November 2026 the bank paid Nu 92.55 for a US$50 or US$100 bill but about 3 percent less for 5, 10 and 20 dollar bills and about 5 percent less for singles, so

bring large bills. And the gap between buying and selling is about 3 percent, which is the cost of changing money twice. The Danish, Swedish and Norwegian kroner are exchanged by transfer only, not as cash.

For quick reckoning, US$100 buys about Nu 9,255, €100 about Nu 10,350, £100 about Nu 12,405, A$100 about Nu 6,385 and S$100 about Nu 7,225. In the other direction, Nu 100 is about one US dollar and Nu 1,000 about ten. A coffee in Thimphu at Nu 150 to 250 is under US$3; a bottle of Druk 11000 beer at Nu 250 is about US$2.60; a hot stone bath at Nu 1,500 is about US$16; a hand-woven scarf at Nu 3,000 is about US$32.

Good to know

- Rates move a little every day with the rupee. The trip cost guide quotes everything in dollars, so you only meet ngultrum for pocket spending.

Can You Use Indian Rupees in Bhutan?

Yes. Indian rupees are accepted everywhere in Bhutan at one to one, from hotels to roadside stalls, and the government collects the Indian visitors' permit fee in rupees. You will often be given change in a mixture of ngultrum and rupee notes, and nobody minds which you pay with.

Two notes to know about. The ₹2,000 note was withdrawn in India in 2023 and is best left at home, since fewer and fewer Bhutanese shops will take it. The ₹500 note is accepted in most places, though some small shops still hesitate with it, so a stock of ₹100 and ₹200 notes travels most easily. Indian rules allow travellers to carry notes above ₹100 up to a total of ₹25,000 across the border; ₹100 notes and smaller are not capped.

Indian visitors can also pay by phone: BHIM UPI works at merchants displaying a Bhutan QR code, in Thimphu, Paro and Phuentsholing especially. Cash still rules in the villages.

Good to know

- Ngultrum notes are not accepted back in India, so Indian guests should spend them or change them to rupees before leaving.

Are US Dollars and Other Foreign Currencies Accepted?

US dollars are taken by hotels, larger handicraft shops and tour operators, usually at a rate a little worse than the bank's, so they are useful as a backup rather than as everyday money. Shops do not take euros, pounds or other currencies over the counter. For small spending, change money and pay in ngultrum.

Bring clean, unmarked notes; US$50 and US$100 bills get the best rate. The Bank of Bhutan counter in the arrivals hall at Paro airport opens for every flight, and the main branches of Bank of Bhutan and Bhutan National Bank in Thimphu and Paro change money during banking hours. Hotels change money at a slightly weaker rate when the banks are shut.

Changing back is the other half. Ngultrum cannot be exchanged anywhere outside Bhutan, so on your last day change leftover notes to dollars at the airport counter, which asks to see your original exchange receipt, or spend them in the departures shops.

Good to know

- Change a modest amount at the airport on arrival, say US$100 to 200, and top up in Thimphu once you know how much you are spending.
- Keep every exchange receipt. It is what lets you convert ngultrum back to dollars on departure.

Are There ATMs in Bhutan?

Yes, in the towns. Bank of Bhutan, Bhutan National Bank, Druk PNB and T Bank run ATMs in Thimphu, Paro, Punakha, Phuentsholing and the district towns, and the Bank of Bhutan and Bhutan National Bank machines take international Visa and Mastercard. There is an ATM at Paro airport. Beyond the western valleys the machines thin out, and in villages and on treks there are none.

Withdrawals are limited to about Nu 10,000 to 15,000 a transaction depending on the bank, with a local fee of roughly Nu 200 to 300 on top of whatever your own bank charges abroad. Machines do go offline, cards are occasionally swallowed, and a network fault can take every ATM in a town down for an afternoon, so treat them as a top-up rather than your only source of cash.

Good to know

- Withdraw in Thimphu or Paro before you head to Phobjikha, Bumthang or the east. Those drives pass very few working machines.
- If a machine keeps your card, the branch it belongs to returns it the same or next working day. Your guide will take you.

Can You Pay by Card in Bhutan?

In hotels, yes. Three-star hotels and up, the larger handicraft shops and the Handicrafts Emporium, and a growing number of restaurants in Thimphu and Paro take Visa and Mastercard. American Express is rarely accepted. Most merchants add a surcharge of 3 to 7 percent to cover their bank's processing fee, and the machine will usually ask whether to charge in ngultrum or your home currency: choose ngultrum, and let your own bank do the conversion.

Everywhere else is cash or a QR code: markets, small shops, taxis, cafes, farmhouses, the stalls at Tiger's Nest, and anything outside the main towns. Tell your bank you are travelling to Bhutan before you leave, since a first transaction from Thimphu is exactly the kind a fraud filter blocks, and carry cards from two different banks in case one is declined.

Good to know

- Your Byways package is paid before you arrive, so card acceptance inside Bhutan only matters for extras.

Digital Payments in Bhutan: goBoB, MyPay and UPI

Bhutan is more cashless than most visitors expect. From Thimphu supermarkets to vegetable-market stalls and taxis, almost every vendor displays a QR code and Bhutanese pay for nearly everything by scanning it.

Visitors can join in with goBoB, the digital wallet from Bank of Bhutan, which needs no Bhutanese bank account and can be set up before you arrive:

1. Download the goBoB app from the Play Store or App Store.
2. Tap Sign Up Now, choose Other National and select Tourist.
3. Register with your own mobile number, passport number and email address.
4. Load the wallet with a debit or credit card; a convenience fee of about 3.7 percent applies to card top-ups.
5. Pay by scanning any merchant QR code. goBoB works with every bank's merchant codes, not only Bank of Bhutan's.

Your passport details are checked with the Department of Immigration, and transactions are secured with a PIN and one-time passcodes. MyPay, from Bhutan National Bank, works the same way. Indian visitors can skip both and pay with BHIM UPI at any merchant showing a Bhutan QR code. Cash still matters in remote villages, but in the towns a charged phone and a wallet app cover most of a day.

> **Good to know**
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> - Set the wallet up at home, where you can sort out card verification with your own bank while you still have easy connectivity. A local SIM or eSIM helps once you land; see the internet and SIM guide.

How Much Cash Do You Need in Bhutan?

Less than most places. A Byways tour includes hotels, every meal, your guide, driver and vehicle, entry fees, the Sustainable Development Fee and the visa, so cash is for drinks, snacks, souvenirs, optional activities and tips. Most guests find Nu 500 to 1,000 a day covers drinks and snacks, and the rest depends on how seriously you shop.

WhatTypical priceIn dollarsBottled water, 1 litreNu 15 to 20about US$0.20Coffee or tea in a Thimphu cafeNu 150 to 250US$2 to 3Local beer in a barNu 100 to 300US$1 to 3Lunch outside the packageNu 400 to 800US$4 to 8Hot stone bathNu 1,000 to 2,500US$11 to 26Rafting on the Mo Chhuabout Nu 3,800about US$40Small souvenirs for a weekNu 5,000 to 15,000US$55 to 160

For a week, US$200 to 500 in cash and card access is comfortable for most guests, more if textiles or a thangka are on the list; the shopping guide prices the souvenirs. Bring part of it in US dollars to change, and withdraw ngultrum in Thimphu as you go.

> **Good to know**
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> - Hotels and restaurants add a 10 percent service charge and 10 percent tax to bills, so a price on a menu grows by a fifth at the till.

Tipping in Bhutan

Tipping is not part of Bhutanese culture, and it has become customary only in tourism. There is no fixed amount and no expected rate: guests give what feels right for the service they received, and nobody is offended by the absence of a tip. What is usual is a single tip for the guide and one for the driver, given from

the whole group at the end of the trip, and on a trek a pooled tip for the whole crew, from trek guide to horsemen, handed over together on the last day.

Hotels and restaurants include a service charge, so nothing further is expected there; a small tip for exceptional service is always welcome. Small US-dollar bills or ngultrum both work.

Good to know

- An envelope and a few words on the last evening mean as much as the amount inside. Guides keep the notes guests write for years.

How Much Cash Can You Bring In and Out?

You may carry up to US$10,000, or the equivalent in any currency, into or out of Bhutan without declaring it. Above that the amount must be declared in both directions, and taking it out is the stricter of the two. Bhutan has run a formal currency declaration system at Paro airport since July 2024, so this is checked in practice.

- **Bringing money in:** cash or bearer instruments worth more than US$10,000 must be declared to Customs at the point of entry. Below that figure nothing is required.
- **Taking money out:** the same US$10,000 threshold applies, but you must also obtain clearance from the Royal Monetary Authority in advance and then declare the amount to Customs on departure.
- **Ngultrum:** up to Nu 25,000 in notes or coins may be carried in either direction. Above that needs prior RMA clearance, and the excess can be confiscated.
- **Indian rupees:** travellers between India and Bhutan may carry notes above ₹100 up to a total of ₹25,000. ₹100 notes and smaller are not capped.

For an ordinary holiday, with the tour already paid, none of this arises. If you are travelling with a large sum for any reason, tell us in advance and we will walk you through the paperwork.

Banking Hours, Exchange Counters and Emergencies

Banks open Monday to Friday from 9 am to 4 pm and Saturday mornings until noon, and close on Sundays and public holidays, of which Bhutan has many. The Paro airport exchange counter opens for every arriving and departing flight regardless of the hour, and most tourist hotels change money at reception at a slightly weaker rate. ATMs at bank branches in Thimphu, Paro and Punakha run around the clock when the network is up.

If a card is lost or stolen, call your bank to block it; your guide will help with the call. Western Union has a limited presence in Thimphu for emergency transfers, and as your operator we can advance cash against a guarantee if you ask in advance. Before you leave home: tell your bank you are travelling, note its emergency number, and bring cards from at least two banks.

Good to know

- Keep US$100 in small bills somewhere separate from your wallet. It is the reserve that has rescued more than one guest when an ATM network went down for the day.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the currency of Bhutan?

The ngultrum, written Nu. and coded BTN, issued by the Royal Monetary Authority of Bhutan since 1974 and divided into 100 chhertum. It is pegged one to one to the Indian rupee, which is also accepted throughout Bhutan.

How much is one US dollar in Bhutan?

On 9 November 2026 the Bank of Bhutan paid Nu 92.55 for a US$50 or US$100 bill, Nu 89.77 for 5, 10 and 20 dollar bills and Nu 87.92 for singles. The ngultrum is fixed to the Indian rupee, so the dollar rate in Bhutan follows the dollar to rupee rate and moves a little every day.

Can I use Indian rupees in Bhutan?

Yes, everywhere and at one to one. Leave the withdrawn 2,000 rupee note at home, carry plenty of 100 and 200 rupee notes because some small shops hesitate over 500s, and note that Indian rules cap notes above 100 rupees at a total of 25,000 rupees across the border.

Are US dollars accepted in Bhutan?

Hotels, larger handicraft shops and tour operators take US dollars, usually at a slightly worse rate than the bank. Small shops, markets and taxis do not, so exchange dollars for ngultrum at Paro airport or a bank for day-to-day spending. Bring clean notes printed after 2000; 50s and 100s get the best rate.

Can I use my credit card in Bhutan?

Visa and Mastercard work in hotels of three stars and up, the larger handicraft shops and a growing number of Thimphu and Paro restaurants, usually with a 3 to 7 percent surcharge. American Express is rarely accepted. Markets, small shops, taxis and anywhere outside the main towns are cash or QR code only.

Are there ATMs in Bhutan that accept foreign cards?

Yes. Bank of Bhutan and Bhutan National Bank ATMs in Thimphu, Paro, Punakha and the district towns accept international Visa and Mastercard, with withdrawals of about Nu 10,000 to 15,000 a transaction and a local fee of Nu 200 to 300. There is one at Paro airport. Villages and trekking routes have none, and machines go offline, so withdraw before leaving the west.

How much cash should I bring to Bhutan?

On a fully inclusive tour, Nu 500 to 1,000 a day covers drinks and snacks, and most guests are comfortable with US$200 to 500 in cash and card access for a week, more for serious shopping. Bring some US dollars to exchange and withdraw ngultrum in Thimphu as you go.

Need More Information?

Contact our Bhutan travel experts for personalized advice.

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