What we look for in a cloud bill

The 26 checks that account for most of what we find in a first pass. Indian region rates, August 2026.

Before you open the console

Get these two things first or the rest is guesswork.

- [ ] **Cost and Usage Report / BigQuery billing export enabled**
  Not the console graphs. The line-item export is the only place the real answers live.
- [ ] **A read role in the accounts, not just billing**
  You cannot tell an idle NAT gateway from a busy one out of billing data alone.

The three that pay for the exercise

In our experience these three cover most of a first pass.

- [ ] **NAT gateways, one per availability zone**
  ₹3,100 a month each before a byte crosses. Three zones is ₹9,400 a month idle, ₹1.1 lakh a year. Ask whether all three are load-bearing.
- [ ] **gp2 volumes never moved to gp3**
  Around 20% cheaper for the same disk, 3,000 IOPS baseline, no downtime, one command.
- [ ] **Cross-AZ replication nobody designed**
  500 GB a day between zones is roughly ₹28,600 a month (₹3.4 lakh a year), usually because a subnet was picked in a hurry.

Data transfer: the section nobody opens

Above roughly ₹1 lakh a month of spend this is usually 10–30% of the bill.

- [ ] **NAT data processing separated from NAT hours**
  The per-GB charge is usually the larger of the two.
- [ ] **Internet egress by service**
  Roughly ₹8.6/GB. Combined with NAT processing it is about ₹12.9/GB.
- [ ] **Cross-region transfer**
  Often a DR copy nobody has reviewed since it was set up.
- [ ] **Traffic that could use a VPC endpoint**
  S3 and DynamoDB traffic routed through NAT is pure waste.
- [ ] **Public IPv4 addresses**
  Chargeable since Feb 2024. Count the unattached ones.

Compute

- [ ] **Instances under 10% average CPU for 30 days**
  Rightsize before you commit to anything.
- [ ] **Instances running outside business hours that needn't be**
  Dev and staging first.
- [ ] **Previous-generation instance families**
  Newer families are usually cheaper per unit of work.
- [ ] **Orphaned load balancers**
  An ALB with no healthy targets still bills.
- [ ] **Over-provisioned managed databases**
  Look at connections and IOPS, not just CPU.

Storage

- [ ] **Snapshot policies with no expiry**
  A slow leak that compounds every month.
- [ ] **EBS volumes not attached to anything**
  Often left behind when an instance is terminated.
- [ ] **Object storage with no lifecycle rule**
  Infrequent-access and archive tiers exist for a reason.
- [ ] **Duplicate backups across two tools**
  Common after a migration nobody finished.
- [ ] **Log retention set to 'never expire'**
  Ingest is one cost; keeping it forever is another.

Commitments: last, not first

Buying these before rightsizing locks in the waste for the full term.

- [ ] **Current Savings Plan / CUD coverage and utilisation**
  Utilisation below ~95% means you are paying for capacity you are not using.
- [ ] **Anything expiring in the next 90 days**
  The renewal is your chance to resize the commitment.
- [ ] **Commitment term against your actual planning horizon**
  A three-year commitment on a workload you may retire in eighteen months is a trap.

Governance

Not savings today, but the reason the savings come back.

- [ ] **Tagging that lets you attribute cost to a team**
  Untagged spend cannot be governed.
- [ ] **A budget alarm that a person actually receives**
  Not one that emails a shared mailbox nobody opens.
- [ ] **Anomaly detection on spend**
  So a surprise is a Tuesday alert rather than a month-end shock.

> If you work through this and find less than 20%, your estate is in better shape than most and you should stop there. That is a real outcome, not a failed exercise.