

Tip Sheet: Wireless World Travel Made Simple

1. Before you travel abroad, check with your provider to see if your mobile phone is going to work abroad. Different countries use different types of mobile phone networks, so don't assume that your phone will work abroad. And even if your phone does work for voice calling, some of its other functions – such as sending and receiving data or text messages – might not work. Check with your provider before you depart. Ask your provider about other available options it may offer.

2. If your mobile phone *will* work where you're going, you should also determine before traveling the "roaming" rates you'll pay for using it. For most U.S. customers, the service plan that covers domestic usage does not cover usage while traveling abroad. And the rates may be much higher when abroad, because of the additional fees for roaming on a foreign mobile phone network. These higher rates may apply to all of your phone's capabilities, including making or receiving voice calls, receiving or checking voice mail, sending or receiving text messages, and uploading to or downloading from the Internet.

Even if you have "unlimited" minutes, texts, or data applying to domestic usage, you may be charged per minute, per text, or per Kb/Mb if you use your phone in a foreign country. Note also that roaming fees may vary depending on which phone network in a foreign country you are roaming on. Check with your provider before you depart to find out the service arrangements that best fit your needs, and *all* the rates and charges that will apply.

Roaming is complicated! Take time to understand all the rules and rates before you travel. Advance preparation can prevent unexpected charges from appearing on your next bill.

3. Even if your mobile phone will work and you have determined all the charges you may incur with your provider, you may want to research other alternatives. For example, you can avoid roaming charges entirely by purchasing an inexpensive handset in the country you're visiting. Or, if your own phone is capable, you can buy a "SIM" card for it (the removable card used by some mobile handsets containing subscriber data and the phone's number) with a local number in the country you're visiting, effectively turning the handset into a local phone.

Another alternative is to rent an inexpensive handset appropriate for the country you'll be visiting. You can rent it before you leave home or when you get to your destination. Or, you may be able to rely entirely on wireline phones and wireline Internet access, perhaps through Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) calling through services such as Fring, Skype, or Truphone.

If you have a smartphone, uploading/downloading data using a Wi-Fi hotspot rather than a foreign mobile network may avoid data roaming charges. And, by making mobile VoIP calls with your smartphone, you may avoid voice roaming charges. Just make sure that your phone does not automatically connect to an international mobile network, which can be expensive to access. Use free Wi-Fi hotspots whenever possible.

Quick tips to help you become a Savvy Traveler with a mobile phone:

- Contact your provider. Your provider may have a plan to cover service outside of the United States.
- Check with your provider about Internet applications using Wi-Fi that may save you money.
- Turn off automatic downloads. Some phones and data services will automatically download data while the phone is on. Check with your provider or your phone's manufacturer to learn how to disable these automatic downloads.
- If you're a frequent international traveler, consider buying a "world phone" that will work anywhere. Check with your provider for more information.
- You may save money by purchasing a calling card overseas.
- Do not call mobile to mobile within foreign hotels. Use the hotel phones.
- Most hotels don't charge for incoming wireline calls, so pre-arrange a time to be in your hotel room for an incoming call from home.
- If you have an option of contacting someone in the country you're visiting at either a wireline or mobile number, call the wireline. It's likely to be cheaper.
- Be aware of the emergency calling number in the country you're visiting. VoIP services often lack some of the emergency calling features of a regular telephone, so be informed about these differences before using them.

Selected Contact Information

[This section includes a few selected service providers of several types. It is intended to assist consumers, and is not meant to be a complete list of all providers. Neither the FCC nor the U.S. Government is endorsing the products or services of any provider by including it on the list.]

Mobile Telephone Service Providers

AT&T

General toll free number: **1-800-331-0500** or “611” from a wireless phone.

www.wireless.att.com/learn/international/roaming/faq.jsp

International Services: **1-800-335-4685**

When calling from overseas: **1-916-843-4685**

Sprint Nextel

Sprint Worldwide Customer Support: **1-888-226-7212, option 2.**

Information about travelling internationally with a Sprint phone:

shop.sprint.com/en/services/worldwide/travelabroad_sprint.shtml

T-Mobile

Customer Support: **1-877-453-1304**

US Cellular

Customer Support at **1-888-944-9400** www.uscellular.com/services/international/index.html

Verizon Wireless

Customer Service: Dial ***611** or call **1-800-922-0204** to enable International Roaming.

www.verizonwireless.com/global

Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) Service Providers

Fring:

www.fring.com/support/

Skype:

www.skype.com/intl/en/home

Truphone:

www.truphone.com/local-anywhere/support/contact.html

UK **+44 (0) 203-318-0742**

USA and rest of world **+1 -646-360-1689**

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FCC Twitter www.twitter.com/fcc

CTIA International Calling Provider Information www.fcc.gov/guides/international-calling-wireless-providers-voip-services-and-smartphone-manufacturers

Wireless World Travel Week Video www.youtube.com/watch?v=tF54w9IHJ8