



## International Roaming: Using Your Mobile Phone in Other Countries

**COVID-19:** Before traveling abroad, check U.S. Department of State [travel advisories](#) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [travel recommendations by country](#).

Planning to take your mobile device along on an international trip? Roaming rules and rates vary from one carrier to the next and can be complex, so take time to understand them before you travel. Advance preparation can prevent disappointments, such as lack of service or unexpected charges on your next bill.

### Plan ahead

Before you travel, ask your carrier about:

- International roaming arrangements with the service providers in the country you are visiting and whether your mobile phone will work there.
  - Mobile telephone networks differ from country to country, and your phone may be incompatible with the networks in the country you are visiting.
  - Your phone might work for voice calls, but other functions – such as text messaging or sending and receiving data – might not. Check with your mobile service provider to confirm before you depart.
- Roaming rates for the countries you plan to visit. If you are willing to pay the charges, verify with your carrier that international roaming is activated before you travel.
  - For most U.S. customers, domestic service plans do not cover usage abroad.
  - Rates may be much higher because of additional roaming fees on foreign mobile networks, and may vary from country to country and network to network.
  - Higher rates may apply to all of your phone's functions, including voice calls, voice mail, text messages and internet access.
  - Ask your service provider about all the available options.
- How you can track your usage so that you stay within your plan and do not incur additional charges while abroad. Due to delays in processing international roaming, charges may not appear on your bill for an additional billing cycle after your return.

### Explore other options

Before traveling, consider your available options:

- **Unlock your phone so you can use a local SIM card.** If your mobile phone is compatible with the networks in the other country, contact your carrier and ask to have your phone unlocked. Unlocking the phone would enable you to use a SIM card (a removable card in some mobile handsets containing subscriber data and the phone's number), or an embedded eSIM, with a local number in the country you're visiting, effectively turning your handset into a local phone.
  - The unlocking process varies by device and by carrier. Contact your carrier for instructions on how to unlock your device. If your wireless service provider is a signatory to the [CTIA Consumer Code for Wireless Service](#), it is required to comply with the code's standards.



- You can either purchase a local SIM card in the United States before departing or purchase it from a local mobile provider once you arrive in the country.
  - Find out if your cell phone has an embedded SIM, or eSIM. If it does, you may be able to select from available service providers for the country you are visiting through a drop-down menu in your phone's settings, instead of having to swap in a physical SIM card. Check on international fees and prices for service before you commit.
  - Some cell phone models have both SIM and eSIM cards, which can expand your options when traveling. Check your owner's manual or the phone manufacturer's website to find out about your phone model's capabilities. (Check out our FAQ to [learn more on SIM and eSIM cards](#).)
- **Rent or purchase a handset.** You could also rent or purchase a handset for the country you'll be visiting before you leave home or when you reach your destination. Research where you can obtain a prepaid or pay-as-you go handset.
  - **Use a calling card.** You may save money by purchasing a calling card in the United States or purchasing a card overseas and relying entirely on wireline phones.

### Quick tips when traveling

- **Use Wi-Fi spots.** Using Wi-Fi won't count towards your data allowance. Wi-Fi abroad may not be free, so determine whether there will be a charge before you begin browsing the web or using your apps.
- **Use calling apps over free Wi-Fi.** You may be able to avoid or reduce voice roaming charges if you use mobile calling apps that rely on Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) and use these apps over free Wi-Fi. Check with the developer of the app to make sure that you will not incur charges for the calls when using free Wi-Fi.
- **Be aware of the security risks** when using your phone and/or transmitting personal information over a public wireless network. See our consumer guide: [Wireless Connections and Bluetooth Security Tips](#).
- **Turn off automatic downloads.** Some phones and apps will automatically download data while the phone is on and you can incur roaming charges as a result. Check with your provider or your phone's manufacturer to learn how to disable these downloads.
- **Be aware of the emergency calling number in the country you're visiting.** If you rely on VoIP services, note they often lack some of the emergency calling features of a regular telephone, so be informed about these differences as well. If you have a local SIM card installed on your mobile phone, you may be able to call the local emergency calling number. For example, in some European Union member countries, your mobile phone must have a SIM card in order [to call the 112-emergency number](#).
- **Call the wireline number.** If you have the 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.
- **Before leaving the United States,** find out the [dialing instructions for the country you plan to visit](#). When using most mobile phones, you can call the United States or another country while traveling abroad by dialing:
  1. The plus sign: +
  2. The [country code](#) of the country you are calling.
  3. The city/area code (if applicable)
  4. The telephone number
- **Understand how to dial local numbers in the country you are visiting.** Visit [HowtoCallAbroad.com](#) to research whether you need to dial a trunk prefix before an area code when making domestic calls in that country

### Resources: contact information for mobile and VoIP service providers

*This section includes a few selected service providers of several types. It 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 this list.*

**AT&T:** 1-800-331-0500 (when calling from overseas: 1-916-843-4685); <https://www.att.com/offers/international-plans.html>; <https://www.att.com/offers/international.html>



**Skype:** <https://www.skype.com/en/>

**Sprint:** 1-888-226-7212; <https://www.sprint.com/en/support/international.html>

**Truphone:** UK +44 (0) 203-318-0742; U.S. 1-646-360-1689; <https://www.truphone.com/uk>

**T-Mobile:** 1-877-453-1304 (when calling from overseas: 1-505-998-3793); <https://www.t-mobile.com/travel-abroad-with-simple-global>

**US Cellular:** 1-888-944-9400; <https://www.uscellular.com/plans/international>

**Verizon Wireless:** 1-800-922-0204 (or dial \*611 from your mobile phone); <https://www.verizonwireless.com/solutions-and-services>

### Filing a complaint

You have multiple options for filing a complaint with the FCC:

- File a complaint online at [consumercomplaints.fcc.gov](http://consumercomplaints.fcc.gov)
- By phone: 1-888-CALL-FCC (1-888-225-5322); TTY: 1-888-TELL-FCC (1-888-835-5322); ASL: 1-844-432-2275
- By mail (please include your name, address, contact information and as much detail about your complaint as possible):

Federal Communications Commission  
Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau  
Consumer Inquiries and Complaints Division  
45 L Street NE  
Washington, DC 20554

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