



Traveling out of the country with a smartphone

If you will be leaving the country with your *iPhone* or *Android* phone you should think about how much you will want to use your phone. International roaming charges can add up quickly if you don't plan ahead. Here are your choices when traveling outside the country with your smartphone:

Option 1: Use Airplane mode (no extra charges at all but no phone, text or Internet either)

If you don't need to make calls or text messages simply put the phone in Airplane mode. This will turn off all wireless communications such as calls, text and Internet. As long as the phone is in Airplane mode you will not be billed for anything extra. You can still use the phone as a camera and use any app that stores information on the phone itself (play games). But you won't be able to lookup anything up on the Internet or get emails while you are running around.

Option 2: Use Airplane mode and WiFi and a variety of apps (call and text when connected to WiFi)

If you don't mind experimenting with new apps you can use Airplane mode to turn off cellular service and only turn WiFi back on when you are at a hotel, airport or cafe that has WiFi. Keep in mind that WiFi service varies widely. Sometimes you can connect to WiFi and instantly be connected to the Internet and other times you will successfully connect to WiFi but still have no Internet service for a variety of reasons. So if you must be connected during your travels do not plan to rely only on WiFi and apps.

If you just want to use the phone for email and the Internet you can turn WiFi back on when the phone is in Airplane mode. This would allow you to connect to a local WiFi hotspot in your hotel, airport or restaurant, but makes it difficult to get an Internet connection when you are on the street needing to look something up. You will also have to figure out how to connect to a local WiFi hotspot (passwords, etc).

If you want to make calls when only connected to WiFi, apps like [Skype](#), [Google Hangouts](#), [FaceTime](#) and [Viber](#) will do the trick if the WiFi is good enough. Keep in mind that the people you want to call will also need to have the app on their phones, tablet or computer. For text only check out [WhatsApp](#).

iPhone and *iPad* users might be able to send texts to other *iPhone* & *iPad* users via [iMessage](#). Apple's *iMessage* service sends text messages over WiFi or cellular so if you are using WiFi only you may get a message through. Note to *iPhone* users: If you have ever noticed that some of your text messages are in blue and some are in green, the blue ones mean they went through *iMessage* and the person you were sending to also uses an *iPhone* or *iPad*.

Option 3: Signup for an International plan with your cell phone company (very convenient)

If you need to make calls and send text messages and you want uninterrupted access to the Internet then simply call your cell phone provider before you leave (Verizon, AT&T, T-mobile, Sprint) and let them know the countries you will be traveling to and for how long. They will sign you up for a temporary International plan so you won't be hit with high International roaming charges. When talking with your cell phone provider you might be asked about call, text and data usage. Most people use between 1-2 GB of data a month, or less, on their smartphones to do email, look things up on the Internet and app data usage.



Option 4: Buy a local SIM card for your phone (least expensive uninterrupted service and you use your own phone)

The least expensive, but technically more challenging option, is to buy a local SIM card and data plan for the country you are visiting. These SIM cards slip into your phone (or you might need a different phone temporarily while traveling) and give you the least expensive way to get uninterrupted service when out of the country. You would need to buy this SIM card ahead of time or get it locally when in country. A major downside to this option is that you will get a temporary local cell phone number while you are traveling so if someone back home needs to call you they will need to make an International call and know what your temporary number is.

Option 5: Buy a cheap cell phone and a SIM card for service in the country you will be visiting (can be cheaper than buying a SIM card for your phone and you don't have to change anything on your own phone)

Companies like [Mobal](#) and [Telestail](#) sell phones and SIM cards that can be a life saver if you need to make a call in a foreign country. [Keepgo](#) has data SIM cards and personal hotspots called MiFi for connecting to your own WiFi. You can plan ahead with these companies or even have the device delivered to your hotel when you are in country.

Safe travels!

More information

[NY Times: A Traveler's Guide to Taking a Smartphone Abroad](#)

[Huffington Post: 9 Hacks For Using Your Phone Abroad Without Racking Up A Giant Phone Bill](#)

[Wired: How to Prep Your Phone for Travel Abroad](#)

[LifeHacker: How to Minimize Your Phone Usage When You Travel Internationally](#)

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Some of my clients do not realize that my business has expanded to all mobile devices. In fact, any consumer electronic product that you can purchase I can help you with. So if you would like help setting up or syncing your new smartphone or tablet or connecting your new WiFi TV to the Internet, just let me know.

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