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


www.telestial.com



Guide to International Cell Phone Service

How to stay in touch with the office and clients while traveling abroad

By [Betty W. Stark](#)

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We've come a long way from the days when the best phone-home option when traveling internationally was the hotel room phone at your destination and all the negatives that imposed, including telephone bills higher than Mt. Everest. Now, with the coming-of-age of international cell phone service, you can be on a mountaintop, in the desert, adrift in the middle of the ocean or in almost any bustling metropolis or sleepy burg in the world and still stay connected to your office and your clients.

The challenge lies in figuring out which international cell phone service best meets your needs. This requires an evaluation of how you travel now and how you expect to travel in the future. Will you need international service just once a year, or are you a global road warrior who must be in touch at all times? Because most cell phones in the U.S. are not adapted for international use, you'll also need to determine whether your current phone is geared up for international mobile phone service.

Depending on your needs, there are several options available to you:

1. Use your own cell phone if it has the right features.
2. Rent a phone and the international service to make it work.
3. Access service in several countries with a single "account."
4. Access "local" service as you travel.

Action Steps

The best contacts and resources to help you get it done

Use your own phone for international cell phone service

Though it's not a standard feature of U.S. cell phones, some cell phones are designed to work in many parts of the world using GSM (Global System for Mobile communications). If the cell phone you use in the U.S. is GSM-ready (If you have a T-Mobile, Cingular, or M-mode type service with AT&T, then you have GSM service), and if it is tri- or quad-band (the latter is recommended), you will probably be able to access international mobile phone service with your present phone. Note: you might have to contact your phone company ahead of time to be "turned on" for international roaming.

I recommend: Use this [Web site](#) to determine if the country you'll visit has GSM service and which frequency it operates on. Then check out the features on your current phone model at [PhoneScoop](#). At this Web site you can also search for phones by specific specs or features and compare up to five phones side-by-side. Find out if your [Cingular](#) (now "The New AT&T") phone will work in a foreign destination. Use the "[Travel Guide](#)" feature to confirm that you'll find Cingular coverage when you get there. If you have a [T-Mobile](#) GSM-ready phone, you can check out coverage areas, international rates, and activate WorldClass service before you leave home.

Infrequent traveler? Consider an international cell phone rental

When you rent a phone to access international cell phone service, it will cost you more because there is another middle man involved. But this option makes sense if you travel abroad infrequently or don't require a lot of features.

I recommend: For quick-and-easy international mobile phone rentals, check out [Mobal](#), [Cellhire](#), [PlanetFone](#) (you'll receive a 10% discount if you're a AAA member) or [Planet Omni](#). If the frequency

Supremely
Useful
9.9
out of 10

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of your visits warrants it, any of these Web sites will sell you a phone too, or check out [Business.com](#) for more options.

✔ Access international cell phone service in several countries

With an international prepaid or post-paid roaming SIM card (this Subscriber Identification Module identifies you to the wireless provider) and a GSM-ready phone, you can move from country to country with the same U.S. phone number, making and receiving calls as you go. The potential downside to this option is inconsistent service and quality from one country's network to another. And rates for this kind of flexibility can be quite high.

I recommend: Check out multi-country prepaid and post-paid SIM options from [Talk Abroad](#), [Mobal](#) and [United Mobile](#). In order to install a new SIM in your cell phone, your phone must be [unlocked](#).

✔ Access international cell phone service with several SIMs

If you'll be staying in more than one country for a period of time, consider purchasing a prepaid SIM for each country and switching them as you move about. By using local service you'll access air time at a lower cost-per-minute and local calls to your phone will cost less or be free of charge. You might also be able to use additional features such as data service (make sure the phone you're using can support these advanced services).

I recommend: If you don't already own an unlocked GSM phone, you can purchase one that is unlocked and ready to use with a [GSM 900, 1800 or 1900 band SIM card](#) for maximum flexibility. Check out [Telestial](#) for country-specific SIMs. They also have an excellent [tutorial](#) to help you understand the fine points of international cell phone service.

Tips & Tactics

Helpful advice for making the most of this Guide

- Japan and South Korea roam on different frequencies than other countries. If you're traveling to either of these countries you'll need a handset that's compatible. In this case, a rental is probably your best option unless your stay will be lengthy.
- Rental phones often don't have all the latest features; if you need (or want) them, consider buying a phone instead.
- The company you bought your cell phone from may have "locked" it so you cannot use that phone with a different wireless service. There are a number of Internet-based services that can unlock your phone so you can switch SIMs as you travel.
- The downside of using several "local" SIM cards as you travel from country to country is that you will not have a single phone number that travels with you.
- Prepaid SIM cards are rechargeable; when you have used up your air time, you can add more.
- With a prepaid SIM card, you won't have to set up an account, submit to credit checks, or pay a monthly bill.

Featured Vendors

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[www.telestial.com](#)

[Ace Telecom Corp: International Cell Phone Rentals & Service](#)

Provides short and long term cellular phone rentals and worldwide service. Cellular communications for special events, business and leisure travel.

[www.acetelecom.com](#)

[BlueCosmo Communications: Worldwide Personal Communications](#)

Sells and rents the latest satellite phones and pagers from Globalstar and Iridium. Service plans available as well.

[Globalstar Phones](#) | [Iridium Phones](#) | [Sat Phone Rental](#) | [Rental Order Form](#)

[www.bluecosmo.com](#)

[Roadpost International BlackBerry](#)

Take your email overseas. Rent a world BlackBerry or get a free BlackBerry 7230 with an annual plan. Unlimited email in 90+ countries.

[www.roadpost.com](#)



Recommended Solution Providers

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[ICS International Cellular Services: Rent a Cell Phone](#)

Rent an international cell (or satellite) phone and they'll ship it to you overnight.

[PlanetFone: Rent an International Cell Phone](#)

If you're a AAA member, take 10% off the cost of your rental.

[MindLogic: Prepaid International SIMs](#)

Find prepaid international SIM cards, GSM unlocked phones and GSM phone rentals here.

[MyWorldPhone: SIM Backup Dock](#)

Back up your cell phone names and numbers on this handy device.



Best Sites to Learn More

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[PhoneScoop: All You Need to Know About Cell Phones](#)

Great Web site for comparing the features of various cell phones. Find out if yours will work abroad.

[T-Mobile: Roaming Coverage Areas](#)

Make sure your phone will work at your destination before you leave home!



Best Blogs and Forums

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[Mad4MobilePhones: User Forums](#)

Find inside information on your phone or the one you're considering renting or buying.

[PhoneScoop: Forums](#)

More international cell phone insights from this comprehensive Web site.



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Betty, this is a great guide and I am saving it in my favorites for easy reference next time I travel outside the U.S. Thanks!

Posted by: [Paul Heller](#) WORK.COM EXPERT 03/26/2007 06:28 PM

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