



# **Roaming - Guidance for mobile phone usage whilst abroad**

## **Guidance Note C03/17**

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## Roaming – Using your mobile abroad

### European Economic Area (EEA) - Calls, SMS and Data

As of June 15th 2017, under EU law, the cost of using a mobile phone within the European Union will be no higher than domestic rates. "Roam like at home", as it is known, means that users from one EU Member State can enjoy using their mobile phone (Calls, SMS and Data) at no extra cost.



What is included?

- All calls and texts to Gibraltar numbers (within the standard allowance for your plan).
- All calls and texts to numbers within the EEA (within the standard allowance for your plan).
- All your data usage (within the standard allowance or data bundle for your plan).

You will also have the facility of receiving free calls and texts in the EEA with "Roam like at home". However, when calling back to Gibraltar, you will need to add +350 before the number you are calling.

What isn't included?

- Data, calls or SMS messages once you have exceeded your plan or bundles allowances or if you don't have an inclusive plan. If you don't have any allowances or bundles the 'off-net' local charge will apply for voice calls, and your standard out of bundle SMS charges and per MB data charges will apply. Check with your local provider for these charges before you roam.
- Premium and special rate numbers.
- International calls to destinations outside the EEA.

"Roam like at home" applies in countries which are part of the EEA. These are: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and UK.

It does not apply in countries such as Switzerland, Andorra, Channel Islands, Isle of Man, Israel or Turkey, so beware that you could be charged more for using your mobiles whilst travelling in these countries.

Note that "Roam like at home" is designed for Gibraltar residents who are on holiday, visiting relatives or taking business trips abroad. It is not designed for extended periods abroad or for permanent roaming.

Mobile data, at home or abroad, is not intended to be used for connection to devices such as modems, for the continuous streaming of multimedia content or for P2P or file sharing in such a way that adversely impacts the service to other service users.

Exceptions to the "Roam like at home" provisions do exist and your provider may be able to apply a roaming charge if you exceed the fair use limit. The 'fair use policy' protects providers from abusive roaming usage, particularly near country borders, where savvy users could purchase cheaper mobile phone contracts in one country and roam indefinitely in the next country in order to enjoy cheaper calls, SMS and data.

### Rest of the world – Calls, SMS and Data

Once you cross a border to a non-EEA country, your provider will apply standard roaming charges. Roaming costs when travelling outside Europe tend to be a lot higher. Thinking about how you plan to use your phone in advance will be worth considering.

Things to do before you leave:

- **Think about how you want to use your phone abroad.** Your monthly allowance may not cover you for usage abroad so making and receiving calls, sending texts and using the internet or other data abroad could end up costing you extra.
- Check if it is **worth buying a SIM** for the country you are visiting. Please note you may need to check whether your handset is 'locked' to the network of your provider, as this will not allow you to use another SIM.
- You may benefit from buying an international SIM card from a specialised provider, which may offer lower prices when travelling in a variety of different countries.
- Another option is to buy a local pay-as-you-go SIM card when you arrive at your destination. It means you'll have a different phone number while you are there, but will ensure you pay local prices and can be particularly worthwhile for people who frequently visit the same country. However, bear in mind that roaming charges will still apply if you want to make a call or send a text back to your home country using a local SIM.
- Check with your operator to make sure you can **use another SIM with your phone** and, if you do buy one, make sure you keep your Gibraltar SIM card safe and secure.
- **Speak with your provider regarding roaming charges** to the area you will be visiting. If they do charge, consider asking them how to switch off your voicemail before you leave Gibraltar and tell your friends and family to SMS instead.

Once you are there:

- **Use local Wi-Fi hotspots** to help keep costs down, especially if you want to surf the web a lot, download maps, upload photos to social networking sites or check or send lots of emails. You can usually access Wi-Fi in places like cafes, restaurants and hotels, sometimes for free, or you can pay to access the internet for a set time period. Some phone apps can seek out Wi-Fi networks and prompt you to connect to them so that you don't have to do this manually.
- Remember, you don't need 'data roaming' switched on to access Wi-Fi. But this does mean you will need to stay within range of the Wi-Fi to avoid losing your connection. If you haven't turned data roaming off while using Wi-Fi and the Wi-Fi signal drops, your

phone may automatically seek out a mobile network to keep you connected and you may therefore incur data charges.

- If you're not using Wi-Fi, avoid data-heavy activities such as watching videos, updating social media with photos or downloading music. Also, if you are checking emails, avoid opening large attachments.
- **Turn data roaming off** if you do not want to incur roaming charges or if your monthly allowance does not cover you for usage abroad. You can run up a big bill without even actively using your phone as smartphones and 3G/4G enabled tablets automatically seek out mobile connections and use them to update apps. These devices could be downloading data at standard rates throughout your stay without you realising. Low data usage that you wouldn't notice at home could end up costing you more abroad as it may not be covered by your standard usage allowance.

### What if I am on a ferry or cruise?



Mobile phones used in coastal areas or at sea may not be able to connect to traditional 2, 3 or 4G networks and may instead seek out a satellite connection. The euro-tariffs and world-wide data limits we mention above unfortunately do not apply to these and charges can be high.

Try to use services on land where-ever possible. If you think you will need to use your phone at sea, check with your provider before you travel how much it will cost to use your phone via a satellite connection. You could consider manually selecting a preferred network while you are on the boat/ship to avoid satellite connections but signals can vary and this will mean you wouldn't receive calls or texts when out of range of the selected network.

### Lost or stolen phones

When taking your phone abroad always be extra vigilant for thieves as they often seek to target tourists.

Having your handset stolen does not only equate to the expense of buying a new phone but also the hassle and inconvenience of losing the personal data stored in the previous one.

How to protect yourself:

- Make sure to **take extra care in public areas**, especially busy and crowded zones, keep it safely in your possession at all times.
- Keep your smartphone secure by **using a passcode** on both your handset and SIM, this will make it more difficult for thieves to use your phone.

- **Download an app which you can trace your smartphone** if it does go missing. This will enable you to check your phone's exact location and will allow for personal details to be remotely wiped from your handset. Apps such as "findmyiphone" or "Android device manager" are commonly used.



- Make a record of your **IMEI number** by keying \*#06# into your handset or by looking behind your phone battery. Keep this number somewhere safe and accessible, as well as the make and model of your handset.
- **Check your insurance options.** You may want to look at insuring your phone for travel. Some travel insurance policies may provide cover for stolen phones and unauthorised use so it may be worth considering such policies. If you already have insurance, check the terms and conditions of your existing policy to see what cover is available to you.

If it does go missing:

- **Contact your local provider immediately** and report the theft to avoid facing high charges as a result of unauthorised use.
- Once you have reported your phone as lost or stolen, your provider will **bar your SIM** to stop calls being made on your account.
- Your provider can also stop anyone else from using your phone by **blocking its IMEI**, a unique 15-digit serial number.
- Even if there's a slim chance you may find your phone, it's worth talking to your provider about whether a temporary bar can be placed on your account. This is important as **you may be liable for all charges** run up on your phone when it goes missing up until you report it as lost or stolen to your provider.
- If you have insurance, it is also important that you **inform your insurer** if your phone is lost or stolen within a certain time frame too. They may ask for evidence of the theft so a **police report** will be required.