

ComReg's top tips for using your mobile phone abroad

Using your mobile phone abroad is more expensive than at home, but this should not stop you from keeping in touch with family and friends if you follow these practical tips.

When you arrive...

1. Keep the 'welcome message' you receive when you arrive in another EU country. It will have not only the rates for calls, data roaming and messages, but also your mobile phone service provider's free customer care number and the number for emergency services.
2. Know the number for emergency services: 112 in the EU and 911 in the USA and Canada. If you are travelling elsewhere, check locally for the relevant number.
3. Contact your service provider immediately if your mobile phone is lost or stolen. If you do not make contact, you may be liable for the costs of using your phone in that country.
4. Consider using a pay phone and phone card. If you decide not to use your mobile phone, check payphone rates – your phone calls may be cheaper if you use a pre-paid phone card. Avoid using a credit card to pay for calls, as the rates will be very high.

European Union law on mobile phone roaming

The EU Roaming Regulation was first introduced in August 2007 to regulate the cost of mobile phone roaming in the European Union. Under this regulation:

- it is free to receive voicemail and text messages,
- there is a limit on the price of making and receiving calls and sending text messages,
- mobile phone service providers must send a 'welcome message' to your mobile phone with their customer care number, the number for emergency services and details of the prices for making and receiving calls, sending messages and data roaming (using the internet) while in that country,
- mobile phone service providers must set a limit on data roaming within a single billing period (the automatic limit is €50.00 excluding VAT), unless you have already chosen another type of limit. You will receive a message when you are approaching your data roaming limit and will not be able to use or spend more than the limit on your account unless you contact the mobile phone service provider.

*Calls to 1890 numbers from landlines are charged at a local call rate. Charges from mobile phones may vary depending on your service provider.

How can I contact ComReg?

By phone: (01) 804 9668 or 1890 229 668*
(9.00am to 5.30pm, Monday to Friday)

By fax: (01) 804 9680

By email: consumerline@comreg.ie

By post: **ComReg Consumer Team**

Irish Life Centre, Block DEF, Lower Abbey Street, Dublin 1

Our websites are:

www.comreg.ie / www.askcomreg.ie / www.callcosts.ie

Mobile Roaming



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Mobile roaming

These days more and more people are using their mobile phones abroad. This means an increase in making and receiving voice calls when abroad, sending and receiving text and multimedia messages (such as photos) and data roaming (using the internet while abroad).

In mid-2009, a survey we commissioned showed that half of Irish mobile phone users claimed to know the regulated maximum price of making calls while roaming in the EU, but only 14% of users claimed to know the cost of accessing the internet while roaming.

In this guide, we:

- give you tips to help you before you begin your journey,
- direct you to the international roaming pricing section of our website, and
- explain how to save money when you are roaming.

What is international roaming?

International roaming is the ability for you to use your mobile phone abroad. For this to happen, your mobile service provider enters into agreements with mobile networks in other countries. When you use your phone abroad, your mobile phone connects to a local mobile network. The foreign network provider sends your service provider a bill (known as a wholesale charge) for your usage. Having added its own costs, your service provider then charges you for using your mobile phone abroad.

Things to note about mobile phone roaming

- In most countries, you can choose which mobile network to use when roaming.
- Charges may vary depending on the mobile network you

choose and may be a lot higher than those at home.

- You will be charged for any calls to your Irish mobile service provider's customer care line while outside the EU. If you are roaming in the EU, you will see a free number to call in your 'welcome message' SMS when you switch on your phone after arriving in another EU country.
- You will be charged for receiving calls while abroad.
- There is no charge to receive voice messages in the EU, but you may be charged to listen to them.
- You may have to pay for your calls in different increments abroad, for example per minute instead of per second.
- Minimum charges will apply in most cases.
- If you are a pre-pay customer, you may be able to see your roaming charges if your mobile service provider offers free bill itemisation online.

What is inadvertent roaming?

This is when the signal from your mobile phone is picked up by a different network without your knowledge. It can occur close to an international boundary, for example the border between the Republic and Northern Ireland.

Radio signals do not observe borders, so if your phone is set to automatically connect to the strongest available signal, it will do so even if you do not cross a border. If this happens, you will have to pay higher call charges. However, some Irish mobile service providers offer all-island and special rates, so check with your service provider if you are using your mobile in the border area.

To stop this from happening:

- disable 'automatic network selection' on your mobile phone so that it will only connect to a different network if you choose to do so (see your handset guide for instructions); or
- consider adopting a price plan that offers discounts on an all-Ireland basis.

If your phone is set to 'automatic network selection' and it does inadvertently roam, you will probably have to pay the resulting mobile bill.

Roaming - what to do before you travel

Visit www.callcosts.ie/roaming for an interactive guide to prices while roaming. You can also check if a special service provider roaming package is best for your planned usage.

Consult your service provider's website and, if necessary, phone its customer care department to find out:

- whether your contract allows international roaming,
- whether any 'bundle' you have includes the price of calls made abroad,
- how much it will cost to use your phone in the country you are visiting – for the internet as well as calls and messages,
- whether you are on a special service provider roaming package,
- which network offers the cheapest roaming rates in the country you are visiting,
- which name will be displayed on your phone for that network,
- which number to call to reach its customer service department (if you are travelling outside the EU),
- which number to call and what handset details (serial number or IMEI) to give if your handset is lost or stolen, and
- how to set up other important services (such as voicemail, call diverts and network selection).

Using the internet abroad on your mobile phone, data card, dongle or USB stick may be very expensive. By contacting your service provider to check prices, you may be able to find cheaper rates (for example daily and monthly tariffs) that may save you money and avoid a shock bill when you return home. See over the page for details on data roaming limits.

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Before you go...

1. Check that you can use your handset abroad and know how to choose 'manual network selection' so you can choose the cheapest foreign network.
2. Check if roaming is covered in your mobile phone account. If you are a pre-pay customer, top up before you leave.
3. Check the international roaming prices on our website at www.callcosts.ie/roaming
4. Check the price of using the internet abroad with your service provider.
5. Encourage your friends and family to text you instead of calling while you're away – there is no charge to receive text messages in most countries.
6. Be aware of voicemail costs in the country where you are travelling – calls to voicemail are free in the EU, but you may be charged to listen to them. If you want to disable voicemail while roaming, contact your mobile phone service provider for instructions.
7. Make sure you have the service provider's full customer care number from abroad. If you are in the EU, the number will be part of your 'welcome message' and will be free to call. Calls to the customer care number from outside the EU are charged at the same rate as other calls to Ireland.
8. List important numbers in case your mobile is lost or stolen. Note the phone number to contact to report a loss or theft and what handset details to give.

About ComReg We are responsible for regulating the electronic communications (fixed and mobile phone markets, premium rate telecommunications, radio communications and broadcasting transmission) and postal sectors.