Using your smartphone abroad

But if you don't take care when using your smartphone or tablet abroad, you could be left paying off a bill long after your tan has faded.

Using your mobile internet, or 'data', connection overseas can cost much more than it does at home – particularly if you are outside Europe.

The following tips will help you get the most from your smartphone or tablet without returning home to an unexpectedly high bill.

Download before you go

Think carefully about how you're going to use your smartphone or tablet when you're away.

Think ahead - make sure you download what you need before you leave home, including any **apps, books, films** or **music**.

Downloading or streaming films, TV or music consumes large amounts of data and you could run up a very high bill if you wait until you're abroad. Use your home Wi-Fi connection to get everything on your device before you go and make sure all downloads are fully completed before you leave the UK. Partially downloaded items may be 'stored' and resume downloading once you arrive at your destination.

Talk to your provider

If you are planning to go online while out and about abroad, speak to your provider before you go. Some offer products where you can use your domestic allowance – **Euro Traveller** or **World Traveller** abroad or buy some roaming voice and data bundles at a discounted rate. Check how these work and that they apply to the country you are visiting. Also confirm when they will be activated on your account.

If you buy some data roaming allowance (for example in a bolt-on), check what happens when you use it up. It may be that your data use will be stopped unless you buy another bit of allowance, or you could automatically continue using data, but be **charged at standard rates**. These out of bundle charges can result in a very high bill?!

Turn off data roaming

Smartphones and 3G/4G enabled tablet computers automatically seek out mobile connections and use them to update apps **even when you are not actively using them.**

So, to be safe, turn off data roaming before you go, and only switch on when you have WIFI connectivity and want to check emails. *Otherwise these devices could be downloading data at standard rates throughout your stay, and you could be running up a high bill without realising it.*

It's simple to turn off data roaming.

iPhone

Go to settings
click on Mobile Data
disable Mobile Data

Android (ICS, Samsung Galaxy)

To turn off data got to Settings -> Wireless & Networks -> where can turn off or set Data Usage

Use Wi-Fi to get online

If you want to regularly browse the web on your device overseas, use local Wi-Fi hotspots instead of your device's mobile internet connection.

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 apps can seek out Wi-Fi networks and prompt you to connect to them so that you don't have to do this manually.

This is particularly useful for checking emails or browsing social networks - all of which would otherwise soon rack up data charges if a mobile internet connection was used. *Remember, you don't need 'data roaming' switched on to access Wi-Fi.*

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.

Know the cost and beware of choosing to use data beyond the data limit
In the European Union (EU), phone companies are not allowed to charge any more than €0.20 (around 14p) per MB of data, plus VAT.

Outside Europe, the cost of data roaming can be much higher – as much as £6 - £8 per MB of data.

To put that into context, the BBC estimates that watching a 60 minute iPlayer video over 3G networks can consume between 50MB and 350MB of data. At £8 per MB that would work out at between £400 and £2800.

So, its a good idea to double check whether you will be travelling within, our outside the EU, for your trip.

The provider must send you an alert when you reach 80% and then 100% of the agreed data roaming limit. Operators must stop charging for data at the 100% point, unless you agree to continue to use data.

Inform your provider immediately if your phone is lost or stolen

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. Therefore, it's important you contact your provider as soon as possible to avoid facing high charges as a result of unauthorised use.

Make sure you put a passcode on both your handset and SIM to make it more difficult for thieves to use.

To add a SIM PIN Lock

1. Launch the **Settings** app
2. Scroll down and tap on **Phone** settings
3. Scroll down to the very bottom and tap **SIM PIN**
4. Switch the SIM PIN option to 'ON'
5. Enter the **default PIN** set by your carrier (check with them, or Google it)
6. Tap **Change PIN**.
7. Enter the current (default) SIM PIN again
8. Enter your new⤤, custom 4-digit PIN code