

# A How to Guide on Using Your Mobile Phone Internationally

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FlightCrewGadgets.Com

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# The Wild World of International Mobile Phone Calling:

## Introduction:

There are many reasons to give people the ability to reach you abroad. You're on a workation with your family, have kids but left them at home, looking for a new job and don't want to miss a call. Maybe you want a family member or friend to have the ability to reach you or you reach them. Having an international connection can give you peace of mind when travelling abroad.

Wait before you continue reading. If you bring a laptop with you while travelling abroad a good option would be to use a VOIP (Voice Over IP uh Internet) service like Skype.com, Raketu.com, or VoiceStick.Com. There are many others. You can usually purchase an inbound US phone number. Then people can call you as if they were calling a traditional phone. When you are online your PC will ring, if you are not the caller can leave you a voicemail. Next time you are online you can check them.

VoiceStick.com provides and USB device with headset that should work with any computer connected to the Internet, Mac included. This could be very handy to use at an internet cafe.

Some providers like Skype offer Wi-Fi mobile phones. If you are near a hotspot you can make and receive calls. If you think this is the route you would like to take then read no further. Get online and do additional research. For those of you that can't resist being on the bleeding edge of telecom technology continue!

## You've Convinced Me I Want to Use My Phone Abroad:

There are multiple paths you can go down in order to have a working cell phone while travelling abroad. Most cards include voice and SMS text messages. Data plans are either not available or extremely expensive. \$3.00 for 100kb of data. I.E. a couple of emails. You are better off hitting the Internet Café for your data needs.

### Options include:

- Using your own carriers international service
- Buying a local sim card for the country you are in
- Buying a "global" sim card. Should work pretty much anywhere - 140+ countries
- There are pros and cons to each method.

### Starter Checklist:

1. You need to unlock your mobile phone. Must be GSM – T-Mobile – AT&T Yes Sprint and Verizon No
  - a. Cost varies. Beg your carrier and they may do it for free
  - b. Otherwise it should be around \$20.00 see <http://www.gsmphonesource.com/> for more details
2. If you don't have a GSM phone you can purchase one
  - a. Look for Go Phone or others at places like Target and Wal-Mart.

- b. Most sim card providers also are willing to sell you a phone
  - c. Check eBay for GSM unlocked phone
3. Pick which option is best for you!

## Using Your Existing Carrier:

Using your own carrier's services will be the easiest. Friends can just call your regular mobile number and they should be able to reach you.

### Advantages/Disadvantages to the caller:

- It's easy. They dial the same # and may not even know you are out of the country
- Generally they should be able to send SMS text messages to you as normal
- You roam on a partner network and are billed directly to your US mobile account
- If you travel to just Mexico and Canada this may be the best deal for you
  - Check to see what international plans your provider offers

### Advantages/Disadvantages to you:

- Expensive! Up to \$1.99 per minute with 60 second billing. Example based on AT&T rates.
  - I have heard T-mobile may be \$.99-\$1.49 per minute.
- Short term commitment. AT&T will let you add and drop one of its international plans on a monthly basis
- If you don't really plan on using your phone while abroad but only want it for emergencies this is the simplest route to take. If you change your mind just buy a local country card

## Using a Local Country Sim Card:

Fly somewhere, get off the plane, and search for a kiosk, newsstand, or electronics store to purchase a sim card. In Europe they are widely available. There are also web sites where you can purchase cards prior to your departure. Obviously you must plan ahead to account for shipping time. PrePaidGsm.Net is a great resource to see all of the different country cards available. <http://www.prepaidgsm.net/index.html>

### Advantages/Disadvantages to the caller:

- Expensive for them to call you on an international number. General fear and confusion of how to dial.
  - Solution to international dialing see (VoiceStick below)
- Generally they should be able to send SMS text messages to you as normal. Easier for you to send and then friend reply
- If you have friends in that country it makes it easy for them to reach you via phone or text

**Advantages/Disadvantages to you:**

- You have to tell everyone what your new number is
- Usually cheap calls to the USA. As low as \$0.09 per minute
- Inbound calls around \$0.70 per minute (If someone calls you promptly call them back!)
- Reduced charges when calling within the same country
- Calling other countries besides USA can be expensive
- Card may expire over time. So each time you visit you have to get a new card and give out a new number to everyone. (See MyGlobalTalk™.com/VoiceStick.com to avoid this)

**Card Tested:**

Blauworld.de – Worked well in Germany, Czech, and Switzerland. Outside of Germany the costs really added up. <http://www.blauworld.de> then click the English flag. Voicemail was difficult to use. Text messages worked well. Also check out [http://www.ortelmobile.de/index.php?lng\\_id=EN](http://www.ortelmobile.de/index.php?lng_id=EN). Pricing is similar to Blauworld. Good general information online about how these types of cards work. See Links page for more options.

## Using a Global Sim Card:

If you are looking for maximum flexibility but not necessarily the cheapest pricing you should consider purchasing a global sim card. The cards work nearly everywhere. 140+ countries. You have one phone number no matter where you are. Inbound calls to you may be “free\*” Note the quotations and asterisk, more on this later. SMS messages inbound are also “free”. Outbound text messages can be sent for as little as \$0.35- \$0.40 per message.

### Advantages/Disadvantages to the caller:


- Caller doesn't care where you are. You can be reached!
- Calls to your phone can be EXPENSIVE depending on what type of inbound phone number you have. Most common numbers are in Estonia. Calls to these numbers range from \$0.40 per minute to \$3.00 per minute depending on the callers international long distance plan.
- There are two common workarounds for cost effective calling:
  - Some sim providers give a Toll-Free 800 number for the caller to use. They call this number, then enter your international number and are then connected to you. No charge to them. Cost to you around \$0.35 per minute depending on the card you have
  - Use a call forwarding service like Voicestick.com or MyGlobalTalk.com. For you it can cost as little as \$0.02 per minute to forward a call to a local country sim card like Germany or Czech. It costs \$0.24 cpm to call a global card with an Estonian number. Cheaper than the toll-free service offered by the sim card provider, doesn't burn minutes on your card (separate account with VoiceStick), caller simply dials a US number of your choice.
    - A forwarding service doesn't burn minutes on your sim card. This makes it less likely to run out of minutes while travelling.
    - You can change the voicemail to state you are home
- It may be difficult to send SMS text messages to your international number. Some providers like OneSim offer a web site where senders can input your mobile number via online form in order to send you a text message. You could then reply via your phone to their US Phone number for \$0.40 per message.

### Advantages/Disadvantages to you:


- You can be reached pretty much anywhere
- Some cards/phone numbers never expire so you have a “number for life”
- Some cards will expire after 8-12 months with no use. You lose the number and your remaining minutes
- Outbound calls to the US are more expensive than a local country card. Generally around \$0.40-\$0.60 per minute
- Outbound calls require using a callback service. You dial the number you want. The system hangs up and then calls you back. You then get a ring to the number you are dialing. Only slightly annoying. Some cards charge beginning with the call initiation. Other cards charge once you are connected. Read the fine print!


## Global Sim Card Options:

There are many options. I have spent countless hours researching them all so you don't have to. I have read the fine print on these cards. Below are what I have found to be the 5 best options based on all of my research.

Provider	Upfront Cost	# Location	Inbound Rate	General Outbound Rate	SMS Rate
<b>CelTrek.com</b> 	\$129.00 Sim Card \$29 \$100 of Airtime	USA	\$0.29 cpm	US: \$0.42 Others: same or slightly more	In Free Out \$0.55
Comments	<p>Upfront costs are high unless you are willing to buy \$100 of airtime. Separate phone number for people to send SMS messages. They do offer some bells and whistles that other cards do not offer like call recording and cheaper calls to voicemail. Forward voicemail to email. To see these features log into the CelTrek Web then under the Support Center MyCelTrek link. While the system works it is not user friendly.</p> <p>When does the CelTrek SIM card and airtime credit expire?  <b>A</b> - Your CelTrek SIM card will never expire as long as:           <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. You have a credit of over \$50, OR</li> <li>2. You recharge your account at least every six months.</li> </ol>           You can reactivate an expired card and recoup any credits with payment of a \$15 reactivation fee</p>				
Quick Test	From the US: SMS works fine. Your SMS # is in Israel so it may be expensive for senders.				

Provider	Upfront Cost	# Location	Inbound Rate	General Outbound Rate	SMS Rate
<b>Yackie.com</b>	\$49 Sim Card is Free	USA	\$0.29 cpm	US: \$0.50-52 Others: \$0.60-\$80	In Free Out \$0.49
Comments	<b>Doesn't work in Switzerland!</b> Service is similar to CelTrek. Separate phone number for people to send SMS messages. Also offers a VOIP service. If you do not use it or recharge it within any period of 9 months it will expire together with possible call value left on it. To avoid this you can recharge or place a call.				

Provider	Upfront Cost	# Location	Inbound Rate	General Outbound Rate	SMS Rate
<b>OneSim</b>  OneSimCard.Com	\$39.99 Includes \$10 of call time	Estonia	Free** See issues with Estonia #'s	US: \$0.55 Others \$0.60-.080	In Free* Out \$0.40
Comments	Best feature is the ability to send SMS text messages to you via a web page. You can view call history and control voicemail on/off from web site. Check remaining balance online or via phone. Phone number never expires but minutes do after 10 months. Data is available but VERY expensive.				
Quick Test	SMS via web works great. Sending worked fine as well. Call quality on brief test call good. Remember this is network dependent.				

Provider	Upfront Cost	# Location	Inbound Rate	General Outbound Rate	SMS Rate
<b>OneRoam</b>  OneRoam.Com	\$24.95 Includes \$5 of airtime	Estonia	Free** See issues with Estonia #'s	US: \$0.55 Others \$0.60-.080	In Free** Out \$0.40
Comments:	You can send SMS via web page but the page is hidden. The link is: <a href="http://www.oneroam.com/sms.aspx">http://www.oneroam.com/sms.aspx</a> Phone number and minutes never expire. OneSim and OneRoam are very similar. The networks are most likely the same. OneRoam would be the cheaper option but has less online features.				
Quick Test	SMS via web works great				

Provider	Upfront Cost	# Location	Inbound Rate	General Outbound Rate	SMS Rate
<b>Go-Sim.com</b>	\$100 Sim card is free	Estonia	Free** See issues with Estonia #'s	US: \$0.60	In Free** Out \$0.55
Comments	Rates similar to OneRoam and OneSim. Text messages are more expensive. Minutes and phone number never expire.				



### Recommended cards

#### Card Notes:

OneRoam and OneSim are very similar. OneSim has better online features but your minutes expire after 10 months. Both can send text messages via web page which makes it easier for people to reach you, especially those that are used to emailing you information. Tough choice between the two. OneSim gives you better accountability since you can see your call and SMS history online. Look for a complete review of these cards in May 2008. We need to have the opportunity to test them overseas.

***Warning! Whichever card you choose do not test it in the US by calling someone. You will burn \$3.00 a minute doing this! You can try sending a text for under a dollar or you can try making an outbound call. Don't let it connect! Checking Voicemail is usually the same cost as calling a regular phone number. i.e. \$3.00 a minute. To test your card send an SMS to it.***

\*\* Estonia Cards "FREE" inbound minutes. Free for you but expensive for your callers. Up to \$3.00 per minute. See our solutions below

## **I want to make it easy for people to reach me from the US no matter what card I use! Use VoiceStick Next2Nothing™ or MyGlobalTalk™.**

Sorry for the long winded title. There is a great service from a company called VoiceStick. While they offer a full VOIP solution like Vonage, they also offer a no upfront fee service called Next2Nothing™. With Next2Nothing™ you get a US phone of your choice which you can then forward to ANY number around the globe. Why is this so great? Well if you want to forward the number to a hotel just log into your account via the web and enter the number. If you want it to ring your home in the US enter that. Want it to call your prepaid sim card no matter which one you have well enter that. You get the idea.

### **Advantages/Disadvantages to you:**

- You make it very easy for people to reach you. They only have to know one number to call no matter where you want them to reach you!
- It is affordable! Start with \$10.00 of credit. Calls forwarded to you costs as little as \$0.01 per minute. If you had a Germany mobile number the cost would be under \$0.20 CPM. The “Free Incoming” Estonia prepaid global sim would cost only \$0.24 cpm to forward to. Very reasonable.
- VoiceStick offers cheap international long distance using your US mobile phone service. This is called a bridge connection. All you have to do is tell VoiceStick what your mobile number is. When you call VoiceStick number it then prompts use to enter the international number you wish to dial. Rates are really cheap!
- You can auto-recharge for just \$10 vs \$25 for most sim cards. Therefore if you do run short on these minutes, which would provide “free” inbound calls, you don’t have to worry about a higher recharge rate on the actual sim card.

VoiceStick is a division of i2Telecom. They are also offering a new service more dedicated to mobile phones. It is called MyGlobalTalk™. It is very similar to the VoiceStick Next2Nothing™ service. MyGlobalTalk is in beta. New features are set to be released in May 2008. So check out [www.MyGlobalTalk.com](http://www.MyGlobalTalk.com) as well. Sign up is the same.

### **Differences between the MyGlobalTalk™ and Next2Nothing™:**

- N2N has voicemail MGT doesn’t. You would use your mobile phone/sim card voicemail or have no voicemail
- N2N has a soft phone VOIP option similar to Skype MGT doesn’t
- N2N has E911 support MGT doesn’t

## Links:

Prepaid GSM: <http://www.prepaidgsm.net/index.html>

This site has lots of general information on the pre-paid sim world.

### Individual Country Sim Cards:

Blauworld Germany - <http://www.blauworld.de>

Ortel Mobile Germany - [http://www.ortelmobile.de/index.php?lng\\_id=EN](http://www.ortelmobile.de/index.php?lng_id=EN)

O2 Czech Republic - [http://www.cz.o2.com/osobni/en/telefon\\_y\\_a\\_zarizeni/predplacene\\_o2\\_karty/index.html](http://www.cz.o2.com/osobni/en/telefon_y_a_zarizeni/predplacene_o2_karty/index.html)

Switzerland – Go to Migros grocery stores or newsstands to find sim cards

### Global Sim Cards:

OneSimCard - <http://www.onesimcard.com/>

Yackie - <http://www.yackiemobile.com/> - Doesn't work in Switzerland

CelTrek - <http://www.celtrek.com/index.php>

OneRoam - <http://www.oneroam.com/sim-cards.aspx>

GoSim - [http://www.gosim.com/index.php?page=3725\\_global\\_sim](http://www.gosim.com/index.php?page=3725_global_sim)

If you are in the UK:

TravelSim - <http://www.travelsimshop.com/>

0044 - <http://www.0044.co.uk/index.htm>

Lets Roam - <http://www.letsroam.com/index.php>

### Call Forwarding Services:

MyGlobalTalk - <http://www.myglobaltalk.com> – No voicemail

VoiceStick - <http://www.voicestick.com/Rates/PlanDetails.aspx?plan=206> – Next2Nothing plan. Includes voicemail

### VOIP Providers:

<http://www.skype.com> – One of the most popular

<http://www.voicestick.com> – Also provides traditional VOIP services for home and business

<http://www.vonage.com> – Tired of the ads yet?

<http://www.hiptel.com/index.php> - Yet another one

<http://www.raketu.com/en/index.php> - and another

## Glossary:

### **Callback Service -**

If you are interested in using a callback only service you might look at <http://www.dialnow.com/en/index.html> or <http://callbackworld.com>. These are mainly used by people who live in Europe but want to save money on long distance calls.

How they work:

- You dial a number some toll-free
- The system then calls you back at your specified number
- You answer, get a US Dial tone and then make discounted calls to the US and other countries

Callback services are now incorporated into Global Sim cards to reduce the cost of making international calls via mobile phones.

### **VOIP – Voice Over IP -**

The plain English explanation of VOIP is it gives you the ability to make phone calls over your computer via a high-speed internet connection. The most common method is to use a Soft Phone. This is an application you install on your computer. It looks like a dial pad and allows you to make phone calls. You either listen through your PC's built in speaker and talk through an external mike or you can purchase a headset. VOIP is rapidly advancing with the help of companies like Skype, Vonage, and VoiceStick. There are hundreds of others. Traditional phone handsets are now available which plug directly into the internet and allow you to make/receive calls without your PC being on. Check out Skype.Com or Voicestick.Com for general information.

### **Unlocking a Phone -**

Most phones which have a sim card come locked. This means you can only use a sim card provided by your carrier. By unlocking your phone you are then allowed to put any sim card in. So let's say you have an AT&T phone but now want to switch to T-mobile. You can either ask AT&T to unlock it or pay a service to do it. Service providers general charge around \$20. I wouldn't pay more than this. Once your phone is unlocked you can put any card in. This is handy if a friend's battery dies and they want to make a call using their phone number. Just change the sim card and now your phone is theirs.

## About the Author of This Fine Work:

Most likely you know me so no introduction is necessary. Otherwise I am now a pilot by profession and a geek at heart. I spent many years in the IT industry prior to pursuing my dream of flying for a living. My wife and I love to travel but I always have to have the Internet leash attached much to her chagrin. Being on the road all the time generally makes you interested in devices that are smaller, lighter, faster, etc. If you didn't download this document directly you can visit my blog for more details about all things geek in my life.

<http://www.aznet.com/wpb>

I can be reached via email at: [ckracht@hotmail.com](mailto:ckracht@hotmail.com)

Thanks for reading,

Christopher Kracht

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