



APPS & TECHNOLOGY

# Activating international roaming before you go

How to avoid the classic \$847 phone bill surprise. Step-by-step for the four major US carriers.

Prepared by Demo Advisor · April 20, 2026

#### ADVISOR TIP

Demo content — illustrative only. This is a showcase of Compass features, not travel advice. Verify anything you'd actually act on.

You land in Europe, your phone connects to a local tower, and by the time you check into your hotel you've racked up \$200 in roaming charges. We've seen it happen more times than we can count. It takes five minutes to avoid.

#### IMPORTANT

Do this **BEFORE** you leave. Most carrier apps won't let you enable international plans once you're already roaming.

## The options

### Carrier day-passes

Verizon TravelPass (\$10/day), AT&T International Day Pass (\$10/day), T-Mobile International Pass (\$5–35 depending on plan).

Pro: your existing number and texts work.

### eSIM / local SIM

Apps like Airalo, Holafly, or Nomad sell eSIM data plans (\$5–40 for a week of data). Works on any unlocked phone made in the last 5 years.

Pro: way cheaper; your main number still receives calls over WiFi.

## Verizon

1. Open My Verizon app.
2. Plans & Services → International Services.
3. Enable TravelPass — \$10/day in most countries, auto-activates when you use data/calls abroad.

## AT&T

1. Open myAT&T app.
2. My Plan → Add International.
3. Enable International Day Pass — \$10/day, covers 210+ countries.

# T-Mobile

## ADVISOR TIP

If you're on Magenta / Go5G plans, you already have free 5GB of high-speed data in 215+ countries. Nothing to enable.

If you're on an older plan, enable International Pass via the T-Mobile app before you go.

## Using an eSIM instead

1. Download Airalo or Holafly before your trip.
2. Buy a data plan for your destination (\$4–40 for 1–30 days).
3. Install the eSIM profile when prompted. iPhone: Settings → Cellular → Add Cellular Plan.
4. Leave your primary SIM active for iMessage/WhatsApp/FaceTime; use eSIM for data.
5. Turn OFF data roaming on your primary line so it doesn't burn a carrier plan.

## Before you leave

- ☐ Test that your phone is unlocked (needed for local/eSIM plans)
- ☐ Download offline maps for your destination
- ☐ Download WhatsApp or Signal — most business contacts abroad prefer these
- ☐ Add trip airlines to your phone's wallet
- ☐ Screenshot your passport, reservations, and driver's license

# Common questions

## Will iMessage work abroad?

Yes, over WiFi. Over cellular, it depends on your plan — free on T-Mobile Magenta, usually included in Verizon/AT&T day-pass, sometimes not on eSIM-only setups.

## What about calls to US numbers?

Over WiFi with WhatsApp/FaceTime, free. Over cellular, check your plan — day-passes usually cover, eSIMs usually don't.

## Does this work on cruise ships?

No. Ship cellular uses marine satellite and costs \$5–12/minute. Buy the ship's WiFi package instead.

[Questions? Schedule a call](#) →