

International Mobile Roaming

What is international roaming?

International roaming refers to the ability to use your mobile service while overseas. Depending on the type of roaming available and the destination to which you are travelling, you may be able to use your existing mobile number and mobile phone to make and receive calls, send and receive SMS, and even receive facsimiles[1]. All of this can occur while being billed by your usual Australian mobile carrier (or service provider).

How does international roaming work?

When roaming internationally, you are using the network of a mobile phone carrier in your destination country with whom your Australian mobile carrier has a 'roaming agreement'. A roaming agreement is a commercial agreement between your Australian mobile service provider and a roaming partner mobile carrier that allows you to access the network of the roaming partner mobile service provider.

Can I use international roaming?

If you wish to use your phone overseas, you need to check:

1. Does your Australian mobile service provider have a roaming agreement with a roaming partner in your destination country?
2. If so, does the roaming partner offer service in the areas of the country that you will be visiting?
3. Will the phone itself be technically effective in the destination country? If not, it may be possible to arrange with your carrier to hire an appropriate handset in Australia or at your destination, or to upgrade your existing phone.

You should consult your mobile carrier's website, or ring their customer care line, to find the answers to these questions.

If international roaming is available where I'm going, how do I activate it?

Procedures for accessing international roaming vary depending on the type of roaming available where you are going. They also vary from carrier to carrier. The simple message is, talk to your carrier at least a few working days before you go to find out how it will work for you.

There are two sorts of roaming: 'plastic roaming' and 'automatic roaming'. 'Plastic roaming' is so-called because to activate it, you need to insert a new SIM card (the 'plastic') into your mobile phone to suit the mobile network that you'll be accessing in your destination country. You'll need to arrange to receive this SIM card from your Australian carrier before you leave Australia – so make sure you allow for this when planning your trip.

'Automatic roaming' does not require you to change anything on your phone (assuming that it is a type that will be technically effective in the destination country): you use the phone as it is, hence the term 'automatic'. Be aware, however, that you may still need to have 'automatic roaming' **activated** by your Australian carrier before you are able to roam internationally. This will depend on a number of factors such as the type of plan you are on. Again, ensure you talk to your carrier about how to gain access at least a few working days before you leave Australia.

What does it cost and how does it work?

As you'd expect, there is a fee associated with the convenience of being able to be contacted so conveniently while overseas. Fees and charges for international roaming vary from carrier to carrier, and from country to country. Talk to your carrier (or visit their website) to find out about the costs – and about possible ways to minimise them – you may find that some products or services suit you and your budget better than others.

Receiving calls while overseas

Contacting you on your mobile while you're overseas, if you're using 'automatic roaming', is as easy as contacting you on your mobile when you're at home. Your mobile phone number does not change. No international prefix is required from Australian callers, but callers from anywhere else in the world (including from your destination country) would need to use the Australian prefix (+61) then your mobile number without the first zero to contact you. For example, if your mobile number is 0414 xxx xxx, then to dial you while roaming, you would need to dial +61 414 xxx xxx.

When using 'plastic roaming', your phone number may change. Check with your carrier.

Making calls while overseas

Procedures and costs for making calls from your mobile while overseas vary from carrier to carrier and from country to country. Talk to your carrier before leaving Australia about how to make calls while overseas, and about the costs.

Further information

For more information on international roaming, contact your carrier, or consult their websites at:

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'3'-www.three.com.au/index.cfm?section=Care&pid=410&pageid=1472

Orange - see www.orange.net.au – and search for 'roaming'.

Optus

www.optus.com.au – and search for 'roaming'.

Telstra

www.telstra.com.au/mobile/products/overseas/roamingoutbound.cfm

Vodafone

www.vodafone.com.au/voda_help/globalRoaming.jsp