

Tips for travelling with your cell phone

(NC) Travelling outside Canada can be a wonderful experience: exploring new places, experiencing local culture and expanding your horizons. But in the digital age, it can also come with unexpected costs, like roaming charges.

Roaming means your mobile device is connected to a network outside your service provider's coverage area. The roaming charges can add up quickly, so here are some simple tips for keeping things under control when you're travelling:

Turn off your mobile data. This is the simplest way to avoid hefty roaming fees. Your device's settings will have an option to deactivate your wireless connection. Alternatively, you can turn on "airplane mode," which disables your mobile connection, but still lets you use Wi-Fi networks. Find it in your quick settings menu along with your Wi-Fi, Bluetooth and flashlight. TIP: the icon looks like a plane.

Download area maps before you leave. Navigation apps use GPS to track your phone's location, but the maps themselves won't load without data. You can download them to your phone in advance, which lets you see your location, streets and major landmarks, even with mobile data turned off.

To download maps, search for your destination in your navigation app. When the area comes up, tap the



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"Download" button if it's available, or tap "More" then tap "Download Map." Alternatively, you can take screen snapshots to save in your photo gallery.

Avoid public Wi-Fi. If you need to look something up while travelling, it can be tempting to turn on your Wi-Fi and look for open networks—connections that don't require a password—but they can be dangerous. Bad actors can monitor and intercept personal information and login credentials as they travel through these unsecured public networks. Find a space with password-secured Wi-Fi that's willing to give you access, such as a restaurant or your hotel. Secured networks aren't risk-free, but they can be a safer option.

Consider a roaming plan. Most providers offer travel plans or add-ons that let you continue using your phone under your existing plan, even outside Canada. Before you buy, make sure to ask questions:

- Will my phone work in the area I'm planning to visit?
- What will cause roaming charges—calling, texting, using data?
- What will the roaming fees be?
- How can I reduce potential fees?

Pay close attention to any notifications about your data usage, because many apps use data in the background. Check your device to turn off background data use as a pre-trip precaution.

Whether you purchased a roaming plan or not, make sure to check your bill for roaming charges when you get back—you can dispute any unexpected charges. If you're not able to resolve an issue with your service provider directly, you can reach out to the Commission for Telecom-television Services (CCTS), the independent agency that can help find a solution that works for both customer and provider, with the authority to direct providers to correct problems when needed.

Learn more about resolving complaints at letsstayconnected.ca.

HOW TO GET

GOOD DEALS!

(NC) It's the most wonderful time of the year for everyone who loves a good sale. But how can you know you're actually getting a bargain? Here are some tips.

Know how to spot quality items. If you get a major discount but the product gives out in a couple of months, that's definitely not a savings. Whatever product you're shopping for, educate yourself about what features mean quality that will stand the test of time. Look to blogs, reviews and even TikTok videos for guidance.

Browse in incognito mode. Airlines and hotel brands are known for adjusting their pricing based on your location and how many times you've visited a page, but some sellers of other item categories are starting to do the same. To get the best prices, always use incognito mode when researching and comparison shopping.

Take advantage of trial periods. Most wireless and internet services offer a 15-day trial period, so test all the features to make sure the service meets your expectations for performance. If it doesn't, talk to your provider and consider cancelling without penalty before the trial expires; otherwise, you'll be locked into a fixed-term contract. You should also carefully review your first bill to make sure it matches what you were offered.

If you have service problems or billing issues that are not resolved after speaking with your provider, you can file a complaint with the Commission for Complaints for Telecom-television Services. This independent organization offers free and unbiased complaint-resolution services at letstalksolutions.ca.

Sunita Dhir

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