**Cell Phones Keep You Connected to Family and Friends**

Do you know if your current phone plan has international cell phone service? If it doesn’t, and you are overseas for the Study Abroad Program or Field Experience and call home a few times, your bill might be just as much as the cost of your program!

Here are some things you should know and tips we collected for you to start to think about it and take an action to get ready before your get on board. We will really appreciate if we can hear your experience and suggestions after your return, so we can make this list even better.

**A couple of facts you should know**

* Europe and much of the world (212 countries at last count) adopted a common cell phone standard called Global System for Mobile (GSM) and their cell phone networks would operate on the same frequencies – the phone works in London will work equally well in Beijing, Sydney and Johannesburg.
* The U.S. DID NOT standardize and adopt this GSM system. Even though T-Mobile and Cingular have the GSM service, they are operating on a different frequency.
* Most cell phones sold in the U.S. are locked, which means that the cell phone provider blocks the access so that you cannot use your phone on another company’s network.

**Check with your provider**

* Do they offer International plan? How much and how is it charged if they do? Is there any roaming fee?
* Can you suspend your phone service temporarily? This means that some providers will allow you to pay a reduced rate to maintain your phone number at the same time you will stop all phone service while you are away.

**Suggestions from experiences and Study Abroad participants**

* Unlock your phone
* A smart phone or even more expensive phone can be unlocked by contacting your service provider or Google “how to unlock your cell phone”.
* SIM Card
* A small card that holds your personal information in it and it can be switched from phone to phone.
* Buy a prepaid SIM Card that allows you to get FREE incoming calls wherever you are in the world.
* A SIM Card for each country you visit gives you a local phone number and local calling rates, as low as 25 cents/minute. It is easy, convenient and relatively inexpensive for you to call other people in the country you are visiting, and easy and normal for them to call you on your local number.
* SIM Card can be replenished by purchasing an airtime voucher in one of the local currency denominations. They are available at most newsstands, kiosks and convenience stores. The airtime vouchers are scratch cards that have a pin code which you simply key into your phone for immediate credit.
* If you are heading to Brazil, SIM Card is the best way to use, according to one of our faculties who led our Study Abroad programs. In Brazil, the provider includes VIVO, TIM, CLARO.
* Please click on it to know more about [sim card](http://www.internationalstudent.com/sim_cards/), please click on it.
* Pre-Paid Cell Phone
* If you don’t want to or cannot unlock your phone, you can also rent or buy a whole Pre-Paid Cell Phone package to use abroad.
* There is no credit check or contract to sign, or monthly bill. You pay in advance and use the phone until their time is exhausted.
* Rates are much higher than post paid phones.
* For more information, a Prepaid Cell Phone Comparisons and pros & cons, please click on

<http://cell-phone-providers-review.toptenreviews.com/prepaid-cell-phones/>

* International Cell Phone Rentals
* You can choose an individual phone rental or multi-countries for country specific with lower rate.
* Most services include free incoming calls.
* You can choose a variety of packages that let you use the phone for as little as a week or as long as a month, and you can renew if you decide to be abroad longer in the country.
* You can leave your own phone home so it doesn’t get lost or stolen.
* A helpful site: [Cellular Abroad](http://www.cellularabroad.com/gsmrental.php)
* Use the Internet to call
* Download Skype or Facetime on your cell phone, so you can use it to call home.
* [Google Voice](file:///C:/Users/Apinant/Desktop/voice.google.com) also lets you text message any phone in the U.S. for free and people can also leave you a voice mail on your virtual number.

These are just some information and suggestions and please make sure that you do some research and select the ones that fit your need the most. Talking with some previous Study Abroad or Field Experience participants is a great idea and way to get more helpful tips for the country you are going.