



Twilight Travel Tips: Telephone & Internet Access

<http://TourTheTwilightSaga.com>

A Novel Holiday Travel Guidebook

Tour the Twilight Saga **Telephones and Internet Access When Twilighting**

Telephones for Twilighting

When preparing to Twilight in the United States or Canada—or anywhere else, for that matter—deciding what cell phone to use **requires research**.

US and Canadian Twilighters visiting Twilight Saga Sites within your home country have the fewest worries. Use your own cell phone for making calls, but be careful of how you access the Internet when outside your home province or state. (More about that, later.)

When US or Canadian Twilighters cross the border, however, you are **visiting a foreign country**. Because both countries are members of the **North American Numbering Plan**, your own cell phone will probably work anywhere within the other country, but **international roaming fees may apply**.

How Cell Phones Work when Visiting a Foreign Country

From **Using Your Mobile Phone in Other Countries**—an online article posted by the US **Federal Communications Commission (FCC)**:

“Mobile telephone networks differ from country to country, and your phone may be incompatible with the networks where you are visiting. Also, if your phone works for voice calls, some other functions—such as sending and receiving mobile data or text messaging—might not work. Check with your mobile service provider before you depart. ...

Roaming is complicated! Take time to understand all the rules and rates before you travel. Advance preparation can prevent disappointments such as lack of service or unexpectedly high charges on your next bill.”

<http://www.fcc.gov/guides/wireless-world-travel-made-simple>

From **Roaming Charges: What You Should Know**—a **Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC)** Internet article:

“When you agree to a plan with your cell phone service provider, it includes a coverage area—or ‘home’ area—where billing according to your selected plan applies. If your contract is for local coverage, roaming charges may apply when you travel and leave the coverage area of your provider’s network and ‘roam’ onto the network or coverage area of another cellular provider, even if you are still within [your country]. If you have a nationwide coverage plan, roaming charges apply when you travel outside of [your country].”

http://www.crtc.gc.ca/eng/info_sht/t17.htm

Below are some other resources helpful to understanding roaming fees:

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roaming>

<http://mobileoffice.about.com/od/glossary/g/data-roaming-fees.htm>

<http://www.whistleout.com/CellPhones/Guides/global-roaming-which-carrier-is-best>

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Although the FCC and CRTC articles were written for US and Canadian citizens traveling abroad, they contain information equally helpful to *other* foreign national Twilighters. In addition to discussing a few phone options available when traveling abroad, they offer important tips for avoiding outrageous roaming fee charges.

Here are a few of those tips:

- Your home cell phone service provider may offer a temporary plan to cover cell phone service outside of your country. If so, this is the most convenient option. Check before you travel.

- **When not making a phone call,**

Shut off your phone, or

Turn off your phone's network connections, or

Set your phone on **airplane mode**.

This will prevent you from incurring roaming charges that result from **data usage that occurs when you're not using your phone**—such as **maintaining a connection between your phone and the nearest cellular tower**.

- **Turn off automatic downloads.** Some phones (especially Smartphones) automatically download miscellaneous data while the phone is on. Check with your service provider or your phone's manufacturer to learn how to disable automatic downloads.
- If you'll be using your phone for voice calls only, and you don't intend to access the Internet or use other data services, turn off your phone's data roaming and data synchronization services. Make sure that you don't have applications on your phone that can override these settings.
- If you *do* want to occasionally use your phone's data services while traveling, and won't be disabling data downloads, turn your phone off when not using it.
- Do not call mobile to mobile within foreign hotels. Use the hotel phones.
- Most hotels don't charge for incoming landline calls, so pre-arrange a time to be in your hotel room (B&B, or other lodgings) for an incoming call from home.
- If you have the option of contacting someone in the country you're visiting at either a landline or mobile number, call the landline. It's likely to be cheaper.

TripAdvisor offers two informative phone-related articles:

Mobile Phone Service for Visiting the US

<http://www.tripadvisor.com/Travel-g191-c196160/United-States:Mobile.Phone.Service.For.Visiting.The.Us.html>

Mobile Phone Service for Visiting Canada

<http://www.tripadvisor.com/Travel-g153339-c163066/Canada:Mobile.Phones.In.Canada.html>

We scoured the Internet for resources to help you research the many variables that affect your decision about what phone to use when Twilighting. The following are our favorite all-round articles about phones and travel.

Telephone Service for Travel—Cell (Mobile) Phones:

http://wikitravel.org/en/Telephone_service_for_travel

10 Ways to Prepare Your Cell Phone for a Trip:

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/smartertravel/10-ways-to-prepare-your-c_b_4213868.html

Using Your Own Cell Phone When Traveling Abroad

Begin your research by contacting your cell phone service provider:

- Ask whether your cell phone model will work in your destination country.
- Ask if a temporary international calling plan can be activated on your account for the duration of your trip.

If the answer to both those questions is “Yes,” **this is the most convenient option**—especially for US and Canadian Twilighters who’ll be crossing the border. You can use your own phone to make calls as you normally would. Your contact list will remain at your fingertips, and folks back home can call you as they normally do—**without incurring international phone call charges**.

Unfortunately, even after activating an international *calling* plan, using your own phone in a foreign country can still be costly. Yes, phone calls will be cheaper than they are without activating an international dialing plan. Fees for **texting** and **downloading data files**, however, may remain ridiculously expensive.

Border-crossing Twilighters planning to use their Smartphone to check e-mail, access apps, and surf the web should ask your carrier for a temporary international *data* plan, as well. Below is a link to Verizon’s international plans, as an example.

<http://www.verizonwireless.com/mobile-living/network-and-plans/verizon-international-plan/>

Beware of International Data Plan Packages that are Too Small for Your Needs

Sticking with a Verizon example, the \$10/month Canada and Mexico Verizon International Travel Plan for US Twilighters allows up to 100 MB usage per month.

<http://www.verizonwireless.com/landingpages/international-travel/>

According to **Stephanie Rosenbloom**, *The Getaway* columnist for the New York Times’ Travel section:

“What exactly can you do with 100 megabytes? As it turns out, not much.

Srini Devadas, a computer science professor at M.I.T., said sending emails doesn’t eat a lot of data, but the fun stuff does. ‘It’s the photos and videos and the maps,’ he said, explaining that emailing a single high-resolution photo is 2 to 5 megabytes. He estimated that a 10-minute video call would be about 24 megabytes.

Companies including Verizon and AT&T have megabyte calculators on their websites that let you estimate how much data you’ll need by selecting the things you plan to do (send emails, upload photos, surf the Web) and for how long. For instance, based on AT&T’s figures, visiting 50 web pages equals about 50 megabytes. Thirty social media posts with photos are roughly 10 megabytes. Downloading 10 songs? Forty megabytes. Boom: You just burned through 100 megabytes. And forget about 4G video streaming. According to Verizon’s figures, that’s 5.8 megabytes a minute.”

Happily, Ms. Rosenbloom also provides tips for minimizing Smartphone data usage.

“How much data you use depends on a variety of things, including the resolution and size of your photos and videos. Always opt for the lowest when sending or uploading. Another way to save: When walking around a city, use offline mapping apps like *City Maps 2Go* and *OsmAnd*, which can work without an Internet connection. (Such apps can take a toll on your phone’s battery life so consider the time-honored tradition of carrying a paper map.) And of course patience will save

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you money: Spend the day taking all the photos and videos you want but upload them later using Wi-Fi at your hotel.”

To see more of her terrific tips, read the article:

http://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/23/travel/being-smart-about-phone-fees-overseas.html?_r=0

If you'll be using your Smartphone to e-mail, post pix on Facebook, access maps or GPS apps—or will be using it as a **mobile hotspot** (more below)—it is cheaper to purchase a larger-than-standard data allowance *before* you leave home. The moment a traveling Verizon user goes over the standard 100 MB international data plan allowance, another 100 MB (\$10) is added to the bill. If you instead sign up for a 250 MB allowance, the fee is \$20—giving you an extra 50 MB for the same price.

Lastly: If using your own phone is an option when Twilighting internationally, please read the SIM Card section below before deciding to do so.

Renting a Foreign Phone

Once upon a time, this was a reasonably good option for enjoying phone service in a foreign country where you couldn't use your own phone. These days, not so much.

Foreign cell phone rental companies are not as commonplace as they once were. However, if you cannot use your own phone in your destination country; and purchasing a cheap, unlocked phone with a local SIM card seems too confusing (see below); renting a phone may be your best option.

From WikiTravel.org:

“There are several advantages to having your [rented] phone before you go. One is that you will have your [foreign] phone number to give out to family, friends and co-workers. You'll also have a phone that's ready to use as soon as you land. Another advantage of renting the phone before your trip is that it will come with complete operating instructions in [your language] with information on how to check the remaining prepaid credit balance, how to add additional credit, how to contact customer service, and how to make and receive international calls.”

http://wikitravel.org/en/Telephone_service_for_travel#Cell_.28mobile.29_phones

***If You Decide to Rent a Phone, get it *Before* You Leave Home**

Rented international phones generally arrive at least one day before departure, and must be returned as soon as possible after your return home to avoid incurring additional charges.

Buying SIM Cards for use in Unlocked Phones

SIM stands for **subscriber identity (identification) module**. A phone SIM card is a microchip that contains the international mobile subscriber identity and the key used to identify and authenticate the cell phone service subscriber.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Subscriber_identity_module

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TripAdvisor highly recommends using **Prepaid No-Contract SIMs** when traveling abroad.

“In general the only answer to excessive roaming fees is to use a phone service from the country you are visiting. You will see it over and over again in TripAdvisor forums, ‘Buy a local SIM!’ It is tested and true advice.”

<http://www.tripadvisor.com/Travel-g191-c196160/United-States:Mobile.Phone.Service.For.Visiting.The.Us.html>

Although Rick Steves’ phone tips are for traveling in Europe, they apply for Twilighters traveling to any foreign country. Just read the name of the country you’ll be visiting in place of “European.”

“You’ll need either a European phone or an unlocked phone in order for a European SIM card to work (some phones are electronically ‘locked’ so you can’t switch SIM cards). Check with your carrier — it’s possible the phone you have is already unlocked, as this feature is becoming more common in newer models. Otherwise, you can try asking your provider if they’ll unlock it for you. Remember that as long as you have a European SIM in your own phone, you won’t be reachable at your regular [home] number.”

<https://www.ricksteves.com/travel-tips/phones-tech/cell-phone-europe>

The greatest SIM card disadvantage is that infrequent foreign travelers may find them confusing. Again, we refer to Stephanie Rosenbloom’s New York Times article:

“If you’re an inexperienced traveler ... there can be a learning curve involved in using a SIM card that you may not want to tackle. But this continues to be one of the best ways to make cheap local calls.”

http://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/23/travel/being-smart-about-phone-fees-overseas.html?_r=0

The solution? Learn everything you can about SIM cards while preparing for your trip. Then, make your decision.

Please Note: Rosenbloom advises local SIM card users to warn friends and family about calling you: “Because you’ll have a local number, if anyone in [your home country calls your SIM card phone] and doesn’t have an international calling plan, they’ll get socked with a fat bill.”

If the folks back home don’t have an international calling plan, consider scheduling a time for you to call them, or make **VoIP** contact appointments (see below).

The best time for setting phone or VoIP contact appointments is bright and early in the **morning**—in your **Twilight Saga Site’s time zone**. That way, home contact appointments won’t curtail your enjoyment of evening Twilighting events that present themselves unexpectedly.

★Speaking of Time Zones

All Twilight Saga Sites in *Tour the Twilight Saga* Books One, Two, and Three are in the Pacific Time Zone.

When it’s 7am in Forks, Washington (TTTS Book One), Vancouver, British Columbia (TTTS Book Two), or St Helens, Oregon (TTTS Book Three), it’s 9am in Chicago and Winnipeg ... 10am in New York and Toronto ... 3pm in the UK ... 4pm in Germany, and so on. Visit the link below to determine the time difference between home and where you’ll be Twilighting.

<http://www.worldtimezone.com/>

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Additionally, **Daylight Saving Time** (DST) is in effect between March and November for all Twilight Saga Sites in TTTS Books One, Two, and Three. The World Time Zone link (above) only reflects DST time zone differences when accessed during the months that DST is in effect. Consult the Wikipedia link below to learn if DST will be in effect during your Twilight Saga vacation.
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Daylight_saving_time_in_the_United_States

Include a note about Twilight Saga Site time zone differences when you give friends and family your travel cell phone number and lodgings landline phone numbers.

VoIP

Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) refers to making phone calls via the Internet. This is the cheapest way to stay in touch with folks back home while on the road.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Voice_over_IP
<http://www.voip-info.org/wiki/view/What+is+VOIP>

From Rick Steves:

<http://www.ricksteves.com/travel-tips/phones-tech/calling-over-internet>

“A cheap way to stay in touch while traveling is to use Internet calling/messaging apps, such as Skype, Apple's FaceTime and iMessage, or Google+ Hangouts, to make free calls online or message to your heart's content. Many travelers use a mix of these apps, based on what their friends and family are already using at home.

To use these apps for free, all you have to do is log on to a Wi-Fi network, then connect with any of your friends or family members who are also online and signed into the same service. Although it's possible to use these apps over a cellular network, doing so when traveling can burn through your data allowance, especially if you're making a video call.”

“The biggest hurdle travelers face with Internet calling is finding a Wi-Fi signal that's strong enough for a smooth call. With a solid signal, the sound quality is much better than a standard phone connection; but with a weak signal, the video and audio can be choppy and freeze up. If you're struggling with your connection, try turning off the video and sticking with an audio-only call.”



Internet Access When Twilighting

There are several options for connecting with the World Wide Web while Twilighting in Canada and the US.

The Cheapest Option: Use Publicly-Available Free Wi-Fi Internet Connections

These days, free **Wi-Fi Hotspots** can be found in airports, train and bus stations; McDonalds, Starbucks, and other restaurants; libraries, book stores, grocery stores — they're *everywhere*.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hotspot_%28Wi-Fi%29

Unfortunately, the cheapest Internet connection option is the most risky one to use.

Even when you must obtain and input a pass code to access the Internet on a public Wi-Fi hotspot, **public Internet networks are unsecured** and the device you're using will be **vulnerable to hacking**.

Basically, anyone else accessing a public establishment's Internet network while you're online can tap into your activity and sniff out your personal information. This is why hackers like to lurk at—or nearby—public Wi-Fi hotspots.

"If ten patrons of a café are using [the café's Wi-Fi] to access the Internet, check email or download music, ten conversations are being broadcast throughout the café and immediate area. Others within range can use widely available tools to eavesdrop on that dialog, trapping and analyzing the data packets. This is a good way for nearby malicious persons to gain usernames, passwords, email messages, and other personal information that is traveling unencrypted on the wireless network."

<http://www.wisegeek.org/is-it-safe-to-use-free-wifi-.htm>

*Wi-Fi hotspots typically have a range of about 66 feet (20 meters) indoors, and an even greater range outdoors. "**Evil Twins**"—hacker-created hotspots with a name very similar to a nearby establishment's hotspot—can be launched from a laptop as far as 300 feet (91 meters) away from the legitimate business.

When a public establishment charges a fee for using their Wi-Fi hotspot, that fee does *not* guarantee a secure connection.

In fact, it may be *more* dangerous to use, especially if you have to provide your credit card information to "subscribe" to their network.

Furthermore, establishments that charge a fee for using their Wi-Fi hotspot are gouging their patrons. *Any* business with an Internet account can offer their patrons free Internet access without having to spend more than the one-time price of purchasing an Internet wireless router.

No matter what Internet access method you plan to use primarily while Twilighting, please read the **wiseGEEK** article above, and the **CNET** (Computer Network) article below. That way, you'll know how to protect yourself whenever you use a public Wi-Fi hotspot to access the Internet.

Six Ways to Use Public Wi-Fi Hotspots Safely.

http://howto.cnet.com/8301-11310_39-20034899-285/6-ways-to-use-public-wi-fi-hot-spots-safely/

Our favorite tip from the CNET article:

"Use common sense. You should treat all open [public] networks as a security risk. Don't do any banking, online shopping, or other activities that would expose your private information. If you wouldn't be willing to share it with the public, it can wait until you get home."

Ah! Here's another great article about safely accessing free Wi-Fi hotspots—this one from **PCWorld**: **Five Rules for Using Your Laptop on Public Wi-Fi Hotspots.**

http://www.pcworld.com/article/251784/five_rules_for_using_your_laptop_in_public_wi-fi_hotspots.html

Our favorite PCWorld tip:

"Want an easy way to foil hotspot hackers? Here's a tip brought to you by the letter 'S': When you type a Web address into your browser, preface it with 'https' instead of the usual 'http.' The former activates something called Secure Socket Layer (SSL), which is a fancy term for encrypted browser traffic."

One more article—this one from **Forbes.com**:

How to Avoid Data Theft when Using Public Wi-Fi

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/amadoudiallo/2014/03/04/hackers-love-public-wi-fi-but-you-can-make-it-safe/>

Forbes' most valuable tip helps you avoid being scammed by an Evil Twin:

“Verify the network name. One extremely common attack involves a hacker setting up a public Wi-Fi hotspot of their own at your favorite Wi-Fi watering hole. It will likely have a name very similar to the hotspot the legitimate business is offering [an ‘Evil Twin’]. This attack is effective because the nefarious hotspot actually works, allowing you to browse the web as you normally would. The problem is that all of your emails, site logins and social media activity are being routed through the hacker’s network, where they can be monitored and collected. Before connecting to any hotspot, ask an employee for the shop’s full network name and carefully check that it matches the one you see in your Wi-Fi menu.”

A Safer Free Option: Book Lodgings that Offer Free Wi-Fi Internet Access

Any lodging establishment that has an Internet account—even small, Mom-&-Pop-run B&Bs—can offer their lodgers free Wi-Fi Internet access without having to pay more than the one-time price of purchasing an Internet wireless router.

Technically, their Internet network is just as unsecured as public Wi-Fi hotspots (all other lodgers have access to it), but hackers are far less likely to be lurking on a lodgings’ private network. Even so, it’s still a good idea to exercise the same public Wi-Fi hacking prevention steps while using your lodgings’ network, and to avoid banking, online shopping, or other activities that would expose your private information.



While not free, the Most Convenient and *Secure* Internet Access When Twilighting is a Portable Mobile Hotspot

Mobile hotspots are small, pocketable devices you can use to create a secure Wi-Fi network wherever a cell phone signal is available. Also known as Wi-Fi hotspots, they vary in cost, speed, and reliability. <http://mobileoffice.about.com/od/glossary/g/mobile-hotspot.htm>

Below is a link to the May, 29, 2015 article, “*Best Mobile Hot-Spots of 2015.*” Because hotspot technology continues to grow in leaps and bounds, however, we suggest that you Google “Best Mobile Hotspots” and look for the most up-to-date article.

<http://www.cnet.com/topics/networking/best-networking-devices/hot-spot/>

Rent a Mobile Hotspot Device

If you're an infrequent traveler and don't want to invest in the purchase of a separate mobile hotspot device, Google "Rent a Mobile Hotspot." Below is an excellent article written by Rick Steves for Huffington Post in December of 2013, "*Consumer Report on a Wi-Fi Hotspot Rental.*"

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/rick-steves/ricks-consumer-report-on_b_4071635.html

Alternatively, Use Your Smartphone as a Portable Mobile Hotspot!

If you have a Smartphone, **and you've activated both international calling and data plans for it**, you may not need a separate mobile hotspot device. Since an additional mobile phone account is required to use a mobile hotspot device—not to mention the cost of the device—this could save you a considerable amount of cash.

Begin your research to determine whether this option will work for you by reading the articles below.

<http://www.pcadvisor.co.uk/how-to/mobile-phone/how-use-your-smartphone-as-wi-fi-hotspot-3441165/>

<http://www.gizmag.com/how-to-turn-your-smartphone-into-a-wi-fi-hotspot/32544/>

<http://www.clientlook.com/use-your-smartphone-mobile-hotspot>

Next, check with your cell phone service provider to determine whether you need to purchase a Tethering Plan to use a mobile hotspot feature or app.

"Tethering" or "Internet sharing" refers to using a Smartphone feature or app to connect a tablet or laptop to the Internet via your phone. Some cell phone service providers—particularly in the US—require payment of an additional fee to allow this. While there are lots of third-party apps available in *Google Play* that will let you bypass a tethering plan, please remember that using those apps likely will violate your wireless agreement with your carrier. Do you really want to risk having your phone disconnected?

After ensuring that your Smartphone is able to tether or Internet-share, determine whether it has a mobile hotspot option. If it does, enable the hotspot. If it does not, download a mobile hotspot app.

Below is a collection of tips and warnings from the How to Use Your Smartphone as a Hotspot articles above:

- Be sure to use an uncommon password when setting up your Smartphone's mobile hotspot feature or app so that you can safely use it in public locations.
- One of the potential problems with using your phone as a portable Wi-Fi hotspot is that your tablet or laptop may think it's connected to a fixed broadband line. This means it could gobble up your limited monthly data allowance very quickly. Whereas your Smartphone is probably already programmed to avoid downloading app updates and any other large data files without your permission, your tablet or laptop may not be. Be sure to disable automatic updates and downloads on your tablet or laptop during your holiday.
- When in use, a Smartphone's mobile hotspot sucks up a lot of power, so it's a good idea to plug your phone into a charger while the feature or app is turned on.

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- When you are not using your Smartphone's mobile hotspot feature or app, disable it or turn it off. This will prolong your phone's battery life.

Connecting a Laptop or Tablet to Your Smartphone's Hotspot

After turning on your Smartphone's mobile hotspot, you're typically able to connect a tablet or laptop to it via Wi-Fi, Bluetooth or USB. Many travelers prefer to use a short, 5" USB cable, because this form of connection often yields faster and more reliable Internet connection. This cable runs from the phone's charging port to one of the tablet or laptop's USB ports. Happily, these days most phone charging cords are also a USB cable—simply remove the plug from the cord.

How to Secure Your Portable (or Smartphone) Mobile Hotspot

<http://netsecurity.about.com/od/secureyourwifinetwork/a/How-To-Secure-Your-Portable-Wifi-Hotspot.htm>

"Most newer portable hotspots come with some security turned on by default. This is a good thing as it ensures that the manufacturer at least provides some form of out-of-the-box security protection. ... The main problem with most default portable hotspot security setups is that sometimes the default [security encryption is outdated] ...

Create a strong wireless network password (Pre-shared Key) ... make your [hotspot's] wireless network password (known as the pre-shared key) as long and as random as possible. Avoid using dictionary words as they may be found in the password cracking tables used with brute-force cracking tools."

In Summary:

Yes, a great deal of research is required to determine your best options for using a phone and accessing the Internet when Twilighting in a foreign country. It is far better, however, to perform this research ahead of time and arrive prepared, than to suffer from lack of connectivity during your travels, or be slammed with a huge cell phone bill upon your return home.