

COUNTING THE COST OF ROAMING

Avoiding Expensive Roaming Costs While Travelling

Where and how to access eSIMs that will save you an arm and a leg, and how to decide on the right service provider and package for your needs

Thanks to the rise of embedded subscriber identity module (eSIM) technology, travellers making the most of the upcoming mid-year holidays will no longer need to factor expensive international roaming charges into their holiday budgets.

Unlike physical SIM cards, eSIMs are built into mobile devices and offer users multiple lines that can be switched at their convenience. Because the embedded SIM can be remotely programmed, travellers visiting foreign countries can still use their same number but on a different profile loaded with data, talk time and other mobile services.

GLOBAL REACH

This technology's uptake has been remarkable, particularly in North America and Western Europe. Tens of thousands of sports lovers are expected to descend on Paris for the Olympics in July and August, and its popularity is expected to surge even further.

In the international travel space alone, the global number of eSIM users will increase from 40 million this year to 215 million in 2028, according to findings released by research giant Juniper in April.

Juniper also forecasts that the global eSIM market will grow from R19.16 billion in 2024 to almost R167 billion in four years. These figures are based mainly on the fact that nearly 400 mobile service providers have launched these services for smartphones across 116 countries since June last year.

"One of the biggest draws of eSIMs for travellers is avoiding expensive international roaming charges from their home carrier," says Mark Collie, Director at global eSIM service provider KnowRoaming.

"Frequent travellers also need seamless global coverage without having to purchase multiple local SIM cards in each country, so they look for options that cover multiple travel destinations under one plan."

Collie makes the critical point that travellers also want the flexibility to keep their primary SIM in their device



to receive incoming calls and SMSes, ensuring they remain reachable on their regular number while utilising an eSIM for data services.

He advises that customers always look for established brands in the eSIM space, positive user reviews, and excellent customer support channels when selecting an eSIM provider.

FIND YOUR ESIM

Various platforms offer different methods for purchasing and activating an eSIM. Some facilitate the process through their website, while others provide a dedicated app.

Irrespective of the platform, the digital purchasing flow is straightforward. Users click on an install link or button, scan a QR code, or enter a provided activation code, and follow the on-screen prompts to complete the

setup process. From there, it's simply a matter of switching the mobile data connection to the new eSIM profile and enabling data roaming for that particular channel.

Considering that costs tend to skyrocket in cities hosting events like the Olympics, travellers must compare the pricing of different packages against their usage requirements. Internet browsing, social media and streaming services should all be considered.

Packages such as those offered by KnowRoaming do offer top-up options as well.

For Collie, one of the most critical aspects is that an eSIM provides a high-quality, low-latency connection and can share data via a hotspot.

He says the eSIM journey should be as simple as possible, though he does offer a few handy tips that travellers

would do well to follow. These include:

- Purchase the eSIM in advance to avoid last-minute rushing.
- Carry a fully charged power bank when activating the eSIM upon arrival at a destination (in case the phone's battery is low from travelling).
- If eSIM activation involves QR codes, these should be saved into the phone or cloud storage for easy access.
- Users should familiarise themselves with the activation steps specific to the eSIM provider and device.
- Monitor data usage, mainly if the plan has limited data.
- Download the eSIM provider's mobile application or log in to its website to view balances and top-up requirements. 📱

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