



For immediate release: Tuesday 19th April, 2011

HOLIDAYMAKERS RISK EXTORTIONATE BILLS JUST FOR SWITCHING THEIR MOBILE PHONE ON

With the bank holiday bonanza fast approaching, millions of Brits will be looking to escape the country and take a well-earned break abroad. However, if they do, they don't want to ruin their holiday by returning home to a large mobile phone bill, warns uSwitch.com.

- **Phone home: using your phone abroad to call the UK can cost up to £2 a minute while receiving calls can cost as much £1.50 a minute^[1]**
- **Data roaming remains the biggest risk to high bills, with cost reaching as much as £8 per megabyte in the US or Australia^[2]**
- **Four of the six main mobile providers offer add-on packages which give reduced rate calls which can save consumers nearly 60% on making calls to the UK^[3]**
- **O2 customers who make just 7 minutes of calls to the UK from USA would be better off buying a bolt-on, while T-Mobile and Orange customers who make 34 minutes of call from Spain should invest in a roaming package^[4].**

Even if you don't plan to make calls while abroad, uSwitch.com, the independent price comparison and switching service, warns that the minute consumers switch on their phone abroad, it will register onto a local network. This means any activity on the handset will be billed at overseas rates, which are much higher than standard charges in the UK. Charges could include paying up to £1.50 per minute to receive calls^[1], which is free within the UK, or £1 to send a picture postcard SMS from Australia^[5] which costs a maximum of 37p in the UK^[6]. Other charges could be incurred for someone leaving a voicemail message, and to pick up voicemail messages – which in the UK cost just 21p a minute at the most^[7].

And those with smartphones or internet-enabled handsets need to watch out for sky-high data roaming charges. These are often included in monthly packages in the UK, but can be as much

as £3.07 per megabyte^[2] in the EU or £8 per megabyte in the US or Australia^[2]. With the increasing use of smartphones and the potential danger of data roaming charges the EU introduced new measures to prevent 'bill shock' for consumers using their mobiles to browse the internet while abroad. Consumers have been able to set a financial limit on their roaming bill, with a €50 limit automatically imposed. But this is only put in place for travellers within the EU – so anyone travelling further afield remains at risk of limitless bills.

Over the last few years the EU has made great strides in lowering the cap on how much networks can charge for people using their phone overseas. However, even if usage is carefully controlled consumers can still suffer a 'bill shock'. One of the best ways consumers can save money is by signing up to their network's roaming package. Three and Virgin don't offer a roaming package, but O2, Vodafone, T-Mobile and Orange all do. Vodafone's 'passport' package is free but T-Mobile, O2 and Orange customers have to pay up to £5 per month^[8].

But by spending just a few extra pounds travellers can get access to even greater rates, which in the long run should save them coming home to find a huge bill on their doormat. If you are travelling to the US for example, an Orange roaming package can save you 30% on calls made to the UK for just an extra £5^[9]. Likewise, travellers going to Spain who use a lot of data, could opt to pay £3.06 to reduce data roaming charges by 74% from £3.07 per megabyte to just 80p^[10].

However, even though the cost of these packages may seem low, for those who don't use their phone much abroad it may be more cost-effective not to take the package. It's important consumers consider how they use their mobile phone abroad before signing up. For example an O2 customer travelling to Australia would be better off taking the package if they made just 6 minutes of calls to the UK, and if they were heading off to Spain they would be wise to invest in a bolt-in if they're likely to make 20 minutes of calls. But Orange and T-Mobile customers would need to make 34 minutes of calls from Spain to make the roaming package worthwhile^[4].

Ernest Doku, technology expert at uSwitch.com, comments: "Contacting your mobile network should be high on every mobile user's holiday checklist, alongside packing their passport and sun cream. Using a mobile phone abroad can lead to a huge 'bill shock' when you come back home, but if people stay in control and make sure they are getting the best rates they can avoid getting burnt. Opting for a special roaming tariff, fixing a cap or even using a cut

price local SIM card can help to keep bills low. At the very least, ask your network to switch off your voicemail service before you leave the UK to avoid these hidden charges.

“But today one of the biggest ways to get stung is by the high cost of data roaming. Mobile internet users must ensure they check that this is turned off when not in use to prevent online services such as email updating automatically. They could also try to avoid visiting sites that are heavy on the visuals, as data is charged per megabyte downloaded – although this may be a hard ask for the Facebook and Twitter addicts amongst us.”

Savvy consumers can avoid returning home to an unwelcome bill by using uSwitch.com’s mobile do’s and don’ts:

- Switch off your voicemail service when you leave the UK and switch back it on when you get home – call your provider to do this
- Switch off the data roaming option in your phone settings – or ask your supplier to switch off the voicemail and data services for the duration of your break
- Ask your provider to cap data roaming charges to an affordable level
- If you have an unlocked phone, then buy a local SIM card when you arrive for local rates
- If you know you will be calling home while away, look into buying an international PAYG SIM, such as Truphone
- Speak to your mobile phone provider about overseas charges – you may be able to switch onto a cheaper roaming package
- If taking your phone for emergencies only, switch it off before you leave the UK and only switch on if needed while away, as charges can rack up every time you turn the phone on
- If you want to keep in touch, consider texting rather than calling - it's far cheaper
- If you are a Pay As You Go customer, make sure you have sufficiently topped up before you travel
- If travelling with someone else, consider taking just the one mobile between you.

For more information visit www.uswitch.com or call 0800 093 0607

-Ends-

For further information please contact:

Katherine Cooper, uSwitch.com on 020 7802 2961 or katherinecooper@uswitch.com

Stuart Lerman, Lansons Communications on 0207 294 3674 or stuartl@lansons.com
 John Diviney, Lansons Communications on 0207 294 3696 or johnd@lansons.com

Notes to editors:

For a full breakdown of roaming charges, please refer to the table below

1. T-Mobile charges £1.50 to receive a call from the UK in Croatia, Brazil, South Africa and Thailand. Virgin charges the same to receive a call in South Africa and Brazil.
2. O2 charges £3.07 per megabyte whilst in Spain and the Channel Islands. Orange charges £8 per megabyte when in the USA, Thailand, Australia, Croatia, South Africa and Brazil
3. The cost of calling the UK from Croatia with O2 is £1.37 without a bolt-on, but 81p with one. This is 59% cheaper.
4. Based on uSwitch.com calculations.
5. Orange charges £1 to send a media message from the USA, Thailand, Australia, South Africa and Brazil to the UK
6. Vodafone charges up to 37p for a media message within the UK.
7. Vodafone charges 21p a minute to call voicemail within the UK.
8. Cost per month for the network's roaming package:
 - O2 ITS - £3.06
 - Vodafone Passport - Free
 - T-Mobile Booster - £5
 - Orange - £5
 - Three – no package available
 - Virgin Mobile – no package confirmed at time of writing
9. Without a roaming package, Orange charges £1.10 to call the UK but 77p when signed up to its roaming rates, saving the consumer 30%
10. Without a roaming package O2 charges £3.07 per megabyte when in Spain, but 80p with O2 ITS

About us

uSwitch.com is a free, impartial, online and telephone-based comparison and switching service, helping consumers compare prices on gas, electricity, water, heating cover, home telephone, broadband, digital television, mobile phones and personal finance products including mortgages, credit cards, current accounts and insurance. In 2010 uSwitch.com celebrated ten years of saving customers money.

uSwitch.com is the first comparison website to achieve the Plain English Campaign's Internet Crystal Mark, which is recognised as a standard that a website has clear language, is accessible and easy to use, and has been tested on a sample of its users.

uSwitch.com is dedicated to helping consumers save money whether they have internet access or not. It offers a dedicated call centre, manned by uSwitch customer service representatives, as well as a freepost 'Send us your bill' service, whereby customers can post their latest energy bills with their telephone number to FREEPOST USWITCH, to get a free call back from a dedicated customer services representative. The service is also available via fax and post. Consumers should fax 020 7233 5933 or write to Customer Services, uSwitch.com, Centro 3, 19 Mandela Street, London, NW1 0DU with their postcode and usage details.

uSwitch.com is owned by Forward Internet Group, a privately funded collection of internet-based businesses focused on consumer engagement and innovation.

		with bolt-on				
Country	Network	Calling to the UK (per min)	Receiving a call (per min)	Sending a text to the UK	Sending a media message to the UK *4	Cost per MB
Channel Islands	3	38.8p	14.3p	10.2p	25.5p	128p
	O2	36p	15p	11p	26p	307p
	Orange	38p	14p	10p	60p	300p

	T-Mobile	33p	12p	9p	20p	150p
	Virgin	39p	15p	11p	31p	133p *1
	Vodafone	39p	15p	11p	37p *3	100p
Spain	3	38.8p	14.3p	10.2p	25.5p	128p
	O2	36p	15p	11p	26p	307p
	Orange	38.8p	14.3p	10.2p	61.3p	300p
	T-Mobile	38.8p	14.3p	10.2p	20.4p	153.2p
	Virgin	39p	15p	11p	31p	133p *1
	Vodafone	39p	15p	11p	37p *3	100p
Croatia	3	140p	99p	35p	25.5p	300p
	O2	137p	85p	30p	26p	600p
	Orange	130p	70p	40p	60p	800p
	T-Mobile	150p	150p	40p	20p	750p
	Virgin	60p	30p	25p	30p	500p
	Vodafone	39p	15p	11p	37p *3	100p
USA	3	140p	99p	35p	25.5p	300p
	O2	137p	103p	25p	26p	600p
	Orange	110p	70p	40p	100p	800p
	T-Mobile	120p	120p	40p	20p	750p
	Virgin	140p	125p	25p	30p	500p
	Vodafone	135p	100p	35p *2	37p *3	300p
Thailand	3	200p	125p	35p	25p	600p
	O2	85p	111p	30p	26p	600p
	Orange	145p	90p	50p	100p	800p
	T-Mobile	150p	150p	40p	20p	750p
	Virgin	170p	125p	25p	30p	500p
	Vodafone	80p	75p	35p *2	37p *3	300p
Australia	3	140p	99p	35p	25.5p	300p
	O2	170p	141p	40p	26p	600p
	Orange	85p	70p	40p	100p	800p
	T-Mobile	120p	120p	40p	20p	750p
	Virgin	95p	80p	25p	30p	500p
	Vodafone	80p	75p	35p *2	37p *3	300p
South Africa	3	140p	99p	35p	25.5p	300p
	O2	170p	141p	40p	26p	600p
	Orange	145p	90p	50p	100p	800p
	T-Mobile	150p	150p	40p	20p	750p
	Virgin	170p	150p	25p	30p	500p
	Vodafone	80p	75p	35p *2	37p *3	300p
Brazil	3	200p	125p	35p	25p	600p

O2	170p	141p	40p	26p	600p
Orange	175p	100p	50p	100p	800p
T-Mobile	150p	150p	40p	20p	750p
Virgin	170p	150p	25p	30p	500p
Vodafone	165p	130p	35p *2	37p *3	300p

*1 - Based on purchasing a 1 hour 3MB Travel Pass costing £4

*2 - Plus your standard plan charge for sending a UK text message

*3 - Plus data charge which is dependent upon the size of the picture.

*4 - May cost more depending on message size

with bolt-on					
Country	Calling to the UK (per min)	Receiving a call (per min)	Sending a text to the UK	Sending a media message to the UK *4	Cost per MB
Channel Islands	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	36p	15p	11p	26p	80p
	34.7p	14p	10p	N/A	82p
	33p	12p	9p	20p	150p
	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	75p connection charge + your standard home rate (Vodafone Passport) - or you can use your inclusive/Freedom Pack minutes	75p connection charge then free for up to 60 mins. Then 20p a minute after that.	11p	37p	£1 per MB for the first 5MB. £5 for every 5MB after that or£2 a day for 5MB on Vodafone Data Traveller
Spain	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	36p	15p	11p	26p	80p
	34.7p	14p	10p	N/A	82p
	38p	14p	10p	20p	150p
	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	75p connection charge + your standard home rate (Vodafone Passport) - or you can use your inclusive/Freedom Pack minutes	75p connection charge then free for up to 60 mins. Then 20p a minute after that.	11p	37p	£1 per MB for the first 5MB. £5 for every 5MB after that or£2 a day for 5MB on

					Vodafone Data Traveller
Croatia	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	81p	52p	30p	26p	80p
	91p	49p	28p	N/A	82p
	150p	150p	40p	20p	150p
	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	75p connection charge + your standard home rate (Vodafone Passport) - or you can use your inclusive/Freedom Pack minutes	75p connection charge then its free for up to 60 mins. Then 20p a minute after that.	11p	37p	£1 per MB for the first 5MB. £5 for every 5MB after that or£2 a day for 5MB on Vodafone Data Traveller
USA	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	90p	39p	25p	26p	80p
	77p	49p	28p	N/A	123p
	120p	50p (International option - flat monthly fee can reduce costs) OR 120p	40p	20p	750p
	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	135p	100p	35p + cost of UK text (Pay monthly) 49p (PAYG)	37p + data cost (Pay monthly) 36p + data cost (PAYG)	£3 per MB up to 5/ £15 per 5MB thereafter (Pay monthly) £3 per MB (PAYG)
Thailand	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	120p	85p	40p	26p	80p
	116p	72p	40p	N/A	123p
	150p	100p (International option - flat monthly fee can reduce costs) OR 150p	40p	20p	750p

	80p	75p	35p + cost of UK text (Pay monthly) 49p (PAYG)	37p + data cost (Pay monthly) 36p + data cost (PAYG)	£3 per MB up to 5/ £15 per 5MB thereafter (Pay monthly) £3 per MB (PAYG)
Australia	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	120p	85p	40p	26p	80p
	60p	49p	28p	N/A	123p
	120p	30p (International option - flat monthly fee can reduce costs) OR 120p	40p	20p	750p
	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	75p connection charge + your standard home rate (Vodafone Passport) - or you can use your inclusive/Freedom Pack minutes	75p connection charge then free for up to 60 mins. Then 20p a minute after that.	11p	37p	£1 per MB for the first 5MB. £5 for every 5MB after that
South Africa	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	120p	85p	40p	26p	80p
	116p	72p	40p	N/A	123p
	150p	100p (International option - flat monthly fee can reduce costs) OR 150p	40p	20p	£7.50
	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	80p	75p	35p + cost of UK text (Pay monthly) 49p (PAYG)	37p + data cost (Pay monthly) 36p + data cost (PAYG)	£3 per MB up to 5/ £15 per 5MB thereafter (Pay monthly) £3 per MB (PAYG)
Brazil	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	120p	85p	40p	26p	80p
	140p	80p	40p	N/A	123p

		100p (International option - flat monthly fee can reduce costs) OR 150p			
	150p		40p	20p	750p
	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	165p	130p	35p + cost of UK text	37p + data cost	£3 per MB up to 5/ £15 per 5MB thereafter