

The 2 Idiots Travel Blog

<http://www.2idiotstravel.com>

Our Travel Cellphone Provider Recommendation: T-Mobile

Have you ever been on a cruise? If so, you probably know that Internet access can be spotty, at best. There's a simple reason for this: When you're on a cruise, you're out at sea, well away from things like cell towers and other key infrastructure.

Now, your cruise may offer you a data plan you can buy for an on-ship hook-up—but these plans are exceedingly expensive.

Yet when we took our 12-night cruise along the Mediterranean, we were able to enjoy some good online functionality *without* this heavy overhead—and for a simple reason: We were lucky to have a great cell provider—T-Mobile—that gave us access to our data any time the ship was anywhere close to land. We'd say we had Internet access for about half of the cruise, and that was pretty cool!

It's also a good demonstration of what a good cell provider will do for you—and why we recommend T-Mobile to anyone who's doing international travel.

Benefits to the T-Mobile Plan

The big draw of this plan—beyond the connectivity—is that T-Mobile offers unlimited everything—unlimited data, text, domestic talk, and so on. You don't have to track everything or worry about how much music you're streaming, how much you're texting people, and so on. It's all covered. The plan offers total peace of mind.

T-Mobile also offers competitive pricing. We're currently paying about \$120 each month for the two of us; for a family of four, it's \$160. We used to have AT&T, and we can verify that T-Mobile is quite a bit cheaper.

Also worth noting: Netflix comes as part of the T-Mobile plan—so you also save on that monthly Netflix premium. That may seem minor, but it adds up!

T-Mobile also allows you to turn your phone into an Internet hotspot; this option is included in your plan, with no additional charge. This came in handy for us a few times when our offline window had closed and we desperately needed our iPad connected to the Web so that we could download some videos for our son. We simply connected the iPad to the phone so that we could download that content for him.

One thing we'll note about international travel is that you have access to the Internet more or less everywhere. It's not always as high-quality as the Internet in the States. Generally, though, things like checking email, texting, uploading photos to Instagram, and accessing Google Maps worked out incredibly well. Note that most cell phone providers will cap your available data, and charge you an arm

and a leg for anything additional—but with T-Mobile’s unlimited data, we didn’t have that concern. We probably saved at least \$2,500 because we had T-Mobile and could always access as much data as we needed, anywhere in the world. That’s the power of a good cellphone provider! (T-mobile only didn’t offer free data in Vietnam or Zimbabwe on our trip)

Another note about T-Mobile is that it’s on the SIM card system (most cell providers are, but Verizon is not). That makes it easy to adapt your phone for use in any country, and in fact, any time we upgrade our devices, we send the old phones to our family in Dubai, and they are able to plug in new SIM cards and use these phones with no problem.

Two Caveats

We do want to make note of just a couple of potential drawbacks.

First, while T-Mobile works well in the city, we have had some coverage lapses while driving through rural parts of America—so if you find yourself in rural areas often, we recommend you to look elsewhere.

Also, if you overuse your T-Mobile plan internationally, the company can technically ding you for violating their terms of service; basically, if they think you are no longer an American resident, they may suspend your phone service. That’s obviously problematic, but if you make sure to connect to local Wi-Fi whenever you can, then it shouldn’t be an issue. We had this happen once, where AJ’s phone ended up on T-mobile’s “extreme roaming” list and we had to suspend the phone number for the last week of our trip! That was definitely a hassle, but we were able to rely on Natasha’s phone whenever we didn’t have Wi-Fi, and the AJ’s phone was un-suspended as soon as we made it back to the States. (You likely won’t run into this issue unless you’re traveling overseas for months at a time.)

All in all, however? We like T-Mobile a lot, and we’re still using it today. It’s extremely useful to have when you’re traveling internationally. And when you’re traveling with a child, you already have enough things to worry about; a cell provider that allows you to *not* worry about data use is invaluable.

Useful resources/links

- [T-mobile website](#)