FAQ – What You Need to Know About Roaming

What is roaming?

Roaming is the ability of a mobile phone to access network services such as calls, texts and data on networks other than that of your own carrier. Roaming enables a user to use their phone in areas where their carrier may have limited infrastructure, enhancing accessibility.
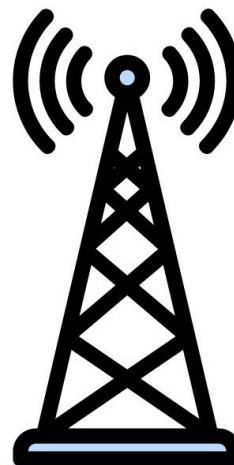
How does roaming work in Canada?

→ Bell, Rogers and Telus own most of the cellular infrastructure in Canada and provide the most extensive coverage. Customers of these carriers rarely need to roam domestically.

→ For smaller and regional carriers there are domestic roaming agreements that allow carriers such as Freedom Mobile or Eastlink to provide service outside their network coverage areas by utilizing the networks of larger carriers such as Bell, Rogers or Telus.

→ Customers of these smaller and regional carriers may incur roaming charges if the usage is outside the terms of their plan, but in some cases it's included.

→ Some providers such as Public Mobile or PC Mobile, rely entirely on the infrastructure of larger carriers. Users experience similar coverage to the hosting carrier but may have different pricing plans and services.

Does roaming cost extra?

Many carriers bundle roaming with their plans, allowing users to roam on partner networks without additional charges. However, some plans impose fees or data caps for domestic roaming, particularly for regional carriers.

What is international roaming?

International roaming allows Canadian cell phone users to use networks of other carriers in other countries through roaming agreements. Conversely, foreign visitors roaming in Canada use Canadian carriers' networks. Most often international roaming is not included in carrier plans, but sometimes it can be included depending on the type of plan you have.

Can I accidently roam on an American carrier while I am close to the border?

Yes. This can happen and this can occasionally lead to extra charges. To avoid this, when you live or travel close to the U.S. border and you don't have international roaming as part of your plan, make sure to turn off the roaming feature on your phone.

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