



**For immediate release: Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> May, 2013**

**MOBILE ROAMING SHOCK: BRITS COULD FACE A £256 MILLION BILL THIS SUMMER  
FOR FAILING TO KNOW WHICH COUNTRIES ARE IN THE EU**

*EU regulations introduced last year which capped the cost of using mobiles abroad have seen bill shock fall, but with many Brits confused about whether or not their destination is in the EU, those using their phones abroad still risk getting burnt this summer:*

- **Being burnt:** Brits are racking up more than £256 million for using their mobiles abroad - 15% have been hit by large monthly bills on their return, averaging £120<sup>[1]</sup>
- **Confusion:** 48% incorrectly believe Croatia is in the EU, while 30% think Turkey is - leaving them vulnerable to high mobile roaming charges<sup>[2]</sup>
- **Taking risks:** almost six in ten Brits (59%) won't check charges for using their phones abroad before they jet off this year<sup>[3]</sup>, but 44% plan to use their phones frequently<sup>[4]</sup>
- **Not satisfied:** 70% of mobile users have never been contacted by their network about money-saving roaming packages<sup>[5]</sup>
- **Too expensive:** despite roaming caps coming in last July, 86% think mobile phone providers still charge too much for overseas services<sup>[6]</sup>.

British holidaymakers heading abroad this summer could collectively be stung with eye-watering mobile roaming charges of £256 million<sup>[1]</sup> according to new research from independent price comparison and switching service, [uSwitch.com](http://uSwitch.com).

Those holidaying within the EU are protected from high mobile roaming charges and, from July 1 this year, mobile networks will be forced to cap roaming charges within EU countries even further. The new caps will mean it costs just €0.24 per minute to make calls, €0.07 per minute to receive calls and €0.08 to send a standard text message<sup>[7]</sup>. But there are no such caps for holidaymakers setting foot outside the EU.

Those who love using the internet on their mobiles will also enjoy greater protection from high bills as data charges are set to be capped at a lower rate of €0.45 per MB in EU countries, as well as a €50 cap on overall data usage. These limits are also set to drop further in 2014<sup>[7]</sup>. The

€50 data usage cap will also apply outside the EU, but those who opt out will still be vulnerable to high charges.

A big problem is that many holidaymakers don't realise when they're setting foot outside of the EU. Almost half (48%) incorrectly think that Croatia – a popular destination for those looking for sun, sea and island hopping – is part of the EU<sup>[2]</sup>. Norway, Switzerland and Iceland also throw people, with 45%, 36% and 32% respectively believing these countries are in the EU<sup>[2]</sup>. And almost a third (30%) wrongly reckon that Turkey is an EU country<sup>[2]</sup>. Considering that Istanbul is number eight in the UK's top 10 favourite destinations this year<sup>[8]</sup>, some bill payers could be in for a nasty shock.

In fact, Brits flying to Turkey for seven days this summer could chalk up a £281 mobile phone bill just by making and receiving two five-minute calls, listening to a two-minute voicemail message, sending five text messages and two photo messages each day<sup>[9]</sup>.

But it's the cost of data that could really get mobile users burnt if they opt out of the €50 data usage cap. 1MB of internet data – just about enough to view a couple of web pages and update your status on a social network – costs an average of £4.75 across the five major networks. Data-hungry smartphones are more popular than ever and a seven-day data bill – just based on a modest amount of video streaming, emailing, browsing websites and using VoIP services like Skype to keep in touch – could hit £294 if mobile users don't keep their phone's data roaming switched off and use free local Wi-Fi instead<sup>[10]</sup>. That means someone who wasn't clued up about roaming charges could quite easily face a mobile bill totalling £575.

Despite the fact that almost nine in ten (86%) think that roaming charges are too high<sup>[6]</sup>, almost six in ten (59%) admit they won't check roaming costs before they jet off this summer<sup>[3]</sup>. And 44% plan to keep their phones switched on and not limit their usage<sup>[4]</sup> while almost a fifth (17%) fail to switch off data roaming in their mobile settings when overseas<sup>[11]</sup>.

But many believe the onus shouldn't be on them. More than three quarters (76%) think that money-saving roaming bundles should automatically be added to their deal when they leave the country<sup>[12]</sup>. Seven in ten (70%) say their networks have never contacted them about roaming deals<sup>[5]</sup>.

This year two thirds of Brits (66%) will travel inside the EU and benefit from roaming caps, leaving three in ten (29%) vulnerable to bill shock<sup>[13]</sup>. Those holidaying in Asia or Non-EU Europe rack up the biggest roaming bills (£242 and £186) but more than one in 10 (12%) EU holidaymakers have still managed to rack up high bills<sup>[14]</sup>.

**Ernest Doku, technology expert at [uSwitch.com](http://uSwitch.com), says:** “Holidaymakers need to add ‘check roaming charges’ to their pre-holiday to do lists. Talking to your network before you jet off will very likely spare you a nasty post-holiday bill shock, as they may be able to advise a bundle, or at the very least let you know the costs involved with using your phone abroad.

“Not knowing which countries are in the European Union could cause havoc for mobile users this summer. A third of us know about roaming caps, but if those people don’t realise that summer sun destinations like Turkey or Croatia aren’t in the EU, they could wrongly think they are protected from roaming charges.

“Limit the damage by keeping data roaming switched off as much as possible. And, when it comes to calls and text messages, the best way to keep costs down to a minimum is to buy a local SIM card, put it in your phone and top it up. If you want to use the internet, wait until you can get Wi-Fi at a hotel or café.”

**Average pay monthly roaming charges (without bundles) for those travelling to Turkey:**

Network	Cost per minute to make a call	Cost per minute to receive a call	Cost to send a text message	Cost to send photo message	Cost to retrieve a voicemail	Cost for mobile internet
O2	£1.50	£1.25	40p	25p	£1.50 per minute	£6 per MB (A maximum charge of £40 a month will be applied)
Vodafone	£1.65	£1.30	35p + a domestic text	37p	£1.65 per minute	£3 per MB for the first 5MB. £15 for every 5MB after
T-Mobile	£1.50	£1.50	40p to UK, 50p to non-UK	30p	£1.50 per minute	Internet won’t work abroad unless you buy a booster – from £3.75 per MB
Orange	£1.30	70p	40p	60p up to 49.9kb or 75p over 50kb	£1.30 per minute	£8 per MB
Three	£1.40	99p	35p	35.7p to UK numbers & 36p to non-UK numbers	£1.40 per minute	£3 per MB
<b>Average</b>	<b>£1.47</b>	<b>£1.15</b>	<b>39p</b>	<b>40p</b>	<b>£1.47</b>	<b>£4.75</b>

**For more information visit [www.uswitch.com](http://www.uswitch.com) or call 0800 093 0607**

**-Ends-**

**For further information please contact:**

Katherine Moss, [uSwitch.com](http://uSwitch.com) on 020 7802 2961 or [katherine.moss@uswitch.com](mailto:katherine.moss@uswitch.com)  
Emily Garnham, Rhizome PR on 020 7851 4757 or [emily@rhizomepr.com](mailto:emily@rhizomepr.com)

**Notes to Editors**

1. There are 49million UK adults (ONS) and [Ofcom's figures](#) suggest that 92% of UK adults have a mobile phone, and 49% of these are contract phones. 92% of 49million is 45,080,000 and 49% of that figure is 22,089,200.

- 64.5% took their phone abroad, and 15% of these said they had been stung by roaming charges, which means 1, 137, 130 have been stung, and their bills averaged £120 which means the total bill = **£256,455,612**
2. Survey participants were given a list of countries and asked if they were in the EU, non-EU Europe, or the rest of the world. 29.7% mistakenly thought Turkey was an EU country, Croatia 47.5%, Iceland 31.5%, Norway 45.2%, Switzerland 35.5%
  3. When asked "Do you know how much your network charges for using your phone abroad?", only 41% answered 'yes, I check the cost before I travel'
  4. When asked how they used their phones abroad, 43.9% selected "I have it switched on most of the time and use it whenever I need to"
  5. When asked "Has your provider contacted you about what packages are available to help keep costs down when using your phone abroad?" 69.7% said 'no', 15% said 'yes, before I went away', 12.3% said 'yes, while I was away and 3% said 'yes, but not until I'd got back'
  6. In response to the question "Do you think the amount mobile phone providers charge for services when you are abroad is reasonable?" 74.2% said "no, I think they charge far too much" and 12.1% said "no, I think they charge a little too much" = 86.3%
  7. [http://www.uswitch.com/mobiles/guides/mobile\\_roaming\\_charges/](http://www.uswitch.com/mobiles/guides/mobile_roaming_charges/)
  8. Source. Top10.com
  9. See table above. All information in the table was collected from networks' websites, cost of retrieving voicemail not specified so was taken as per minute cost to make a call. Average daily spend of £34.87 is based on making and receiving two five-minute phone calls per day, listening to a two-minute voicemail message, sending five text messages and two photo messages  
Calculation is:  $(1.47*5)*2 + (1.15*5)*2 + 1.47*2 + 0.39*5 + 0.8 = £40.19 \times 7 \text{ days} = \textbf{£281.33}$
  10. From table above. Data usage figure based on the following usage per week:  
30 mins spent streaming video + 50 text only emails sent/received + 10 emails with attachments + 20 websites browsed + 5 HD photos uploaded + 10 mins VoIP calling (Skype etc)  
Estimated monthly data usage according to [Vodafone calculator](#) = **1.12GB**  
Divide by 30 days to get daily usage = **37.3MB** x £4.75 (average cost of data per MB across all 5 providers) = then multiply by seven for length of holiday £42.05 x 7 days = **£294.35**
  11. In response to the question "did you turn off data roaming whilst you were abroad?" 17.2% said 'no'
  12. When asked to what extent do you agree with the following: "add-ons that cut the cost of using your phone abroad should be added automatically to your deal when you leave the country" 76% of respondents said "agree"
  13. When asked "where will you go this year" 65.6% said EU; 28.8% said Non-EU destinations.
  14. When asked "how much was your bill shock" the average amount was: Asia = £242.36; Non EU Europe = £186.40.

### About uSwitch.com

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, email and post. Consumers should fax 0203 214 8417, email [CustomerServices@uswitch.com](mailto:CustomerServices@uswitch.com) 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 Limited, a privately funded collection of internet-based businesses focused on consumer engagement and innovation.