



Digital safety guide

Traveling with your smartphone



How to prepare your phone before a trip, keep it safe on the road, and check it when you get home. Works for iPhone and Android.

01 Before you go

Update	Install all phone and app updates at home, on your own Wi-Fi.
Back up	Make sure iCloud or Google backup has run recently, so a lost phone doesn't mean lost photos and contacts.
Lock it down	Use a PIN of six or more digits. Check that Find My (iPhone) or Find Hub (Android) is on, along with Stolen Device Protection or Android's Theft protection .
Travel light on data	Sign out of apps you won't need. Don't keep passwords in Notes or photos of your passport and cards; use a password manager instead.
Plan for service	Ask your carrier about an international plan, or buy a travel eSIM from a well-known provider before you leave.
Write it down	Put your carrier's number, a backup contact, and your 2-step verification backup codes on paper, kept apart from your phone.
Going abroad?	Enroll in the State Department's free Smart Traveler Enrollment Program at step.state.gov for alerts and help in an emergency.



02 On the road

Wi-Fi	Public Wi-Fi is much safer than it used to be, but fake networks with names like the hotel's still exist. Ask staff for the exact network name, and use your cell data for banking.
VPN	A reputable paid VPN adds a layer of protection on public Wi-Fi. Some countries restrict VPNs, so check the State Department's page for your destination first.
Charging	Bring your own charger and cable, or a portable battery. Avoid plugging your cable into public USB ports; use a wall outlet instead.
Bluetooth and sharing	Turn off Bluetooth and AirDrop or Quick Share when you're not using them, and never accept a pairing or file you didn't expect.
Location	Wait until you're home to post trip photos or check-ins. Real-time posts tell people where you are, and that your house is empty.
If it's lost	From another device, go to icloud.com/find or android.com/find to lock or erase it. Then call your carrier to suspend the line.

03 At the border

US Customs can inspect phones at the border without a warrant, and many other countries can too. It's rare, affecting well under 1 in 1,000 travelers, but plan for it.

🕒 *Good to know*

Carry only what you need, back up before you go, and be polite and truthful with officers. US citizens can't be refused entry over a phone, but the phone can be held for review. For high-risk trips, consider a separate inexpensive travel phone.



04 When you get home

Check in	Install any updates that came out while you were away, and switch back to your home plan or remove the travel eSIM.
Review accounts	Look at your email, bank, and social accounts' sign-in history for logins you don't recognize. Change any password you typed on a shared or hotel computer.
Watch for trouble	A phone that drains fast, runs hot, or shows apps you didn't install may need a closer look. Run Play Protect on Android, remove unknown apps, and ask for help before resetting it.

✓ Quick do's

Set a short auto-lock time, like 30 seconds.

Keep your phone on you, not on a café table.

Use your own charger.

✗ Quick don'ts

Type your PIN where others can see.

Sign in to accounts on hotel or shared computers.

Post your location while you're still there.

Want a hand with this?

We'll get your phone trip-ready with you before you go, at your pace.

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