

## Cell Phones While Abroad

- If you have a smartphone, you should bring it with you to France. Even if you do not use cell phone service with your phone, you can still use WiFi to check email and to communicate via Skype or free messaging services (WhatsApp, Gmail, etc.).
  - WiFi is available in most host families' homes, at all IAU College buildings, and in most cafés—you may just have to ask for the password, or *mot de passe*.
- If you do decide to purchase a global phone plan through your U.S. carrier, be aware that it will most likely be extremely expensive, as call rates go as high as \$2/minute and text messages as high as \$.50/text.

### **IF USING A SMARTPHONE:**

- Before departure, you will need to call your cell phone carrier to ask them if your phone is unlocked or if it is capable of being unlocked (for example, Verizon can usually unlock an iPhone if you call them). Having an unlocked phone is necessary in order for a French SIM card to function in your phone.
- **If you bring your unlocked phone, IAU staff will explain during orientation in Aix (the Monday after arrival) how and where to purchase SIM and calling cards.**
  - During orientation, IAU staff will explain how and where students can purchase SIM cards and calling cards to use with their smartphones, *as long as their cell phones are already unlocked*.
  - In the 1-2 days before orientation that students will not have cell phone service, they can still use their computers and phones to access WiFi and to stay in touch with those back home.
- Read this article for detailed information on using cell phones while abroad: <https://www.ricksteves.com/travel-tips/phones-tech/cell-phone-europe>

### **IF NOT USING A SMARTPHONE:**

- Another option is to buy a prepaid phone after arrival in Aix and recharge as needed.
  - This is an affordable option that would suit students whose phones cannot be unlocked.
  - Rechargement minutes can be purchased at local convenience stores. The initial phone is inexpensive and easy to work (some host families may even have old phones from previous students they offer to the student).
  - Incoming calls from France and the U.S. are free.
- You may also consider renting a phone from companies such as Piccell or Telestial in the U.S., so that you already have a functioning phone upon arrival in France. See the below table for more information.

<b>Cell phone options</b>	<b>Advantages</b>	<b>Disadvantages</b>	<b>Contact info</b>
Current Phone: International Plan	No need to purchase another phone. Billing in US dollars. Easy to add an international feature to your phone.	International rates are extremely expensive and you need to monitor your bill and online usage.	Contact your cell provider.
Current Phone: French SIM card	No need to purchase another phone if yours can be unlocked. SIM card and calling plans are very affordable.	May not be possible if your phone cannot be unlocked. Expect to begin cell phone service after the orientation in Aix (2 days after arrival).	Contact your cell provider to unlock the phone.
French Phone: purchase in France	Phone is affordable, and sending texts and making calls is inexpensive. Incoming calls from France and the U.S. are free	You must remember to purchase rechargment minutes in order to use the phone.	<a href="http://boutique.orange.fr/mobile/carte-prepayee-mobicarte">http://boutique.orange.fr/mobile/carte-prepayee-mobicarte</a>
Phone rental: Piccell	You may rent a phone for any length of time and the phone can be shipped to the U.S. before you depart for France. Incoming calls are free while in France. Never run out of minutes. Free phone rentals with only a processing fee.	If you are not careful with your usage, your monthly bill can quickly get very expensive. You pay per minute for the calls you make. Pay monthly bill. If phone gets lost or stolen, the replacement can be very expensive if phone insurance is purchased.	<a href="http://www.piccellwireless.com/iau">www.piccellwireless.com/iau</a>
Phone rental: Telestial	Phone can be shipped to the U.S. before you depart for France. Very easy to keep track of your usage and maintain a budget. Incoming calls are free while in France. No monthly contract. Easy to buy more minutes at convenience stores in France.	There are expensive initial costs because you purchase a phone and a SIM card. Once your credit runs out you are unable to place a call until you purchase a recharge voucher (You may, however, receive incoming calls and dial the European 112 emergency number.	<a href="http://www.telestial.com/">http://www.telestial.com/</a>

Internet Options	<p><b>These options are inexpensive and easy ways to stay connected while you are abroad. The only disadvantage is that you need to have internet access. WIFI is becoming more and more popular throughout Europe so do not stress about finding a WIFI hotspot.</b></p>	Find more information at:
Whatsapp	<p>Free for first year. Available for iPhone, BlackBerry, Android, Windows Phone and Nokia. Because WhatsApp Messenger uses the same internet data plan that you use for email and web browsing, there is no cost to message.</p>	<p><a href="http://www.whatsapp.com">http://www.whatsapp.com</a></p>
Viber	<p>Free. You can use this app to send text, photos, voice and video messages for free to other Viber users, while the new Viber Out feature lets you call non-Viber numbers and landline phones worldwide (for a fee). The fee is considered an in-app purchase, and the amount depends on where you're calling. You will need a SIM card and phone functionality to set up Viber.</p>	<p><a href="http://www.viber.com">http://www.viber.com</a></p>
Google Hangouts	<p>Free. Hangouts links together users with a Google or Android account, allowing them to send individual or group chat messages, share photos, emoji and animated gifs, and make video calls (both individual and group) to other users. Smartphone users can also send SMS and MMS messages through the Hangouts app.</p>	<p><a href="http://www.google.com/+learnmore/hangouts/?hl=en">http://www.google.com/+learnmore/hangouts/?hl=en</a></p>
Skype	<p>Free. Make video and voice calls from your computer, mobile and tablet. Can send text messages from a few cents. Calls to mobiles and landlines worldwide at low rates.</p>	<p><a href="http://www.skype.com">http://www.skype.com</a></p>