



How to Use T-Mobile in Portugal

If you are relocating to Portugal and want to maintain your American cell number to stay in touch with friends and family and for two-factor authentication, I highly recommend porting your phone number to T-mobile (if you don't already have T-mobile).

After doing exhaustive research on whether it's better to go with GoogleFi, GoogleVoice, iPlum, Vumber, etc etc, we decided to get a very affordable monthly T-mobile plan that we could use both in the U.S. and in Portugal as needed.

Here's what we did to accomplish that:

1. Purchased a dual SIM phone (we took advantage of T-mobile's buy-one-get-one-free phone offer at the time).
2. Had T-mobile connect our T-mobile to the e-SIM "slot" on the phone (this is the digital sim).
3. Got a physical Vodafone SIM card (after we arrived in Portugal) for the physical SIM slot in the phone. Putting your Portuguese SIM card in the physical slot makes it much easier to swap out SIMs if you're traveling to countries that would require different SIM cards OR you change Portuguese cell providers. This came in really handy as our first year in Portugal, we had Vodafone service but when we moved elsewhere in Portugal, NOS service was better for that area so we very simply traded out the NOS and Vodafone SIM cards.

Before we decided on T-mobile, we wanted to confirm with them that we wouldn't lose service in Portugal because American carriers often cancel your service after a few months if you are using international cell towers. Here's the conversation with T-mobile representatives so that you understand how it works.

So, we did a chat with T-mobile and there is a relatively cheap solution for porting your number with them and having text/talk capabilities WITHOUT service being cut off after three months.

We told the T-mobile reps that we'd be out of the US for at least 10 months per year, that we do not need a data plan and are looking for the most affordable way to talk and

text (especially for two factor authentication) and that we wanted to be able to use our plan whenever we are back in the US to text and call people.

Here's what T-mobile said about their plans...

"First things first, if you really just need the basics, our prepaid T-Mobile Connect plan for \$15/mo might do the trick. That comes with unlimited talk and text and capped data, and is our most affordable prepaid plan currently.

One drawback of prepaid is that international roaming is not enabled; however, Wi-Fi calling is included for free on this plan, so as long as you have wi-fi access you can still send and receive text messages no matter where you go.

If you want to make sure that you have access even without Wi-Fi, our postpaid plans all come with unlimited international texting to and from the U.S. to 200+ countries! If you just need the basics and aren't interested in adding data services, we do offer a plan with unlimited talk and text only for \$20 per month. You would need to complete a credit check as it is a postpaid service, but it sounds like it may be the most reliable option so you can stay connected wherever you go."

Here are details on [T-mobile's Talk and Text Plan](#)

On the question of having service cut off after 3-months if you're not using the phone in the United States....

"That policy actually applies to roaming, not necessarily where you're located. Basically, you're not able to roam outside of the T-Mobile network for more than 3 months.

Typically where this becomes an issue is if someone is like an expat in London and uses their phone as though they're still in the US, but utilizing the London towers. This would constitute roaming on another carrier's network and would violate the terms of service."

At that point, we confirmed that if we only use this plan while we're on Wifi, there would be no problem. Their response....

"That is correct but you would *have to* stay on that WiFi while using the T-Mobile eSIM. The only time you'd see any trouble would be if you were utilizing the eSIM in the device and connected to a network there in London. As long as it is connected to WiFi the entire time you're using the T-Mobile side of things, you'll be good to go 😊 In regards to getting into new iPhone 12's, I'm showing that a trade in device would be required, however there is a buy one get one on the iPhone 12 Mini and this plan would qualify with that offer."

When we told them that we are not tech savvy and really don't understand how a dual SIM phone works and asked if we're able to control when the T-mobile SIM is active or not, this was their response....

"When using both SIMs in the phone, you have the option in the settings of which SIM you want the phone connected to at any given time. That way you control which carrier you're using on the device."

When I asked if the Buy One Get One Free iphone 12 mini required a 2-year contract, they said...

"There are no contracts with T-Mobile service, however the credits to get the second device for free are spread out over 24 monthly payments."

Our Plan: To get a dual SIM phone, make the T-mobile SIM the e-SIM, get the \$20/month unlimited talk/text plan and get a more complete plan through one of the Portuguese mobile carriers.

We've now been using the dual SIM with T-mobile in the e-SIM and our Portuguese carrier in the physical SIM successfully for almost two years now. It's been great! And, it's very convenient because when we're back in the States, we are able to use our T-mobile service as we normally would have before we moved to Portugal. It's seamless.

Hope this helps. 😊