
LEISURE / TRAVEL / INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL

Learn about communications when living abroad -- Part 6: Non- broadband solutions

June 14, 2009

4:33 PM MST





Cell phone with web access. Photo by Don Farris

You have made the move to another country and you can't get a high speed internet connection where you live. Or you are traveling in another country and staying in hotels without a broadband connection. What do you do if you want to communicate with your friends and family back home cost effectively?

In Costa Rica, where I live, you can only get a land line phone or a cell phone if you are a citizen, permanent resident or if you own an S.A., their version of a corporation. Fortunately, it is common in Costa Rica to place a home or car in an S.A. so, most people that are purchasing a home have one.

Unfortunately, you can only get dial up internet access. ISDN, or DSL access if you have a phone line. Even if you meet all of the requirements for a phone, you may have to wait your turn on a waiting list until they are able to connect you.

There may be some cable options, but they aren't available where I live. So for the first few months I lived here, I explored many non-broadband solutions. Every country is different, so you will have to check the rules in the country where you are living.

There are several options:

1) Internet Cafes or WiFi Restaurants and

Hotels. It is handy to have a notebook or a netbook computer when you are traveling. (The definition of a netbook, according to Microsoft, is a small notebook computer with under a 10.2 inch screen.) When we first moved to Costa Rica, we used to go to a local restaurant for breakfast and stay working on our computer until lunch time. The owners were great about it. Often, I see cars pulled up to the restaurant late at night, after the restaurant is closed, with people sitting in their cars working on their laptops or using **Skype** to call friends and family. So Skype is still an excellent option for people that will be able to use these facilities on occasion. The other option is obviously e-mail and instant messaging.

2) Cell Phones – Often, you can get a cell phone with internet access. In Costa Rica, there is a small additional charge for a cell phone with internet access. However, cell phones have the same restrictions that land lines do in Costa Rica, but this may allow you to use the internet in locations where phone lines are not available yet. I will be doing a series on international cell phones in the near future. You can use this for e-

mail or instant messaging. You may even be able to use it for call back services. At the present time in Costa Rica, the speed is not fast enough for the broadband solutions mentioned previously. However, check the speed of cell phone internet service in your country - it may work.



Scanned image of my International phone calling card from ICE.

3) International Phone Calling Cards – These calling cards are available in almost every country. Here in Costa Rica, they are sold by ICE, the government agency that handles phone, DSL and electric services. They are purchased in local stores like pharmacies. There is a code that you scratch off on the back. Then, from any phone you can dial the number and follow the instructions. We always keep one handy.

4) Call Back Services – There are companies that offer a call back service which charge low rates for international phone calls from your local phone. **Enlinea** is one of them. You can call an

international location from the U.S., you can call the US from an International location or you can call from one international location to another. In the U.S., one dials an 800 number to a switch. From an international location you dial a pre-assigned DID (Direct Inward Dial number). The switch will call you back within 2 to 3 seconds with a dial tone, from which you dial the number desired. If you are calling the U.S., you do not need a country code. Elinea has no minimum requirement and you can find out immediately on the website what your charge for the call was. They also offer a calculator so that you will know before hand the predetermined cost. You can either pre-pay an amount or weekly they will charge your credit card. The people that I know that have this service like it. Elinea is not the only call back service, so check with your friends and see if there is one they use that may offer better rates in the country in which you are living.

5) Other Options - Establishing a network of local friends who can assist you is always advisable. They may be able to suggest local systems that may not be available internationally. For example, in Costa Rica, a popular calling system is La Fragata Verde de Los Siete Mares S.A. You deposit money at Banco National and call 2220-4594 (yes, the number is correct in Costa Rica there are 8 digits) to open an account. The cost of a call to the United States is then approximately three cents per minute.

With so many different options, you should be able to find a way to communicate with your

loved ones anywhere in the world regardless of whether or not you have a broadband solution.

Additionally, you may want to review my articles on other solutions:

- Part 1: Skype
- Part 2: Magic Phone
- Part 3: Ooma
- Part 4: PhoneGnome
- Part 5: Vonage

Next: [The first carbon neutral airline in the world.](#)

For More Information: Please contact me, Lynn Farris at LynnFarris@ymail.com I'd love to hear from you. Please share your comments on this story and your stories on [living abroad](#). Also, let me know your favorite communication tool.



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