

There are easy ways to enjoy international calls on the cheap when you are travelling

Phone home cheaply

One-year-old Holoio now has 40,000 subscribers with 3,000 of them being active users who call via Holoio at least once a week.

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harlie Koh used to pay about \$800 in phone roaming fees whenever he went on week-long business trips to Germany. Last month, however, he switched to an alternative service provider called Holoio and cut his bill by half.

Instead of the usual \$4 per minute for outgoing calls, he needed to pay only \$1.70 per minute.

The 42-year-old general manager of Eureka Technology, a local lighting and access control company, said that it is now company policy for all travelling executives to use Holoio instead of calling directly from the phone.

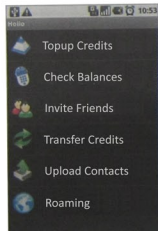
Consumers and business executives no longer need to pay exorbitant roaming fees with the availability of at least two local solutions - Holoio and Trusting Communications' Ready-2-Go - which can slash overseas roaming fees by as much as 10 times. Here is how they work.



Oo Gin Lee



PHOTO: REUTERS, HONG KONG

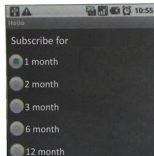


Holoio (www.holoio.com)

Available on iPhone, Android, BlackBerry and Symbian smartphones

First, you will need to download the Holoio app, either from a mobile app store or the Web. Set up an account with Holoio and top up your calling credits online using a credit card.

Just before your trip, subscribe to a roaming Holoio number through the



app. Click on More and then on Roaming (left). This costs \$5 per month and is deducted from your Holoio credits (above).

Then go to your phone's settings and divert all calls to the phone number provided by Holoio.

When you reach your destination

country, buy a pre-paid SIM card. Launch the Holoio app on your phone and key the number of your overseas pre-paid SIM card into the app (right).

Now when your friends call you, their calls will be re-directed by Holoio's servers to the holo from which you bought your overseas pre-paid SIM. You have to pay 16 cents per minute for the local airtime charge, plus Holoio's IDD rates.

A regular incoming roaming call when you are in, say, China, costs about \$82.30 per minute.

With Holoio, it costs only 36 cents per minute (16 cents for local airtime plus 20 cents for the IDD call to China). The latter is significantly cheaper.

One drawback is that you cannot receive SMS messages with your overseas SIM card. The solution is to have two phones, one with your local SIM card and the other with the overseas SIM card.



For outgoing calls when you are overseas, simply make a call as you normally would. Holoio's software will automatically "jack" your phone's dialler when you call.

Outgoing calls work through a call-back system. When you make a call, you are actually sending a 10 kilobyte data packet, which contains the information of the number you are trying to call, to Holoio via the Internet.

Holoio then makes use of its call-back system to call you and your recipient and - voila - both of you are connected.

With the call-back scheme, it means you have to wait about 10 seconds before the call is connected. In China, for example, you pay only 20 cents per minute, plus a flat 20 cents - the roaming cost of sending the data packet - to initiate the call.

Compare this with the typical \$3 per minute and the savings can be substantial for a frequent traveller.