

# 14. Communication

Keeping in touch with your friends, family and fellow travellers is easier nowadays than ever before. But be cautious, many places still have little or no mobile phone reception, and not all mobile phones will work outside the UK. It is best not to rely on just one form of communication.

## Regular communication

Family and friends will be glad to hear how you are getting on during your gap experience. Here are a few ways you can keep in touch:

### **The Internet/email**

- Get a free email address that you can use all over the world. E.g. from [www.msn.com](http://www.msn.com), [www.yahoo.co.uk](http://www.yahoo.co.uk) or [www.gmail.com](http://www.gmail.com)
- You can use internet cafes at a small cost whilst abroad - see [www.cybercafe.com](http://www.cybercafe.com) for locations. Some accommodation may also provide free wifi or internet access.
- You can also use the Internet as a phone facility. It is a good idea to set up an account with a company like Skype, which will let you make free calls to other Skype users and low cost calls abroad. [www.skype.com](http://www.skype.com). If you are a Facebook user you can also use 'Facetime'.

### **Mobile phones**

- These are useful in an emergency. If your phone is unlocked, you can buy a local sim card or even buy a local sim card before you go e.g. [www.worldsim.com](http://www.worldsim.com). This will allow you to contact friends and in-country contacts very cheaply too.

### **Normal phones**

- Think about pre-paid phone cards and look at charge cards e.g. [www.ekit.com](http://www.ekit.com)

### **Web journals/blogs**

An interactive online journal which allows you to write a diary, upload photos and voice messages, map your journey, send safety alerts etc can keep you in touch with friends, families and colleagues as you travel the world. For examples of blog sites see:

- [www.blogger.com](http://www.blogger.com)
- [www.wordpress.com](http://www.wordpress.com)

However don't be too ambitious in your planning - in many places the internet is slow and uploading images may be problematic.

## Emergency communication

If travelling independently it is helpful to contact family and friends regularly to let them know your location and next destination.

Ensure your parent/guardian in the UK and any friends you are travelling with have the contact details for the British embassy in-country for use in an emergency. You should also give your travelling partner(s) the contact details of your family/friends in the UK.

Keep copies of key telephone numbers with you whilst travelling and email them to yourself before departure so that they are accessible even if your phone gets stolen. These should include:

- The British embassy in the countries you are travelling to
- Family and friends in the UK and in-country
- Nearest hospital/doctor to your accommodation
- Your bank

- Your airline
- Your insurance company
- Your provider(s) (if applicable)

Ask your parents/guardians before you leave if they will accept a reverse charge call if you find yourself in a situation where you need to contact home and have no money. Note the operator number for each country you are travelling in to use for a reverse charge call.

**Exploratory questions to ask yourself:**

- How will I keep in contact with family and friends during my gap experience?
- How often will I be able to contact home?
- Do I have any contacts in-country? Will they be contactable at all times?
- Who would I contact in an emergency? How could I contact them?