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TRAVEL TALK

Kate Russell's Tech Traveller

Technology reporter and author of *Working the Cloud*, Kate Russell is a pro at finding the best websites and apps to recommend. Check out her site [Workingthecloud.biz](#) or tweet her @katerussell

By Kate Russell. Published on 19th July 2013



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Data roaming update

Things move fast in the world of technology and there have been some great developments in terms of data saving for the connected traveller, making it easier and cheaper to feed your smartphone habit abroad.

For starters, regulators have put a cap on roaming charges in the EU and enforced a warning message for long-haul travellers when charges approach €50 (£42). Better yet, from July 2014 you'll be able to shop around for the best roaming contract without dumping your domestic provider or losing your regular phone number. MoneySupermarket.com has a great guide on the latest mobile deals.

Until then your best bet is still to buy a roaming SIM card. Ritesim will sell you a hassle-free, easy to activate pre-paid SIM card for over 45 countries before you leave the UK, so you can ensure it works on your phone and share contact numbers with friends and relatives. If you'd rather not change your number, Toggle Mobile is selling SIM cards at £15 with £10 credit, giving you a permanent UK number and the option to add up to nine local numbers while travelling. They claim savings of up to 90% as users can receive free incoming calls while roaming in over 100 countries worldwide. There are other companies that seem to offer this kind of service but make sure you check the number you're given is truly a mainland UK number or you could find those calling you will be charged a premium rate. [moneysupermarket.com/mobile-phones](#) [ritesim.com](#)

[togglemobile.co.uk](#)

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Flight-sim fans who like a bit of realism can cruise through the skies over photo-realistic continents with a free plugin from Google Earth. There are plenty of different craft to fly, from helicopters to a hot-air balloon. It's not as smooth a ride as the more hefty flight-sim downloads but you can fly anywhere in the world, from any airport's runway.

realrailway.com/en

Who didn't want to be a train driver as a kid? At RealRailway.com there's a selection of simulators running along real Japanese rail routes. You can play online but the free downloads have smarter graphics. Learn the art of driving (and stopping), or choose 'passenger mode' and just sit back and watch the photo-realistic scenery fly by.

snapshotserengeti.org

If you fancy a safari but don't have the cash, take a virtual one instead. Snapshot Serengeti takes you on a journey through images collected by more than 200 motion-sensitive cameras dotted around the Serengeti National Park. Help the reserve by classifying and counting the animals — it's like crowd-sourcing the job of park ranger.

WE LOVE...

oovoo.com Stay in touch with loved ones when you head overseas with Oovoo, which connects up to 12 users in HD — completely free. It recently added a four-way mobile function for iOS and Android, too. As well as live chat there's a video message feature enabling you to email clips or pop them on YouTube.

Four of the best travel passion apps

Minube

Social travel site Minube has added English-language versions of its main website and iOS app. The service is popular in much of Europe and Latin America, offering a buzzing social platform and user-generated travel guides. iOS. Free. minube.net

TripAdvisor

It may be a trusty old favourite but did you know it offers free apps? Save places to visit and use the 'street view' feature to easily spot the hotel or restaurant you're heading to. iOS, Android, WP7. Free. tripadvisor.com/apps

Zite

Create your own custom travel magazine with the Zite app. Once you've chosen your destination, load the app up with reading material to keep you occupied in the airport departure lounge. iOS, Android, WP7. Free. zite.com

Planefinder

This app tracks flights in real-time including details about craft, cargo and route. With free basic apps, the enhanced iOS version uses augmented reality so you can point to the sky and see what's flying overhead. iOS, Android. Free. planefinder.net

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