

A Note About Phone Calls

I really thought I was getting a great deal on the phone rates for calling overseas with my Voice over IP phone until I talked with a friend who calls his daughter in Wales on a regular basis using his plain old home phone using the 1010 services. The year before, I had made several calls to England making reservations at out of the way hotels for a trip there and I had nearly \$40 in phone charges. What I have discovered, is that if you don't have a plan for international calling, you get really stiffed with your current long distance carrier and because it is easy, I will pick on AT&T.

So I developed a chart outlining the **cost for a 20 minute call** to various locations around the globe using five different long distance calling services. There are a ton of Voip calling services so if you go with an obscure one, read the fine print carefully. None of the monthly fees are included in the numbers below which you will pay for using ITP, Vonage, and AT&T. With Skype, you need to prepay your minutes.

Country Called	ITP Global	1010987 phone service	Skype Skypeout Service	Vonage World	AT&T normal Intl Rates
Antarctica (Casey 672)	10.00	55.33	n/a	37.60	n/a
Australia	Inc.	2.73	.48	Inc.	55.20
Canada	Inc.	1.73	.48	Inc.	18.20
China	Inc.	3.73	.48	Inc.	116.20
Cuba	19.80	31.33	23.58	18.20	103.00
Fiji	5.98	34.73	6.60	6.00	108.60
Germany	Inc.	1.73	.48	Inc.	48.20
Japan	Inc.	2.93	.52	Inc.	61.20
United Kingdom	Inc.	1.73	.48	Inc.	45.80
United States	Inc.	1.73	.48	Inc.	n/a
Vatican City	n/a	1.73	.74	1.40	61.80
Zaire (Dem Congo)	6.50	41.20	8.16	7.60	84.40

Rates as of December, 2009.

The Fine Print:

ITP Global, www.itpvoip.com starts with a monthly charge of \$24.99 and then the calls to 60 countries are included and the others, you pay for. Note that some mobile phones in the "free" countries are not part of the plan.

With 1010987, www.1010987.com, the initial cost for the most part is .53 cents to make the call and in some cases it was higher but those amounts have been included in the chart. The cost of 1010987 is included in your monthly phone bill and there is no monthly fee. (note that while their rates seem current, their site still has a copyright 2005 date on it). Skype is a very popular European internet calling service, www.skype.com. You can use a web camera for video calls, which millions do now; or get a handset for just making phone calls. Another alternative is getting a good headset. If the person you are calling has Skype, the call is free. Otherwise, you sign up for Skypeout. Skype has different rates for calling cell phones in some places.

Vonage World is a VOIP service that you pay monthly for. Their World Service listed above is \$24.99 per month and you get free calls to many countries. Others, you will pay extra for. Included in the plan is the equipment you need.

www.vonage.com. From AT&T Public Affairs comes the absolutely silly rates you will get stuck with if you don't have an international plan. Oh by the way, these are the off-peak rates. Needless to say, seeing what my wonderful phone company would charge me for an overseas call really frosts my guppy. What this also tells me is that if you make calls anywhere overseas and especially to obscure places, you better check the rates before hand because, as you can see, it can make a huge difference in the cost of your phone call.

Another option would be to check for the overseas access rates from your cell phone, again, you will probably have to sign up with a calling plan. Finally, be very careful of using a phone calling card. Many have maintenance fees, connection fees, time use fees, minimum minute fees, early expiration, and you should get the picture by now.

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