BILL'S HOME TECH
Home & Small Business Tech Solutions

BILL'S COMPLETE MANUALS

Staying Connected While Traveling

Wi-Fi, hotspots, roaming and eSIMs — how to stay online, safe, and in touch wherever you roam, in plain English

A plain-English guide for travelers

Take your time — you can't break it

Written for you by Bill — Bill's Home Tech

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What's Inside

This is your plain-English guide to staying connected when you leave home — whether that's a weekend at the lake, a visit to the grandkids across the country, or a dream trip overseas. Read it in any order and at your own pace; there's no test, and you can't fall behind. We'll cover getting online safely, using your phone as your lifeline, staying in touch without a shocking bill, and handling the bumps that travel brings. Where prices come up — for roaming or travel plans — they change often, so I'll give you the lay of the land and tell you where to check today's figure.

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PART 1

Before You Leave Home

A little setting-up before you pack makes everything on the road easier: your phone ready, your maps and shows saved, your photos safe, and a simple charging kit.

CHAPTER 1

A Note from Bill

Hello, and welcome. Travel is one of life's great pleasures, and these days a phone or tablet in your pocket can make it smoother and safer than ever — a map that never folds wrong, a way to reach family in a heartbeat, your boarding pass and your photos all in one place. But the worry of "will it work out there?" and "will I come home to a huge bill?" holds a lot of good folks back. This book settles those worries.

I'm Bill. Helping people feel at home with their technology is what I do every day, and I wrote this the way I'd explain it sitting across from you before a trip: slowly, in plain English, with no rushing. If I use a term you don't know, I'll stop and explain it right then.

What this book will do for you

By the end, you'll know how to get online wherever you are, how to do it *safely* on strange Wi-Fi, how to keep your phone working in another country without a frightening bill, and how to lean on your phone for maps, translation, and keeping close to the people you love. You'll travel lighter in your mind, knowing the little glass rectangle in your pocket has your back.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

The freedom of a connected trip

A phone that works away from home means directions when you're turned around, a photo of the grandkids sent the moment you snap it, your reservation pulled up at the desk, and help a tap away in a pinch. That's not just convenience — for a traveler, especially a solo one, it's real peace of mind for you and for the family back home.

And I'm only a phone call away

Set these things up before you go and most of your trip will just work. But if you hit a snag — before you leave or while you're away — you're never stuck alone. Call or text me at **(330) 200-8042** and we'll sort it out. There's no such thing as a silly question. Let's get you ready.

— Bill

CHAPTER 2

How Your Phone Gets Online — the Big Idea

Before we travel anywhere, let's understand the one idea that makes this whole book easy: your phone can get onto the internet in **two different ways**, and knowing which one you're using at any moment explains nearly everything about cost and signal.

The two roads to the internet

Way online	What to know
Cellular (cell data)	The signal from cell towers — the same thing that carries your calls. It works almost anywhere you have "bars," with no setup. You pay your phone company for it, and it can get expensive in other countries.
Wi-Fi	A local wireless internet signal from a particular place — your home, a hotel, a coffee shop. It's usually free to use, but only reaches a short distance from its source, and a strange one can be less safe.

Your phone switches between these automatically: it prefers Wi-Fi when it knows one, and falls back to cellular when there's no Wi-Fi around. The art of traveling connected is simply steering this on purpose — leaning on free Wi-Fi when it's safe, and on cellular when you need it, while keeping both your signal and your bill under control.

GOOD TO KNOW

"Data" just means internet use

You'll hear the word **data** a lot — "using data," "a data plan," "data roaming." It simply means your phone using the internet over the cellular signal: loading a map, sending a photo, checking email. Wi-Fi use is usually free and doesn't count against your phone plan's data. Keeping that distinction in mind is half the battle of avoiding a big bill.

The little icons that tell you which you're on

Glance at the top of your screen. A **Wi-Fi symbol** (curved lines, like a fan) means you're on Wi-Fi. Bars or dots with **"5G"** or **"LTE"** next to them mean you're on cellular. When you're traveling, this little glance tells you instantly whether what you're about to do is free (Wi-Fi) or using your phone plan (cellular) — a handy habit abroad.

CHAPTER 3

Getting Your Phone Travel-Ready

A few minutes of preparation before you leave prevents most travel-tech headaches. Run down this list the day before you go, with your phone in hand and plugged in.

The pre-trip checklist

1. **Update your phone.** Install any waiting software update so you're on the latest, steadiest version (Settings, then General or System, then Software Update).
2. **Charge everything fully** — phone, tablet, and any battery pack — the night before.
3. **Know your passwords.** Have your phone's passcode, your email password, and your main logins written in a safe place you're carrying (not just stored on the phone itself).
4. **Turn on Find My phone** so a lost device can be located (next chapters cover this).
5. **Back up your photos** so nothing is lost if the phone is (Chapter 5).
6. **Download what you'll need offline** — maps, boarding passes, shows (Chapter 4).

> TIP
>
> **Write your key info on paper and carry it separately**
>
> Keep a small card in your wallet — separate from your phone — with your own phone number, a family member's number, your email address, and your hotel's name. If your phone dies or goes missing, that little card lets you borrow any phone and still reach help. Low-tech, but it has saved many a traveler.

Set your 'In Case of Emergency' info

Both iPhones and Android phones let you add **emergency contacts** and medical notes that can be seen from the locked screen, so a helper or medic can reach your family even without your passcode. On an iPhone it's in the Health app's "Medical ID"; on Android it's under Settings, Safety & emergency. It takes five minutes and is especially worth doing before you travel alone.

CHAPTER 4

Downloading Maps, Shows & Passes for Offline Use

Here's a traveler's superpower: you can save maps, entertainment, and tickets onto your phone *while you're on your home Wi-Fi*, so they work later with **no internet at all** — on a plane, in a dead-signal area, or abroad where data is dear. Do this before you leave.

Download your route maps

Google Maps (and others) let you save a whole area — a city, a region — to your phone ahead of time. Then the map, search, and driving directions all work with no signal.

1. On home Wi-Fi, open Google Maps and search for the place you're visiting.
2. Tap the place name, then look for **Download** or tap your profile picture and choose **Offline maps**.
3. Adjust the box to cover the area you want and tap **Download**. It saves to your phone.
4. While traveling, the map works from this saved copy even with no internet.

Download shows and music

As covered in the streaming world, apps like Netflix, and music apps too, let you save shows and playlists for offline enjoyment. Download a few before a long flight or drive, on your home Wi-Fi, and entertain yourself for hours using no data at all.

Save your boarding passes and tickets

Add your airline boarding pass to your phone's **Wallet** (iPhone) or the airline's app, where it stays available even offline. Same for event tickets and hotel confirmations. A paper backup is still wise, but having them on the phone means one less thing to lose.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Your trip in your pocket, no signal required

Downloading before you go turns your phone into a self-contained travel kit: maps that guide you through a strange city with no signal, shows for the long haul, and your passes always to hand. It also saves money abroad, since you're not burning costly data on things you could have saved for free at home. It's the single best pre-trip habit there is.

CHAPTER 5

Protecting Your Photos & Information Before You Go

A phone can be lost, dropped in a lake, or left in a taxi. The sting of that is far gentler if your photos and important information are safely **backed up** first — copied automatically to the internet, where losing the phone doesn't mean losing the memories.

What a backup is

A **backup** is simply a second copy of your phone's contents kept safely elsewhere — "in the cloud," which just means on secure computers run by Apple or Google that you reach over the internet. If your phone vanishes, you sign in on a new one and everything flows right back. It's the seatbelt of the digital world.

Turning on photo backup

- **iPhone:** Settings, tap your name, then iCloud, then Photos — turn it on. Your pictures copy to iCloud whenever you're on Wi-Fi.
- **Android:** open the Google Photos app, tap your profile picture, and make sure **Backup** is turned on.

Do this on your home Wi-Fi before the trip, and let it finish. Then every photo you take on your journey quietly copies itself to safety whenever you reach Wi-Fi — your memories protected without a thought.

STAY SAFE

Backups also foil a thief

A backup isn't only about a dropped phone. If your phone is *stolen*, a good backup plus Find My (coming up) means you can erase the phone from afar — wiping your private information from the thief's hands — and still restore everything onto a replacement. Protection and recovery in one. Set it up before you go.

CHAPTER 6

A Simple Charging & Power Kit

Nothing undoes a connected traveler like a dead battery. A small, thoughtful charging kit keeps you powered through long days of photos, maps, and messages. You don't need much.

What to pack

Item	Why
Your charger & cable	The ones that came with your phone, plus a spare cable — they're cheap and the first thing to fail or go missing.
A portable battery (power bank)	A pocket-sized rechargeable battery that tops up your phone on the go. One that can fully recharge your phone once or twice is plenty for a day out.
A car charger	If you'll be driving, so maps don't drain your phone flat on a long haul.
A travel plug adapter (abroad)	Other countries use different wall sockets; a simple adapter lets your charger fit. Needed only for international trips.

Stretching your battery on a long day

- Turn on **Low Power Mode** (iPhone) or **Battery Saver** (Android) when you drop below a quarter — it quietly stretches what's left.
- Dim the screen and close maps when you're not actively using them.
- Charge whenever you get the chance — at lunch, in the car — rather than waiting for empty.

TIP

A power bank is a traveler's best friend

If you buy one travel gadget, make it a small **power bank**. It means a day of heavy map and photo use never leaves you stranded with a dead phone far from an outlet. Charge it fully the night before, toss it in your bag with a cable, and you've got a full extra tank of power in your pocket. I'm glad to help you pick a good simple one.

PART 2

Getting Online on the Road

Using Wi-Fi in hotels and cafes without getting burned, what a VPN is and when you need one, and turning your own phone into an internet source for your other gadgets.

CHAPTER 7

Hotel & Public Wi-Fi: the Basics

Free Wi-Fi is everywhere travelers go — hotels, airports, cafes, libraries, even many planes. Used well, it keeps you online for free and saves your cellular data. Let's cover how to join one properly, which is a little different from your home Wi-Fi.

Joining a public Wi-Fi network

1. Open your phone's **Settings** and tap **Wi-Fi**. A list of nearby networks appears.
2. Pick the **official** one — the hotel or cafe usually posts its exact network name. Choose that exact name, not a look-alike (more on that danger soon).
3. You may be asked for a **password** (the place will give it to you) or simply to agree to terms on a page that pops up.
4. If a sign-in page doesn't appear on its own, open your web browser and try to visit any site — the page will usually appear so you can accept and get online.

> GOOD TO KNOW
>
> **The 'sign-in page' is normal**
>
> Many public networks show a **welcome or sign-in page** where you tap "Agree" or enter your room number before they let you online. This is normal and harmless — it's just the place's front door. If no page appears, opening your browser and trying to visit a website usually summons it.

Why public Wi-Fi needs a little caution

Public Wi-Fi is shared by strangers, and it isn't private the way your home network is. For ordinary browsing, reading news, or watching a show, that's perfectly fine. The caution comes when you do something *sensitive* — banking, shopping with a card, or signing into important accounts — which the next chapter addresses. Know the difference and you'll use public Wi-Fi with confidence.

CHAPTER 8

Staying Safe on Strange Wi-Fi

Here's the heart of safe traveling online. Public Wi-Fi is fine for most things, but because it's shared, you want to be thoughtful about the private stuff. A few simple rules keep you safe without making you a hermit.

The safe-on-public-Wi-Fi rules

- **Fine to do anywhere:** read news, check the weather, look at maps, watch shows, browse around, send ordinary messages.
- **Better to avoid on open Wi-Fi:** banking, entering a credit card, or signing into important financial accounts — unless you're using a VPN (next chapter) or your own cellular data instead.
- **Never do:** type a password or card number into a page that arrived from a link in an email or text, on any network.

Use your own data for the sensitive moments

The simplest safety trick of all: when you must do something private — pay a bill, check your bank — just turn *off* Wi-Fi for a minute and use your phone's own **cellular data** instead (at home or in your own country, where it's included). Your cellular connection is far more private than shared Wi-Fi. Do the sensitive thing, then turn Wi-Fi back on. Easy and free.

STAY SAFE

Watch for the look-alike network

A favorite trick of thieves is to set up a fake Wi-Fi with a name almost like the real one — "Airport Free WiFi" next to "Airport_Guest_WiFi" — hoping you'll join theirs so they can snoop. Always use the **exact** network name the hotel or cafe posts, and when in doubt, ask a staff member which is theirs. If two networks look nearly identical, that's a red flag worth a question.

CHAPTER 9

What a VPN Is (and Whether You Need One)

You may have heard that travelers should use a **VPN**. The word sounds technical, but the idea is simple, and whether you need one depends on how you travel. Let's demystify it.

A VPN in plain English

A **VPN** (it stands for "virtual private network," but the letters don't matter) is a small app that wraps everything your phone sends over the internet in a private, sealed tunnel. On shared public Wi-Fi, that tunnel means no one nearby can peek at what you're doing — even your banking is private. Think of it as mailing your internet traffic in a locked, opaque box instead of on an open postcard.

Do you actually need one?

Your situation	The verdict
You probably don't need one if…	You mostly browse, watch, and message, and simply use cellular data for the occasional bank check. The simple rules in Chapter 8 keep you safe.
A VPN is worth it if…	You travel often, regularly use hotel and airport Wi-Fi, and want to bank or shop freely on it without worrying. Then a reputable VPN app is a sensible, modest investment.

FROM BILL

Choose a VPN carefully — or let me help

If you decide a VPN suits your travels, pick a **well-known, paid** one — the free ones often make their money by snooping on you, which defeats the whole purpose. There are a handful of trusted names. Rather than wade through the ads and reviews, call me at **(330) 200-8042** and I'll point you to a reputable one and help you set it up in a few minutes. No sense overpaying or picking a bad one.

CHAPTER 10

Your Phone as a Hotspot (Tethering)

Here's a wonderful feature many people own and never use: your phone can **share its own internet** with your other gadgets — your tablet or laptop — becoming a little private Wi-Fi of its own. This is called a **hotspot** (or "tethering"), and it can be safer and handier than hunting for public Wi-Fi.

Why it's useful

- Get your tablet or laptop online anywhere your phone has signal — in the car, a park, a hotel room with weak Wi-Fi.
- It's **your own private network**, far safer than shared public Wi-Fi for banking and the like.
- No extra gadget to buy — your phone already has it built in.

Turning on your hotspot

1. **iPhone:** Settings, then **Personal Hotspot**, and switch it on. Note the Wi-Fi password it shows.
2. **Android:** Settings, then **Connections** or **Network**, then **Mobile Hotspot** (wording varies), and switch it on.
3. On your tablet or laptop, join the Wi-Fi network named after your phone, using that password.
4. You're online — through your phone's cellular signal.

HEADS UP

A hotspot uses your cellular data — mind the limit

Because a hotspot runs on your phone's cellular data, it counts against your phone plan's data allowance (and can be very costly abroad — see Part 3). It's perfect for quick tasks and for plans with plenty of data, but don't stream movies through it for hours on a limited plan. Check what your plan allows, and use a hotspot thoughtfully. Call me if you're unsure what your plan includes.

CHAPTER 11

Airplane Mode & Smart Travel Settings

A few phone settings are made for travel. Knowing them keeps you in control of signal, battery, and — crucially abroad — your bill.

Airplane Mode

Airplane Mode (a little airplane icon) switches off all your phone's signals at once — cellular, Wi-Fi, and Bluetooth. You turn it on for takeoff as the crew asks. But it's useful on the ground too: it instantly stops all cellular use (handy abroad to avoid charges), and you can turn *Wi-Fi back on by itself* while leaving cellular off — perfect for using free plane or hotel Wi-Fi without any cellular bill.

The travel settings worth knowing

Setting	What it does for a traveler
Airplane Mode	All signals off. Turn Wi-Fi back on separately to use free Wi-Fi with no cellular charges.
Data Roaming	The switch that lets your phone use cellular data in another country — and the one that causes bill shock if left on carelessly abroad (Part 3). Know where it is.
Low Power / Battery Saver	Stretches a low battery through a long day of sightseeing.
Wi-Fi Calling	Lets you make normal calls over Wi-Fi when the cell signal is weak — great in hotels and abroad (Part 3).

TIP

The abroad trick: Airplane Mode + Wi-Fi only

Here's a traveler's favorite: the moment you land in another country, turn on **Airplane Mode**, then switch **Wi-Fi back on** by itself. Now your phone can't ring up any costly foreign cellular charges at all, yet you can still use hotel and cafe Wi-Fi for messages, calls, and maps. It's the simplest way to guarantee no surprise bill — and we'll build on it in Part 3.

PART 3

Traveling to Another Country

How your phone behaves overseas, the ways to get affordable data abroad, calling home for free, and — above all — never coming back to a frightening bill.

CHAPTER 12

How Your Phone Works in Another Country

The number-one travel-tech fear I hear is the overseas phone bill — the horror story of someone who came home from a lovely trip to a bill of hundreds of dollars. Let's make sure that is never you. It starts with understanding one word: roaming.

What "roaming" means

When you leave your phone company's home territory and your phone connects to a *foreign* cell network, that's called **roaming**. Your phone still works — calls, texts, internet — but it's borrowing another country's network, and your company may charge a lot for the favor unless you've arranged a travel plan. Roaming is exactly where the scary bills come from, and exactly what this part of the book tames.

The good news

Modern phones work in most countries with no change of hardware — the same phone that works in Ohio works in Italy. The only question is *how you pay* for its internet and calls while there. You have several good, affordable options, and we'll walk through each so you can pick the one that fits your trip.

GOOD TO KNOW

Three ways to be online abroad

There are really just three routes: (1) lean on free **Wi-Fi** only, and keep cellular off; (2) buy a **travel pass** from your own phone company; or (3) get a **travel eSIM**, a digital foreign SIM for cheap local data. The next chapters cover all three. Most travelers pick one or two of these, and none of them is complicated once you've seen it.

CHAPTER 13

Roaming & Your Carrier's Travel Pass

The simplest way to stay connected abroad is a **travel pass** from your own phone company — Verizon, AT&T, T-Mobile, and the rest all sell them. You keep your own number and your own phone, and pay a set daily or monthly fee to use them overseas.

How travel passes work

- You turn on (or buy) the pass before or during your trip, often with a quick call to your company or a tap in their app.
- You then use your phone abroad much as you do at home — calls, texts, and internet — for a flat daily charge on the days you use it, or a monthly bundle.
- The daily fee is typically around ten dollars a day in many countries, but prices and countries vary, so check your company's current rate before you go.

When a travel pass is the right choice

A travel pass shines for shorter trips, for folks who want zero fuss, and for anyone who needs to keep their usual phone number reachable. You change nothing about how you use your phone — you just pay the daily fee. The trade-off is cost: for a longer trip, those daily fees add up, and a travel eSIM (next chapter) can be far cheaper.

TIP

Call your phone company before you fly

A week before an international trip, call your phone company (or visit their app) and ask: "What are my options for using my phone in [your destination], and what will it cost?" Set it up *before* you leave, so you're not fumbling with it — or racking up full-price roaming — on arrival. If you'd like, call me first and I'll help you understand what they offer and whether it's a fair deal.

CHAPTER 14

Travel eSIMs & Local SIMs

For longer trips, or to save real money, a **travel eSIM** is the modern traveler's secret. It sounds technical; it's actually quite simple, and it can cut your overseas data cost dramatically.

What an eSIM is

Your phone has always needed a **SIM** — a tiny chip that ties it to a phone company. An **eSIM** is the same idea but *digital*: instead of a physical chip, you install a second phone "line" by scanning a code, right from your chair. Most phones from the last few years support eSIMs, and you can have your home line *and* a travel eSIM on one phone at once.

How a travel eSIM works

1. Before your trip, on home Wi-Fi, buy a travel data plan from a travel-eSIM company (there are several well-known apps for this) for the country you're visiting.
2. They send you a code; you add it in your phone's settings under **Cellular** or **Mobile data**, then **Add eSIM**.
3. On arrival, you switch your data over to the travel eSIM. You now have affordable local internet — often a fraction of roaming's cost.
4. Your home number still receives calls and texts over your regular line (set it to not use data) or over Wi-Fi.

> **FROM BILL**
>
> **eSIMs save money but take a little setup — let's do it together**
>
> A travel eSIM can turn a hundred-dollar roaming trip into a ten- or twenty-dollar one — real savings. The one hurdle is the first-time setup, which has a few steps that are easy to get slightly wrong. This is a *perfect* thing to do together before you leave: call me at **(330) 200-8042** and we'll get your eSIM installed and tested so it just works when you land. Twenty minutes now saves a lot of fumbling abroad.

CHAPTER 15

Calling & Texting Home for Free

One of the happiest surprises of modern travel: you can call and video-chat with family back home from anywhere in the world, often for **free**, as long as you have Wi-Fi or data. The trick is using the internet-based apps rather than old-fashioned international calling.

The free ways to stay in touch

Tool	What it does
FaceTime (iPhone to iPhone)	Free video and voice calls over Wi-Fi or data, between Apple devices. Wonderful for seeing the grandkids from abroad.
WhatsApp	Free calls, video, and messages to anyone else on WhatsApp, worldwide, over the internet. Hugely popular with international families.
Facebook Messenger	Free calls and messages to your Facebook contacts over the internet.
Wi-Fi Calling	Lets your phone make *normal* calls to home numbers over Wi-Fi — often with no roaming charge. Turn it on in your phone's settings before you go.

Agree with your family *before* you leave on which app you'll use, and make sure you both have it installed and have tried it once. Then, from a cafe in Paris or a hotel in Tokyo, seeing their faces is as easy as a tap — and it costs nothing over Wi-Fi.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

The miles melt away

There's something deeply reassuring, for you and for them, about a nightly video call home — proof you're safe, a shared laugh, the grandkids waving. These free internet apps make that possible from almost anywhere on earth, with no bill at all over Wi-Fi. Set one up with your family before you go, and travel with your loved ones only a tap away.

CHAPTER 16

Never Come Home to Bill Shock

Let's gather everything into one simple, bulletproof plan so you return from your trip with nothing but good memories — and no nasty surprise on your phone bill. Follow these and you're safe.

The no-bill-shock checklist

1. **Decide your plan before you leave:** Wi-Fi only, a carrier travel pass, or a travel eSIM (Chapters 12-14).
2. **If Wi-Fi only:** turn on Airplane Mode on arrival, then switch Wi-Fi back on. Your phone then cannot ring up any foreign charges at all.
3. **Turn off Data Roaming** unless you've bought a pass that needs it on. This one switch prevents most accidental charges.
4. **Use free apps** (FaceTime, WhatsApp) for calls and texts home over Wi-Fi.
5. **Watch your usage** if on a pass — your carrier's app shows what you've used.

STAY SAFE

The one switch that saves the day

If you remember only one thing from this whole part: find **Data Roaming** in your settings and turn it **off** before you travel internationally (unless you've deliberately bought a plan that uses it). With roaming off, your phone simply won't rack up surprise foreign data charges — the source of nearly every horror-story bill. It's the seatbelt of overseas travel. I'm glad to help you find and set it before you go.

PART 4

Making the Most of It While You're Away

The everyday travel magic: maps that guide you, translation that breaks the language barrier, finding a lost phone, and keeping memories and loved ones close.

CHAPTER 17

Maps & Finding Your Way

A phone is the finest travel companion ever made for not getting lost. Whether you're walking a strange city or driving an unfamiliar highway, the maps app turns "where on earth am I?" into a calm, guided stroll.

Getting directions

1. Open **Maps** (Apple Maps or Google Maps).
2. Tap the search box and type where you want to go — an address, or a place like "nearest pharmacy."
3. Tap **Directions**, choose walking, driving, or public transit, and tap **Go** or **Start**.
4. The phone speaks and shows each turn. Just follow along; if you miss a turn, it simply recalculates — no scolding.

Remember to **download the map area before you go** (Chapter 4) so this all works even with no signal abroad. A downloaded map plus your phone's built-in location sense will guide you through a foreign city without using a drop of costly data.

> **TIP**
>
> **Drop a pin where you parked**
>
> Before you walk away from your car, your hotel, or the spot where the tour bus waits, open Maps and tap and hold your current location to **drop a pin** — a marker you can navigate back to later. No more wandering a parking lot or a strange street trying to retrace your steps. It's a small trick that spares real stress.

CHAPTER 18

Breaking the Language Barrier

Here's a bit of genuine magic that makes travel abroad far less daunting: your phone can **translate** — turning a foreign menu, sign, or conversation into English on the spot. It feels like something from a science-fiction film, and it's free.

The ways to translate

- **Type or speak** — in the Google Translate or Apple Translate app, type or say a phrase and it shows (and speaks) the translation. Hand your phone to a shopkeeper and they can reply into it too.
- **Point your camera** — aim your phone's camera at a menu or sign, and the app shows the English right over the foreign words, live. Astonishing the first time.
- **Conversation mode** — the app listens to two languages and translates back and forth, so you can hold a simple conversation.

Download the language you'll need *before* you travel (the apps let you save a language for offline use), so translation works even with no signal. A little preparation turns your phone into a pocket interpreter that never tires.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Travel with less fear of the unknown

For many folks, the language barrier is the scariest part of going abroad. Knowing your phone can read any menu, ask any question, and understand any reply takes that fear right off the table. You can order dinner, ask directions, and chat with a local — all with a device you already own. That confidence is worth a great deal.

CHAPTER 19

Finding a Lost Phone — and Yourself

Phones get left in taxis and on cafe tables, and the moment of realizing it's gone is sickening — especially far from home. The good news: both iPhones and Android phones can be **located on a map** if they go missing, and you set this up before you leave.

Find My (iPhone) and Find My Device (Android)

This free feature shows your phone's location on a map, viewed from another device or a computer. You can make it play a sound (to find it in the couch cushions), lock it, display a "please call me" message on its screen, or — as a last resort — erase it so a thief gets nothing.

Make sure it's on before you travel

- **iPhone:** Settings, tap your name, then **Find My**, and make sure **Find My iPhone** is on.
- **Android:** Settings, then **Security** or **Google**, and make sure **Find My Device** is on.
- Know how you'd reach it: from a family member's phone with the Find My app, or by signing in at the maker's website on any computer.

STAY SAFE

Set it up now, be grateful later

Turning on Find My takes two minutes and you hope to never use it — but if your phone ever walks off, it's the difference between a quick recovery (or a clean erase of your private data) and a helpless panic. Switch it on before every trip, and tell a traveling companion or family member how to help you find it. It's cheap insurance for your most important travel tool.

CHAPTER 20

Money, Cards & Paying on the Go

Your phone can help with money while you travel, too — from paying with a tap to keeping an eye on your accounts. A little know-how keeps your money safe and handy.

Paying with your phone

Apple Pay and **Google Pay** let you pay by holding your phone near a store's card reader — no physical card needed, and it's actually *safer* than a card because the store never sees your real card number. It works in a growing number of places worldwide. Set it up before you go by adding your card in the Wallet (iPhone) or Google Wallet (Android) app.

Keeping an eye on your accounts

- Your bank's app lets you check balances and watch for anything odd while traveling — but do this on your cellular data or a VPN, not open Wi-Fi (Chapter 8).
- Tell your bank and card company your travel dates before you leave, so they don't freeze a card for "suspicious" foreign use.
- Carry a backup card stored separately from your phone and main wallet, in case one is lost.

SCAM ALERT

Beware 'your card is locked' messages while traveling

Scammers know travelers are anxious about their cards, and send fake texts and emails saying "your card is locked, click to verify." Never click. If you're worried about a card, call the number **on the back of the card itself**, not one from a message. And if any money message while traveling makes you uneasy, you can always call me at **(330) 200-8042** to talk it through before you act.

CHAPTER 21

Capturing & Sharing the Memories

Half the joy of a trip is the photos — and your phone is a superb camera that's always with you. A few habits keep those memories safe and let you share them with family as you go.

Taking and keeping good travel photos

- Tap the screen where you want the photo to focus (a face, a landmark) before you snap.
- Let your photos **back up** to iCloud or Google Photos whenever you reach Wi-Fi (Chapter 5), so a lost phone never means lost memories.
- Don't fret about storage filling up — backed-up photos can be safely cleared from the phone to make room, and still kept forever in the cloud.

Sharing with the folks back home

Send a favorite shot right to family with a text or a free app, or make a **shared album** (in Apple Photos or Google Photos) that relatives can follow along with for the whole trip — they see each new photo as you add it. It's a lovely way to bring everyone along on your adventure, even from afar.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Come home with the memories safe

There's nothing sadder than a wonderful trip whose photos vanished with a dropped phone. With backup turned on, every picture you take is quietly copied to safety, and shared albums let your family enjoy the journey in real time. The memories are protected and shared — exactly as they should be.

CHAPTER 22

Keeping Entertained on Long Journeys

Long flights, train rides, and car trips are far pleasanter with your phone or tablet loaded up ahead of time. The key word, as always for travel, is **before** — prepare on home Wi-Fi so you need no signal on the way.

Load up before you go

- **Download shows and movies** from your streaming apps onto your phone or tablet (on home Wi-Fi), to watch with no internet.
- **Save music and podcasts** for offline listening the same way.
- **Download audiobooks or e-books** — a tablet can hold a whole travel library in your bag.
- **Add a few simple games** if you enjoy them — many work with no internet at all.

Comfort for the journey

Bring your own earphones (and a spare), pack your power bank so the entertainment doesn't drain your phone to empty, and remember captions (subtitles) if a noisy plane or train makes dialogue hard to hear. A little setup turns hours of waiting into easy, enjoyable time.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

The long haul, made easy

A tablet loaded with shows, a good book, and a favorite playlist turns the dreaded long flight or drive into restful time that passes gently. And because it's all downloaded, it costs nothing in data and needs no signal — perfect for 30,000 feet or a stretch of empty highway.

CHAPTER 23

Making Your Phone Easy to See & Hear on the Road

Travel can be hard on the eyes and ears — bright sun on the screen, noisy terminals, tired eyes at the end of a long day. Your phone can adjust to all of it, and knowing these settings makes travel far more comfortable.

Seeing the screen better

- **Turn up the brightness** (in Control Center or Quick Settings) when you're out in the sun.
- **Make the text bigger** in your phone's Display settings — a real kindness for reading maps and messages on the go.
- **Zoom in** on a map or a page by spreading two fingers apart on the screen.

Hearing it better

- **Turn up the volume** with the side buttons, and use earphones in noisy places.
- Turn on **captions** for videos so you can follow along without straining to hear.
- If you wear hearing aids, many now connect to your phone directly — a handy thing to set up before a trip.

> TIP
>
> **Set comfort options before you leave**
>
> Take a few minutes before your trip to make the text bigger, the brightness comfortable, and the volume easy — rather than fiddling with settings in a hurry at the gate. A phone tuned to your eyes and ears is a far better travel companion. I'm glad to help you set these once so they're right.

CHAPTER 24

Handy Travel Apps Worth Having

Beyond the basics, a handful of free apps make travel noticeably smoother. You don't need them all — but it's worth knowing what's out there so you can pick the ones that fit your trip.

App	What it does for a traveler
Your airline's app	Your boarding pass, flight status, gate changes, and alerts if a flight is delayed — often before the airport announces it.
Maps (Apple or Google)	Directions, nearby restaurants and pharmacies, and offline maps you saved before the trip.
Translate (Apple or Google)	Reads menus and signs and helps you talk with locals abroad.
Weather	The forecast wherever you are, so you pack and plan right.
Your hotel or booking app	Your reservations in one place, and sometimes a digital room key.
A rideshare app (Uber/Lyft)	A ride in unfamiliar cities without hailing a cab or finding cash — where available.

STAY SAFE

Only install apps from the official stores

Download apps only from the **App Store** (iPhone) or **Play Store** (Android), and make sure it's the real company's app — look at the publisher's name and the reviews. Avoid installing anything from a link in an email, a text, or a random website, which is a common way harmful apps sneak in. When unsure which app is the real one, ask me first.

CHAPTER 25

Time Zones, Weather & Little Everyday Helps

Your phone quietly handles dozens of little travel chores if you let it. Here are a few small conveniences that smooth out a trip.

Time zones take care of themselves

When you travel, your phone usually updates to the local time **automatically** — so your clock, alarms, and calendar all shift to where you are. That's handy, but double-check an early morning alarm after you land, and be aware that a call home lands in *their* time zone, not yours. The World Clock in your Clock app can show both at a glance.

Other small helpers

- **Weather** for your destination, so you pack and plan with confidence.
- **A currency converter** app or a quick web search to understand foreign prices.
- **Reminders and notes** for your packing list, confirmation numbers, and what you want to see.
- **The flashlight** (in Control Center or Quick Settings) for a dark hotel room or reading a map at night.

GOOD TO KNOW

Let the phone do the remembering

Travel is full of little details — gate numbers, confirmation codes, where you parked, what time the tour leaves. Jot them in your phone's Notes or Reminders as they come up, and you free your mind to enjoy the trip instead of worrying you'll forget. The phone is a wonderful, patient memory; put it to work for you.

CHAPTER 26

Keeping Your Devices Safe in Transit

Your phone and tablet are precious on a trip — both for what they cost and for what they hold. A little physical care keeps them (and your information) safe while you're on the move.

Physical safety

- **Keep your phone in a front pocket or zipped bag** in crowds, where pickpockets work — not a loose back pocket.
- **Use a sturdy case**, and consider a strap or a pocket you won't accidentally leave it in.
- **Don't set it down on counters and tables** and walk off — the most common way phones go missing while traveling.

Keeping your information safe

- **Lock your phone** with a passcode and Face ID or fingerprint, so a lost phone doesn't mean a stranger in your accounts.
- **Keep it backed up** (Chapter 5), so the phone is replaceable even if the device isn't recovered.
- **Have Find My on** (Chapter 19), so you can locate, lock, or erase it from afar.

STAY SAFE

A locked, backed-up, trackable phone is a safe phone

Do these three things — lock it, back it up, and turn on Find My — and a lost or stolen phone becomes a manageable hassle instead of a disaster. The thief gets nothing, your memories are safe in the cloud, and you can wipe the device remotely. Set all three before you leave, and travel with real peace of mind.

CHAPTER 27

Coming Home: Settling Your Phone Back In

When you return, a couple of minutes of tidying up puts your phone back to its everyday self — and makes sure a travel setting doesn't quietly cost you or confuse you later.

Your welcome-home checklist

1. **Turn Data Roaming back to your usual setting**, and turn off Airplane Mode if it's still on.
2. **Switch your data line back** to your home plan if you used a travel eSIM, so calls and texts flow normally.
3. **Cancel or pause a travel pass** if it keeps charging, and remove a used-up travel eSIM you won't need again.
4. **Let your photos finish backing up** on home Wi-Fi, then enjoy clearing space if you like.
5. **Delete downloaded maps and shows** you no longer need, to free up room.

TIP

Don't forget to turn off the travel plan

The one thing travelers forget on returning is a travel pass or eSIM plan that keeps billing. Take two minutes when you get home to switch it off or let it expire, so you're not paying for travel data on your own couch. If you're not sure whether something's still running, call me and we'll check it together — better safe than billed.

PART 5

Staying Safe, Fixing Snags & Getting Help

The scams aimed at travelers, what to do if a phone is lost or stolen, fixing a phone that won't connect, and knowing when to reach out.

CHAPTER 28

Travel Scams That Target Your Devices

Travelers make tempting targets — unfamiliar surroundings, hurried decisions, and a reliance on the very devices scammers want to reach. Knowing their tricks in advance makes you nearly scam-proof. Here are the ones to watch.

The scam	Your defense
Fake Wi-Fi networks	A network named to look official, set up to snoop. Use only the exact name the venue posts; ask staff if unsure (Chapter 8).
"Your booking has a problem"	A text or email about your hotel or flight with an urgent link to "confirm" or "pay again." Don't click; contact the hotel/airline directly.
Fake charging stations	Rare, but public USB ports can in theory be tampered with. Prefer your own charger in a wall outlet, or your own power bank.
QR-code traps	A sticker with a code promising free Wi-Fi or a menu that leads somewhere harmful. Be cautious scanning codes from loose stickers in public.

SCAM ALERT

Urgency is the tell, every time

Whatever the scam, the common thread is **urgency** — "act now, click here, or lose your booking / your account / your money." Real companies don't operate that way. When a travel message makes your pulse jump, that feeling *is* the warning: slow down, don't click, and verify through a number or address you already trust. When in doubt, I'm a call away: **(330) 200-8042**.

CHAPTER 29

If Your Phone Is Lost or Stolen

It's the traveler's nightmare, but with a cool head and a little preparation it's recoverable. Here's exactly what to do, in order, if your phone goes missing away from home.

The moment you realize it's gone

1. **Don't panic — retrace calmly first.** Phones are far more often misplaced than stolen. Check the last place you used it.
2. **Use Find My from another device.** Borrow a companion's phone or find a computer, sign in, and see it on the map. Make it play a sound if it's nearby.
3. **Lock it** from Find My, and put a message on the screen with a number to reach you.
4. **If it's truly gone,** erase it remotely so your information is safe, and contact your phone company to suspend the line.

This is exactly why we turned on Find My and backed up your phone before the trip (Part 1). Because you did, a lost phone is a manageable inconvenience, not a catastrophe — your data is safe, and you can restore everything onto a replacement.

TIP

Carry the paper card — now you see why

Remember that little card in your wallet with your numbers and your hotel on it (Chapter 3)? This is its moment. With your phone gone, that card lets you borrow any phone, reach your family or your hotel, and get help. The travelers who handle a lost phone best are the ones who prepared a low-tech backup. A minute with a pen before the trip pays off enormously here.

CHAPTER 30

"My Phone Won't Connect" — Travel Fixes

Sooner or later a phone acts up far from home — no signal, Wi-Fi that won't join, a map that won't load. Nearly always it's a small, fixable thing. Here's your calm checklist.

The travel troubleshooting checklist

1. **Check Airplane Mode isn't stuck on.** If you turned it on for a flight, make sure it's off (or that you've turned Wi-Fi back on).
2. **Restart the phone.** Off, wait ten seconds, on. This clears a remarkable number of signal and Wi-Fi gremlins.
3. **Forget and rejoin the Wi-Fi.** If a particular network won't behave, tap it in Settings, choose **Forget**, then join it fresh.
4. **Abroad: check your data plan is active.** Make sure your travel pass is on, or your travel eSIM is selected as the data line.
5. **Move to better signal.** Thick walls, basements, and remote areas weaken both Wi-Fi and cellular. Stepping outside or nearer a window often helps.

TIP

The restart cures most travel gremlins

As with so much technology, turning the phone fully off and on again is the single most effective fix — for no signal, stuck Wi-Fi, a frozen app, or a map that won't load. Before you worry that something's broken far from home, give it a calm restart. It works far more often than you'd expect, and it never loses your photos or messages.

CHAPTER 31

When to Call Bill

This book aims to send you off confident and self-reliant, and mostly it will. But you should never feel you must wrestle alone with travel tech — before or during a trip. Reaching out is smart, and here's when it makes good sense.

Good reasons to call — ideally before you go

- Getting your phone fully travel-ready: updates, backups, Find My, and offline maps, all set up and tested before you leave.
- Deciding between a carrier travel pass and a travel eSIM for your trip — and getting the eSIM installed and working ahead of time.
- Making sure you won't come home to bill shock — checking your roaming settings together before you fly.
- Setting up free calling with your family so you can reach them easily from abroad.
- Any scam, suspicious message, or money worry that comes up while you're away — call me before you click or pay.
- A lost or stolen phone — I can talk you through finding, locking, or erasing it, calmly.

FROM BILL

Let's get you ready before you leave

The very best time to call me about a trip is *before* it — a short session to get your phone travel-ready means your whole journey goes smoother and cheaper. But I'm here during your travels too, whatever the time zone trouble finds you in. Call or text **(330) 200-8042** and we'll sort it out together.

How to reach me

I'm Bill, and I help folks right here in **Portage County, Ohio** get the most out of their technology — at home and on the road. Call or text **(330) 200-8042**, or book a visit online at **billshometech.com/book**. If you reach my assistant **Sophie** on the main line, she can answer simple questions and get you on my schedule. With 30+ years of professional experience, there's little about traveling with technology I haven't helped someone through.

— Bill

CHAPTER 32

Questions Travelers Ask Me

The same good questions come up again and again before a trip. Here are plain answers to the ones I hear most — one of them is probably on your mind too.

Will my phone even work in another country?

Almost certainly yes — the same phone works in most countries with no change. The only question is how you pay for its internet while there: Wi-Fi only, a carrier travel pass, or a travel eSIM (Part 3). The phone itself is ready.

How do I avoid a huge bill abroad?

Turn **Data Roaming off** before you go, and use the Airplane-Mode-plus-Wi-Fi trick on arrival. With roaming off, your phone can't ring up surprise foreign charges. Add a travel pass or eSIM only if you want cellular data while out and about (Chapter 16).

Can I call my family for free while traveling?

Yes — over Wi-Fi, apps like FaceTime and WhatsApp let you call and video-chat home for nothing. Set one up with your family before you leave and try it once, so it's familiar (Chapter 15).

Is hotel and cafe Wi-Fi safe to use?

For browsing, maps, and messaging, yes. For banking or entering a card, either use your own cellular data for that moment or a trusted VPN, and always join the *exact* network the venue posts to avoid look-alike traps (Chapters 8-9).

What if I lose my phone on the trip?

If you turned on Find My and backed up before leaving (Part 1), you can locate it, lock it, and even erase it from another device — and restore everything onto a replacement. Carry a paper card with key numbers as a backup (Chapter 3).

Do I really need a VPN?

Not necessarily. Occasional travelers are fine with the simple safety rules in Chapter 8. If you travel often and want to bank freely on hotel Wi-Fi, a reputable paid VPN is worth it — call me and I'll point you to a good one.

FROM BILL

Your question not here? Just ask

Every trip is a little different, and no travel-tech question is too small. If something's on your mind before you go — or a snag comes up while you're away — call or text me at **(330) 200-8042**. In 30+ years I've helped travelers through just about everything, and I'm glad to help you too.

CHAPTER 33

Your Traveler's Cheat-Sheet

Tear this out or fold the corner and tuck it in your bag. It's the whole book boiled down to what matters most on the road.

Before you leave

1. Update and fully charge your phone.
2. Back up your photos; turn on Find My.
3. Download offline maps, shows, and boarding passes on home Wi-Fi.
4. Decide your abroad plan: Wi-Fi only, travel pass, or travel eSIM.
5. Write key numbers on a paper card in your wallet.

Abroad: avoid bill shock

Goal	Do this
The safe default	Airplane Mode on, then Wi-Fi back on — no cellular charges at all.
The one switch	Turn Data Roaming OFF (unless your pass needs it on).
Call home free	FaceTime, WhatsApp, or Wi-Fi Calling over Wi-Fi.
Sensitive tasks	Use cellular data or a VPN — not open Wi-Fi.

When something goes wrong

Problem	Do this
No signal / Wi-Fi won't join	Check Airplane Mode; restart the phone; move near a window.
Phone lost	Find My from another device; lock; message on screen; erase if needed.
Suspicious travel message	Don't click; verify via a trusted number; call Bill.
Weird map behavior	Use your downloaded offline map; restart the app.

Keep handy

Keep handy	Fill in
My phone company's travel help	_____
My family's free-call app	_____

Keep handy	Fill in
Bill's Home Tech	(330) 200-8042 · billshometech.com/book

FROM BILL

Go enjoy your trip

You've got everything you need now: a phone that's ready, the know-how to stay online and safe, and a plan to avoid any ugly bill. Travel light in your mind, lean on that device in your pocket, and remember I'm one call away for the rest. Safe travels. — Bill, (330) 200-8042