

HOLIDAY MOBILES

Why risk taking your expensive gadgetry on the beach when affordable and capable phones can replace most of it? David Phelan offers his pick of six mobiles to pack



HOLIDAY ADVANTAGE: DOUBLES AS A CAMERA
LG KC550 £100
(pay as you go on T-Mobile)

Although the budget optics found in a cameraphone mean it can't compete with the quality and versatility of a range-topping digital camera, the latest mobiles are at least getting better at taking casual snaps. This LG boasts a 5mp sensor — more than adequate for standard 6x4in prints — and takes good shots, especially in the sort of bright sunlight you'd hope for on holiday. Bear in mind that it's cheap compared with most other 5mp cameraphones because it can't offer fast 3G speeds, so uploading your shots to a website would be a time-consuming process, and you'll need to add a memory card to store your shots until you get back from holiday. On the plus side, it has autofocus (most snapper phones have fixed focus) and image stabilisation, and with its brushed metal lens cover and chrome trim it looks pricier than it is.

Verdict: A great balance of attractive features and low price.
www.phones4u.co.uk
★★★★★



HOLIDAY ADVANTAGE: TAKES TWO SIMS
SAMSUNG D880 DUOS
£220 (handset only)

Samsung's clever D880 is available only on import, but it's worth tracking down as it's effectively two phones in one. Slot in a pair of Sim cards — one from your business phone, perhaps, and a second bought on arrival at the airport to take advantage of cheap local rates — and both will receive incoming calls (with different ringtones, if you like). For calls out, simply pick the required Sim with the press of a button. Other features are less impressive, however: the handset is a little chunky, there's no 3G and the camera is poor.

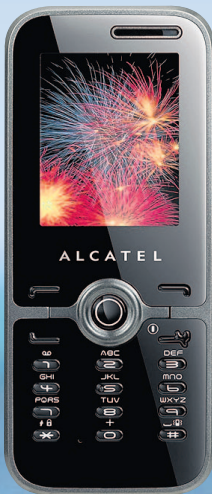
Verdict: Much more convenient than carrying a pair of handsets around.
www.expansys.com
★★★★☆



HOLIDAY ADVANTAGE: CHEAP TO USE ABROAD
NOKIA 6120
£110 (pay as you go on 3)

The 3 network offers a tariff to cut the cost of overseas calls: 3 Like Home lets pay-as-you-go customers use the 3 network in Austria, Hong Kong, Ireland, Denmark, Sweden and Italy to call landlines or mobiles in the UK for 12p per minute. Monthly customers can use their pre-paid minutes to make the same calls and can add Australia to that list. Receiving calls when away is free for all customers. You must be on the local 3 network — check it says "3 Italy", or whatever, on screen. All 3 phones are 3G; this model features Nokia's intuitive operating system with an easy-to-use keypad.

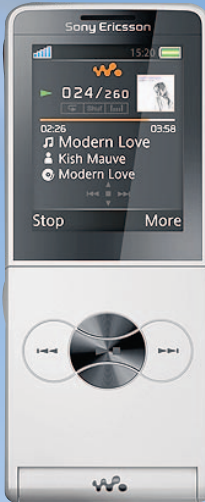
Verdict: A good handset on a cost-effective tariff.
www.three.co.uk
★★★★☆



HOLIDAY ADVANTAGE: THROWAWAY PRICING
ALCATEL OT-S520
£20 (pay as you go on Virgin)

The camera is low-resolution (0.3mp), the colour screen is small (1.8in), there are few extras and it's dual rather than tri-band, so it won't work in the United States. However, if you don't want to risk your expensive main phone on holiday, the Alcatel is fun to use and so cheap you won't mind if you drop it in the sea. Its gloss-black front looks swish, and while cheaper phones are usually bulky, this is slim and light enough to be unnoticeable in your pocket. The operating system is unfamiliar but highly usable; the tiny keys, however, are fiddly.

Verdict: Sparse on features and lacks poke, but cheap, cute and fun.
www.woolworths.co.uk
★★★☆☆



HOLIDAY ADVANTAGE: DOUBLES AS A MUSIC PLAYER
SONY ERICSSON W350i
£60 (pay as you go on T-Mobile)

The music playback on a Sony Ericsson Walkman phone is good enough to leave the iPod at home. This tiny budget phone offers more than decent sound quality, and transferring music from a PC to the handset is straightforward. The headphones are tinny, but you can substitute others. The device includes the enjoyable TrackID function: use it to record a snatch from, say, a radio in a bar, and you will automatically receive a text naming the song. Along with a good FM radio, there's a basic 1.3mp camera, but no flash for those nightclub memories.

Verdict: Good sound playback means you can save your iPod from a sandy grave.
www.carphonewarehouse.com
★★★☆☆



HOLIDAY ADVANTAGE: REPLACES A SAT NAV
MOTOROLA U9 £50
(pay as you go on Vodafone)

This clamshell can tell you where you're going thanks to the free Google Maps for Mobile (download it before you jet off by going to google.co.uk/gmm and choosing the "send yourself a text message" option — a link is then sent to your mobile). This isn't GPS, so you'll need to know where you're starting from, and the graphics update slowly, but it does offer directions, searches for local businesses and maps. It's data intensive, so use sparingly to avoid large bills.

Verdict: A cool design, and Google Maps adds basic navigation.
www.dialaphone.co.uk
★★★☆☆

HOW TO KEEP YOUR HOLIDAY CALL CHARGES DOWN

Keep it brief: Remember that when abroad you'll pay to receive calls as well as make them, so don't be too chatty

Forget voicemail: Collecting voicemail can be pricey. Consider SpinVox (www.spinvox.com), an impressive voice-to-text conversion service that will forward your voicemails as texts for 20-30p per message

Think PAYG: A pay-as-you-go Sim card bought at your destination will probably

be cheaper for local calls. Check in the shop that it works in your phone

Choose the right network: If keeping your Sim but buying a whole new phone on holiday, bear in mind that PAYG mobiles are usually locked to a network — make sure it's the same network your Sim is on, otherwise you'll have to pay to have it unlocked

Swap tariffs: Check with your network that you wouldn't be better off on a

different tariff, even just for one month. And make sure you have international calling (called "roaming") activated

Avoid the web: Surfing the internet can be cripplingly expensive abroad — check data tariffs before you set off

Use wi-fi: If you own a wi-fi-equipped mobile, pay a small charge to get online at an internet cafe and use a program such as Skype to make free calls over the web, bypassing network charges completely

Best, Better... Brilliant!

The UK's favourite safety camera locator just got smarter...



ROAD ANGEL Professional Connected

The world's first safety camera and blackspot locator that updates itself while you drive, no wires, no computers, no hassle.....

Find out more at www.roadangelgroup.com or call 01327 855 586

Additional subscription charge of £4.99 per month is required for ongoing use.

E-MAIL FROM AMERICA

Mark Harris
IN SEATTLE — NEW TECH CITY

Getting used to the sheer scale of America can take some time. When one or two MoD laptops go missing in London, the whole of Britain starts tutting. Over here, travellers through the country's airports misplace 12,000 portable computers every single week — 2,000 of them in New York's airports alone, according to a recent survey by the Ponemon Institute, a computing research organisation. Just as in the UK, these lost and

stolen laptops represent a torrent of sensitive information — names, addresses, social security numbers and bank details — flowing into the hands of criminals. Few people think to password-protect or encrypt their computers, but at least a few American travellers now have a chance of getting their laptops back. For an annual fee of \$60 (£30), users here can buy software that enables a control centre to track and potentially recover stolen laptops — similar to some car tracking devices.

When a thief connects to the internet from a computer running Computrace LoJack for Laptops, the software silently reports its location to the developer, Absolute. The company then works with local police to recover the computer, and can remotely delete sensitive data in a flash. Absolute claims that 75% of missing laptops running its software are eventually recovered, compared with just 3% of unprotected machines. There is even the promise of some cash — up to \$1,000 (£500) — if Absolute can't reunite you with your laptop or delete your data. The LoJack for Laptops technology isn't perfect, however. Thieves can

disable it by installing a new operating system or simply removing the hard drive, and Absolute won't even attempt to recover machines stolen outside the US — a drawback for absent-minded air travellers. The software is currently available in Britain only to corporate users, such as large banks, although a consumer version is likely to arrive later this year.

In the meantime, pay special attention when going through security: the survey reveals that 40% of laptop theft occurs at the departure-lounge checkpoint itself.



GADGETS OF THE WEEK

Advent 4211
£280 www.pcmworld.co.uk

WHAT IS IT? A "netbook" — a small laptop specially made for surfing the internet and built around Intel's new Atom chip. The Atom won't tempt hardcore gamers to switch processors — even workaday desktop PCs run faster — but it handles Windows XP quickly and reliably. Just as importantly, its low power consumption stretches battery life to about three hours. Wi-fi, a webcam and Bluetooth are all on board and there's 1GB of operating memory and an 80GB hard drive. The 10in screen is sharp and bright, and despite the 4211 being just the size of a hardback book, the well-spaced keyboard is a pleasure to use. There's little software provided, but hunt out the free online equivalents of Microsoft's pricey, overspecified products — Google Docs instead of Word, for example — and you're in business. In fact, it's only when struggling with the tiny trackpad that you remember you're not on a full-size machine.



SHOULD I BUY ONE? Not if you use a laptop to play DVDs, as there's no optical drive. But if your work and entertainment are already digitised or largely online, the 4211 offers an impressive combination of price and performance.

Mad Catz AirDrives Interactive
£40-£60 www.airdrives.co.uk

WHAT ARE THEY? Sports-style earphones that sit just in front of your ear rather than over it, conducting sound through bone and tissue while leaving the auditory canal unblocked. This means you can listen to tunes while remaining aware of your surroundings. They also employ decibel levels far lower than those found in conventional earbuds, which can damage sensitive young ears — and would explain why there's a specific AirDrives Kids model at £40. Other versions include a regular, adjustable adult size and an iPhone model complete with microphone. Mad Catz might claim its headphones produce "premium sound quality", but users tell of a lack of bass. However, for anyone who has nearly stepped out in front of a car while lost in a musical reverie, that compromise might be a small price to pay.

SHOULD I BUY SOME? Not if you're a considerate commuter: the AirDrives leak more noise than regular earphones, so expect some annoyed looks as you crank up the volume on The Best of Slayer.

Matthew Bingham

