

Communication

Will I have access to the internet?

Some hostels and most hotels have internet access, and more and more cafes and retailers are providing wifi for their customers. It is not always free, however.

What's the best way to call home?

The best way to call home is through a Skype account or FaceTime for Apple users. It is free through the internet between computers and cell phones running the app. (Data charges will apply if the phone is not connected to wifi.) You can also buy credit to call land lines and mobile numbers for a very low cost.

Will my cell phone work?

Most cell phones work in Panama. You should call your phone company for the details of whether your particular phone is set up to work there, and what an international plan will cost you. We recommend only chaperones bring cell phones.

Roaming charges can be very expensive. If your phone is unlocked and can support it, you can purchase SIM cards in Panama and make calls back to North America. Chaperones may wish to check with their provider about International data plans; it may be the best way to text or send email updates to families back home.

Even if you have a functional cellphone, it may not work, as cell towers typically don't have the capacity to handle the volume of traffic during large events. For example, it will be very difficult to get cell reception during the vigil with nearly 2 million other pilgrims competing for service. Walkie Talkies are a great way for groups to keep in communication during huge events.

Will I have a local cell phone provided to me, and contact information in advance?

YES! JMJ Youth will provide your group leader with a cell phone and a group webpage. Every pilgrim and parent back home should be given access to that web link. Before you leave the country, the webpage will be updated with the contact information for **Hotels** (if you have chosen hotels), **Cell Phones** (your group leader and your JMJ Youth guide, in case you need to get in contact with someone immediately), and **JMJ Youth in Panama** for help if a problem arises. You can also get a message to your group through JMJ Youth's US office.

How often will I be in touch with loved ones at home?

While it may be possible for some groups to access the internet almost daily, there may be a few days for everyone when it is virtually impossible. We advise each group to set up an email list or a Facebook group. That way one email or post can be sent to update parents throughout the journey. It is so rare in our modern times that we are ever fully "unplugged" – detaching from electronics, media, email, and even the concerns of home. This detachment is one of the greatest blessings of a pilgrimage, and creates space to hear God and to allow him to work in places that might otherwise be too full to let him in. Lift up one another in prayer daily, but do not expect to be in touch frequently.