

AT&T iPhone users who jailbreak their devices/handsets or get AT&T to agree to unlock their iPhone for international travel can upon unlocking or jail-breaking the iPhone use it with other GSM based U.S. carriers of 3G service (T-Mobile USA is the only other GSM based carrier) or with GSM based wireless services abroad. This is due to the fact GSM is more commercially available and accessible worldwide than Verizon and Sprint's CDMA. However, an unlocked 3G capable cellular phone in the U.S. cannot work with any U.S. wireless provider this is because different wireless providers in the U.S. offering 3G services have been incompatible with each other because of their use of differing network technologies like CDMA and GSM.

So an AT&T iPhone can be unlocked or jail-broken for use with T-Mobile USA since it too uses GSM (even though it uses different frequencies) but unfortunately it can't ever work with Sprint Nextel or Verizon Wireless as they use the incompatible CDMA format. As a result unlocked iPhones or other smart-phones unlocked for international travel can only be used when in the U.S. on up to 2 carriers. What is frustrating though is the fact that each iPhone is capable of handling CDMA or GSM. The hardware components in an iPhone 4S from Verizon Wireless are the same as components in an iPhone 4S from AT&T and the same as the unlocked iPhone 4S sold in other countries. In theory a so called unlocked iPhone should be able to work in the U.S. on any CDMA or GSM based 3G network from any of the wireless carriers.