

Meet Airalo, the eSIM store looking to transform how you connect abroad

Have you ever been stung by a hefty data bill after a holiday? Abraham Burak, cofounder of Airalo, the world's first eSIM store, wants to make that a thing of the past. We spoke to Abraham about his journey to becoming a founder, their impressive Series A round, and the perks of an Uber-style business model.

I was what people call a digital nomad: I have been living, working and travelling in different countries since an early age. I finished high school in the US and then moved to China and travelled there for a year. After spending some time in China, I later moved to Europe, finished college and worked and lived in countries including Switzerland and the Netherlands, then took another year off, moved to Israel, and eventually went back to the US. I travelled to quite a few countries in between, too.

During this “longitudinal market study”, one of the biggest issues that I have come across was the state of travel connectivity. While everything else was being digitised, travel connectivity was still antiquated and depended on legacy systems where you needed to buy a SIM card in some foreign country or use expensive roaming. There were and have been different levels of inaccessibility and unaffordability for travellers.

At that time, my cofounder and I were involved in the telecom industry in

different capacities. Our observations in the industry – accompanied by personal agony of trying to connect abroad – encouraged us to move the goalposts and redefine the rules of travel connectivity. Seeing this as a “customer-satisfying process” and not a “goods-producing process”, we thought eSIMs, instead of SIM cards, would be the right wave of technology to accomplish this with.

People don't want a SIM card, they want connectivity.

That's the mindset we had when we decided to build the gateway to instant connectivity worldwide: *Airalo*.

From idea to reality

We previously secured \$1.9M in Seed funding from Antler and Sequoia. Then, in the middle of a pandemic, when travelling vanished overnight, we looked for investment for our travel tech idea we were confident in and committed to funding.

Airalo is an American travel tech startup that has developed the world's first eSIM store. We have been bringing instant connectivity all around the world by allowing travellers to purchase virtual eSIM packages. Airalo allows the users to download an affordable plan directly to their phone without the hassle of needing to exchange a SIM card, resulting in a seamless and contact-free experience. In doing that, we are saving the customer's time, money and promoting ecological sustainability by cutting out unnecessary plastic from physical SIMs.

One of the biggest tasks we have been undertaking is the educational component of our business. eSIMs are relatively unknown at the moment despite the fact that millions of people own eSIM-capable devices. We are constantly working to educate the world on what eSIMs are and making people aware of the benefits of this novel technology.

A smart business model

Our business model is quite close to that of some tech goliaths. Uber is the world's largest taxi company but does not own the cars. Alibaba does not have inventory, but is the world's largest retailer. Airbnb is the world's biggest accommodation provider and owns no real estate.

Airalo is the world's largest connectivity provider, but we do not own any networks. We are able to provide connectivity in over 190 countries and regions in the world, without having invested in any telecom infrastructure. We are building strong partnerships from the telecom industry and helping companies to provide connectivity to travellers around the world through a reliable platform.

This is providing the customers a seamless connectivity solution and helping providers recognise and adjust to an inflection point in the market.

Raising funds and planning ahead

We have recently closed our Series A and raised \$5.4M with an impressive list of telecom, travel and venture capital leaders from around the world. Our lead investor is Rakuten Ventures and we have subsequent investment from Sequoia, Antler, Singtel Innov8, Wayra (Telefonica), LG Technology Ventures, GO Ventures (GO p.l.c.), Ground Control, Plug and Play and I2BF.

With this new round of investment, we will continue to rapidly expand by increasing and improving our global eSIM coverage and simplifying our user experience. We will also keep our global expansion by welcoming smart, adaptable and creative team members to our hubs in Toronto, Istanbul and Singapore while continuing to hire remotely from all around the world. We will continue to establish major partnerships in the telecom and travel industry as the world's premier eSIM marketplace.

Abraham Burak is cofounder of Airalo

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