

## **Avast Experiment: What Happens to a Lost Smartphone**

*Avast “Lost” and Tracked 20 Phones In the U.S. to Find Out Where They Went*

Avast Software, maker of the world’s most-trusted PC and mobile security, conducted an experiment in the United States, by losing and tracking twenty phones. Ten Android phones were each randomly placed in various locations throughout New York City and San Francisco.

Prior to dropping the devices, Avast installed three security apps on all the phones: The free [Avast Anti-Theft](#) app, Lookout Mobile Security, and Clean Master. Each phone was marked with contact information stating where to return the device if found.

### **Finders Keepers**

Over a five-month period, Avast analysts used the Avast Anti-Theft app to track the lost devices and observed the following:

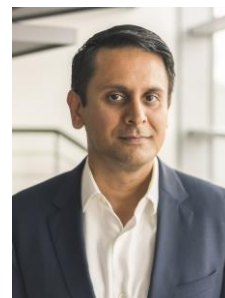
- 15 phones were wiped clean using the factory reset feature
- 11 phones remained online for more than 24 hours after losing them
- 7 phones were tracked by us for several months
- 4 phones were returned
- 4 phones are currently online and used
- 2 phones ended up abroad
- 1 phone was never factory data reset

The majority of lost devices were wiped clean using the factory reset feature, but **only the Avast Anti-Theft app survived the factory reset.**

A device appears to have traveled via a transatlantic cargo ship before settling in India, where the phone is currently being used. One device flew to the Dominican Republic, while another landed in a pawn shop. One more device appears to be with a taxi driver zigzagging the streets of San Francisco.

*“More than 3 million phones are lost each year. Fortunately with Avast Anti-Theft, users have the means to track and recover a lost phone – or remotely wipe the data on it if it’s not recoverable. With all the personal data we store on our phones today, it’s a good idea to have a way to either find your phone or delete the content if you lose it.”*

– Gagan Singh, President of Mobile at Avast Software



### **Avast Anti-Theft**

Avast Anti-Theft provides users with remote recovery options to help them recover lost or stolen devices. The free app uses GPS, Wi-Fi, and mobile networks to locate lost devices. Users can also remotely lock mobile phones to prevent access to personal data and settings, and even take a “theftie” – a photo of the person who stole the device. Avast Anti-Theft is available for free and can be downloaded [here](#).

## Good Samaritans

While the majority of the lost devices continue to wander the world, four people returned the phones they found to Avast. Two of them talked with us about why they returned the phone:

### **Quiana W., New York**

Quiana W. found one of Avast's phones on a park bench in Harlem, New York City. She knows what it means to lose an important personal belonging and, therefore, she returned the phone.

#### **First thought when Quiana found the phone**

*I wanted to check it to see if it was on and see if I would be able to contact someone to return their phone. I know what it feels like to lose things, like a wallet or a phone, so I was just trying to pay it forward. It doesn't necessarily have to happen back to me in this way, but it was just something that kind of took my heart.*

#### **How Quiana uses her phone**

*Everything revolves around technology. So, I would feel definitely lost without my phone. Even simple things, like if you need directions to somewhere or if you're trying to locate something, then, you know, it's good to have your phone handy.*

#### **Quiana's first fear when she lost her phone**

*The amount of money I would have to pay to get it back.*

#### **Why Quiana's phone is important to her**

*The most valuable pieces of information on my phone is probably my contacts, because I try not to keep too much private stuff, or stuff that is sensitive. I guess my contacts or probably topics I may discuss with people via text messages are the most important to me.*

#### **Quiana's own experience with lost phones**

*I lost my phone a couple of months ago and at first, I didn't even know I had lost it. I was in my car and my cousin kept asking me why was I calling her. I replied, "Why are you asking me why I am calling you, when I am driving? Wait a minute, I don't have my phone – where is it?!" We realized that I had actually dropped my phone in the parking lot of the grocery store that we were just at, so luckily, we just went and picked it up without any problems.*

### **Michael D., New York**

Michael found one of Avast's lost phones in a public restroom in Harlem, New York City. He returned the phone and shared his thoughts with us.

#### **First thought when Michael found the phone**

*My initial reaction was to leave the phone where it was. It seemed a little suspicious – how could someone not hear the phone drop onto the floor? I also thought that someone might mistake me for a thief if I walked out with the phone. But then, partially out of boredom and partially out of honesty, I decided to play detective and find the phone's owner.*

#### **How Michael found the phone owner**

*I am not very good with new phones. So I fumbled around until I found the message box. I checked the text messages and found a note asking to return the phone.*

#### **Why Michael returned the phone**

*I returned the phone because I don't take things that aren't mine.*

#### **Why Michael's phone is important to him**

*My own phone is important to me because it keeps me in contact with family and friends. The most valuable data on my phone is the contact list. Then, the old messages saved to memory.*

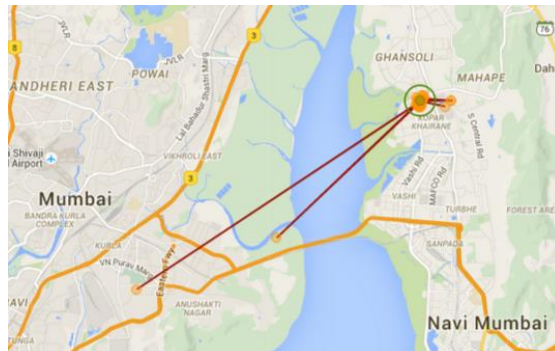
Michael also thought about what would happen if he lost his own phone. If that happened, he would be more concerned about losing the device itself rather than its data.

## Some of the phones' stories

### Lost in Battery Park, New York – now in Mumbai, India

The phone was lost in Battery Park, New York in April.

After two months, the phone was in Mumbai, where it has now established its daily routine of traveling back and forth between a workplace and a home every day.



### Lost in San Francisco – now owned by a Spanish speaker

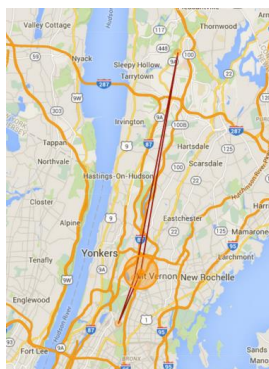
The phone was lost in San Francisco in April and was subsequently picked up by a Spanish speaker, as the phone's language was switched to Spanish.

The SIM card was changed to a number with a Los Angeles area code (310), and MetroPCs as the operator. However, it is likely that the new phone owner spent time in San Francisco, as the phone was last seen there and the last known Internet provider the phone connected to was "United States San Francisco Comcast Cable Communications, Inc.".

### Enough details in place to track down the phone

The phone was last online on August 23, 2015 at 2:01pm – long enough to possibly be found. Avast tracking shows us the full number, so if we wanted to, we could have handed it to the police to research the phone's new owner and track down the phone.

### Lost in Strawberry Fields, New York – offline after three months and now back online

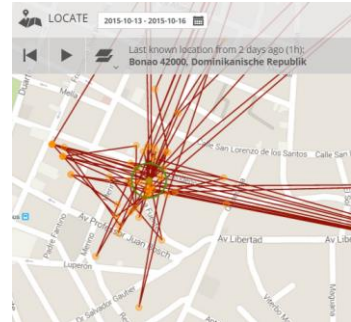


The phone was lost in Strawberry Fields, New York, in April. The phone then moved to the Bronx, New York, where it was active until July 22. The phone then went offline for two months, during which time it may have sold to a pawn shop and was waiting to be purchased.

The story didn't end there -- after more than two months, the SIM card was changed and now the phone seems to have found a new owner, as the phone has again been active since October in Yonkers, New York.

### Lost at Central Park, New York – now in Bonao, Dominican Republic

The phone was lost at 59th Street and 5th Avenue in New York City, close to Central Park. Shortly after it was found, it made its way to the Dominican Republic. The phone's language was switched to Spanish and it is now active on a daily basis in the city of Bonao.



### About Avast

Avast Software ([www.avast.com](http://www.avast.com)), maker of the most trusted mobile and PC security in the world, protects 230 million people and businesses with its security applications. In business for over 25 years, Avast is one of the pioneers in the computer security business, with a portfolio that includes free antivirus for PC, Mac, and Android, to premium suites and services for both consumers and business. In addition to being top-ranked by consumers on popular download portals worldwide, Avast is certified by, among others, VB100, AV-Comparatives, AV-Test, OPSWAT, ICSA Labs, and West Coast Labs.