iPhone Officially Coming to China Mobile

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The iPhone is officially heading to the world's largest wireless operator.

Apple yesterday announced a multi-year deal with China Mobile [1] that will put the iPhone 5s and 5c in China Mobile's retail stores as well as Apple retail stores across China starting Jan. 17 of next year. Pre-orders for the devices will begin Dec. 25 on China Mobile's website.

The China Mobile iPhones will work with the carrier's TD-LTE and TD-SCDMA networks.

"China is an extremely important market for Apple and our partnership with China Mobile presents us the opportunity to bring iPhone to the customers of the world's largest network," Apple CEO Tim Cook said in a statement.

The China Mobile iPhone agreement comes as the carrier is beginning to roll out its LTE network. By the end of 2013, China Mobile plans to have LTE deployed in 16 cities including Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Shenzhen. By the end of 2014, China Mobile plans to complete the rollout of more than 500,000 4G base stations, which will cover more than 340, according to a press release.

A deal to bring the iPhone to China Mobile has been the stuff of rumors [2] for years. Gaining official access to China Mobile's more than 700 million subscribers could prove to be a big boost to Apple's revenue. It's already given investors confidence, as Apple's stock is up nearly three percent as of 8:40 a.m. CT.

A letter [3] sent to employees by cook suggests big plans for 2014 but the year has already started on a positive note for Apple with the long-gestating China Mobile distribution deal finally done.

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