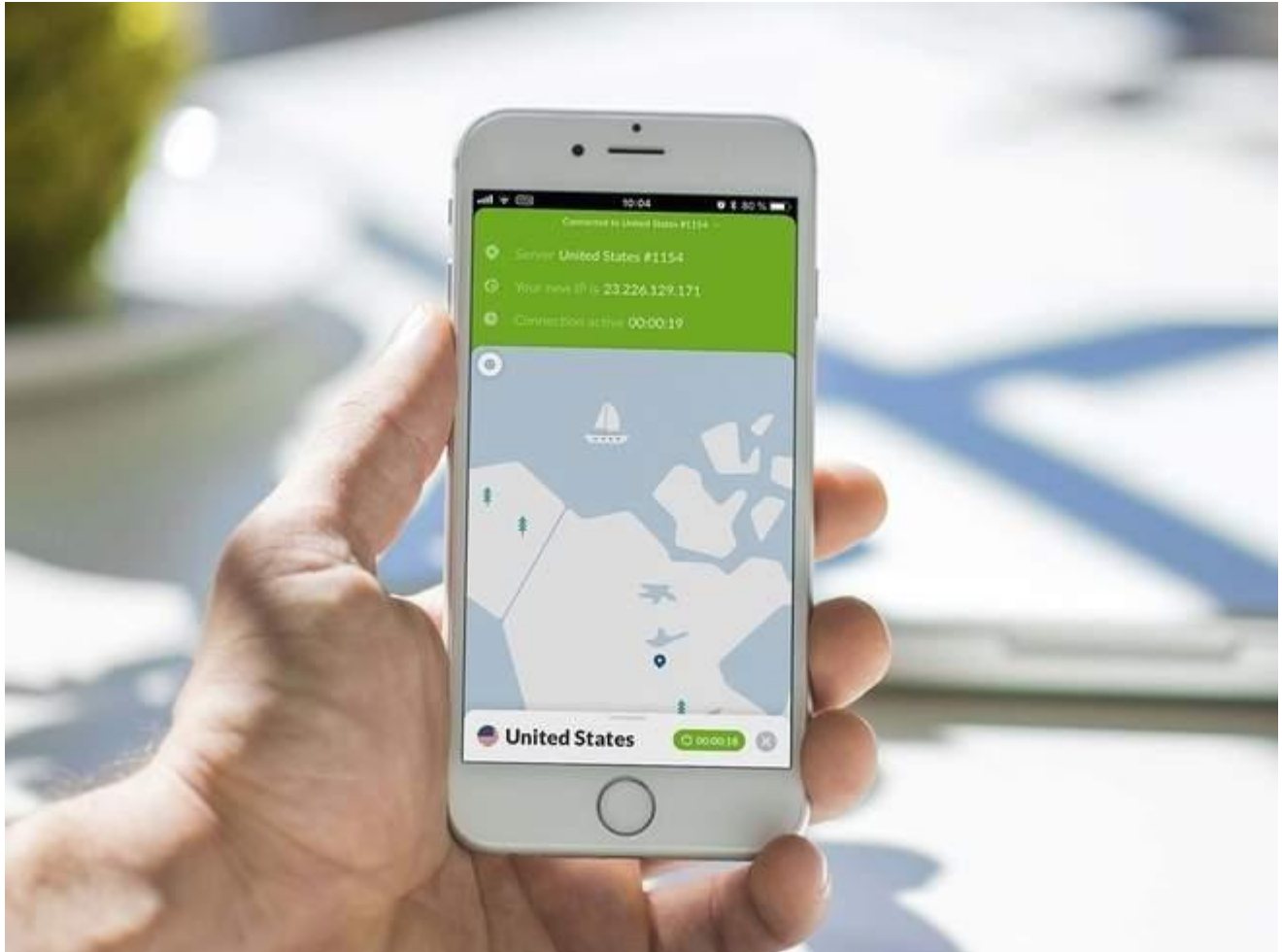


How to set up a VPN on your phone



Set up a VPN app on your phone.

When your phone connects to the web, prying eyes can snoop on every site you visit. To protect your privacy, put a Virtual Private Network, or VPN, between your phone and the internet. Instead of connecting directly to a website, you'll connect to your VPN's servers, which then route you to the page.

This hides your browsing from prying eyes, but it can also slow down the speed at which pages load. However, its benefits override this quibble. For example, because a VPN can connect to servers anywhere in the world, it lets you visit a video portal or a news site as if you were in a different country—which allows you to access different content as a result.

Of course, security is still the main reason to download a VPN to your phone. Any connections you make will receive secure encryption, so nobody can look at your online activity. This is particularly important on [public Wi-Fi networks](#) like the ones in hotels or coffee shops, where anyone else can get on the same network. Using a VPN makes it much harder for the owners of the network, your internet service provider (ISP), or anyone else to follow you around the internet.

That said, the VPN provider itself can still monitor your browsing. However, many providers will promote privacy as a priority, promising not to collect data on your browsing habits or time online. So it's important to pick a network that you trust.

Choose a good app

When you look for a VPN, keep an eye out for networks with high speeds, strong encryption, and a no-logging policy—in other words, they won't permanently store any information about your online activities. We recommend paying for a service rather than relying on free tools, because it takes money to run one of these networks, and if you're not paying for it, then you don't know how the VPN supports itself. Even if you do find a free VPN that's legitimate and above-board (they do exist), it will often struggle to keep up decent speeds and a reliable connection.

If you're looking for specific names, we've tested the following VPNs and found them to be both fast and reliable:

- [NordVPN](#)
- [ExpressVPN](#)
- [TorGuard](#)
- [AirVPN](#)
- [IPVanish](#)
- [Private Internet Access](#)

These options also score highly in PC Mag's independent testing of mobile VPNs for [Android](#) and [iPhone](#), which tests providers in categories like speed, price, and configuration options. Even if you choose something on this list, don't sign up for a provider without checking as many reviews as you can. These reviews should come from independent tech blogs you already trust, as well as review-centric sites such as [The Wirecutter](#), [TrustPilot](#), and [That One Privacy Site](#).

What using a VPN is like

Mobile VPNs make the setup process simple. To demonstrate how you do it, we've picked a couple examples, and we'll walk you through installing those apps on your Android or iOS

device. Both platforms let VPNs run happily in the background, so when you use these apps, you won't notice much of a difference in your phone's function.

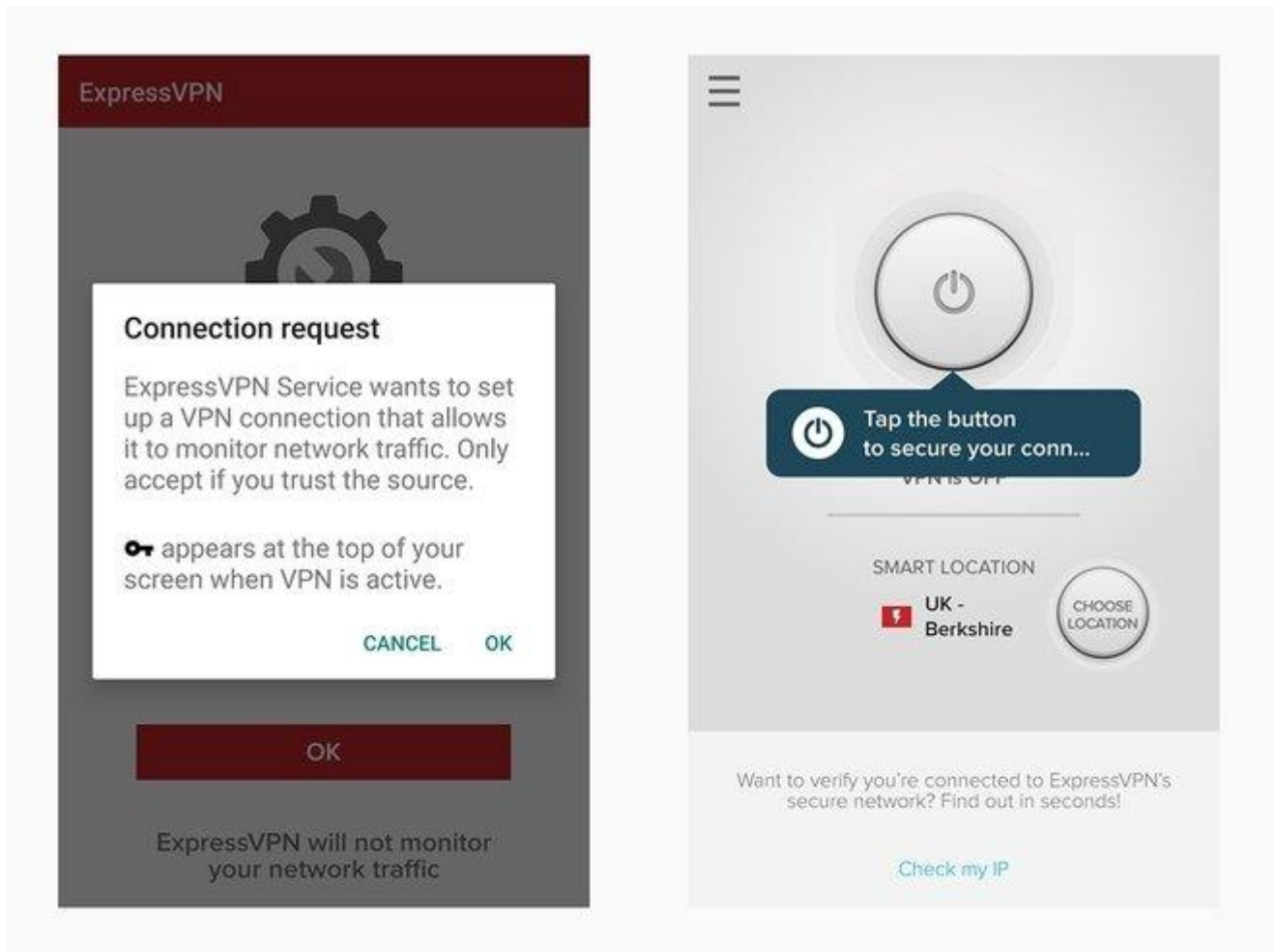
Many VPN apps, including the two we covered below, will start by connecting you to a recommended server, usually the one closest to you, since it will provide faster speeds. If you want to change your virtual location to a different country, you can do so easily, but be aware that the further away a VPN server is from you, the more the connection speed will lag.

Once you've activated your new VPN app, it will filter all the internet traffic on your phone, whether you're using a web browser or a connected app like Facebook. It will *not* affect any apps that don't drain your data, so your phone's SMS and calling apps should remain unaffected. That way, you won't suddenly receive unexpected data roaming charges, because your phone will still connect to a local tower before jumping to the VPN.

Setup on Android

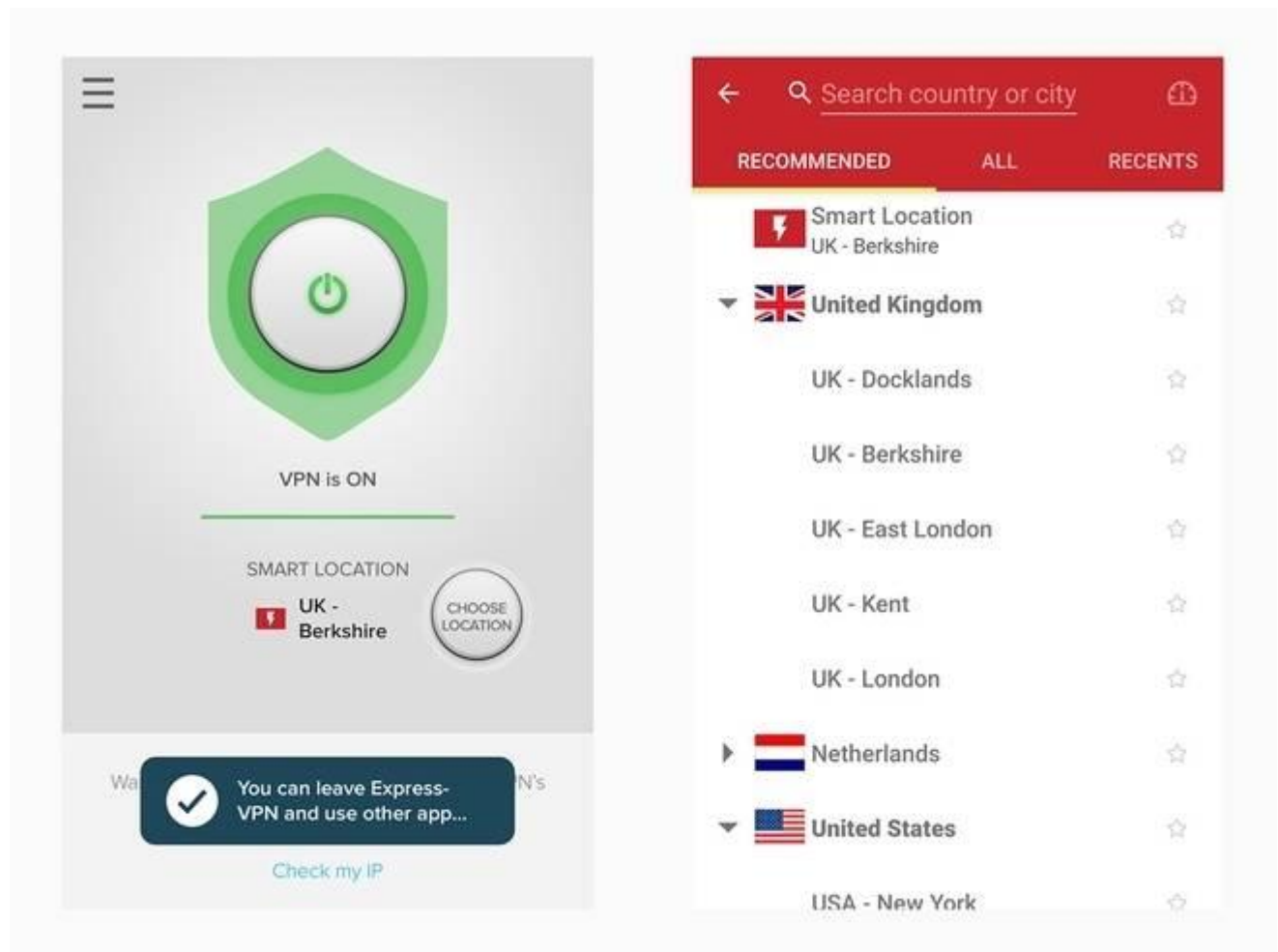
No matter what VPN you sign up for, the setup procedure is more or less the same. So for Android, we'll demonstrate the setup with one of our favorite VPN apps, [ExpressVPN](#). In addition to its Android app, the ExpressVPN service is also available on iOS phones and most major computer operating systems. It's fast, encrypted, and unrestricted, and the company promises not to collect data on your online activities. Through it, you can access 148 servers across 94 countries.

We'd recommend signing up for this service through [its website](#), where the payment plans are more clearly visible than they are in the app. Depending on how many months you commit to at once, the price will vary from about \$8 to \$13 per month.



Once you've subscribed online, download and fire up the [Android app](#). Sign in with your new account credentials, and the app will set itself up. As it does, it will ask you to confirm that you trust the app and to opt in or out of sending anonymous diagnostic reports to the service.

When you reach the main ExpressVPN screen, tap the power button to enable VPN protection. As soon as it turns green, you're safe. Now you can go on using your phone as normal. If you want to check on your status, Android should display a little key symbol in the status bar whenever your phone is connected to your VPN.



Accept a recommended server or choose your own.

David Nield

To speed up the connection process, ExpressVPN will automatically choose a server for you. If you'd rather use a different one, open the app and tap **Choose location**. Although it will suggest specific options based on your location (remember, closer servers offer faster speeds), you can select any server anywhere. To search for a country or city, tap **All**, which displays every server on the ExpressVPN network, or visit the **Recents** tab to see servers you've connected to in the past. As you switch servers, your connection will temporarily cease.

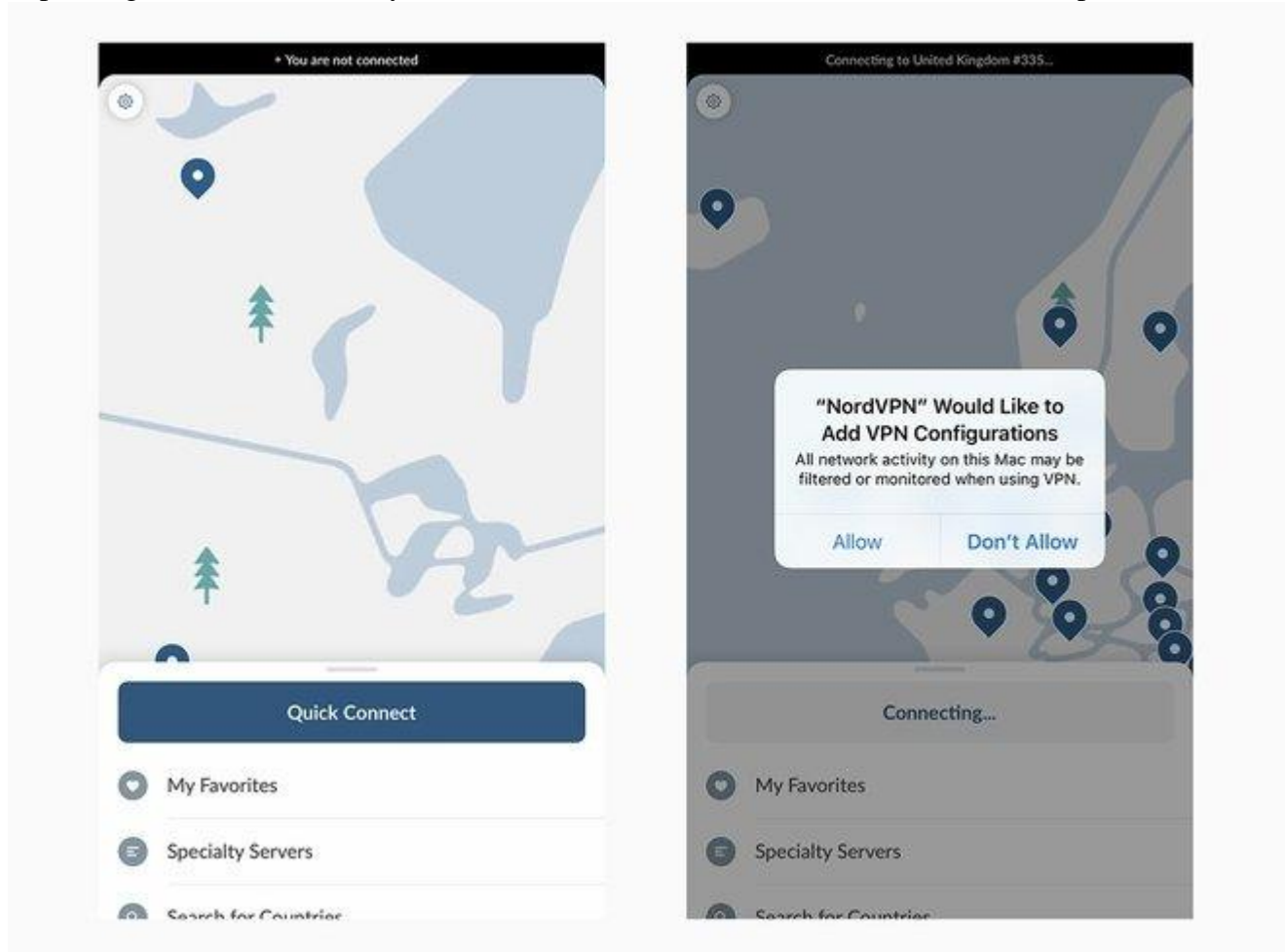
That's really all you need to know about setting up your VPN. If you'd like to configure its options, open the app, tap its menu button (three lines) on the top left of the screen, and choose **Settings**. This lets you adjust things like whether ExpressVPN will automatically turn on every time Android restarts.

Setup on iOS

As on Android, most VPN apps will take you step by step through the setup process, and they'll function similarly as well. Again, we'll explain with a specific app, in this case, NordVPN.

NordVPN has a strict no-logs policy, puts no restrictions on bandwidth, creates apps for all major computer and phone operating systems, and offers high-speed connections to more than 4,800 servers in a total of 62 different countries.

It's easiest to sign up for NordVPN on [its website](#) before you install the app on your phone. Depending on how much time you book at once, the service will cost about \$3 to \$12 per month.



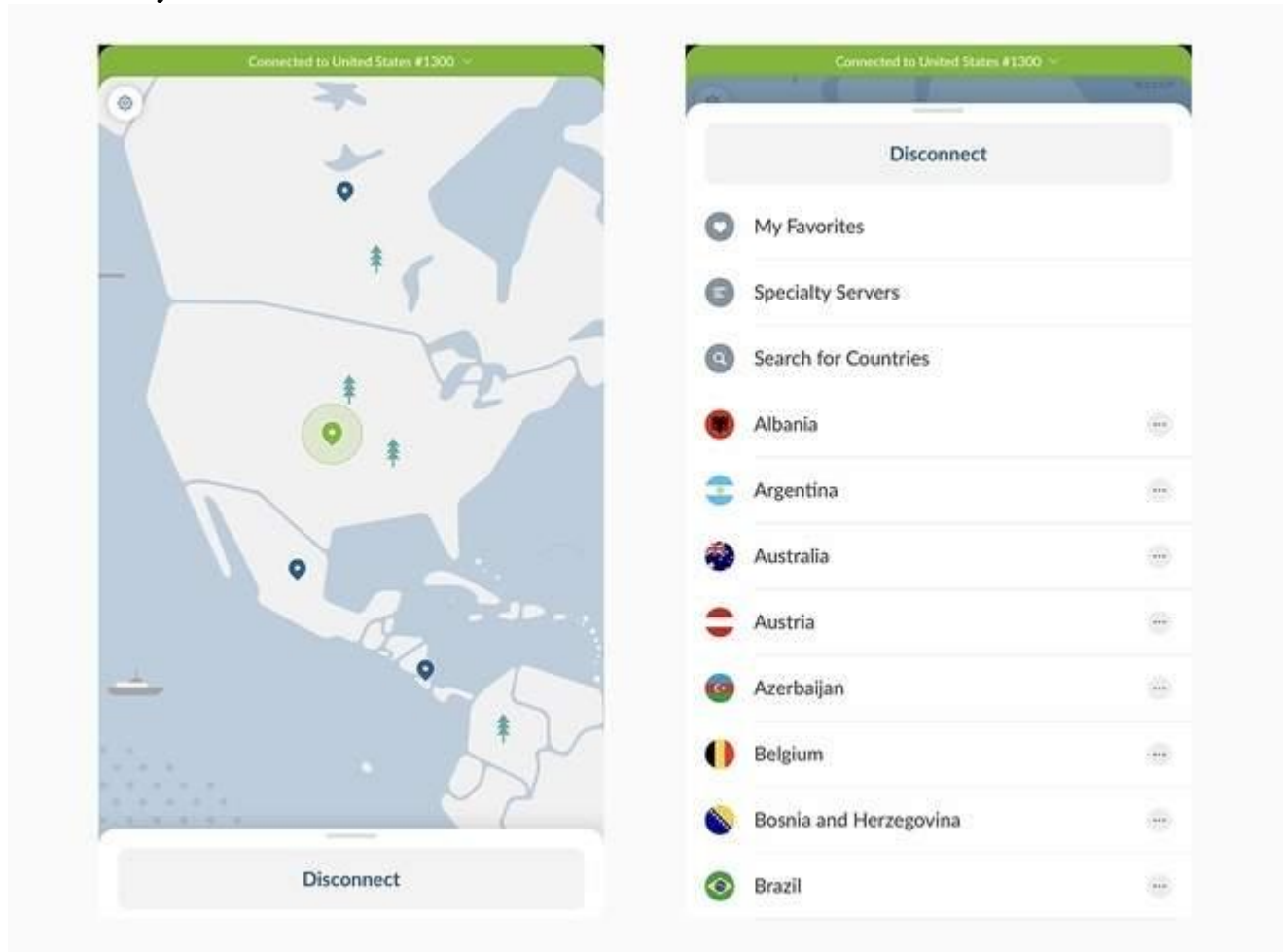
iOS asks for confirmation that you want to run NordVPN.

David Nield

With your credentials in place, install and fire up the [iOS app](#). Sign in with your new account, and you'll have to take care of a little housekeeping, but the app will guide you through it. You will need to give NordVPN permission to add a VPN profile to your iPhone, which you do by simply tapping **Allow** when prompted.

Now, every time you tap **Quick Connect**, the service will immediately apply VPN protection under the app's default settings. This means NordVPN will automatically connect you to a local server so you can access the fastest speeds. At this point, the map on the app's main screen will show your current server, and the phone's status bar should display a VPN badge. If you want to

pick a different server (like one on another continent), swipe up on the menu at the bottom to see a full country list.



Picking a closer server should give you faster connection speeds.

David Nield

Tap on any country to connect to a recommended server in that region. Or tap the three dots to the right to view a full server list where you can pick one yourself. To save a server for quick access in the future, tap **Favorites** > **Add** on the bottom menu. Under the **Speciality Servers** menu option, you can find **Onion Over VPN** (should you want to dip your toes into the dark web) and **P2P** (specifically for peer-to-peer apps like torrent downloaders).

The VPN will continue running until you disable it. By default, NordVPN should start up again as soon as your iPhone reboots, though you will have to enter your NordVPN password again at that point. To disable VPN protection and return to normal browsing, you'll have to reopen the app and tap the **Disconnect** button.