

Chapter 3:

Wifi Resources for Staying Connected



One of the most challenging aspects of working from an RV is having a stable and consistent WiFi connection. Thankfully technology continues to improve, and there are more available options now than there were a few years ago.

Phone Hotspot

The easiest and quickest way to get on the road and connect to WiFi is by adding a hotspot option through your cell phone carrier plan. Most unlimited cell phone plans have this as an option, which can easily be activated in your phone settings by turning on your personal hotspot. This connects to your phone's data plan via your laptop, or another device, like a tablet. Many personal hotspot options are capped at 22GB of data, and you need to have a cell phone signal for it to work.

This is a great option to have as a backup, but not something to solely depend on as most users go over the allotted amount of data in a short amount of time.

Does your cell phone plan allow you to use it as a hotspot? Yes or No

Mobile Hotspot

Another option is a mobile hotspot. This differs from your phone hotspot in that you have a small hotspot device with its own SIM card. This device uses its own data plan, and each cell phone carrier offers different options for “unlimited” data.

Pro tip: Use a different carrier than your cell phone so that you have more coverage between the two carriers. Look at each carrier's coverage map to get an idea of which ones cover more of your destinations. This will help you select a carrier that works best for you and your needs.

Something to be aware of with mobile hotspots is that most are capped out and don't offer truly unlimited data. Make sure to clarify with your provider, so you have the bandwidth you need.

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Signal Booster

If you go the route of using a cell phone carrier for your mobile WiFi needs, get a WeBoost or another cell phone signal booster to enhance your signal quality. While this can't create a signal if there's no tower to pull from, it does enhance the signal's reach. Ultimately, boosters enhance a cellular signal but can't create one.

Starlink

One of the best RV connectivity options is Starlink. Using a dish and router, you're able to have WiFi in more remote areas. This option is especially useful for those who frequently boondock or camp in destinations that don't have cell phone towers. With a dish outside of your rig that pulls in radio signals from satellites above, a router inside your rig provides WiFi to your connected device. If you need fast speeds and unlimited data, Starlink is the best option for you.

Like cellular providers, Starlink also has a coverage map that you should look at before making any decisions. Make sure that your frequently-traveled-to destinations have satellite coverage. It doesn't matter which device you have—if you don't have coverage, you won't have service.

A downside to Starlink is that your RV needs to power the router and dish. Take this into consideration, especially if you don't have solar panels or a large battery bank for power. With the other connectivity options, you can charge and use them until depleted. But in order to work, Starlink needs to be plugged in and powered. Starlink is also a pricier option: the equipment itself costs \$599, and an RV service plan runs \$150 per month.

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Public WiFi

The final option, and one that should be used as a backup, is to use public WiFi in places such as a public library, local coffee shop, or a major chain restaurant. These locations typically have slower speeds and don't provide the quietest environment, but you can get by.

It's important to have a public location as a backup because there will be times when you don't have a strong enough signal or other tech issues no matter which option you chose. When you work from your RV, you have to ensure that WiFi doesn't prevent you from getting work done or taking video calls. It's a privilege to be able to work and travel, so ensure that you're capable of executing your work regardless of the circumstances. It's worth driving the extra distance or doing more advance planning when you're able to successfully travel and work from the road.

Before setting up your campsite and workstation, use this WiFi checklist:

1. Turn on your WiFi device and do a speed check from your computer.
2. Look at a map and locate a nearby public WiFi spot.