Remote Access

Staying connected to your data while on the road is possible, with the right tools.

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EVEN WHEN YOU are out of the office, you need to keep up with e-mail, check voice mail, deal with faxes, fine-tune PowerPoint presentations, and grab information from relevant Web sites. Fortunately, there are plenty of ways for you to stay connected while on the go, whether it's with a notebook, a smart phone, or a wireless PDA. »

Getting Broadband

Before you head for the open road, review your connection options. Will your hotel have broadband Internet access? Will there be Wi-Fi hot spots at the airport? To find nearby hotspots in advance (so that you won't have to waste time looking for them later), try PC World's Wi-Fi Finder at pcworld.jiwire.com. Other options: JiWire's Wi-Fi Hotspot Finder (find.pcworld.com/57569) is a free program that lets you search for hot spots when you're offline, TravelPost.com offers an extensive list of airport hot spots at find.pcworld.com/57570. And HotelChatter provides an annual ranking of the 'best Wi-Fi hotels,' complete with photos and videos at find.pcworld.com/57573.

Get a secure connection with a Virtual Private Network. A VPN combines the security of a private network with the convenience of an Internet connection. Most businesses require their remote or mobile employees to connect to the company's network via VPN. Individuals and small businesses can take advantage of VPN technology, too, with services like Megaproxy ($10 for three months, megaproxy.com), Boingo's Personal VPN ($30 a year find.pcworld.com/57572), and WiTopia's PersonalVPN ($40 a year, find.pcworld.com/57574).

Go cellular. Cellular phone carriers have built high-speed Wireless Wide Area Network (WWAN) data networks to provide fast Internet access via cell phone or PC. Some laptops include built-in WWAN connectivity, or you can add it with a PC Card, ExpressCard, or USB WWAN modem. The monthly fees for cellular WWAN service are pricey, however (about $60). One alternative: Many cell phones double as wireless modems for connecting a notebook to the Internet. Check with your carrier to see if a connection kit or data plan is required.

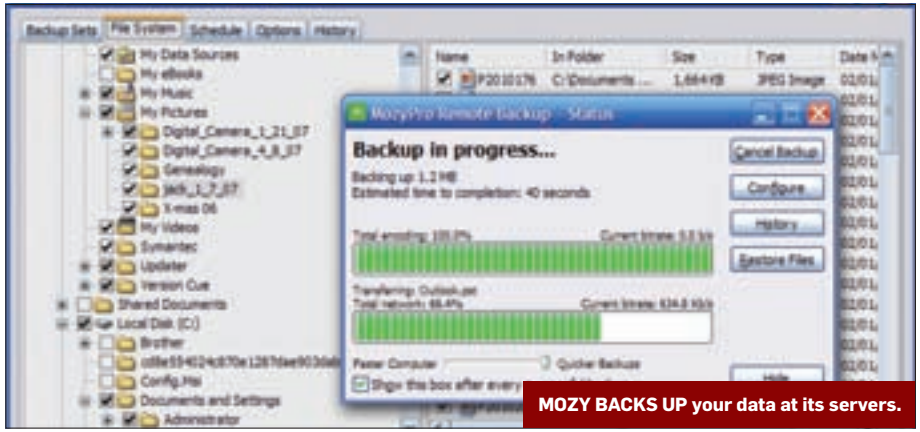
tip

Most airline club lounges are hotspots. If you are not a member, you may be able to get onto the network by setting up outside the lounge. Be aware that many airline lounge hotspots charge a fee. Or buy a Priority Pass, which admits you to 500 lounges ($99 per year, or $24 per visit, find.pcworld.com/57577).

tip

Some hotel rooms still offer only wired broadband. A portable router lets you create your own wireless hotspot, so you can work anywhere in the room or share the connection with a traveling partner. Linksys's Wireless-G Travel Router ($100, find.pcworld.com/57589) is a good choice.

Backing Up Online



MOZY BACKS UP your data at its servers.

Frequent backup is crucial for travelers. Online services let you back up files to a remote server over the Internet, where they can be accessed or shared securely. Xdrive.com (xdrive.com) offers 5GB of space free or 50GB for $10 monthly, With Mozy.com (mozy.com), you can store 2GB for free; unlimited data is $5 monthly.

Accessing Your Data Remotely

Access files from another PC. Remote access software and services give you access to your entire computer from any PC. Caveats: Usually, the remote PC must be on and connected to a network to be accessible remotely—and performance can be sluggish. With LogMeIn's free service (logmein.com) you can view your remote PC, launch and close programs, read e-mail, copy and paste text between PCs, and access files. LogMeIn Pro ($13 per month and up) adds the abilities to move files and to synchronize folders between PCs. For more-advanced features, your options include GoToMyPC »

($20 per month or higher, gotomypc.com), winner of several *PC World* World Class Awards; PCAnywhere ($200, find.pcworld.com/57583); and WebEx PCNow ($13 monthly, find.pcworld.com/57584).

Access files from your smart phone or PDA. Some services enable you to access your remote PC from a handheld device. Among them: LogMeIn, which provides remote access to PC files with a Windows Mobile 2003 or Pocket PC device; GoToMyPC PocketView, for accessing remote PCs via a Windows Mobile, Pocket PC, or Windows CE device; and WebEx PCNow, which allows you to use any Web-enabled phone. Avvenu Access 'n Share provides remote PC access from Palm and other handheld devices and is available in free and paid versions ($30 yearly, find.pcworld.com/57585).

Keeping the Communication Flowing

Read your voice mail. By converting voice messages into text form, new services ease the pain of checking voice mail on the go. Rather than listening sequentially to messages, you can select only the ones that you want from your e-mail in-box on your handheld device or PC. Vonage Text (find.pcworld.com/57586), for Vonage's Voice over IP customers, transcribes voice messages into text e-mail very well; it costs 25 cents per message. Other transcription options include PhoneTag.com (formerly SimulScribe.com, $10 per month, phonetag.com) and SpinVox.com (spinvox.com, with a free trial period.

Listen to your e-mail. If you are driving, reading your messages doesn't work. Text-to-speech services let you have your e-mail read to you over the phone by a computer. The jConnect Premier service ($15 per month, find.pcworld.com/57624) includes E-Mail by Phone, which permits you to reply to e-mail notes by speaking into the phone. ●

» tip

Ensure that you always have access to needed files by keeping your multiple computers synchronized. Microsoft's free Foldershare is easy to use and syncs selected folders on both PCs and Macs. You can also use FolderShare to access files on your computers remotely (find.pcworld.com/57590).

» tip

Mix pleasure with business on your next trip by taking a guided tour with your iPod or other handheld. Downloadable audio tours are available from Soundwalk (find.pcworld.com/57578).

Cool iPod Add-ons

Your iPod can do more than play music and video files. With the right accessories and software, it can also do the following:

- Record audio in stereo with **Xtreme Mac's MicroMemo** ($60, find.pcworld.com/57616).
- Record video from a TV, camcorder, or other video source with **iSee 360i** ($230, find.pcworld.com/57615).
- Store files, bookmarks, and computer settings with **MojoPac** software ($30, find.pcworld.com/57617).
- Wake you up on time, using the built-in Alarm Clock feature. Or dock your iPod in the portable **iHome** alarm clock/radio/speaker system ($100, find.pcworld.com/57618).

Video on the Go

These products are dedicated to keeping you entertained while you are on standby or in transit.

- **TiVo Desktop Plus** (find.pcworld.com/57587) software ($25) transfers TiVo programming to video-capable iPods, PlayStation Portables, Palm Treos, and other wireless devices. The software also lets you move music and photos to your TiVo DVR for playback through your TV.
- The **Slingbox** (prices beginning at $130, www.slingmedia.com) enables you to watch whatever's playing on your home TV from a broadband-connected laptop or wireless device, regardless of your precise location. The $250 Slingbox Pro lets you view high-definition programming.