



## BEHIND THE BUZZ

### Internet Anywhere (Without Hot Spots)

**WHAT IT IS** The wireless broadband card, a gizmo you plug into your laptop, can get you online wherever there's a cell signal.

**THE BUZZ** AT&T, Sprint and Verizon Wireless all offer a broadband card that lets you surf on the go at speeds comparable to those of DSL connections. The cost: about \$50 for the card plus a monthly connect fee of \$60. And no more fees of \$7 to \$13 a day for Wi-Fi in airports and hotels.

**THE TRUTH** If you regularly travel with a laptop, a card can be pretty useful. In our tests we got Internet access in several locations with no problem—though moving around online wasn't as speedy as promised. The monthly fee entitles you to download five gigabytes, equivalent to loading 1,000 Web pages a day. "What you need to consider is how much you're paying for Wi-Fi access on the road now because it may still be less expensive," says Avi Greengart, a wireless analyst with tech research firm Current Analysis.

#### SHOULD YOU BUY?

**IF YOU'RE ALREADY SPENDING BIG WI-FI BUCKS**

**STICK TO PAID ACCESS POINTS**

—KATE ASHFORD



## 3 THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT...

### YOUR FREQUENT-FLIER MILES

A fleet of new fees may soon turn your frequent-flier miles into fleecing-flier miles. "It's the most significant negative onslaught of changes since these programs launched in 1981," says Tim Winship of FrequentFlier.com. Ahead: new and higher service fees and more miles required for tickets and upgrades. This fall most major carriers are cutting capacity by 10% to 15%. Bottom line: fewer seats for you. What to do?

› **Use 'em.** Miles are dropping in value like Florida condos. So spend them while you can—but do the math. A domestic round-trip fare in most programs costs 25,000 miles, or \$300 to \$400. (Miles are worth 1.2¢ to 1.6¢.) Redeem miles only if the trip costs more on the open market. Otherwise, trade your miles for fee-free dining discounts and subscriptions. Or use them for upgrades to a better seat class on a long trip.

› **Figure in fees.** Even upgrades have them. Starting in October you'll pay \$50 each way to use miles for an upgrade on a domestic flight on American and up to \$350 (gasp!) each way internationally. Some airlines charge you a fee if you book through a human instead of online. And to change an award ticket, you may pay \$35 to \$250. To prep, check out the Ultimate Guide to Frequent Flyer Fees at [smartertravel.com](http://smartertravel.com).

› **Trade in your card.** If you earn miles through an airline credit card, exchange it for a rewards card with a more flexible program, such as the Starwood Preferred Guest American Express, where you can use points for hotel stays as well as airline tickets. Or go with a card like Chase Freedom Visa, which gives you cash back instead of points—in other words, something you can take to the bank. —DONNA ROSATO

...HELLO WALMART! 74% of families with incomes over \$500,000 say they now wait for sales before buying, per the Harrison Group...