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TOPIC: Bahamas WiFi GSM BTC Bahamas Internet 2014-15

Bahamas WiFi GSM BTC Bahamas Internet 2014-15 11 hours, 24 minutes ago

#3708

hayden



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As we prepare to sail into the Bahamas for our 4th season, here is a basic overview of what we have learned about WiFi and Cell service and Internet in the Abacos and the Exumas. We have been connected each time we have gone, and the service is getting better each year. Our first connected sail over was March 2012 to Abacos. Then in Feb 2013 we sailed to Long Island, Georgetown and back up to Abacos. Feb 2014 we sailed to Black Point then back up through the Exumas then Eleuthera up to Abacos. During all these trips we were connected daily as we mange a few websites.

WiFi First, it is easier in general:

WiFi is available from many providers, but the two largest are OII, Out Island Internet and Bahamas WiMax with WiMax being the better one in my opinion and from years of use.
OII
www.abacoinet.com/
WiMax
www.bahamaswimax.com/

Focusing just on WiMax, as I recommend, they sell accounts for daily, weekly, monthly, three months and 6 months. The cost for one month is $105. Not bad for being in the Bahamas. I usually buy the one month of three month packages.
www.bahamaswimax.com/index.php/services/wifi-hotspots
Once you have an account, then the time starts the first time you log in. You can not stop the clock, it will expire once the time is used up.
You can buy this service once you reach the Bahamas. You simply turn on your laptop or tablet and it will find the WiFi, connect to WiMax and then open your browser. Your browser will display the sign up packages. You create a username and password and enter your billing information and credit card. Immediately this is completed and your account is open,. At that point you can login and surf the web. Your computer or tablet is now online.

The immediate next question is....Great, I am connected....BUT....how do I get more than one computer or tablet online now? Do I have to buy a WiMax account for each device????? No, not really, you need to learn how to set up a network with a Router.

The basic concept of a router is that you connect Internet to the router and then the router distributes the Internet via local WiFi to multiple Laptops, tablets, cell phones onboard your boat.

The next question is HOW DO I GET INTERNET into the router?

To get Internet into your router, you need an Access Point / Bridge device that will have an antenna. This AP/Bridge will then connect to the internet and feed it out via an Ethernet plug or USB. This feed then plugs into the WAN port on the router. WAN port is the Wide Area Network port that the router looks to to find Internet. Once internet is into the router, it then can be distributed to many devices onboard.

So, WHAT IS THE BEST AP/BRIDGE? We all think the best is THE BULLET by Ubiquiti Networks.
www.ubnt.com/airmax/bulletm/
This is the best there is, and you will see many Marine WiFi systems built using the Bullet and they rename it or put a sticker on it and resell it for more. So, If you want to get the best deal, then buy your own Bullet and learn to set it up. If you are not good at setting up computer networks, then buy a prebuilt full Bullet based WiFi system. A popular one can be found here:
IslandPC.com
islandtimepc.com/marine_wifi.html

If you want to learn how to set up your own Bullet based WiFi system, then read my other popular article here:
ipyoa.com/forum/53-wifi-a-computer-netwo...let2hp-simple-set-up

WiFi Conclusion:
1. Use Bahama WiMax for buying Wifi in the Bahamas Abacos to Georgetown
2. Use one laptop or one tablet at a time to connect and surf the web with your WiMax account

3. If you want an onboard network, learn to set up the Bullet and plug it into a Router
4. If you want a prebuilt network, then buy the IslandPC.com wifi rig, it is a bullet based system.

Next Topic....BTCBahamas.com Cell service and Internet via BTC

This has worked very well for us, we have used a BTC sim card every year we have sailed in. Once we brought our own SIM and phone before we sailed in and other times we bought the SIM once in the Bahamas. I now have a BTC SIM so I keep it active by logging into my account at BTCbahamas.com and checking my balance, if low, add money.

The easiest way to get a phone is to sail into Bimini or Nassau and buy the phone and SIM card at the BTC office and make sure it all works before leaving. That is the easiest way.

If you want a little more of a challenge and if you dont want to go to Bimini or Nassau, then buy an Unlocked GSM phone or make sure your phone is unlocked by your cell company. Also buy your own SIM card for BTC before you go. If you do this, then once you are within a BTC cell tower range, your Bahamas phone will light up and be live. I prefer this. You can buy your SIM card here:
www.mrsimcard.com/s-batelco.html
My first year, I did this, I bought my SIM card, had it mailed to me, then right before leaving USA, you call Mr SIM CARD and they activate your card on the BTC network. Sure....I thought this would never work. Well it worked great. My card lit up and my phone was live as we are sailing in. Amazing.

Another year, we sailed into Bimini and went to the BTC store and bought a NEW SIM, because I left the old one expire. This was easy as they made sure the phone was online and was working while in the BTC office. This is the easiest.

OK, so now you have a GSM unlocked cell phone working on the BTC Bahamas cell grid. HOW DO I GET ON THE INTERNET?

BTC INTERNET via your cell phone.
To access the internet with your BTC cell phone you need to add a new APN, ACCESS POINT NAME. This can be found under the settings area of your phone. Create a new APN with the value of internet.btcbahamas.com then leave all other settings the same. Save this and your phone is now ready to access the Internet.

BUY DATA use SMS, text message from your BTC phone.
That is right, you need to buy a data amount using SMS text message on your BTC Bahamas cell. Here is the help page from BTC:

BTC offers a number of services to our prepaid customers directly from their phone. By dialing the following short codes you will get the following options:

*201# allows you to see your balance
*202# allows you to add a Top Up to your account
*203# allows you to transfer funds to another Prepaid Mobile
*204# allows you to send a Call Me Text
*205# allows you to add mobile data

So you use the TOP UP and add money into your account, then you dial in again and add a mobile data plan to your account. This is the process of PrePaying for your service.

In Summary BTC DATA:
1. Buy an Unlocked GSM cell phone that is a QUAD BAND phone
2. Buy a BTC SIM card, get it activated here before you leave or buy it in Bahamas
3. Top up your card, i.e. add money to your account. Online or in the BTC store
4. Use SMS text to add mobile data plan to your cell phone *205#
5. Add a new APN ACCESS POINT NAME to your phone: internet.btcbahamas.com
Welcome to Internet via cell in the Bahamas.

Here is a link to the FAQs for PREPAID customers like us.
www.btcbahamas.com/support/category/53-p...started/faqs#faq-110

----------one last item----------

PDANet app for cell phones, iPhones need a JailBreak 

This app for a cell phone turns your phone into a free WiFi router. This allows you to share your Internet Data plan with more than one device. For example: you can use PDAnet to connect your laptop to your cell phone via WiFi and then surf the web on your laptop but it goes through your cell phone! WHAT???? Yes, it works great. We have used this for 3+ years, it is great. So, this makes the WiFi rig above NOT NEEDED if you want to surf all data through the cell phone. The phone acts like the AP/Bridge and a router and handles all the comms. It is truly amazing.

I hope this gives you a good overview of current connectivity in the Bahamas

Hayden on IP35 Island Spirit in Marathon Florida

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