Working from the Beach Review

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I live very near the beach currently and want to make the most of it, knowing that I likely won't live near one forever. Armed with a desire to enjoy life, a world freshly molded by a global pandemic, and a few beach accessories, I set off to change my work-from-home environment from a boring home office, to a luxurious beach atmosphere.

The Plan

My goal was to spend an entire day working from the beach. I currently work from home in the field of software development, so this seemed achievable. For this to work, I planned out a few requirements and things I would need.

Requirements

My list was simple:

- Good weather
- Good enough cell reception
- A day without too many meetings

Things To Bring

This is the checklist I created in advance to make sure I had everything I needed for success. I already owned everything I thought I would need, so this plan would not cost me anything.

Beach Equipment

- Wagon
- Small Folding Table
- Beach blanked & towel
- Sunscreen
- Beach Chair
- Beach Umbrella
- Sunglasses

- Hat
- Jacket

Work Equipment

- Laptop
- Battery
- Headphones
- Monitor (optional)
- Tablet (optional)

Food

- Cooler
- Ice packs
- Water Bottles
- Lunch
- Snacks

Dogs

- Dog Backpack
- Water Bowl
- Leash Spike

Ah yes, I forgot to mention I have two dogs that I did not want to leave at home alone, so they must be included. Go ahead and add them to the list of requirements.

The Day Of

We actually start the day before when I realized the weather was looking great and I packed up the beach wagon with all my supplies except food, so that I would be ready to go in the morning with nothing in my way.

I decided not to bring an extra monitor for my first day out of fear of running out of battery, so I brought my tablet instead.

Since my biggest concern was whether or not I would have a strong enough internet connection while tethered to my phone, I took my 9am morning standup meeting at home as usual. After helping out with a few issues in the morning that I didn't want to risk missing, I grabbed drinks, my lunch, the dogs, and we were out just after 10am.

My walk to the beach took about 20 minutes. There is a closer beach about 10 minutes away that does not allow dogs, so I made the trek to the dog friendly spot. The wagon was easy to pull and the dogs behaved.



Setup was quick and easy. In no time at all we were settled and my office was open for business.







I checked in with a colleague in the morning over a video call to test out my reception and slightly brag. To my surprise we were able to have a 20 minute long call with no issue other than my Bluetooth headphones disconnecting once. I felt I was set for the day and this would work well.

Tethering off a cell phone is not an ideal internet setup, and I did experience some slowdowns throughout the day. An afternoon one-on-one meeting was troublesome and I called the person's cell directly. Another meeting where I was an active participant with about 15 people went great.

Towards the very end of the day I noticed a significant slowdown in internet speed. I suspect my cell carrier was throttling or de-prioritizing my traffic for using so much bandwidth while tethering.

I worked all day long until 6pm, with a lunch break to eat and run the dogs through the waves. Despite the occasional network hiccup, I was able to get all my development tasks done, as well as project planning, code review, and meetings. When I needed to think or step back from my work for a moment, my beautiful surroundings made this much more relaxing and less stress inducing.

I particularly around 5pm when a family that had been enjoying a beach vacation day nearby packed up and asked me what I did for a living. Their initial guesses were writer or day trader. Not bad guesses, but I hope this post helps prove even more people can and should work outside.

Lessons Learned

- I had much more battery power than I needed. This could likely be done without any extra battery if your laptop is newer. With battery saver mode, I was shocked how long my battery last. I used to think my laptop battery would die within 3 hours.
- An extra monitor would be nice, but is not at all necessary. I checked the power draw and tested this at home later. My battery could easily power a monitor all day, so next time I'll bring it.

- My tablet didn't end up helping much, but I did use it to play music and check notifications. I will bring it for email/chat/etc notifications only when not bringing a second monitor.
- Meetings didn't work well on a tethered device. I always ended up switching to the phone app. I suspect this is due to carrier throttling.
- Internet is definitely the limiting factor. If I decide to do this even semi-regularly, I will look into a mobile hotspot device to see if the traffic will be better prioritized. I may also need to upgrade to a plan with higher tethering allowance.

My Equipment

Battery - RAVPower PD Pioneer (RP-PB187 70,200 mAh)

At the time of writing, this specific model is out of stock, but you can find their other models here:

https://www.ravpower.com/collections/pd-pioneer-power-bank

Laptop - System76 Darter Pro

Read my review

Table - $20 aluminum table from Marshalls

Takeaway

If you get the chance, take it. Maybe you're not by the beach, but a nice park can be just as relaxing a place to work for the day. Heck, you could even just sit in your yard. I hear the wifi is better there.

Update: I did this again in 2024, this time with a buddy as well. Things went great and being able to refer to this for a list of things to bring made it even easier. I live slightly further from the beach now so this time I drove instead of walked. Once again the most difficult part was positioning myself to get a decent cell connection. I should find an area of beach with better reception.

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