



# Cutting connections

Save money when you're not at your French property by suspending your telephone line – **Bob Elliott** explains how

France is unusual in having a high number of second homes, which has created some special offers for holiday home owners who don't want to pay all year round for telephone services that may only be used for perhaps a few months at a time.

The national network in France is owned and managed by Orange who, until recently, has benefited from its monopoly position by being able to exclusively offer customers the ability to suspend both their line rental and broadband services, if they can demonstrate that the property is not their main residence – a utility bill or council tax statement is sufficient proof. The main home doesn't have to be in France.

Once proven, the customer can request that their line rental and – if they take the service – broadband, be suspended while they are away. During periods of absence and suspension of the broadband service, the modem must be returned to an Orange shop and collected on return.

This is no longer the only offer available. At UK Telecom we wanted to provide another choice based on the feedback of our customers, 25% of whom are second home owners. One important difference is we offer the ability to suspend services to all customers, not just second home owners.

There are two alternatives available. Firstly, customers on a *Dégroupage Partiel* service (where calls are carried over the line and broadband sits separately on it) can suspend

their broadband, but not their line rental, while those with the *Dégroupage Total* (where the telephone line's voice service is deactivated, and calls over the broadband service) can suspend their broadband contract while incurring a charge of €5 per month as there is no line rental to pay.

The period of suspension is limited to a maximum of four months in any 12-month period, so it's not as flexible as the Orange offer but more convenient, as the suspension of both types of service does not require the return of the modem and the changes are managed remotely.

There is an alternative to the usual broadband service if your requirements are not high or are infrequent. Several companies offer a wifi hotspot device that connects to the internet via the mobile network; this small box allows up to nine devices to connect to the internet at the same time.

Obviously you need to be in an area with a good mobile signal, which you

can check by visiting [quechoisir.org/carte-interactive-reseau-mobile-n21247/](http://quechoisir.org/carte-interactive-reseau-mobile-n21247/). Insert your holiday home's location and then the mobile service you want to use, and it will tell you if the signal is good enough.

Do remember that hotspots come with a 1Gb data package that is valid for 90 days. The data can be topped up via an English-language website and packages range from 500Mb, valid for 14 days and costing €7, to 100Gb, valid for 30 days and costing €99. ■

**Top tip**

It is good practice to disconnect your telephone handset and modem if you are going to be away for any length of time. This is because storms often cause electrical power surges that can damage equipment and your broadband provider will not replace modems damaged in this way free of charge.

“Several companies offer a wifi ‘hotspot’ that connects to the internet via the mobile network and allows up to nine devices to connect to the internet at the same time”



*Examples of data usage for hotspots*

Download	Gb Required
● 2 music albums	0.1Gb
● 5-minute video clip on YouTube	0.15Gb
● Low-definition movie	0.75Gb
● 40 hours web surfing	1.0Gb
● 1 hour of internet radio	1.0Gb
● HD quality movie	4.5Gb

**Bob Elliott** is Commercial Director of UK Telecom Ltd. Tel: 01483 477100; Freephone from France 0805 631 632 [uktelecom.net](http://uktelecom.net)