

Backend Platforms 2026

Railway vs AWS vs Azure vs GCP vs Firebase vs Cloudflare — picked for an AI iOS app.

\$5-30

INDIE /MO ON RAILWAY

200+

AWS SERVICES

90%

OF COST = AI API

1

PICK TO START

• By cost at small scale (a few thousand MAU)

DEFAULT

Railway

\$5-30/mo · Predictable. Push code, get URL.

PaaS

Vercel

\$0-20/mo · Hobby tier generous. Web-first.

Edge

Firebase

\$0-50/mo · BaaS — least backend code. Lock-in real.

BaaS

Cloudflare Workers

\$0-10/mo · Edge-first. Global low latency.

Serverless

AWS

\$30-150/mo at small scale. Service breadth. Cost-trap risk real.

Power

Azure

\$30-150/mo · Microsoft ecosystem, Azure OpenAI Service.

Enterprise

GCP

\$15-80/mo · Cloud Run = cleanest serverless containers.

Dev DX

PRO TIP

Backend hosting is rarely your biggest infra cost. AI API spend (Claude / GPT) typically dwarfs it 5-10×. Optimize there first.

COMMON TRAP

Choosing AWS "in case you scale" before you have users. Burns months learning vs shipping. Start simple — migrate when you must.

PICK BY USE CASE

- 1 **Solo iOS dev, Claude proxy**
→ Railway
- 2 **Real-time chat / social**
→ Firebase
- 3 **Global low-latency API**
→ Cloudflare Workers
- 4 **F500 customer mandated**
→ AWS / Azure
- 5 **GPU / ML training**
→ AWS / GCP / specialty

BY APP MATURITY STAGE

- 1 **Stage 1 (0-100 users)**
Railway / Firebase / Vercel
- 2 **Stage 2 (100-10K)**
Same — optimize cache + sub plan
- 3 **Stage 3 (10K-1M)**
Most stay on PaaS. Some migrate.
- 4 **Stage 4 (1M+)**
Hyperscaler with SRE practice

Full comparison: djenterprises.ai/blog/backend-comparison → Run the math: [profitability calculator](#)

DJENTERPRISES · AI CONSULTING & IOS APP STUDIO