

CRUISE VACATION: THE COST OF INTERNET ACCESS AT SEA



Transatlantic cruise liners also called the “floating palaces” for the comfort and the variety of activities offered on a cruise vacation, are much more than big luxury ships. In fact, technology is transforming modern cruise ships into smart hotels.

In 2018, a new record was achieved when 27 million cruise passengers were registered worldwide. **The number represents a 6% growth compared to 2017.**

However, to maintain the high expectations of the passengers, the cruise line companies need to take a series of measures that go beyond the standard offer. Internet access was a pleasant bonus in the past, but hardly a requirement. Nowadays, everyone needs wi-fi, even if they are in the middle of nowhere.

Providing internet access for thousands of passengers on cruise liners which is hundreds of miles away from the nearest land is technically a challenging task. It explains why the onboard internet access service is not only more expensive but also slower. Nevertheless, all cruise lines now offer onboard wi-fi that allows the passengers on their cruise vacation to stay in touch with their family and friends.

There are several limitations of the internet use that the cruise passenger should get ready for. For example, the use of VPN (Virtual Private Networks) in order to access the internet privately in many cases will not work. Some lines, like Carnival, clearly state that “VPN is not supported”, others do not explicitly say that, but the cruises passengers report problems with VPN. One of the few, NCL, offers VPN access within its “Unlimited Premium package” only.

In terms of pricing, the cost is based on the level of offered service, however, most cruise lines charge \$20-30 per one device per day. Tourism Review compiled a list of the most common onboard internet access options of the major cruise companies. It is important to emphasize that almost all cruise lines offer significant discounts when the passengers book an internet access package in advance.

Royal Caribbean

The cruise line positions itself as a leader offering “the fastest Internet at sea.” Royal Caribbean offers two internet access plans - Surf and Surf + Stream. The first option allows browsing all around, including email, social media, and all general web sites. The cost of the plan is \$15.99 per day when the passenger orders the services for the entire cruise time and \$22.99 for one-day access. The advance plan, as the name of the package says, offers not only the Internet access but also the ability to stream video or music. The cost of the Surf + Stream plan is \$19.99 per day for the whole cruise vacation and \$29.99 for single-day access.

Carnival

The company offers three internet connection plans: Social, Value, and Premium with different levels of access. Carnival’s Social plan allows access to social media, such as Facebook, WhatsApp, and

some other sites such as for example websites of airlines. However, news or webmail sites are blocked. The cost of such low-end access option is \$8 per day for one device. On the other hand, the Value plan costs \$12 per day, offers access to most of the Internet resources, including emails, news, weather, sports, and sites. If you are looking for the fastest internet connection (three times faster than the Value plan) and the entire Internet (streaming might be available on some ships), the Premium plan would be a perfect option. The cost of the Premium plan is \$17 per day (\$25 per 24-hour pass).

Norwegian Cruise Lines

Since Norwegian offers a range of “Free at Sea” services, the Internet access could be one of such perks. However, if the passenger books the cruise vacation without the free internet option, there are three different internet access levels to purchase: Unlimited Social Media, costs \$14.99 per day; Unlimited Wi-Fi costs \$29.99; Unlimited Premium Wi-Fi costs \$34.99 per day. As names imply and like other providers, the Premium package allows full unlimited internet access, including streaming audio and video, while mid package offers only browsing all around and the budget solution allows only social media access.

Celebrity Cruises

Unlike other cruise lines, Celebrity has just one internet access plan, called Xcelerate Internet, that is fast enough for flawless streaming music and video. Costs are applied for the whole length of the cruise. For example, for 7-8 days long cruise, the cost of internet access would be \$249, and the daily cost would be about \$25-35 per day per device.

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