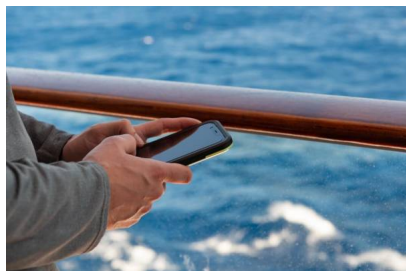


ONBOARD WI-FI AVAILABLE ON MORE AND MORE CRUISE SHIPS



Cruise ships increasingly use the Internet for onboard Wi-Fi powered by Starlink satellites. One such company is Aida Cruises, which equips all its ships with this technology, offering passengers various fares.

Other companies that have adopted this technology include Royal Caribbean's giant ships and most of Hurtigruten's expedition ships. **Cunard plans to have all its "Queen" ships equipped with Starlink by the end of the year.** These are just a few examples.

According to experts, cruise companies that rely on Starlink are not skimping on superlatives. They claim that the technology will revolutionize the internet connection on board ships, improving the cruise experience for everyone - guests and crew alike. Aida, for instance, promises the "best available" internet experience at sea.

Internet Almost Like at Home

Experts suggest there is some truth to the statement regarding Starlink's speed, and it's not just a PR or marketing stunt. If the shipping company allows it to operate at full speed, it can be much faster than any other form of maritime communication. It can provide a home-internet-like experience for many users. However, the speed depends on satellite availability, and Cunard states on its website that Starlink can offer speeds of up to 200 Mbit/s.

More Bandwidth Costs More Money

The question is also whether cruise companies allow full bandwidth or throttle it. This is a pricing policy. Fast Internet and streaming often cost more.

Cruise companies have a pricing policy for providing internet access to their passengers. The extent to which they allow full bandwidth is crucial. Faster Internet and streaming media often come at a higher cost.

For example, Cunard offers an Essential package for 15 US dollars per day when booking the entire trip or 24 US dollars for 24 hours, which includes internet access for surfing, emailing, and social media. The premium package offers higher speeds and video streaming and is priced at 20 or 36 US dollars.

Hurtigruten's expedition ships, called HX, provide free onboard Wi-Fi limited to surfing the net. Streaming is not possible, even though they have Starlink reception. In sea voyages to remote locations, the range and speed of the Internet are very limited.

Aida offers four internet packages, ranging from the "Onboard Chat" for 1 euro per day, which allows communication with other people on board via the Aida app, to the "Premium Internet Flat" for 15 euros per day. The latter package allows full bandwidth access and the use of VPN clients. Discounts are available on booking rates.

Low Orbit, Low Latency

The Starlink satellites orbit at a relatively low altitude of 550 kilometers above Earth, whereas the satellites of other providers, commonly used for ship internet, orbit at an altitude of over 30,000 kilometers in a geostationary orbit.

Due to the lower distance and the greater number of satellites, these Internet services provide faster connection speeds, lower signal delay (latency), and wider coverage. The decreased latency is especially noticeable in internet telephony, such as via messenger, where there are hardly any annoying delays, allowing regular phone calls.

No Cruise Ships without Starlink & Co in the Future

According to experts, nearly all shipping companies will soon rely on internet services from low-orbit satellites. It's more convenient and cost-effective for them to use these systems rather than geostationary ones.

Cruise companies can offer their customers higher internet speeds or increase margins.

However, industry experts believe that shipping companies won't use faster internet speeds to make more profit.

Fast and affordable Internet onboard can be decisive for families with teenagers when booking a cruise. Most people are used to internet access almost all the time on land and don't want to travel without it. The increasing use of Starlink & Co at sea could also lead to more affordable and faster Internet onboard.

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