



Grace's Cruises – Insider Travel Tip

Cruise Ship Wi-Fi: What You Need to Know Before You Buy

Staying connected at sea has become much easier than it used to be. Many newer cruise ships now use high-speed satellite technology such as Starlink, making it possible to check email, browse the web, share photos, video call family and even stream movies from the middle of the ocean.

Not all cruise Wi-Fi packages are the same, and buying more internet than you actually need can add unnecessary cost to your vacation. Here are a few things to consider before buying a package.



What Will You Actually Use Wi-Fi For?

Start by thinking about how connected you really want to be.

Light Use

- Checking email
- Sending messages through WhatsApp, iMessage or Messenger
- Browsing websites
- Checking airline reservations or travel information
- Reading the news

A basic internet package may be all you need.

Moderate Use

- Posting photos on social media
- Sending larger email attachments
- Making occasional audio or video calls
- Working remotely for short periods

You may need a higher-level package depending on the cruise line.

Heavy Use

- Streaming Netflix, YouTube or other video services
- Regular FaceTime or video calls
- Uploading large photos or videos
- Working remotely with video meetings

Look for the cruise line's premium or streaming-level package.

For example, Celebrity's Basic Wi-Fi is intended for browsing, email and text messaging, while Premium adds video calls, larger files, social-media sharing and streaming. Holland America's Surf, Premium and Stream plans follow a similar progression.



One Device Does Not Necessarily Mean One Person

This is something many travelers misunderstand.

When a cruise line sells a one-device Wi-Fi plan, it may mean that only one device can be connected at a time, rather than restricting you to one particular phone for the entire cruise.

Depending on the cruise line and package, you may be able to switch between your phone, tablet and laptop by logging out of one and connecting another.

If you want your phone and laptop connected at the same time, however, you may need a multi-device plan. Always check the rules for your particular cruise line and package before purchasing.

💡 **Tip:** Before paying for multiple devices, ask yourself whether you really need them connected simultaneously. If you only check your laptop occasionally, a one-device plan may be perfectly adequate.



Check What Is Already Included

Before purchasing Wi-Fi separately, check your cruise fare.

Internet is increasingly bundled into cruise packages and certain stateroom categories. You may already have more internet access included than you realize.

For example, Holland America's Have It All currently includes Surf Wi-Fi, while Princess Plus includes MedallionNet Max for one device per guest and Princess Premier includes four devices per guest. Celebrity's All Included fares include Basic Wi-Fi, while Retreat suites include Premium Wi-Fi.



Buying Before Your Cruise May Save Money

Do not automatically wait until you board.

Some cruise lines offer lower prices when Wi-Fi is purchased or upgraded before sailing. Celebrity, for example, specifically states that pre-cruise pricing for its Wi-Fi upgrade is lower than purchasing the upgrade onboard.

It is worth checking your cruise planner before departure for packages, upgrades and special offers.



Wi-Fi and Cellular Data Are NOT the Same Thing

Your phone can connect to the ship's Wi-Fi, but while at sea it may also connect to a maritime cellular network. Those are two completely different things.

If your phone connects to the ship's cellular network and begins using roaming data, you could incur charges from your mobile carrier. Celebrity, for example, advises that cellular-at-sea rates are determined by the guest's wireless carrier.



Grace's Tip: Use Airplane Mode

Once the ship leaves port:

- Turn on Airplane Mode
- Turn Wi-Fi back on
- Connect to the ship's Wi-Fi network
- Leave cellular/mobile data turned off

This allows you to use the ship's Wi-Fi while helping prevent your phone from accidentally connecting to maritime cellular service.

When you arrive in port, you can decide whether to turn cellular service back on depending on your mobile plan and destination.

Remember: You Are Still at Sea

Even today's best cruise-ship internet is not identical to your high-speed connection at home. Satellite service can be affected by the ship's location, weather and satellite availability, particularly in remote destinations.

If something is important to download, upload or send, do not leave it until the last minute.

Download Before You Sail

Before leaving home, download anything you may want during the cruise:

- Movies, books, podcasts and music
- Airline, hotel and cruise documents
- Maps and important travel information

Having important items saved directly to your device gives you a backup if the internet is temporarily unavailable.

Final Thoughts From Grace

Cruise ship Wi-Fi has improved tremendously, but the best package depends on how you plan to use it. Check what is already included, consider how many devices you really need, and choose a package that matches how you plan to stay connected.

Most importantly, remember that ship Wi-Fi and cellular-at-sea service are not the same thing. A few simple phone settings can help prevent an unexpected mobile bill.

Sometimes disconnecting is part of the vacation too. 😊



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