



Cruise Ship Internet — What's Worth Paying For

What's Worth Paying For Stay in touch at sea without wasting money

————— **An Extended Guide · No. 1596** —————

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THE 60-SECOND VERSION

1. The Whole Idea in One Glance

If you remember only this page, you will avoid the big mistakes.

Out at sea there is no ordinary cell signal, so a cruise ship makes its own internet and sells it to you by the day or for the whole voyage. Many ships now use the same satellite service that works well on land, so it is faster than it used to be. The two things that matter most are choosing the right plan and keeping your phone from quietly running up charges on the ship's cell service.

- Put your phone in airplane mode the moment the ship leaves port
- Turn Wi-Fi back on by itself, so you use the ship's internet and not costly cell service at sea
- Decide if you need a plan at all, or if free Wi-Fi in port is enough
- Buy the plan ahead of sailing, where it is usually cheaper
- Use free texting apps to reach family instead of paying per text

WATCH OUT

The single most expensive mistake is leaving your phone in its normal mode. Out at sea it can latch onto 'cellular at sea' service that charges steep rates per minute and per text. Airplane mode is your shield.

WHY IT IS DIFFERENT

2. Why the Ocean Has No Signal

On land, your phone talks to cell towers that are never far away. Out on the open ocean, there are no towers for hundreds of miles. That is why a ship has to make its own internet, beaming signals up to satellites and back down again.

For years that satellite link was slow and the connection dropped often. The newer service that many lines have fitted changes the picture, because it uses a large fleet of low satellites that give a quicker, steadier connection. It is still not quite like home, but it is a world away from the old days.

GOOD TO KNOW

The improvement you may have heard about comes from a satellite service called Starlink, which many cruise lines have added to their ships. It is the same technology used in homes and RVs on land.

STARLINK AT SEA

3. What Starlink Means for Your Cruise

Starlink is a satellite internet service that uses thousands of small satellites orbiting close to the earth. Because they are closer than the old satellites, the connection is faster and has less of the lag that made video calls stutter. Many of the big cruise lines have installed it across much of their fleet.

What this means for you is that the ship's Wi-Fi can now handle things it could not before, like a video call with the grandchildren or streaming a show in your cabin. It is not guaranteed on every ship, so it is worth checking whether your particular ship has it.

TIP

When you book or before you sail, ask your cruise line or travel agent whether your specific ship has the newer satellite internet. Ships in the same fleet are not always fitted at the same time.

THE BIG WARNING

4. The Charge That Catches People Out

Before anything else, understand this one danger. When your ship sails away from land, your phone goes looking for a signal and may connect to a service called 'cellular at sea.' This is a special ship-based cell service, and it is extremely expensive, charging by the minute for calls and by the message for texts.

People have come home to bills of hundreds of dollars simply because their phone was sitting in their pocket in its normal mode, checking email in the background. You did nothing but carry it, yet the charges piled up. The fix is simple and free, and we will cover it next.

WATCH OUT

Even a phone you are not touching can run up charges at sea if it is not in airplane mode. Background apps check for messages and updates on their own, and each check can cost money on the cellular-at-sea network.

AIRPLANE MODE

5. Airplane Mode Is Your Best Friend

Airplane mode is a setting that switches off your phone's connection to cell towers and the cellular-at-sea service. It is the same setting the flight crew asks you to use on a plane. The clever part is that you can still turn Wi-Fi back on by itself while airplane mode is on, so you use the ship's internet and nothing else.

- 1 As the ship leaves port, open your phone's settings or control panel
- 2 Turn on Airplane Mode; you will see a little airplane icon
- 3 With airplane mode on, turn Wi-Fi back on by itself
- 4 Connect to the ship's Wi-Fi network if you have a plan
- 5 Leave airplane mode on for the whole time you are at sea

TIP

On an iPhone or Android, you can usually swipe to open a control panel with the airplane and Wi-Fi buttons side by side. Tap the airplane on, then tap Wi-Fi back on. That is the whole trick.

DO YOU NEED A PLAN

6. Do You Even Need to Buy Internet?

Here is a question worth asking before you spend a penny: do you actually need internet while you sail? Plenty of people enjoy a cruise as a true break, checking in only when they reach a port where free Wi-Fi is easy to find. There is no rule that says you must be connected at sea.

- If you just want to unplug, you may need no plan at all
- If you have a medical or family reason to stay reachable, a plan brings peace of mind
- If you only need to check in occasionally, port Wi-Fi may be enough
- If you want daily video calls home, a plan is the way

GOOD TO KNOW

Many travelers buy a plan for one phone and share the news with the whole family through it, rather than buying a plan for every device. One connection can carry a lot of quick check-ins.

KINDS OF PLANS

7. The Two Main Kinds of Internet Plan

Cruise internet usually comes in two shapes. There is a basic plan, often called a social or surf plan, meant for messaging, email, and browsing. And there is a premium or streaming plan, which costs more and is meant for video calls and watching shows.

- Basic or social: good for texting apps, email, and checking the news
- Premium or streaming: adds video calls and watching video
- Per-device: the plan covers one phone or tablet at a time
- Whole-voyage or per-day: you can often choose to pay by the day or for the whole trip

TIP

If all you want is to message family and share a few photos, the basic plan is usually plenty. Pay for the premium streaming plan only if you truly plan to make video calls or watch video at sea.

PER-DAY OR WHOLE TRIP

8. Paying by the Day Versus the Whole Cruise

Most lines let you pay either for each day you want internet or for the entire cruise at a slightly better rate per day. Which is cheaper depends on how many days you actually want to be connected.

If you only want internet on a couple of the sea days, buying by the day can save money. If you want to be connected every day of a week-long cruise, the whole-voyage plan usually works out cheaper per day. Do the simple arithmetic for your own trip before you buy.

GOOD TO KNOW

Prices change often and vary by ship and sailing, so I will not quote exact figures that go stale. As a rough guide, expect somewhere in the range of fifteen to forty dollars per device per day, and always confirm the current price in your cruise planner.

BUYING AHEAD

9. Buy Before You Sail to Save

One reliable way to save money is to buy your internet plan ahead of time, through the cruise line's website or app, rather than waiting until you are on board. Lines commonly offer a discount for buying in advance, since they know you are a sure thing.

- 1 Log in to the cruise line's website or app before your sailing
- 2 Look for the internet or Wi-Fi packages in the planner
- 3 Compare the per-day and whole-voyage prices for your trip length
- 4 Buy the plan that fits before you board to get the lower rate
- 5 Keep the confirmation so you can connect easily on day one

TIP

The pre-cruise discount can be meaningful, often saving a good slice off the on-board price. If you are fairly sure you want a plan, buying ahead is the thrifty move.

ONE DEVICE AT A TIME

10. How 'One Device' Plans Work

Most basic plans connect one device at a time. That means if you buy a single plan, you can use it on your phone, then log out and use it on your tablet, but not both at once. If a couple wants to each be online at the same time, they typically need two plans or a multi-device plan.

GOOD TO KNOW

You can share one plan across your devices by signing out on one and signing in on another. It is a small hassle, but it saves buying a second plan if you do not need to be on two screens at the same moment.

STAYING IN TOUCH

11. The Cheapest Way to Reach Family

The least expensive way to stay in touch at sea is to use free messaging apps over the ship's Wi-Fi, rather than regular texts or calls over the cellular-at-sea service. These apps send your messages, photos, and even calls as internet data, so they ride on your Wi-Fi plan and cost nothing extra per message.

- iMessage between iPhones, which looks like a normal text

- WhatsApp, which works between any phones and is very popular
- FaceTime for video or voice calls between Apple devices
- Facebook Messenger or similar apps the family already uses

TIP

Agree with your family before the trip on which app you will all use. If everyone has WhatsApp or iMessage set up ahead of time, staying in touch at sea is as easy as it is at home.

TEXTING APPS

12. Setting Up a Messaging App Before You Go

The time to set up a messaging app is at home, on your own Wi-Fi, not on the ship. Download it, create your account, and send a test message to a family member so you know it works before you sail.

- 1 At home, download the app your family uses, such as WhatsApp
- 2 Open it and follow the steps to set up your account
- 3 Add your family members as contacts
- 4 Send a test message and make sure they receive it
- 5 On the ship, open the same app over the Wi-Fi to stay in touch

WATCH OUT

Some messaging apps need a text message to confirm your account when you first set them up, and that is hard to receive at sea. Do the full setup at home so everything is ready before you lose your regular signal.

IN PORT

13. Staying Connected When You Reach Port

When the ship docks at a port, the picture changes. You are near land again, which means free Wi-Fi is often available at the cruise terminal, in cafes, and in shops. Many travelers skip the ship's plan entirely and simply catch up on messages while ashore.

Your own phone may also pick up a local cell signal in port. That can be handy, but it may carry roaming charges depending on your plan and the country, so be careful before you use it freely. Free Wi-Fi at a cafe is usually the safer choice for a quick catch-up.

GOOD TO KNOW

A cup of coffee at a dockside cafe often comes with free Wi-Fi. It is a pleasant way to send your photos and check in with family without paying the ship for internet at all.

ROAMING IN PORT

14. Watch Out for Roaming Ashore

In a foreign port, if you take your phone out of airplane mode to use the local cell network, you may run into roaming charges, which are the fees your carrier adds for using a phone in another country. These are not as brutal as the cellular-at-sea rates, but they can still add up.

- Check with your carrier before the trip about overseas roaming
- Some carriers offer a daily travel pass for a set fee abroad
- When in doubt, keep airplane mode on and use free Wi-Fi ashore
- Turn roaming back off before the ship leaves the port

WATCH OUT

A carrier's travel pass that works on land often does not cover the cellular-at-sea network on the ship. Do not assume a pass that helped you in a city will protect you once you sail away from the dock.

WHAT WORKS WELL

15. What the Ship's Internet Handles Well

With the newer satellite service, the ship's internet handles everyday tasks comfortably. It is worth knowing what to expect so you are pleased rather than frustrated.

- Sending and receiving messages and photos
- Checking email and reading the news
- Short video calls with family, on a streaming plan
- Looking up a port, a restaurant, or a map

GOOD TO KNOW

Even good ship internet can slow down when the whole ship is online at once, such as a rainy sea day when everyone is indoors. A quick message will still go through; a long video might buffer.

MANAGING HOPES

16. Keeping Your Expectations Realistic

Even with the better satellite service, a ship's internet is shared among thousands of passengers and can still have its moments. It helps to go in with realistic hopes so a slow spell does not spoil your mood.

Think of it as good enough for staying in touch, not as a replacement for your home internet. A message will almost always go. A big download or a long video call may sometimes stall, especially far from land or when the ship is crowded indoors.

TIP

If a video call stutters, drop down to a voice call or a few photos and a message instead. The connection handles the simpler task far more reliably.

VIDEO CALLS

17. Video Calling Home From the Ship

One of the real joys of the newer ship internet is being able to video call the family and show them the ocean behind you. To do this well, you want a streaming or premium plan, since the basic plan may not be built for video.

- 1 Buy a streaming or premium plan if video calls matter to you
- 2 Connect to the ship's Wi-Fi with airplane mode on
- 3 Open FaceTime, WhatsApp, or your family's video app
- 4 Find a spot with a strong Wi-Fi signal, often higher in the ship
- 5 Keep the call short if the connection is busy

GOOD TO KNOW

A quiet time of day, like early morning, often gives a better connection for a video call than the busy evening hours when the whole ship is online.

BRINGING YOUR OWN

18. Can You Bring Your Own Internet Device?

Some travelers wonder if they can bring their own satellite dish or internet device aboard to avoid paying for the ship's plan. The short answer is no. Cruise lines generally prohibit passengers from bringing their own satellite receivers aboard, and several lines have made this rule explicit.

WATCH OUT

Do not plan to bring a personal satellite dish on a cruise. It is against the rules on the major lines, and it can interfere with the ship's own systems. Use the ship's internet or free Wi-Fi in port instead.

DEVICES TO BRING

19. Which Devices to Bring Online

You do not need to connect everything you own. Think about which one or two devices you actually want online, since most basic plans cover a single device at a time. For most people, the phone is the one that matters.

- Your phone, for messages, photos, and calls, is usually all you need
- A tablet if you want a bigger screen for video calls
- Leave the laptop at home unless you truly need it
- A spare device is handy only if you have a multi-device plan

TIP

Traveling light with internet means picking one device as your main connection. It is simpler to manage and saves you from buying plans for gadgets you will barely use.

FAMILY AT HOME

20. Telling the Family Your Plan Before You Sail

A little planning with the family before you leave spares everyone worry. Let them know you will be at sea, that your internet may be patchy, and how best to reach you. That way a slow reply does not set off alarm bells back home.

- Tell them which app you will use to check in
- Explain that replies may be slow or come only at certain times
- Share your rough itinerary so they know when you are in port
- Agree on who to contact in a true emergency

GOOD TO KNOW

In a genuine emergency, family can always reach you through the cruise line's guest services, who can get a message to your cabin. Make sure someone at home has the cruise line's number and your booking details.

SOCIAL MEDIA ONLY

21. The Cheapest Social Plans

Some lines sell a very basic plan aimed only at social media and messaging. It is the cheapest option and works nicely if all you want is to post a photo to family and send the occasional message, without browsing the wider web.

WATCH OUT

If your goal is just to share a sunset photo and say you are having a wonderful time, the cheapest social or messaging plan may be all you ever need. Do not pay for streaming you will not use.

DOWNLOADING AHEAD

22. Load Up on Entertainment Before You Go

A clever way to avoid paying for a streaming plan is to download your shows, movies, music, and books onto your phone or tablet at home, before you sail. Once downloaded, they play without any internet at all, so you can enjoy them on sea days for free.

- 1 At home on your Wi-Fi, open your streaming apps
- 2 Look for a download button on the shows and movies you want
- 3 Download a few favorites to watch at sea
- 4 Do the same with music playlists and audiobooks
- 5 On the ship, play them offline with no plan needed

GOOD TO KNOW

Downloaded movies and music do not need any connection to play, so they cost nothing at sea. This alone saves many travelers from ever buying a streaming internet plan.

THE SHIP'S APP

23. The Free Onboard App

Most cruise lines have their own app that works on the ship's Wi-Fi, and much of it is free to use even without an internet plan. It shows the daily schedule, the menus, your account, and often a way to message others in your party who are also on the ship.

This onboard messaging can be a lovely, free way to stay in touch with your travel companions across the ship, telling your spouse you are at the pool or arranging to meet for dinner. It usually costs nothing beyond a small onboard chat fee, if any.

GOOD TO KNOW

Download the cruise line's app before you sail and set it up at home. On board, it becomes your free guide to everything happening, and often a free way to message your own group.

PACING YOUR DATA

24. Being Gentle With a Busy Connection

Even on an unlimited plan, the connection is shared, so being a little thoughtful keeps things running smoothly for you and everyone else. A few simple habits make the most of what the ship offers.

- Download large files and updates at home, not at sea
- Turn off automatic video playback in your apps
- Send photos in smaller sizes if the app offers the choice
- Save video calls for quieter times of day

GOOD TO KNOW

Your phone may try to back up photos or install updates on its own, which eats the connection. Turn off automatic backups and updates while you are at sea, and let them catch up when you are home.

CONNECTING ON DAY ONE

25. Getting Online the First Day

Once you board, getting connected is usually straightforward. You join the ship's Wi-Fi network and sign in with your plan, the same way you would at a hotel. Doing it early means you are ready before the ship sails out of signal range.

- 1 Turn on airplane mode, then turn Wi-Fi back on
- 2 Open your Wi-Fi settings and pick the ship's network
- 3 A sign-in page should open in your web browser
- 4 Sign in with your cabin number and the plan you bought
- 5 Test a message to make sure you are connected

TIP

Connect while you are still in port on the first day, when the signal is strongest and the sign-in page loads quickly. Starting at the dock is easier than fiddling once you are out at sea.

TWO PHONES

26. When Both Spouses Want to Be Online

If both you and your spouse want to be online at the same time, remember that a single basic plan covers only one device at once. You have a few choices, and the right one depends on how much you each want to use it.

- Buy two separate plans if you both want to be online together often
- Share one plan by taking turns, signing out on one phone and into the other
- Look for a multi-device plan if the line offers one
- Decide whether one of you can simply rely on port Wi-Fi

GOOD TO KNOW

Many couples get by with a single plan on one phone, using that one connection for all the family check-ins. It is the thriftiest approach if you do not both need to be online at the same moment.

MEDICAL PEACE OF MIND

27. Staying Reachable for Health Reasons

For travelers who want to stay reachable for health reasons, perhaps checking in with a doctor or being available for news about a family member, a plan brings genuine peace of mind. In that case, the cost is money well spent, not a luxury.

TIP

If being reachable matters for your health or your family's, buy a plan without second-guessing it, and make sure someone at home also has the cruise line's emergency contact number. That way you are covered both ways.

AVOIDING SURPRISES

28. Checking Your Bill Before the Charges Pile Up

The horror stories about enormous phone bills almost always trace back to the phone not being in airplane mode. If you follow the airplane-mode habit from day one, you simply will not get those charges. Still, it is wise to keep an eye on things.

- Keep airplane mode on the entire time you are at sea
- Check your phone's settings show cellular data turned off

- If your carrier texts a roaming warning in port, take it seriously
- Review your first bill after the trip to catch anything unexpected

WATCH OUT

If your phone ever shows a cell signal with a ship or sea name while you are at sea, that is the costly cellular-at-sea network. Switch airplane mode on at once and the charges stop.

KEEPING KIDS OFFLINE

29. Grandchildren and the Ship's Internet

If you are cruising with grandchildren, their devices need the same airplane-mode care as yours, or they can quietly run up charges too. It is worth a quick check of every phone and tablet in your party before the ship sails.

TIP

Make a game of it on the first day: gather everyone's phones and tablets and switch each one to airplane mode together. Downloaded games and movies will still work, and no device will surprise you with a bill.

WHICH LINES HAVE IT

30. Checking Which Lines Have the Newer Internet

The major cruise lines, including the familiar names like Carnival, Royal Caribbean, and Norwegian, have been fitting the newer satellite internet across their fleets. Not every ship in every fleet is done, so the only sure way to know is to check your specific ship.

GOOD TO KNOW

When you book, ask your travel agent or the cruise line directly whether your ship has the newer satellite internet. It is the detail that most affects how well the Wi-Fi will work for you.

COMPARING PLANS

31. How to Compare Plans Without a Headache

Cruise internet plans come with different names on different lines, which makes comparing them confusing. Cut through it by ignoring the fancy names and asking two plain questions: what can this plan do, and what does it cost per day for my trip?

- Ask whether the plan allows video and streaming, or only messaging

- Work out the cost per day for the length of your cruise
- Check whether it covers one device or several
- Compare the pre-cruise price against the on-board price

TIP

Write the two or three plan choices on a piece of paper with their per-day cost and what each can do. Seeing them side by side makes the decision far easier than squinting at the website.

IF IT STOPS WORKING

32. When the Internet Drops Out

Every so often the ship's internet will slow to a crawl or drop entirely, especially in certain spots at sea or during bad weather. This is normal and usually passes. A few simple steps often get you reconnected without any fuss.

- 1 Move to a different part of the ship, often higher up
- 2 Turn Wi-Fi off and back on in your phone's settings
- 3 Sign out of the ship's network and sign back in
- 4 If it is still down, wait a while; it usually recovers on its own
- 5 Visit the ship's internet desk if the trouble lasts

GOOD TO KNOW

A dropped connection at sea is rarely a problem with your phone. More often the ship has sailed into a weaker patch of coverage, and it clears up as you move on.

REFUNDS AND HELP

33. If a Plan Does Not Work as Promised

If you buy a plan and it simply will not work, the ship has an internet or guest-services desk that can help, and in some cases offer a credit for a plan that failed to deliver. It is worth raising the issue while you are still on board, not after you get home.

TIP

Be polite and specific at the internet desk: tell them the plan you bought and what is not working. Staff can often reset your account or sort out a billing problem on the spot.

BEFORE YOU BOOK

34. Questions to Ask Before You Buy

A short list of questions, asked before you sail, saves money and surprises. You can ask them of your travel agent, the cruise line, or find the answers in the online planner.

- Does my ship have the newer satellite internet?
- What does the basic plan allow, and what does streaming add?
- Is it cheaper per day for the whole voyage or by the day?
- Is there a pre-cruise discount for buying ahead?
- Does one plan cover one device or several?

GOOD TO KNOW

The answers can differ from one sailing to the next, so ask about your exact ship and dates. A plan that was a bargain on last year's cruise may be priced differently on yours.

A SAIL-AWAY ROUTINE

35. A Simple Routine as You Leave Port

The travelers who never get a surprise bill all do the same small thing: they have a routine for the moment the ship leaves the dock. It takes seconds and protects you for the whole voyage.

- As the ship pulls away, switch every device to airplane mode
- Turn Wi-Fi back on by itself if you have a plan
- Confirm you see no cell bars, only the Wi-Fi symbol
- Relax, knowing no cellular-at-sea charges can reach you

TIP

Tie the routine to a moment you will not forget, like the sail-away party on deck. When you feel the ship move, that is your cue to switch to airplane mode.

SAVING THE MOST

36. The Thriftiest Way to Cruise Connected

If saving money is your goal, you can enjoy a cruise nearly as connected as you like for very little. The secret is to lean on free options and buy only what you truly need.

- Download movies, music, and books at home for free entertainment
- Use the free onboard app for the schedule and messaging your group

- Catch up on messages over free Wi-Fi in port
- Buy only a basic messaging plan, if any, and share it on one phone

GOOD TO KNOW

Many happy cruisers spend almost nothing on internet by downloading entertainment ahead of time and using port Wi-Fi for check-ins. A plan is a convenience, not a necessity.

THE BALANCED VIEW

37. What Ship Internet Can and Cannot Do

It is worth being honest about where ship internet stands. The newer satellite service has made it genuinely useful, but it is still an extra cost and still shared among a crowd. Setting your expectations right keeps you happy with whatever you choose.

- It can keep you in touch with family throughout the cruise
- It can handle video calls on a streaming plan, most of the time
- It will not always be as fast as your internet at home
- It does protect your budget only if you also use airplane mode

TIP

Decide before you sail what connection matters to you: daily video calls, the odd message, or a true unplugged break. Then buy to match that, and nothing more.

BEFORE YOU LEAVE HOME

38. Getting Your Phone Cruise-Ready at Home

A calm half hour at the kitchen table before you leave saves a great deal of fuss once you are aboard. The idea is to set everything up while you still have your home Wi-Fi and a reliable signal, so there is nothing left to figure out when you are at sea.

- 1 Download and set up the messaging app your family uses
- 2 Download a few movies, shows, and playlists for the sea days
- 3 Install the cruise line's own app and sign in
- 4 Practice turning airplane mode on and Wi-Fi back on
- 5 Save the cruise line's emergency contact number for family at home

TIP

Write a tiny checklist and tape it inside your travel folder: airplane mode on, Wi-Fi on, open the family app. With your phone ready before you board, the first day of the cruise is for enjoying the ship, not fiddling with settings.

CARRIER CRUISE PLANS

39. Your Phone Carrier's Cruise Packages

Some phone carriers sell their own cruise or ship packages, which let you use your regular number for calls and texts over the ship's cellular-at-sea network for a set daily fee. These can be convenient, but they are usually pricier than using the ship's Wi-Fi with free messaging apps, and the coverage is not guaranteed.

- Ask your carrier whether it offers a cruise or ship package
- Compare its daily fee against the ship's Wi-Fi plan
- Check whether it actually covers the cellular-at-sea network
- For most people, the ship Wi-Fi plus free apps is the better value

WATCH OUT

A carrier's ordinary international travel pass often does not cover the cellular-at-sea network on the ship, even if it works on land. Confirm with your carrier exactly what is covered at sea before you rely on it, or you may still get surprise charges.

SHARING PHOTOS

40. Sending Vacation Photos to Family

Half the fun of a cruise is sharing the sights with family back home, and your phone makes that easy without a big data plan. The trick is to send photos through a messaging app over the ship's Wi-Fi, and to be mindful that lots of big photos use more of the connection than a few.

- 1 Pick your best few photos rather than sending dozens at once
- 2 Open your messaging app over the ship's Wi-Fi
- 3 Attach the photos to a message to family
- 4 If the app asks, choose a smaller or standard photo size
- 5 Send, and let them upload in the background while you carry on

GOOD TO KNOW

If photos are slow to send at a busy hour, wait for a quieter time or send them over free Wi-Fi at the next port. The picture will look just as lovely arriving an hour later.

KEEP PHOTOS SAFE

41. Backing Up Your Pictures on the Trip

Your cruise photos are precious, and it would be a shame to lose them if a phone went overboard or into the pool. Your phone can back them up to the cloud automatically, but that uses a lot of internet, so you want to control when it happens rather than letting it run at sea.

GOOD TO KNOW

Turn off automatic photo backup while you are at sea so it does not eat your plan, then turn it back on over free Wi-Fi in port or once you are home. That way your memories are saved without draining your connection.

THE INTERNET DESK

42. Getting Help From the Ship's Staff

Every ship has staff who can help with internet trouble, usually at a guest-services or dedicated internet desk. There is no shame in asking; they help people every day, and they would far rather sort out a problem on board than have you come home unhappy.

- Ask at guest services if you cannot get connected on day one
- Bring your cabin number and the plan you bought
- Explain plainly what is not working
- Ask them to check your account if charges look wrong

TIP

Raise any billing or connection problem while you are still on the ship, not after you disembark. It is far easier for the staff to fix something while your account is active and you are standing in front of them.

SMALLER SHIPS

43. River Cruises and Smaller Ships

Not every cruise is a giant ocean liner. River cruises and smaller ships are a different story for internet, because they often sail close to land, where your own phone may pick up a regular signal. That can change what you need entirely.

GOOD TO KNOW

On a river cruise hugging the shore, your phone may find a cell signal much of the time, so a local travel plan from your carrier might serve you better than a ship plan. Check your route and ask your carrier about coverage before you sail.

A CALM MINDSET

44. Letting the Cruise Be a Break

It is worth remembering why you booked the cruise in the first place. For many people, part of the appeal is stepping away from the constant pull of email and news. You do not have to be connected every hour, and choosing to unplug for stretches can make the trip more restful.

There is a happy middle ground between being cut off and being glued to a screen. Many travelers check in with family once a day, share a few photos, and otherwise let the ocean and the ports fill their time. The internet is there when you want it, and quietly off when you do not.

TIP

Decide on a gentle rhythm before you sail, perhaps a single evening check-in with family. Everyone at home knows the plan, and you get to enjoy the cruise instead of watching a screen.

WHEN TO CALL

45. When It Is Worth Calling Me

Setting up airplane mode, loading a messaging app, and downloading shows for the trip are all things most people can do with a little guidance. If you would rather have someone sit beside you and get your phone cruise-ready before you leave, that is exactly what I am here for. My first in-home visit in Portage County is a flat 99 dollars, and I also offer remote screen-share help for 49 dollars if you would like me to guide you from my screen to yours.

TIP

Call me at (330) 200-8042, or ask Sophie, my phone and chat helper. Before your cruise, I can set up airplane mode, install the messaging app your family uses, download your favorite shows, and show you how to connect to the ship's Wi-Fi, so you sail off with no risk of a surprise bill.

CHEAT SHEET

Everyday Cheat Sheet

Keep this page handy for your cruise. It is the short answer to the questions travelers ask most about staying connected at sea.

- Switch to airplane mode the moment the ship leaves port, every device
- Turn Wi-Fi back on by itself so you avoid costly cellular-at-sea charges
- Buy your internet plan ahead of sailing for a lower price
- Basic plan for messaging; streaming plan only if you need video
- Use free apps like WhatsApp, iMessage, or FaceTime over the Wi-Fi
- Download movies, music, and books at home to enjoy free at sea
- Catch up over free Wi-Fi when you reach a port
- Make sure someone at home has the cruise line's emergency number
- Get help: call Bill at (330) 200-8042

AT A GLANCE

A Picture to Follow Along

Which Internet Plan Do You Need?

Match the plan to how you want to stay in touch.

Unplug

No plan at all
Use free port Wi-Fi
Download shows at home

Stay in Touch

Basic messaging plan
Texting and email
Share photos with family

Video Calls

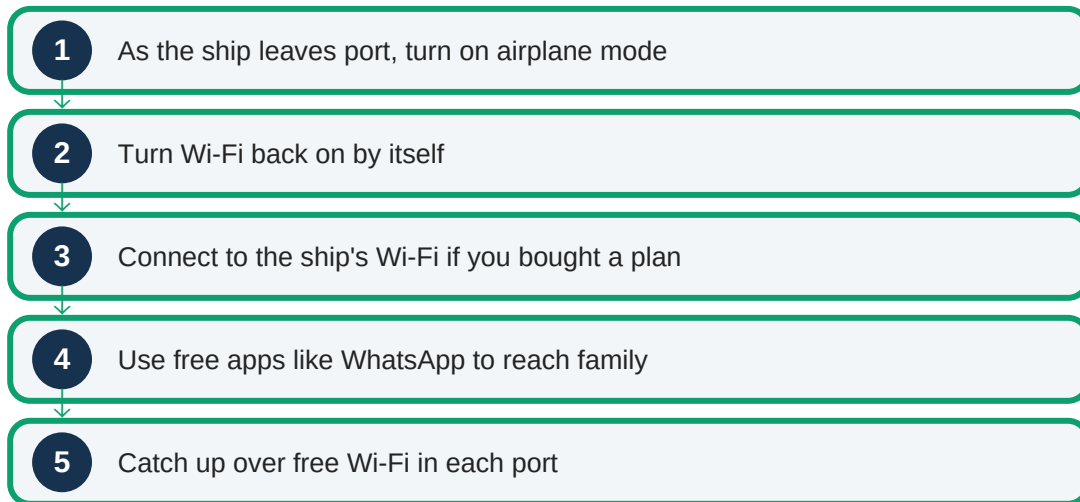
Streaming plan
Video calls home
Watch shows at sea

AT A GLANCE

A Second Look

Keeping Your Bill Safe at Sea

The habit that stops a surprise phone bill.



BEFORE YOU GO

A Note From Bill

A quick note from Bill. I write these guides to make home tech a little less frustrating, and I do my best to keep every step accurate and up to date. Still, every home, device, and setup is a bit different, so I can't promise a guide will match yours exactly or fix your particular problem. These guides are for general information only — they're not professional, legal, or financial advice, and they don't replace your device's own manual or the manufacturer's instructions. Please go slow, use your own good judgment, and use everything here at your own risk. If a step involves electrical wiring, a gas appliance, a water heater, plumbing, or climbing a ladder — or if anything just doesn't feel safe — please stop and call a licensed professional (or give me a call at 330-200-8042). Bill's Home Tech and Bill Davis can't be responsible for any damage, data loss, or injury that results.



HOW I CAN HELP

Your Visit — and My Promise

In-home visit — \$99 flat for your first visit. No contracts and no surprise charges, and a 30-day follow-up is included.

Remote Support — \$49 for a screen-share session. I only connect with your permission, you watch the whole time, and you can end anytime. If I can't fix it over the screen-share, I refund the \$49 — and if it turns out you need me in person, that \$49 goes toward your visit. It's included free for Support Plan members (\$39/mo).

GOOD TO KNOW

My promise — If you're not 100% satisfied with your visit, I'll come back at no charge, or refund the full \$99. No questions, no awkwardness. That's how I'd want to be treated.

Call or text **(330) 200-8042** · Book a visit: **billshometech.com/book** · **bill@billshometech.com**

This free guide is for general information only — not professional advice, and no substitute for your device's own manual. Any prices or outside products mentioned can change; please confirm current details before you buy. Please use your own good judgment and follow it at your own risk — for anything involving electricity, gas, water, or heights, stop and call a licensed professional. Bill's Home Tech and Bill Davis can't be responsible for any damage, data loss, or injury that results. © 2026 Bill's Home Tech, LLC.