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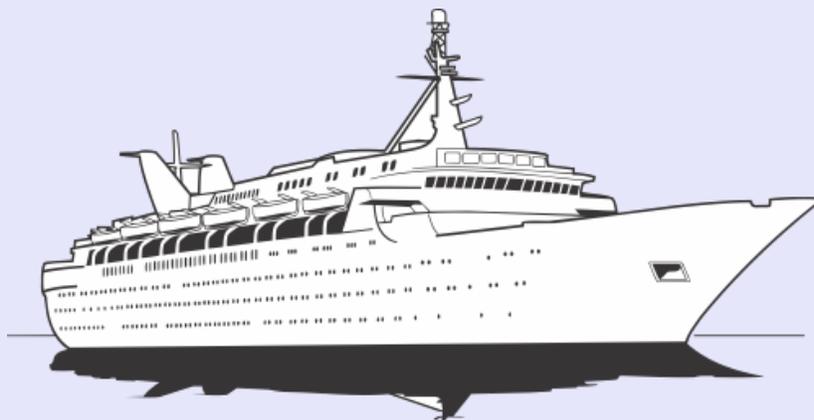
#### Stay Connected... Or Not?

by Sunni the Cruise Lady

#### Cruise ships – Very Expensive and Extremely Slow

Just a decade ago, we boarded cruise ships and locked up our cell phones in the in-room safe and disconnected for the week. It was liberating! These days we can stay connected even out at sea.

Newer cruise ships are being built with cell towers and Wi-Fi hot spots, and the older ships have been modified to keep up with the demands of the “connected” generation. No longer are those cell phones locked in the safe. Stroll down the promenade and you’ll see people on their phones. Tablets and laptops lighting the path.



Cruise ships have internet café’s, but most people bring their own devices. Ships will have ‘hot spots’ where you can get Wi-Fi, and some boast the entire ship is a hotspot. This means you can get Wi-Fi in your cabin.

You’ll have to pay a per minute fee, which ranges from \$.50-75/minute. There are also packages that may save you money. Plan to spend about \$30/hour at a

minimum. The first \$4-9 of that is the 'connection' fee, then you're on your way- But then there is the speed to consider. Remember 90's dial up? This is what we're experiencing here.

In addition to super-slow speed, some lines have blocked the use of mail programs like Outlook, Live Mail, and Thunderbird. You may not be able to download it, log off, read and answer and then upload it.

### **Free Wiffee?**

I recently read a funny in the 'Reader's Digest' where a middle age woman concluded her fast food order with "and I'll try the wiffee." At the clerk's confused look she pointed to the sign that said "Free Wi-Fi with order". It's everywhere and we're using it everywhere, but should we?

It frustrates my son that I order pizza by phone. In 30 seconds, I can make a call and my pizza is underway. He's still picking out toppings, but he does everything online. In the time it takes me to eat a bagel and drink a cup of coffee, he can check the due date of his credit card, balance a check book and buy 100 shares of Panera Bread on the open market. Not coincidentally, that's the same amount of time for the guy in the next booth to capture my passwords to my credit card, bank and brokerage accounts. It does happen. It's best to stick to sites that have no login and no personal information when using public Wi-Fi.

### **High Flying Wi-Fi**

Years ago airplane seats would be filled with sleepers and the occasional reader and crossword worker. It was hours of dead time and we used the time to relax.

That's all changed now with Wi-Fi. It's in the airports and now it's in the planes. Now these hours are an excellent way to catch up on work or projects. Some airports have complimentary Wi-Fi that works throughout the airport. Others have a plan available for purchase. It's usually less than \$10 and may extend to your next destination (same day). This is particular handy when you have a two or more hour layover. So read the fine print when purchasing and remember, even if you're paying for it, there is no real security there. Don't log into sensitive sites.

Onboard a flight is different. Even if you've just paid for a plan in the airport, it's not going to work at 20,000 feet. Some carriers (Southwest comes to mind) has 'free Wi-Fi TV'. You can log on free to watch some TV shows and movies, but this won't grant you access to email. For that you'll need to pay another fee. Expect to pay a pretty penny based on the duration of your flight. It's not too expensive, but when contemplating the purchase, keep in mind your device battery will probably not last the duration of a long flight.

*Sunni Drisgill is the owner and manager of BTS Cruise and Tour in Towson.*

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