

Should You Have Wi-Fi on Your Corporate or Charter Jet? What Operators Should Know About Cabin Connectivity



Wi-Fi technology and cabin connectivity options are constantly evolving in the private aviation world with innovations in high-speed browsing, media streaming, and talk/text capabilities.

If you are considering having a connectivity system installed or getting an upgrade, there are a few factors to consider, including who is flying on the aircraft and what their needs are, whether it is worth the cost, and what the available connectivity options are on the market.

Factors to Consider for Cabin Connectivity

Connectivity options are available with various capabilities. Deciding which one will be the right choice for you will depend on a combination of the following factors.

Aircraft Use and Passengers

How the aircraft is used - either for private use or charter flights - and who will be spending time on board will impact what connectivity services you want available for your passengers.

If the aircraft is commonly used by business professionals, the aircraft should be equipped with an internet option that allows passengers to connect to business applications and video calls/meetings. For passengers who want to relax, you may want movies, TV shows, and music available via either a pre-loaded media library or streaming service. If you need some of both, companies like Viasat offer services with business and entertainment capabilities.



Devices

Passengers will likely use their personal devices for web browsing or streaming content during a commercial or charter flight.

Private business aviation, on the other hand, may offer more connectivity options, such as having a large LCD screen onboard with pre-loaded or streaming content. Passengers may even bring larger devices onboard, such as carry-on Apple TV, Plex TV, etc.

Small screens could be installed at each seat for either private or charter use.

Length of Flight

For longer flights, it may be beneficial to have stronger Wi-Fi and more in-flight entertainment (IFE) options to give passengers options while they travel.

A shorter flight might benefit from fewer or more basic options, depending on the clientele.

Location of Flight

Where the aircraft flies will affect what connectivity options are available. Ground-to-air internet connection may only be available wherever that provider has towers. This option is generally only available for domestic flights.

CONNECTIVITY COSTS FOR CORPORATE & CHARTER JETS

Common Connectivity Systems

\$80,000-\$250,000

**Satcom Systems
(ka-band or ku-band)**

\$650,000-\$700,000



Aircraft flying internationally will want a provider that keeps passengers connected even after leaving the country. For international flights, operators might choose satellite internet connections.

How Much Does Cabin Connectivity Cost to Install in Business or Charter Jets?

Most connectivity systems range from \$80,000 to \$250,000. Prices depend on the system requirements for the aircraft, the number of passengers, and the type of service being offered.

For larger, ka-band or ku-band Satcom systems generally cost between \$650,000 and \$700,000. These systems, such as the Collins Aerospace Luxstream or Honeywell JetWave, require tail and fuselage antenna modifications. They are more common on bigger charter or semi-private regional jets.

Are Connectivity Capabilities Worth the Expense?

Be sure to weigh the benefits of having connectivity services against the cost. For corporate or small business jet users, cabin connectivity provides greater convenience, entertainment, and business capabilities. For charter aircraft, passengers are more likely to choose flights that offer cabin connectivity.

Charter flights can also charge passengers for their internet use to cover the costs. Wi-Fi charges

may either be bundled as part of the flight costs or as a separate fee. A baseline Wi-Fi may be available for free with other levels of service available for passengers willing to pay extra.

When and How to Use Cabin Connectivity on a Charter Flight?

How internet services may be distributed amongst passengers will depend on the type of aircraft. For example, on small to midsize corporate jets, there is generally a switch in the flight deck where the crew can turn on and off the Wi-Fi for all passengers in the cabin. Most charter operators include connectivity services within the flight hour lease.

What Else Do You Need to Know about Aircraft Connectivity?

As you're shopping for connectivity services, keep these additional considerations in mind.

- Find out what is the latest technology available and pay attention to upcoming releases. Companies are moving toward 5G and LTE networks. Older technology may be cheaper, but it will not be supported by these future upgrades. (For example, Gogo's ATG Classic systems will no longer function after January 1, 2026.)
- Compare services from different manufacturers to make an informed decision.
- Compare how rates for services are charged (e.g., monthly rates vs pay for what is used).

