Carnival plans enhanced high-speed Internet fleetwide

By Rick Lundstrom on November, 3 2014  |  Catering

Carnival Corporation announced today an enhanced high-speed Internet service to eventually be rolled out to all 101 of its ships on all nine of its brands.

“This technology innovation is expected to revolutionize how millions of its passengers stay in touch during their cruise and generate even greater interest in cruise vacations, especially among the tech-savvy millennial generation,” said a release from Carnival.

WiFi@Sea™ will integrate strategically located land-based antennas installed along cruise routes, Wi-Fi from a port connection and advanced satellites.

Carnival’s "smart hybrid" network is designed to provide passengers and crew with faster and more stable Internet access throughout their voyage. Carnival Corporation has been piloting this technology for more than a year. Pricing will vary by brand upon service rollout.
The integrated network is built to seamlessly switch among its various technology solutions to give passengers the highest available bandwidth capacity and strength of signal. Carnival says the network will be capable of providing Internet connectivity speeds that can be roughly 10 times faster than those previously offered on Carnival ships.

Following the initial launch in North America in fourth quarter of this year for ships sailing in the Caribbean, Carnival Corporation is scheduled to roll out the technology globally. Under the current plan, the expansion will continue with Alaska in summer of 2015 and will extend to the Mediterranean, Baltic, Western European and Asian regions in 2015 and 2016. The technology will eventually be available on all nine of the company's leading global brands – AIDA Cruises, Carnival Cruise Lines, Costa Cruises, Cunard, Holland America Line, P&O Cruises UK, P&O Cruises Australia, Princess Cruises and Seabourn.

The newly equipped ships will connect to the new wireless network via multiple technologies – port Wi-Fi, long-range Wi-Fi and a fleet of advanced satellite systems over multiple frequency bands. The network will seamlessly switch back and forth between connection types based on which option will provide the best user experience at that time. Much like a cell phone changing from one data connection to another while moving across a coverage area, the toggle between networks will be transparent for travelers and managed behind the scenes by a high-tech system.

In looking to the future the hybrid approach to Internet connectivity at sea will allow Carnival Corporation to add new technologies to the network as they become available. Similarly, the scalable model will allow the company to extend the network as it adds new ports of calls and routes to its upcoming ship itineraries.