

Breakdown/Showfax Newsletter

Vol 7 No. 6

June 17, 2003

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The Wi-Fi Revolution

More information for those planning to travel outside the U.S. this summer and fall. Those looking for wireless Internet access (or Wi-Fi) will now have more options than ever, in places ranging from Amsterdam to Mount Everest to the Dead Sea.

At www.wifinder.com you will find a comprehensive list of points of public access to Wi-Fi from around the world. Type in London, for example, and you'll find over 60 sites that provide commercial Internet access. The tricky part, it would seem, is finding a service provider that either has a U.S. counterpart, or who is willing to take you on a temporary basis. But with all the service providers cropping up all over Europe and Asia, that shouldn't be too difficult. HubHop at www.hubhop.com will take care of all your business in the Netherlands. In England and Germany, you will find dozens of T-Mobile accounts, but be warned: your American T-Mobile account is NOT valid, so you should check ahead about subscriptions at www.t-mobile.co.uk/hotspot. Boingo customers are more fortunate as the company (listed at www.boingo.com) does provide international service to all its American customers. If you plan to stay in one area, you might be better off signing up with a local provider. Telia Homerun of Sweden (www.homerun.telia.com), for example, has Scandinavia pretty much covered, as well as a dozen or so international airports in North America, Asia and elsewhere. It shares a roaming agreement with Openzone (www.bt.com/openzone), the Wi-Fi service of BT, the British telecommunications company, although using it costs extra. For its own part, however, Openzone recently launched the Cloud, which provides thousands of British pubs with Wi-Fi service. Swisscom Europort (www.swisscom.com/eurospot), the other major provider in Europe, is now offering about 800 hot spots throughout

You Need IM to CYA

It is a fact that email is the most successful and most used part of the Internet. Given that we all agree that the "need for speed" is more necessary than ever, how long will it be before real-time conversation, AKA Instant Messaging via the Internet makes email slow by comparison?

As more and more people discover the world of Instant Messaging, new programs fight to cut out the greatest support and the most users. The greatest weakness of Instant Messaging is that you and your friends all need to be using the same program, so if your friends are using AOL Instant Messenger as opposed to another program, you will want to be where your friends are....and so you see, it could be a winner take all proposition. These programs don't all offer the same values however and have distinctions that you may want to consider.

AIM or AOL Instant Messenger sparked the whole one-on-one chat thing. AIM used to be for AOL users only, now anyone with Internet access is a player. Services such as Voice Chat that allows you to talk online is available in the newest version (AIM 5.1). You can also create a personal profile, view customized stock and news, share files and add ICQ users to your "Buddy Lists". There is also a new status indicator that automatically replies with a customized message to those trying to contact you when you are away from your desk, busy, on vacation, drinking wine, getting an eye exam because you spend too much time in front of a computer and so on. One problem with AIM is that it tends to disconnect easily which can be frustrating.

Another program is Yahoo Messenger. Users meet in chat rooms and continue conversations on a one-on-one level with services rivaling AIM such as voice chat, stock and news as well as email through Yahoo. If you are a Windows user with a fast (Broadband) connection you can also set up a Webcam to broadcast live video through Yahoo Messenger.

MSN messenger incorporates the same list of services plus you can also send a message to a pager. If you are a Windows user, you can make phone calls to anywhere in the world. Other services such as personal profile information isn't allowed and the ability to meet unknown users through the system is limited...this might not be such a bad thing however and all in all the list of services is more limited than Yahoo or AOL.

ICQ is what really gave Instant Messaging a push. ICQ means "I seek you" in cybertalk. In the ICQ network, users have a number which is used as their chat identity. ICQ has great multilingual technology and can be viewed by a wide range of individuals speaking different languages.

Fast email is no longer the fastest way to communicate; Instant Messaging has made great strides in the business environment. So in the future, if you want to do business, you better have an IM account to CYA.

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Wi-Fi Con't

the Continent. As usual, it's always best to check out these websites before you travel, just to get the lay of the land.

For those in the entertainment business, it's nice to know that most, if not all, of the major film festivals and industry conferences now provide Wi-Fi access. And if you're planning a trip to Australia, you'll be happy to know that all McDonald's restaurants Down Under are now equipped with Wi-Fi, as are several hundred in South Korea, Taiwan, Japan and Thailand. (Certain meal combinations even come with an hour of free access.) And many Apple computer stores throughout Europe beam free Wi-Fi to the surrounding neighborhood, as they do in the U.S. If you're planning to spend a great deal of time traveling, don't despair: you can now surf while flying! Lufthansa and British Airways recently introduced trans-Atlantic Wi-Fi with Boeing's Connexion service. Japan Airlines and Scandinavian Airlines System which offer the service soon. If you're taking the rails in Sweden, Wi-Fi service along several routes have already been instituted, with more to follow this fall. The Gare du Nord station in Paris was also recently equipped with Wi-Fi, and free access along the central Parisian bus routes will be available through the end of the summer. (Users can sign up at www.wixos.net). The German rail system, the Bundesban, recently announced similar plans for access. Some additional tips for accessing Wi-Fi: (1) with most providers, you pay through an on-screen credit card process that is initiated when you computer detects a network, although that often means you can choose from among several competing providers; (2) some of the more comprehensive sites include hotspot-locations.com, wi-fizone.org and wifinder.com; (3) for non-commercial networks, try wififreespot.com; (4) since technical problems can still plague these systems, especially those that are new, it pays to have a Web-based

e-mail account, like those offered at www.hotmail.com, as a backup; (5) best to use a PC with Windows XP or a Mac with OS X or later system, as these operating systems have network-detecting abilities; (6) if all else fails and no network can be located in your particular area, head on over to the local university or library, where there is sure to be at least some kind of service, however spotty.

Sites Express

www.protozoo.com/mutant - construct new and unusual faces using elements from existing head shots.

<http://oak.cats.ohiou.edu/~bakera/ArticleH.htm> - get tips on what makes an online relationship successful.

uglydress.com - a portfolio of bridesmaids dresses from hell.

www.friendster.com - make friends with the friends of your friends.

<http://www.wibsite.com/wiblog/dull/> - self-proclaimed "dullest Web diary in the world".