

Cybercafes Too Costly For Many

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The cost of Internet access in cybercafes varies greatly country-to-country according to a recent study by Foreign Policy magazine.

Prices tend to be higher in Western Europe and North America, where an hour of Internet time averages anywhere from \$4.30 in Canada to \$7.00 in Sweden. Elsewhere, prices can be much lower. In South America, prices range from \$1.00 in Bolivia to \$3.45 in Brazil. In Africa, prices go as low as \$0.60 in Ghana to \$5.40 in Nigeria, though most countries see prices of between \$1.00 and \$2.00 per hour. Prices in Asia and Eastern Europe are generally under \$3.00.

Worldwide Cybercafe Rates, April-May 2004 (In dollars per hour)

Australia	\$7.50
Japan	\$7.50
Cayman Islands	\$7.20
UK	\$7.00
Saudi Arabia	\$6.60
Sweden	\$6.45
Austria	\$6.00
Nigeria	\$5.40
New Zealand	\$5.25
Singapore	\$5.00
US	\$5.00
Canada	\$4.30
Bhutan	\$4.20
Israel	\$4.00
Brazil	\$3.45
Argentina	\$3.00
Chile	\$3.00
Colombia	\$3.00
Iran	\$3.00
Qatar	\$3.00
Russia	\$3.00
Vietnam	\$3.00
Lebanon	\$2.75
China	\$2.50
Haiti	\$2.50
Namibia	\$2.48
Kenya	\$2.28
Libya	\$2.25
Mexico	\$2.25
Tunisia	\$2.20
Nicaragua	\$2.00
Panama	\$2.00
Philippines	\$2.00
Bangladesh	\$1.70
Cuba	\$1.50
Egypt	\$1.50
Guatemala	\$1.50
Kazakhstan	\$1.50
Algeria	\$1.40
India	\$1.35
Dominican Republic	\$1.15
Azerbaijan	\$1.10
Afghanistan	\$1.00
Bolivia	\$1.00
Indonesia	\$0.66
Ghana	\$0.60
Pakistan	\$0.60
Turkey	\$0.50

Source: Foreign Policy, July 2004

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But prices alone do not tell the whole story. Taking into account the spending cash of the people in each country, the cost for one hour of Internet time can cost a full days wage for a large percentage of the population. For example, although it may cost just \$1.35 an hour to surf the Web in India, over 25% of the population lives on \$1.00 per day or less. Nigeria also has over one-quarter of its people living on \$1.00 per day, but one hour of Net access there costs \$5.40. Compare that to the US, where cybercafés are slightly cheaper (\$5.00 an hour), but less than 5% of the population lives on \$1.00 or less a day.

Some citizens are getting a good deal. Turkish Web café visitors pay only \$0.50 per hour in cybercafés, and less than 5% of their countrymen live on a dollar or less a day. Overall, what's striking is the exorbitant cost of Net access for many people. While tourists may be able to afford

such rates, spending one dollar on Net access when you need that dollar for a full day is an outlandish luxury. And while the Internet offers a pathway towards making the world come together and bridge cultural differences, right now national differences are hindering a true global discussion.

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