

Iridium launches Wi-Fi hotspot for extreme roaming

September 7 2011, By PETER SVENSSON , AP Technology Writer



This undated photo provided by Iridium Communications Inc., shows the Iridium AxcessPoint which can provide Wi-Fi enabled smartphones, tablets and laptops everywhere via the Iridium network using Extreme or Iridium 9555 satellite phone. (AP Photo/Iridium Communications Inc.)

Want to get email on your iPhone or BlackBerry in the middle of the ocean, or in the Arctic? Now you can - but it'll cost you.

Satellite phone company Iridium Communications Inc. said Wednesday that it is launching a cigarette-pack-sized box that connects to an Iridium phone.

The box produces a Wi-Fi hotspot that smartphones and [tablet computers](#) can connect to. The phone relays that connection to satellites overhead, which then [shunt](#) the signal to a ground station connected to

the Internet.

The data speeds will be slower than dial-up, but they should be good enough for meaningful use of email, Iridium CEO Matt Desch said.

Iridium, which is based in McLean, Va., said the AxxessPoint will cost less than \$200, but it needs to be paired with a phone that costs about \$1,000. The data connection will cost about \$1 per minute.

Iridium phones can already connect laptops to the Internet, through the use of a cable.

AT&T Inc. sells an alternative solution for those who need Internet access where there are zero bars of regular coverage: a "Genus" [smartphone](#) that connects directly to a satellite. However, that satellite covers only North America, while the Iridium network of 66 satellites spans the entire world.

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