



## Hotel Wi-Fi: the right reflexes to have before connecting when traveling

By Floriane

It's become a real headache: when we travel, the Internet is now almost indispensable. Since we [often work remotely](#) and spend a lot of time planning our itineraries online, we connect to numerous Wi-Fi networks: in hotels, cafés, railway stations and airports.

Over time, we've developed a few habits. Before connecting to a public Wi-Fi, we always check the **network name**, avoid certain **sensitive actions** and, above all, **almost systematically activate our VPN**.

A few good reflexes are all you need to take advantage of Wi-Fi at your hotel or elsewhere without exposing yourself unnecessarily, and continue to travel connected with a lighter mind.

## Why hotel Wi-Fi requires a minimum of vigilance

When you connect to a hotel's Wi-Fi, you're usually joining a network used by lots of other people, and [hotel Wi-Fi networks are among the easiest to exploit](#).

In most cases, everything goes smoothly. You **check your e-mails**, prepare **for the next day**, **send a few messages** and forget about it.

But a **public network remains more exposed than a private connection**. It can be poorly configured, insecure or simply used by people you don't know. It's precisely this "shared" aspect that calls for a little caution.

The best-known risk is **data interception**. Simply put, someone with malicious intent can try to get between your device and the network to observe what's going on. This is often referred to as a "man-in-the-middle" attack, but there's no need to remember the technical term. What you need to understand is that public Wi-Fi doesn't always offer the same level of confidentiality as a personal connection.

Fortunately, many sites today are more secure than before, thanks to HTTPS, the famous little padlock you see in your browser. This is a good thing. But that doesn't mean you should click everywhere with your eyes closed, especially when you're connecting from an unfamiliar network.

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## **Fake Wi-Fi networks: the simple trap**

There's another very real risk when traveling: fake Wi-Fi hotspots, as [we've seen in some airports](#).

The principle is quite simple. An ill-intentioned person creates a Wi-Fi network with a name that sounds credible, precisely to encourage travelers to connect to it without thinking too hard. Once connected to the wrong network, your Internet traffic passes through an access point over which you have no control.

Here are a few examples of names that may seem reliable at first glance:

- Hotel Guest
- Hotel WiFi Free
- WestHotelName
- Internet Lobby
- Free Hotel WiFi

## **Good habits to adopt before going online**

### **Check the exact network name at reception**

A simple reflex: ask reception for the exact name of the hotel's Wi-Fi network.

Before connecting, take a few seconds to ask reception for the official name of the hotel's Wi-Fi network. This simple check eliminates the risk of stumbling across a bogus hotspot.

### **VPN, our security reflex when traveling**

Over the years, the VPN has become one of our travel tools. Not the most glamorous, granted. It's not the stuff of dreams, like a sunrise on a beach or a confidential address found in a back alley. But in practice, it really does simplify our lives.

When we travel, we connect to the Internet everywhere: hotels, cafés, train

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stations, airports, accommodation, coworking spaces... Sometimes to consult an itinerary, sometimes to manage reservations, sometimes to work. And when we do, we prefer not to depend solely on the level of security of the network we're connected to.

A VPN, or **virtual private network**, encrypts the connection between your device and the Internet. Simply put, it creates a kind of **secure tunnel**. Even if you're using hotel Wi-Fi, your data becomes much harder to read by anyone trying to intercept it.

What we really like is that it's automatic. Once you've installed the application, all you have to **do is activate it before connecting to public Wi-Fi**. Choose a server, wait a few seconds, then use the Internet as normal.

### Why choose a log-free VPN?

Not all VPNs are created equal. When it comes to travel and confidentiality, one point often comes up: data retention policy.

A [no-log VPN](#) means that the service advertises that it does not retain its users' browsing history. In practice, this means it doesn't keep detailed records of what you do online.

This is an important criterion, because using a VPN also means trusting the VPN provider. So it's not just a matter of **installing one at random** because it comes up first in a search. It's better to take the time to look at its reputation, privacy policy, countries of operation, compatible devices and ease of use.

When traveling, we prefer a VPN that's easy to use. Because the best security tool is the one you actually use. If the application is too complicated, too slow or too unstable, you end up disabling it. And then it's of little use.

The criteria that matter most to us :

- a simple application on phone and computer;
- a stable connection;
- a policy without clear logs;
- servers in several countries;
- rapid activation;

- good compatibility with travel use.

## **Situations where we always activate our VPN**

There are times when you don't even ask yourself the question.

When you're on public Wi-Fi, you activate the VPN automatically.

This is the case in **hotels**, of course, but also in **airports** and **train stations**. The long waits between flights are often the time to get out the computer and get a few things done. Except that airport networks are very busy, sometimes open, sometimes with similar names. In this context, VPN becomes a real basic reflex.

The same goes for **cafés**. We love to settle down somewhere with a computer and a drink. It's often in these moments that we prepare the next part of our trip, sort out photos or answer a few messages. But then again, Wi-Fi is shared with all the customers around us.

It's also used in **coworking** spaces when you're not familiar with the network configuration.

## What not to do on public Wi-Fi

Even with a VPN, there are a few simple things you can do. On the Wi-Fi of a hotel, café, train station or airport, here's our little checklist:

- **Don't connect to the first network you come across:** always check the exact name of the Wi-Fi, especially in hotels, by asking at reception.
- **Avoid sending sensitive documents:** passports, proof of identity, bank documents or important business information.
- **Don't enter your bank details on a dubious site:** before paying, check that the site is **https** and that the little padlock appears in the browser.
- **Don't forget to activate your VPN:** whenever you use public Wi-Fi, you activate it almost automatically, especially when checking e-mail, booking transport or logging on to a personal account.
- **Avoid staying connected to your sensitive accounts:** bank, insurance, administrative space, professional e-mail... once you've finished, log off.
- **Disable automatic Wi-Fi connection:** this prevents your phone or computer from connecting to an unsecured network by itself.
- **Update before you leave:** phone, computer, browser, important applications... it's always easier to do at home than with a temperamental hotel Wi-Fi.

## Our simple routine before going online

Today, when we arrive at a hotel, our routine is almost always the same.

Ask reception for the exact Wi-Fi name. Connect only to the network indicated. Activate VPN on phone and computer. Check that the sites you're using are secure. And if anything seems strange, we use our mobile connection instead.

It's not a perfect routine, but it has the merit of being simple. And when traveling, it's often what works best.

Don't hesitate to drop us a **line** below if you have any questions here or on [Instagram](#), we'll be delighted to get back to you.

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