

Where to Keep Your Photos

by Mike Sullivan | Cove Apple Club | March, 2015

The photos and videos we take are the most precious, most personal and most valuable bits of digital data we have. No one wants to ever lose a photo, and yet we want to be able to easily share our photos as well as view them wherever we are. And, images take up a lot of space, and we may soon find ourselves with hundreds of gigabytes of photos we need to store, backup, protect and migrate to new devices through the years.

So, what's the best solution?

Here are four popular approaches to photo storage and photo sharing, along with my recommendations:

Personal Cloud Storage Hard Disk Drives (Western Digital, Seagate, others)

These are big hard disk drives that connect to your home LAN via Wi-Fi or plug into your router via Ethernet, and let you view, upload, stream and share your media on your LAN, as well as over the Internet using free apps available for each device.

The only benefit to these devices is their vast amount of cheap storage — as much as 4Tb for under \$300 — and no monthly or annual fees.

But that's where the benefits end, especially regarding photos. Because these Personal Cloud devices are just souped-up, network-connected hard disks, they suffer from all the perils of any hard disk drive, and since they are also connected to the Internet, they **also** suffer from all the perils of having your prized personal information potentially accessible to hackers and malware.

- **All** hard drives fail eventually. When these Personal Cloud hard drives fail (and they will), they take your entire photo library with them, and you're unlikely to have another backup.
- There's no off-site backup to the data on the Personal Cloud drive, so any disaster at your house means you lose all your photos.
- Streaming and sharing over the Internet can be slow, since you are throttled by the upstream speed of your home Internet connection.

Personal Cloud Devices: **NOT RECOMMENDED.**



Flickr.com (Free online photo sharing & storage service from Yahoo!)

Flickr was among the first and is still one of the most popular free online photo storage and photo sharing sites. Flickr has a very good set of features for uploading, viewing, organizing and sharing your photos, and Yahoo! gives every Flickr user a massive **1 Terabyte** of free online storage.

But there's a catch: since it's free, you are not the customer. You are the product Yahoo! is selling to advertisers. And since you're not the customer, you won't get any customer support. If you have problems, you'll need to figure out a solution on your own, or reach out to the Flickr user community online. Other downsides to the "free" Flickr approach:

- They run ads against your photos, galleries and albums, on every screen of all the mobile apps and on the Flickr website.
- An ad-free Pro version is \$50/year, but even then there's no way to pay for more storage or get real customer support.

If you can swallow all of that, Flickr may be an excellent answer for all but the most demanding user. Flickr apps are very good (if you can ignore all the ads), the sharing, editing and organizing features are very good, and since it is running on Yahoo!'s platform, performance, reliability and security are very good as well.

Flickr: **Recommended if** you want **Free***, can stand the ads, and have typical expectations for what you want to do with your photos. On the Web: **flickr.com**



Apple Photos app / iCloud Photo Library

Photos is Apple's new app for OS X and iOS that uses the new iCloud Photo Library feature of iCloud Drive to store, share and replicate your photos across all your devices, and it also makes them available on the Web at

icloud.com/photos

Apple is decommissioning the iPhoto on the Mac and iOS, the Aperture app on the Mac, and the Camera Roll feature in Photos on iOS, all to be replaced by the new Photos app. Photos is free and will be rolling out in April after the public beta test period ends.

Photos pros:

- Photos lets you optimize the storage on your iPad/iPhone. If you turn on Optimize [device] Storage, iCloud Photo Library will automatically manage the size of your library on your iOS device, so you can make the most of your device's storage and access more photos than ever. iCloud Photo Library stores the original, high-resolution photos and videos in iCloud and can keep lightweight, device-optimized versions on each of your devices. As long as you have enough storage, recent photos and videos that you access the most will stay on your device at full resolution.
- Photos keeps all your photos in sync across all devices. Edit a photo on your Mac, the edited version appears on your iPhone. Delete a photo from your iPad, it's deleted from your Mac, etc.
- Photos backs up all your photos to the iCloud Photo Library (**as long as you pay for enough space or stay under the free 5Gb storage limit**)
- Photos functionality is integrated into all of Apple's iOS & Mac OS apps

Photos cons:

- Right now, Photos has nowhere near the editing and organizing features of Aperture, Apple's pro-level photo app; however, Photos probably does everything most casual users want to do, and does so easily.
- iCloud Photo Library can get very pricey for large collections of photos. Apple charges \$48/year for 200Gb; \$120/year for 500Gb, and a staggering \$240/year for 1Tb of storage, with no higher tiers available.

Apple Photos / iCloud Photo Library: **Recommended** for most casual users, but watch your iCloud storage space or it will get expensive!



SmugMug (Online photo storage, websites & sharing at SmugMug.com)

SmugMug is one of the original fully-paid photo hosting/sharing sites. They are privately owned, and have a very highly polished, highly developed product along with a suite of apps for iPhone/iPad and Android.

SmugMug really shines at two standout features: **UNLIMITED** photo storage, and beautiful photo websites. For a flat fee every month (less if paid annually), you can upload an UNLIMITED number of photos and videos to SmugMug, and access them on any computer, smartphone or tablet in the world. SmugMug has never lost a customer's photo, and their product runs on top of the Amazon Web Services infrastructure, so the reliability, performance and security of the system are without equal. You can even run SmugMug on your own domain to give your photos a home of their own.

Because all SmugMug accounts are **paid** (after a free 30-day trial period), **you** are the customer, and so you have access to free, live customer support 24/7/365. Paid plans start at just \$40/year, and remember, that's for UNLIMITED photo storage.

SmugMug: **Recommended** as the best-in-class for price/performance, pro features, sharing and editing.

For more information:

- Try SmugMug free with this link: <http://goo.gl/QzjLcY>
- Read more about iCloud Photo Library and the new Photos app: <https://support.apple.com/en-us/HT204264>