

The cheapest managed host is rarely the cheapest

Hosting sticker price is the smallest line in the real cost. Maintenance hours and the revenue a slow site loses usually dominate, which is why a higher monthly plan can be the cheaper one.

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Pick a host on the monthly sticker price and you are optimizing the smallest line in the real cost. The two larger lines are the hours you spend keeping the site running and the revenue a slow site quietly loses.

The sticker is one line of three

The true 12-month cost is the plan price, plus maintenance hours times your hourly rate, plus the conversions a slow load time costs you. A premium managed tier and a budget tier differ on all three, not just the plan price.

Where a higher plan wins

On the planning baseline, a premium managed tier runs about 35 dollars per site a month against about 16 for a budget tier. But the premium tier removes roughly 60% of your maintenance hours where the budget tier removes about 40%, and it tends to hit a faster load time. At a real hourly rate and real traffic, the maintenance and lost-revenue lines swing the total far more than the 19 dollar plan difference, so the higher monthly plan is often the lower 12-month cost.

The sticker can be a first-term promo

There is a second reason the sticker misleads: at the budget end it is often an introductory rate for the first term only, not the price you keep paying. On entry managed-WordPress plans the renewal commonly runs several times the sign-up rate once the first term ends. As of June 2026 SiteGround advertises its StartUp plan around 2.99 dollars a month and renews it at about 17.99, and Bluehost advertises Basic around 2.95 dollars a month on a three-year term and renews it at about 8.99 (list prices that move, and the lowest sign-up rate usually requires prepaying one to three years up front). Premium flat-rate managed hosts such as Kinsta and Cloudways do not run this gap, so their first-year number is close to their steady-state number. Price the renewal rate, not the promo, before you compare.

Because the crossover depends on your maintenance hours, hourly rate and traffic, the only honest answer is to put your own numbers in and read the 12-month total, not the sticker.

Frequently asked questions

Is the cheapest managed host actually the cheapest?

Usually not. The true 12-month cost is the plan price plus maintenance hours times your rate plus the revenue a slow site loses. The sticker is the smallest of the three lines, so a higher monthly plan that cuts maintenance and improves speed can be cheaper overall.

What really drives managed hosting cost?

Maintenance hours and the conversions a slow load time quietly costs you, not the monthly plan price. A premium tier that reduces both can beat a budget tier despite a higher sticker.

Does managed hosting price go up after the first year?

At the budget end, usually yes. The advertised sticker is often an introductory rate for the first term only, and the renewal can run several times higher. As of June 2026 SiteGround StartUp renews at about 17.99 dollars a month from a roughly 2.99 sign-up rate, and Bluehost Basic renews at about 8.99 from around 2.95 on a three-year term, with the lowest intro rates usually requiring one to three years prepaid (list prices that move). Premium flat-rate managed hosts like Kinsta and Cloudways price close to flat, so compare on the renewal rate, not the promo.

Compare your true 12-month cost

Free, no signup: agent.mue.app/tools/managed-hosting-cost-calculator

agent.mue.app/articles/the-cheapest-managed-host-is-rarely-the-cheapest

