

What OpenClaw actually costs

Cost breakdown · April 2026 · Prepared by AFTA

OpenClaw's advertised \$59/month is a platform fee — not the total bill. AI model API costs are charged separately. Below is an honest breakdown of what each option realistically costs per month.

OPTION	PLATFORM / HOSTING	TYPICAL API COST	REALISTIC TOTAL
OpenClaw Cloud	\$59/mo	\$25-50/mo (small team)	~\$85-110/mo
OpenClaw self-hosted	\$5-50/mo (VPS)	\$25-50/mo	~\$30-100+/mo + setup & maintenance time
Claude Pro	\$20/mo (all-in)	\$0	\$20/mo
Claude Max	\$200/mo (all-in)	\$0	\$200/mo

January 2026: Anthropic closed the OAuth loophole that let OpenClaw run against a Claude Pro/Max subscription. Third-party harnesses must now use a pay-per-token API key. The flat-subscription workaround no longer applies.

OPENCLAW MAKES SENSE WHEN

- Running local models (Ollama) — near-zero API cost, ~\$5-8/mo total
- Multi-model routing — engineers optimising cost per task across providers
- Data sovereignty — regulated industries that cannot use cloud AI
- Developers forking or building on the open-source framework

OPENCLAW DOESN'T SAVE MONEY WHEN

- Non-technical teams — maintenance overhead erases any price advantage
- You planned to use a Claude subscription with it — that path is closed
- Simple scheduled workflows — direct Claude API is cheaper and simpler
- Comparing "\$59 vs \$200" — Claude Pro is \$20/mo; OpenClaw Cloud + API is ~\$85-110/mo

Sources: OpenClaw — pricing plans (getopenclaw.ai) · Anthropic — Claude plans & pricing · shareuhack.com — OpenClaw + Claude Code Costs 2026 (OAuth closure, Jan 2026) · Yu-WenHao — OpenClaw Deploy Cost Guide (Feb 2026) · setupopenclaw.com — Cloud vs Self-Hosting Real Cost Comparison