

How to Plan Your Next Vacation in One Breezy Sitting

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Planning a vacation should be as relaxing and eye-opening as the actual journey.

The traditional way of planning vacations — flipping through travel books and magazines — is an exhausting time suck. Lately, we've been planning our dream holidays using travel-planning applications. Globetrotters can find trip inspiration, affordable flights, off-the-map sights, delicious local eats and the best hotels deals right on their [smartphones](#), tablets or computers.

Grab a cup of coffee (or a piña colada if you see a tropical getaway in your midst), plop down on a comfy seat and we'll show you how to map out your next adventure — all from the comfort of your home, office or favorite cafe. All you'll need a reliable Internet connection.

Even if you're saving money for that plane/train/bus ticket, planning a few trips in the meantime will abate the wanderlust, for sure.

SEE ALSO: [Social Travel Apps Broaden Your Vacation Options](#)

Below are a few tech resources that can help adventurers of all experience levels to expertly plan the next voyage.

Step One: Deciding Where To Go



Our must-see destinations list keeps growing after scrolling through many travel-planning apps in our spare time such as [Minube](#).

Minube is an [iOS](#) and desktop app. The app works its magic by suggesting vacation spots that fit your mood, how much time you have or region of the world you want to see. If you're looking for a culinary adventure, the app might suggest slurping up a bowl of authentic Vietnamese pho soup riverside in Ho Chi Minh City or visiting the seaside town of Islantilla in Spain for paella.

On the app, you can explore any city in the world. You'll find plenty of sights to see, places to eat and lodging — plus pictures and tips from fellow travelers. The app accumulates user-uploaded photos and content. Since launching in 2007, the Madrid-based startup's community base has grown to more than 500,000 travelers and locals everywhere. The app is available in Spanish, English, Portuguese, French and Italian. It's a mobile must-have for busy travel planners.

For another photo-heavy guide, try [Trippy](#) — the Pinterest of travel sites. It's a hotbed for inspiration and advice. Your Facebook and Twitter friends fuel the conversation. On [Trippy](#), users harness their social networks to find personal recommendations about travel spots. It's a place where you can follow someone who has been to a place you're going to simply to ask for recommendations.

Step Two: Finding Affordable Flights



Once you've narrowed down your list of possible destinations, it's time to find the best airfare. Your roundtrip ticket will likely be the biggest cost of your trip. From experience, it's best to check travel sites several times a day and throughout a week because ticket prices fluctuate hourly. It would also be ideal to book a few weeks in advance and to check with smaller carriers as well as the major airlines. To keep costs low, make sure to do your research about seasonal prices.

We asked travel blogger Geraldine DeRuiter aka [The Everywhereist](#) how she scores the greatest airfare deals year-round. Her secret is starting the search with [Kayak](#).

Kayak, recently [acquired by Priceline](#), scans hundreds of airfare sites for top deals. Searching the Kayak website, [iOS](#) or [Android](#) app can surface top-notch deals in seconds. The best part besides saving money — if you create a profile, your flight itinerary can be accessed across platforms.

Here are a few more online [airfare tools](#) every budget traveler should know.

Step Three: Budget Hotels



Where to stay is a huge component of any trip. After a long day of eating delicious food, meeting locals and sightseeing, tired travelers need a quiet, comfortable, clean and affordable place to rest.

Luckily, for us, in recent years there's been a growth of online resources helping us hotel hunt. [Gogobot](#) is a people-driven hub for top hotels, vacation rentals, things to do and restaurants. Looking up hotels for our next trip to Mumbai, India, as an example, we received 427 hits for hotels. Vacancies are searchable by popularity, ratings and price per night.

If you have lots of friends who travel or follow wayfaring bloggers on Facebook, Foursquare and Instagram, you can use Tripbirds. [Tripbirds](#) is a travel website that makes hotel recommendations based on your social network. The website turns your friends' mentions, hotel check-ins and mobile photography into a guidebook.

Firstly, you must enter in where you want to go — we used "London" in our test run. After signing into Tripbirds with our Facebook account, the network told me we have friends who have stayed at [The Savoy](#). From here, you can privately message any of your friends for a personal review.

For something a little more authentic, we're told to do as the locals do. The travel bloggers Laura Siciliano-Rosen and Scott Rosen behind [Eat Your World](#) recommend using [Airbnb](#) to find local short-term accommodations. Travelers can choose a wide range of shared rooms, private rooms and entire apartments or houses.

"We've moved toward staying in more apartments than hotels lately, finding them more comfortable, better situated in (real) local neighborhoods, and definitely providing more value for the cost," Laura wrote in an email to *Mashable*.

Another online resource for finding short-term housing is Tripping. [Tripping](#) is platform that connects travelers with locals who are renting out their homes around the world. There are over 750,000 rental spaces ranging from luxurious penthouses to rustic beachside stays.

For last-minute lodging deals, try [Hotel Tonight](#), a free mobile app available on [iOS](#) and [Android](#) devices.

Step Four: Coordinating With Travel Buddies



Finally, you can share all the details with your travel mates.

[Triplt](#) is a helpful mobile and desktop application to get everyone on the same page. Users can plan trips on Triplt privately or in tandem with co-travelers. Creators can choose to share the itinerary by email or link with anyone. Here, you can discuss flights, car rentals and other transportation options. Plus, add additional details about lodging, restaurants and activities.

TripIt is available on iPhone, iPad, Android, Blackberry and Windows Phone 7. It's an easy way to turn all the confirmation emails from airlines, hotels and restaurants into an easily sharable itinerary. If there are any flight delays, cancellations and gate changes, TripIt will conveniently email real-time updates to the group's phones. Plus, it conveniently syncs to your mobile or desktop calendar.

Step Five: Itinerary



All that's left to do is plan how you'll explore a new city, island, coast or country. There are plenty of apps and websites to help you make the best of your time.

If you want to rappel down waterfalls, take a private boat ride through hidden grottos and go swimming in an underwater cave, [Vayable](#) is a great resource to find and book unique experiences. The startup created an online marketplace for local experts and certified guides to connect with interested travelers. On the website, individuals can purchase guided tours, expeditions and adventures.

To find other unique experiences, Siciliano-Rosen from Eat Your World also recommends consulting local blogs and online travel communities including Lonely Planet's Thorntree travel forum (organized by continent, country and trip categories). "[It's] still our favorite for asking other in-the-know travelers specific questions, especially for more off-the-beaten-path destinations," she said.

SEE ALSO: [17 Tips From Instagram's Power Elite For Amazing Travel Photos](#)

For travel inspiration, don't ignore your own social networks. Use [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#) to reach out to wayfaring friends and travel bloggers. Plus, don't forget to throw a search term into [Instagram](#) for a never-ending trove of ideas.

Did we miss any of your favorite travel-inspiration or group-planning apps? Tell us in the comments.

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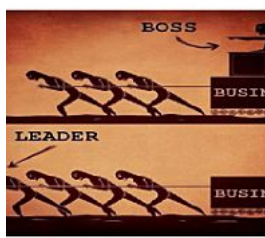


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