

Cruising for travel information

Visit these sites when you plan your next vacation

by Kathleen A. Clark, Priscilla C. Geahigan, Thomas R. Mirkovich, and Anita D. Haynes

The origins of tourism can be traced to the Roman Empire, when wealthy citizens traveled to seaside resorts along the Mediterranean coast for rest and relaxation. Periods of exceptional tourist activity since that time include the 17th century when Grand Tours, or extended travels throughout Europe, were enjoyed by British aristocrats, and the 18th century when health travel gave rise to European spa towns, such as Germany's Baden-Baden. For centuries tourism was enjoyed by only the wealthy, and it was not until the Industrial Revolution, with increased prosperity and mass-transportation, that the less well-off were able to participate. In the last 50 years, tourism has soared to become a huge economic phenomenon enjoyed by millions. According to the World Tourism Organization, "some 613 million tourists worldwide traveled to foreign countries, spending U.S. \$448 billion in 1997."¹ Including domestic travel, tourism worldwide is a \$3 trillion industry.

The selected list of Internet sites in this article covers many aspects of travel and tourism and is designed to serve as an aid to individuals who travel for business or pleasure, as well as academics and industry professionals interested in accessing information on tourism. Travel sites included range from transportation, accommodation, and restaurant guides to tourism guides and international travel resources. Searching the

Internet for information can be very useful to the prospective traveler, and it has become much easier with the advent of search engines such as AltaVista (Access: <http://altavista.digital.com/>), HotBot (Access: <http://www.hotbot.com/>), and Northern Light (Access: <http://www.nlsearch.com/>). As Internet sites constantly change, practice and familiarity with the algorithms of these search engines is highly recommended.

Travel mega sites

These sites offer the broadest range of information available to the would-be traveler and are excellent places to begin gathering information. Encyclopedic in nature, they also serve as a model for identifying and organizing those things that need to be addressed when preparing for a trip.

- **Yahoo!** For the searcher who feels comfortable using structured menus, more than 40 alphabetically listed travel subheadings are available at Yahoo! Included are the typical travel headings, such as lodging, discount transportation, tour packages, travel agencies, restaurants, and literature. Also, included are population-specific subheadings, such as women, Jewish, ecotourism, vegetarian, and gay. Access: <http://www.yahoo.com/Recreation/Travel>.

- **AltaVista.** AltaVista, besides being an excellent Web search engine, has compiled a tri-level menu of travel and vacation resources.

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Subheadings are arranged categorically and geographically. Access: <http://altavista.looksmart.com/altavista.html>.

- **Expedia, Internet Travel Network, PreviewTravel, Travelocity, TravelWeb.**

A plethora of travel-specific Web sites exist that allow searchers



to book airfares and hotel accommodations and arrange for car rentals. The top-rated sites include

Expedia, Internet Travel Network, PreviewTravel, Travelocity, and Travel-Web.

All of these sites have a host of other travel-related information, services, and links, as well.

Access: <http://expedia.msn.com>;

<http://www.itn.net/>;

<http://www.previewtravel.com/>;

<http://www.travelocity.com/>;

<http://www.travelweb.com/>.



General tourist information

Experienced travelers use a variety of strategies to avoid problems and to obtain the best services at the lowest cost—wherever they may be going. Finding information and planning a trip in advance are keys to smart traveling. State and local governments are eager to provide travel information through their tourist offices.

- **Fodor's Travel Service.** This site is a good starting point for getting tourist information for specific locations. Besides its hotel, bed and breakfast, restaurant, and fare finders, it provides a very useful personal trip planner. Currently, this planner allows users to build a customized miniguide to 87 destinations around the world. The trip planner



includes a series of check-lists so

that a user can specify a destination and exactly what kinds of hotel, restaurant, and travel information are needed. Access: <http://www.fodors.com/>.

- **StateSearch.** StateSearch is a service of the National Association of State Information Resource Executives and is designed to serve as a topical clearinghouse for state

government information on the Internet. Tourism is one of 23 categories available for searching within the site. It includes Web links for each of the states, making it an easy way of finding a specific state tourism agency. Access: <http://www.nasire.org/ss/STtourism.html>.

- **The International Association of Convention and Visitor Bureaus (IACVB).** This page includes links to over 350 CVB Web sites for destinations around the world, each of which provides useful information on business and leisure travel. Each listing contains contact information for IACVB member convention and visitor bureaus, listed alphabetically by the country and city in which the office is located. Access: <http://www.iacvb.org/>.

- **Tourism Offices Worldwide Directory.** This index listing contains only official government tourism offices, convention and visitors bureaus, and similar agencies. TOWD currently contains 1,743 entries. Users can select tourism offices from listings by country. Most countries include home and overseas offices. Access: <http://www.towd.com/>.

- **EcoNETT.** EcoNETT is sponsored by The World Travel & Tourism Council and the European Commission. Its mission is to provide environmental guidelines to travel and tourism companies, and to governments worldwide. Its "Internet Resources" section



currently has over 600 files, including Internet sites with content relevant to tourism and the environment. Its "Who's Who" section provides information and links to over 150 eco-related organizations. This site gives comprehensive coverage of sustainable tourism initiatives, as well as provides contacts and links to other sources. Users can search the news stories by destination names or keywords such as "green hotels" or "earthwatch." Access: <http://www.wttc.org/>.

- **HOSTLINE.** This Web site is sponsored by the Nestlé Library of Cornell University's School of Hotel Administration. There are four groupings included in this site: food service, hospitality education, hospitality business, and travel and tourism. The last

category includes a section called "Adventure and Eco-Tourism," which provides over 50 links to other Internet sites. HOSTLINE is a good starting point for checking out eco-tourism and adventure tourism programs. *Access:* <http://www.sha.cornell.edu/library/Hostline/Linkpages/tnt.htm>.

Accommodations

Arranging for lodging ahead of time can relieve the traveler of one major source of anxiety. Web sites vary in usefulness, from allowing the user to make reservations online to providing toll-free contact numbers.

All of the mega travel reservation services on the Web include an option for making reservations at hotels worldwide. The handiest to use are Internet Travel Network (ITN) and Travelocity because, during the first input screen, the traveler provides the check-in and check-out dates; results of the search are limited to hotels that have openings on those dates. Other systems, such as TravelWeb, Expedia, PreviewTravel, and City.net, require the user to query each hotel in a city for dates available. Both ITN and Travelocity are limited to listings for hotel chains with online reservation capability while the other sites cast a wider net, including at least a few non-chain hotels and hotels without online reservations. Of course another option is to search the yellow pages via Big Yellow for hotel listings in a particular town, and let your fingers do the walking! *Access:* <http://www.itn.net/>; <http://www.travelocity.com/>; <http://www.travelweb.com/>; <http://www.previewtravel.com/>; <http://expedia.msn.com/>; <http://city.net/>; <http://s7.bigyellow.com/>.

- **Woodall's 1998 Campground Directory.** This directory lists information on facilities available in over 14,000 campgrounds in the United States, Canada, and Mexico. Listings are primarily aimed at RV campers. A search engine provides for searching by state, city, or name of campground. Most records include the location, facilities, recreation, rates, dates open, and a phone number. *Access:* <http://www.woodalls.com/whercamp/directry/directry.html>.

- **The Worldwide Hostel Guide.** This guide provides a directory of thousands of

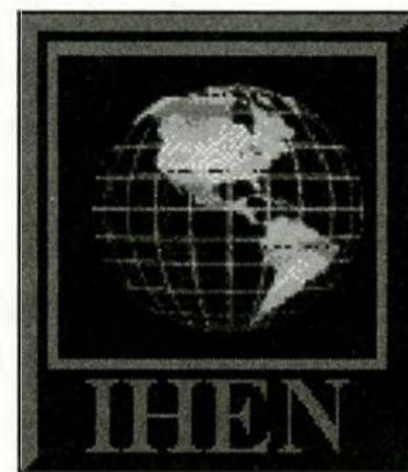
hostels in over 150 regions throughout the world. *Access:* <http://www.hostels.com/hostel.menu.html>.

- **Inns and Outs.** Inns and Outs, which is part of the Bed & Breakfast Channel, provides over 20,000 listings for bed and breakfasts worldwide. Although this is not an

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online reservation service, contact information is provided, including e-mail and Web addresses when available. Check Yahoo! for other bed and breakfast networks. *Access:* <http://www.innsandouts.com/>.

- **International Home Exchange Network.** This site is available to individuals interested in swapping their homes for the accommodations of others. This is a surprisingly safe and economical way to travel that is enjoyed by thousands of people worldwide. It is particularly popular among professionals and families. *Access:* <http://www.homexchange.com/>.



- **INTERVAC.** This is another large, well-established home exchange network. *Access:* <http://www.intervac.com/>.

Restaurants

Eating seems to take on a heightened dimension of importance when traveling; it is often a central part of the tourist experience. Finding good food when away from home can also be a challenge.

- **The Great American Restaurant Guide.** Addresses, cuisine information, and geographic access to literally thousands of restaurants throughout the United States are available at this site. *Access:* <http://www.netguides.com/>.

- **CuisineNet.** CuisineNet (which replaced DineNet) offers access to the complete menus of a broad range of restaurants in ten major U.S. cities. *Access:* <http://www.cuisinenet.com/>.

- **Zagat Restaurant Survey.** This site covers restaurants in approximately 40 U.S.

cities. Food, service, and decor are rated. *Access:* <http://www.pathfinder.com/travel/Zagat/>.

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Entertainment

- **Ticketmaster.** To arrange for tickets to special events at your destination, use Ticketmaster. A search engine is provided for locating events (sports, concerts, museums, etc.) in the United States, Mexico, Canada, and Australia. In most cases tickets can be purchased online. *Access:* <http://events.ticketmaster.com/>.

- **Casino Network.** Casino Network, though geared toward casinos and gaming worldwide, provides entertainment news, lodging, shopping, gaming strategy, and major sports. A direct link to Las Vegas Online is an added bonus with over 600 Las Vegas links. *Access:* <http://www.casino-network.com/>.

Travel-related information

- **The Federal Highway Administration.** This site provides links to the Department of Transportation for most states, which usually post detours and road construction information. *Access:* <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/related.html>.

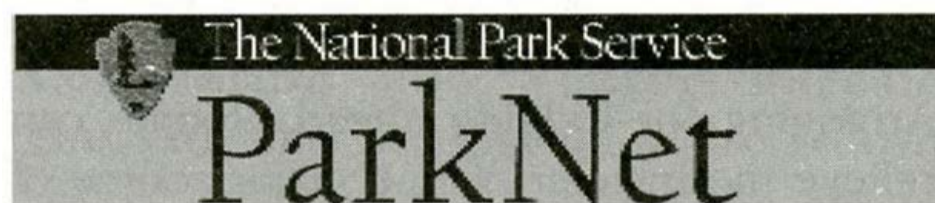
- **Speed Traps.** Also of potential interest is Speed Traps, which is the result of a nationwide grass-roots effort to document areas where there are a high incidence of safety patrol units. *Access:* <http://www.speedtrap.com/speedtrap/>.

- **Mapquest.** Need directions to the convention center or to Grandma Gerty's new condo? Available for any city in the United States and many international destinations, Mapquest, from GeoSystems, will interactively draw a map of a locale via its Interactive Atlas. Maps are zoomable, giving the user the option to view regional, city, or, in many cases, street-level maps. Or, using TripQuest, get step-by-step driving instructions between U.S. destinations. *Access:* <http://www.mapquest.com/>.

Visiting the parks

Whether as destinations or brief respites for the weary traveler, America's parks are jewels the traveler should not overlook.

- **Park Net.** The National Park Service has set up a comprehensive site, Park Net, for the facilities it manages. National parks, recreation areas, reserves, scenic rivers, seashores, historic reserves, monuments, memorials, and historic sites are listed by location or alphabetically. Each location admin-



istered by the National Park Service has a Web page that gives phone numbers, addresses, facilities, camping information, etc. A centralized reservation system for many of the major parks has recently been created. *Access:* <http://www.nps.gov/>.

- **State Parks Online.** This site provides links to pages maintained by, in most cases, state departments of tourism or natural resources. Photos, contacts, facilities, hours, etc., are usually available. *Access:* <http://www.mindspring.com/~wxrnot/parks.html>.

- **Park Search.** Holiday seekers will profit from having a look at L.L. Bean's Park Search, which provides, in a standardized format, information and photos for nearly 1,500 parks in the United States. Park Search is searchable by name, activity, region, or state. *Access:* <http://www.llbean.com:80/parksearch/>.

Traveling abroad

- **Centers for Disease Control (CDC) Travel Information and the U.S. State Department's Bureau of Consular Affairs.** Prior to any trip abroad, check out the travel information provided by the CDC and the State Department. CDC Travel Information provides specific health recommendations for travel in most countries. In addition, the traveler can learn about disease outbreaks, vaccine recommendations and requirements, and special precautions. Check the U.S. State Department's Bureau of Consular Affairs for information of a non-medical nature, including civil unrest, crime, natural disasters, and passport and visa information. *Access:* <http://www.cdc.gov/travel/travel.html> and <http://travel.state.gov/>.

- **The Currency Converter.** Whether traveling abroad or purchasing a book from overseas, you'll want to know how much

your money will buy! The Currency Converter by Oanda is the most comprehensive

CDC Travel Information

currency converter, performing interactive conversions for over 160 currencies. *Access:* <http://www.oanda.com/cgi-bin/ncc/>.

- **Travelang.** Travelang provides the basic words, numbers, shopping, dining, travel, directions, places, time, and dates for over 60 languages. Simple to use, just indicate your native language, then the language to learn. Many valuable links to other language resources on the Web are provided here, too. *Access:* <http://www.travlang.com/languages/>.

- **Intellicast, CNN, The Weather Channel.** Although there are many weather sites available, the international traveler will want to consult the Intellicast site, which includes four-day forecasts and satellite images for the world. A handy ($^{\circ}\text{C}/^{\circ}\text{F}$) converter is provided in a pop-up window. CNN and The Weather Channel also have extensive worldwide coverage. *Access:* <http://www.intellicast.com/weather/intl/>; <http://www.cnn.com/WEATHER/>; <http://www.weather.com/>.

Touring on the cheap

- **Fare Tracker.** Fare Tracker from Expedia will, at no cost, periodically send the user a customized e-mail report listing the lowest roundtrip published airfares for preselected routes. Similar e-mail services are available from specific airlines (e.g., TWA), Travelocity, and others. *Access:* <http://expedia.msn.com/>; <http://www.twa.com/>; <http://www.travelocity.com/>.

- **Consumer World.** This site is advertised as a public service site with over 1,700 useful consumer Internet resources, including travel and tourism pointers. *Access:* <http://www.consumerworld.org/>.

- **BizMiles.** Weary of keeping track of your frequent traveler rewards? Let BizMiles do it for you. Register at the site for free and record your frequent traveler account

numbers once; thereafter, just check back to see how the benefits have grown. *Access:* <http://bizmiles.biztravel.com/>.

- **Smart Travel Tips.** For scores of major cities, Fodor's provides Smart Travel Tips, which includes ideas and strategies for making travel easier and cheaper. Coverage of major cities varies. For instance, there is currently no listing for Beijing or São Paulo, but 20 pages of smart tips for Hong Kong. *Access:* <http://www.fodors.com/stt.cgi>.

Notes

1. "Tourism Growth Slows Due to Asian Financial Crisis." WTO News (March–April 1998): 1. *Access:* <http://www.world-tourism.org/newslett/marapr98/1997RES.htm>. ■

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access to a new student population that will increase dramatically within the decade. The expectations of these students for online delivery of instruction, information, and service are high, and the off-campus library programs devised in response to these demands are very high tech, built mostly around Web-based systems. Other presentations focused on the challenges remote learning situations present for learning and research.

They accentuated the need for a highly personalized approach to providing off-campus services, using online chat rooms, e-mail, and often telephone consultations in reaching and teaching remote library users.

Off-campus and remote services promise to be major growth areas in the academic library community over the next decade. It will be useful for more academic librarians to become involved in discussions about these library services, given the improvement and expansion of educational technology and its applications for learning.

Note

Proceedings of this and several past Off-Campus Library Services Conferences are available. Contact Central Michigan University Dean of Libraries' Office, Park Library 207, Central Michigan University, Mt. Pleasant, MI 48859, (517) 774-3500 or fax: (517) 774-2179. ■

