



Internet Travel Planning

Planning a trip can be fun and time consuming, but once you have picked your destination and travel dates, you can use the Internet to make your reservations and find the best available deals. If you are flexible with your dates and times, more often you will be able to find better fares. You may be eligible for discounts through AAA, AARP, or other organizations you may be a member of, so be sure to explore these options before you are ready to purchase tickets or book a hotel room.

The Travel Websites

There are three major websites where you can explore rates, fares and plan vacations and trips. They are listed here in alphabetical order:

Expedia = <http://www.expedia.com>

Orbitz = <http://www.orbitz.com/>

Travelocity = <http://travelocity.com/>

- Consumer WebWatch, (part of Consumers Union) has conducted studies on these sites and found that no single site always locates the best price and consumers often have to try more than one site to get the best price.
- Keep in mind that some airlines (JetBlue, Southwest) do not offer flights on travel sites. Consumers may find better fares directly on these or other airline websites. (If you don't know which airline travels where, use the travel site to find out this information by searching for fares.)
- Also keep in mind going directly to hotel websites to book rooms may also provide better rates than the using one of the three major travel websites.
- Before you buy, be sure it is reservation you want. Most reservations are non-refundable.
- Check for fees. The travel websites charge booking fees.

"Opaque" Travel Websites

On opaque sites, consumers specify a location, place, date and other pertinent information and insert a price willing to pay. Consumers don't know where they'll be

staying or what airline they flying until after the site accepts your price and you purchase the reservation. Examples of opaque sites include:

Priceline = <http://www.priceline.com/>

Hotwire = <http://www.hotwire.com/>

Other suggested websites:

Sidestep = <http://www.sidestep.com/> Sidestep has alliances with travel marketers including Orbitz and JetBlue.

Trip Advisor = <http://www.tripadvisor.com/> Read reviews posted by travelers.

Hotel Shark = <http://www.hotelshark.com/> Contains guest-written hotel reviews.

Travel Information websites:

The Clearwater Public Library System has compiled a number of Internet resources about travel on our Internet Resources page. See the following link for websites:

<http://myclearwater.com/cpl/ref/resources/index.asp?cat=23>