

What a Site: 36 Web Addresses You Should Know

Using the Internet to book travel is here to stay. In the past year, nearly 45 million booked their travel plans through the Web, up nearly 6 percent from the previous year, according to a survey by the Travel Industry Association. In this chart, we've updated our annual guide to travel sites, including new spins on old standbys and new sites worth perusing. We've also added a category on aggregators, sites that basically scan direct booking sites for the best deals and then point you there to purchase. One constant remains: Compare prices on two or more sites to make sure you're getting a fair deal. And, yes, there are plenty of other worthwhile sites out there—these are our admittedly subjective top picks.

-Carol Sottili

	SITE	PROS	CONS	NEW & NOTABLE
LODGING	www.hotels.com	Offers extensive pictures, amenities and attractions. Access to 12,500 properties in 400 worldwide destinations. Also books vacation rentals, golf tee times. Price guarantee good for 24 hours from reservation. Toll-free number prominently displayed.	Cancellation and service fees vary by hotel, and are not clearly spelled out. Prepayment required.	Can search for vacation destinations by drive time from specific Zip codes.
	www.quikbook.com	Can search for hotel by price range or neighborhood. Categorizes lists of hotels, such as "seaside favorites." Concentrates on hotels in 75 major destinations. Best-rate guarantee is good for 48 hours after reservation.	Lowest prices require prepayment. Charges a cancellation fee of \$10 on prepaid reservations plus hotel's fee.	"Hotel Marketplace," with 55,000 hotels, allows bookings for cities/hotels outside of its 75 major destinations.
	www.travelweb.com	Access to booking about 11,000 hotels worldwide, specifically Hilton, Hyatt, InterContinental, Starwood and Marriott chains. Lowest "i-Deal" rates guaranteed for 24 hours.	Initial rates don't include taxes. Rates are sometimes cheaper at chain's individual sites or by calling hotel. Best rates require prepayment. Cancellation fees apply.	Payment is made directly to individual hotel's reservation system, so smaller chance that booking will get lost.
	www.tripadvisor.com	Best all-around site for unbiased guidebook and reader reviews. Offers info on restaurants, tourism offices, etc. Lists hotels in order of reader popularity for each destination.	Site crams in so much info, it's almost too busy. Doesn't do direct bookings, but does show prices offered by major booking sites, with links.	Can sign up to get deal alerts or vacation info for specific locales. New forums for user interaction.
	www.vrbo.com	This "Vacation Rental By Owner" site lists 27,800 vacation rentals worldwide available directly through the owner. In Ocean City alone, it lists 58 rentals. Pictures usually included. Prices are good. Availability even when area is sold out. No fee to renter.	Site is merely a conduit. It does not referee disagreements.	Best for those who know area and don't mind negotiating. Has grown by more than 10,000 listings. Similar sites include www.cyberrentals.com and www.vacationrentals.com .
	www.wheretostay.com	Has nearly 9,900 user reviews of more than 1,700 hotels and villas throughout Caribbean, Bermuda and Hawaii. Can search for hotels by interests. Extensive guides to islands.	Can book through site, but system is sometimes awkward. Reader reviews vary so wildly you wonder if they were at the same hotel.	Bermuda is new this year.
	www.placestostay.com	Has hotels in 5,000 destinations/160 countries. Can sort hotels by rate, quality, name or proximity to airport or landmark. Offers map view of hotels.	Total must be prepaid and does not include taxes. Service fees vary and are not clearly stated.	Offers best choice of smaller, independently owned hotels and B&Bs.