

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
BUDGET TRAVEL	www.independenttraveler.com	Its extensive "bargain box" feature does a thorough and up-to-date job of scouring the Web for airfare, hotel, car rental, cruise and vacation package deals. Can also search for family, student and senior specials.	Not a booking site, but it links you to other sites, including Travelocity, Priceline and Cruise411 to buy.	Fans of TV's "Amazing Race" show take note: A section of the site is devoted to discussion of each episode.
	www.travelzoo.com	Simple, easy-to-use site that lists well-priced last-minute deals by departure city. Best feature is the "Top 20" list of bargains published Wednesday mornings; sign up to get it e-mailed to you.	Some deals are very short-lived.	"Supersearch," its new aggregator feature, allows you to search multiple sites at same time, but it still has some bugs.
	www.smarterliving.com	"Today's Top Picks" lists air, hotel, cruise and vacation packages. Site has other neat features, such as listings of all flights between specific city pairs and well-written travel advice. Does not sell tickets, which helps assure objectivity.	Annoying pop-ups.	Recently launched Tripmania.com for travel deals and Bookingbuddy.com (see Aggregators, above).
	www.studentuniverse.com	College student travel site. Flight prices are often cheaper than other booking sites'. Books hostel stays for everyone, not just students. Links to www.railkey.com for rail passes. Can buy tickets for stays as long as a year.	For college students and faculty only, and you must prove it to book. Cannot book for anyone but yourself. Displayed fares don't include taxes. Service fee of \$5 for flights.	No frequent-flier miles for certain airlines, including Virgin Atlantic, British Airways, United and US Airways.
	www.sta.com	Concentrates on student deals, but also sells non-student tickets, lodging, rail, bus, car rentals, vacation packages and travel gear.	Need to buy \$22 student identification card to purchase student tickets. Charges a \$5 booking fee.	Storefronts operate at Georgetown and George Washington universities.