



Travel Agency Sites Ranked by Visits, U.S. December 2003

Internet High On Travel Destinations

By [Robyn Greenspan](#) | January 28, 2004

Travelers are including the Web in their journeys by researching and booking trips, and responding favorably to online marketing, according to a report from the [Travel Industry Association of America \(TIA\)](#) that examines how the Internet has impacted travel. Not only have nearly two-thirds of the 95.8 million Internet users that travel consulted online resources for trip planning, but 37 percent have subscribed to travel-related e-marketing promotions or registered with travel Web sites.

More than 64 million Americans — 67 percent of Internet users who travel — used the Internet in 2003 to get information on destinations or to check prices or schedules, resulting in 42.2 million actually booking their travel arrangements online — an 8 percent gain over 2002.

Furthermore, 29 percent of online bookers made all their travel arrangements online in 2003, compared to 23 percent the year prior. "This has grown steadily since we started this survey in 1997. I expect that number to continue to grow in the future," said Andrea M. Stokes, director, marketing and international research, TIA.

As Internet adoption plateaus, so does online travel planning. "But even though the number of online travel planners is flattening out too, the number of planners who take the next step and actually book something continues to grow," Stokes noted.

The survey, conducted during July 2003 of approximately 1,000 adult Internet users who took at least one 50+ mile one-way trip in the past year, found that travel suppliers have achieved some success with e-mail marketing. The research shows that 11 percent of online travelers (or 10 million individuals) claimed to have taken a spontaneous trip that was spurred by an e-mail promotion, discount or offer.

The questions about e-mail and Web site marketing are new to the TIA survey, and Stokes commented on the findings: "I was surprised at the large number of people who say they have registered to receive e-mails or more information from these Web sites, and by the number who said they took a trip they otherwise would not have taken because of an e-mail marketing piece they received."

"It seems travel e-mail marketing may be stimulating new travel, rather than travel that would have happened anyway," continued Stokes.

Online travel bookers spent an average of \$300 more on travel during 2003 than they did in 2002, ringing up \$2,600 each for the year, with 75 percent buying airline tickets. Nearly as many (71 percent) reportedly bought their accommodations online — up from 57 percent in 2002 — followed by car rentals (42 percent).

According to traffic measurements from [Hitwise](#), the road for U.S. travel buyers led to Expedia during December 2003. The firm evaluated the visits to travel agency and business Web sites, which provide planning and organizational services for holiday and travel, and found that most visitors were female (more than 55 percent) who accessed the sites from home (nearly 68 percent). Nearly 40 percent had annual household incomes above \$75,000.

Visitors to Travel Agency Sites by Age, U.S. December 2003	
18-24	11.30%
25-34	19.11%
35-44	23.64%
45-54	23.48%
55+	22.48%
Source: Hitwise	

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Site	Market Share
Expedia	22.82%
Travelocity	16.35%
Orbitz	15.17%
Yahoo! Travel	5.80%
Cheap Tickets	5.33%
Hotwire	5.05%
VIPfares	3.58%
Priceline.com	2.85%
ITN.net	2.82%
TravelNow.com	1.49%
Source: Hitwise	

[Nielsen//NetRatings](#) examined traffic patterns during September, October and November 2003, finding that travelers do a lot of comparison shopping when making travel arrangements. During the measured period, 46 percent of Expedia visitors also went to Travelocity and 44 percent went to Orbitz; 50 percent of Travelocity's audience also browsed Orbitz and 59 percent browsed Expedia; 56 percent of Orbitz's visitors also surfed Expedia and 50 percent also surfed Travelocity.

Other findings from Nielsen//NetRatings include:

- The unique audience for travel sites from home and work grew by 27 percent — from 47.8 million in November 2002 to 60.4 million in November 2003.
- The time spent per person at travel sites was 37 minutes and 23 seconds (also from home and work) in the U.S. during November 2003, up from 36 minutes for the same period in 2002.
- The number of online ad impressions in the travel category jumped 11 percent from 2002 to 2003 while total number of impressions in the Online Ad Universe

rose just 4 percent. During 2003, 25 percent of all online ad impressions placed by travel sites were pop-ups and pop-unders, while these types of ads comprised just 6 percent of the Online Ad Universe as a whole in 2003.