

Click and go...

Don't just Google 'holiday'. Here's the Guardian Travel team's list of our all-time favourite websites - to help take the stress out of planning your next trip

Fabulous accommodation

holidaypad.net If you want to stay in a flying-saucer-shaped cabin in Wisconsin, a windmill on Santorini or a house in the Lake District that featured on Grand Designs, Holiday Pad will sort you out. You can't book directly, so think of it more as inspiration, with links to the websites of unique, unusual places to stay across the globe.

i-escape.com We probably mention this lip-smacking site most weeks, but it is our first port of call for gorgeous boutique accommodation around the world. Lots of photos, honest reviews by writers that list what's good and bad about the properties, tons of detail on the place and surroundings, rates through the season and a mix of mid-range to high-price luxury properties make it one of the best out there. And though they're not cheap, they're not all eye-wateringly expensive either. The site currently features a list of bargains for summer, eg this week La Sommita in the stunning white hill town of Ostuni in Puglia, Italy, has 55% off rooms normally costing from €290 a night in July.

tablethotels.co.uk The site for globetrotters who like a teeny bit of glamour, specialising in boutique/luxury hotels. You can book through the site and there are quirky extras, such as cool soundtracks to listen to while searching, top 10 lists and an "I want to get away" button to click when you just need a break but lack the energy to research destinations. It also features last-minute deals such as rooms at the Apostrophe Hotel in Paris down from €270 to €159.

welcomebeyond.com For a property to make it on to this site it needs to be architecturally interesting and something of an interior design delight. Choose, say, between a cave in Sicily or a rooftop apartment in Buenos Aires. You can search by location or interest, whether that be culture, nature or simply staring at the (beautifully decorated) walls.

sawdays.co.uk All the quaint and lovely places to stay in 17 countries, from the popular guidebook range. A mix of charming little guesthouses,



Great mates with rentalcalfriend.com



Rent a New York loft with airbnb.com

B&Bs, self-catering properties, restaurants with rooms and hotels. There are more than 2,000 in Britain, nearly that many in France and hundreds more in Spain and Italy, Ireland and Portugal. Also see Sawday's latest site, **canopyandstars.co.uk**, for glamping and quirky accommodation - gypsy caravans, yurts, safari tents, etc.

Camping

goglampping.net Glamping is the latest camping craze... and this site, an offshoot of Holiday Pad, has the pick of the crop, from camps with four-posters next to Lake Garda to a safari-style



Pitch your tent on someone's lawn with campinmygarden.com

retreat near Sydney and a collection of Airstream caravans in Cornwall. It currently features 110 in the UK and a scattering around the world, that are being added to all the time. **glampingsite.com** is another good new one.

pitchup.com This website screams "camping is fun!" You can scour campsites close to festival spots or search for one best suited to your interests, whether that's hiking, families or naturism. Once you've found a site you can check availability and book online.

campinmygarden.com The concept is simple: people offer their gardens for you to camp in. You can search for suitable sites by event and they range from the basic - bring a primus - to the more glamorous, with access to a toilet and kitchen. It's free to join, as is listing your garden, and costs from £5pp per night to stay - though it may cost more near popular events.

Budget accommodation

airbnb.com This site is particularly useful for trips to cities like New York, where it is really hard to find good cheap accommodation. Rather than splurging on a tiny designer room, or slumming it in a hostel, why not borrow a local's gorgeous loft apartment at a bargain rate, or stay in their spare room? Launched in 2008 and now covering 181 countries, airbnb lets you meet locals and experience a bit of real life.

Many other websites are getting in on the borrow-a-home concept, including **9flats.com** (more Europe-focused and a bit more grown-up, with en suite rooms in Lisbon for €12 a night, for example); **windu.co.uk**



Futuro cabin, from holidaypad.net

(includes reviews and ratings of hosts, and sites in 11 languages). The first generation of meet-the-locals websites - **couchsurfing.org**, **istopover.com** and **crashpadder.com** - still have a large online community and are good for meeting people in thousands of cities, either for a drink or to crash on their sofa or in a spare room for the night.

intervac.co.uk This home exchange service has been around so long that members used to correspond by telephone and snail mail, and it claims many second-generation members. You pay £50 to join for a year, but that gives you access to 30,000 rated and recommended listings, which you can view in no more than two clicks. Also try **homeexchange.com** and, of course, the Guardian's home exchange (**guardianhomeexchange.co.uk**).

Cheap flights

There is no simple formula for finding absolutely the cheapest flight. You have to shop around, and you need to book early. But there are comparison sites to help you. Cheapest flights to western European destinations tend to cost between £50 and £100 return, long-hauls to Asia and the US from £500 (though look out for off-season bargains), South America from £700 upwards. These are the sites we go to first to compare flights:

kayak.co.uk Great for comparing the cost of flights from different airlines all over the world. If you get a tad frustrated searching hundreds of travel sites, let Kayak do it for you; it also pulls up the best-value flights, hotels and car hire deals from sites such as Expedia and Opodo. It also has an interactive flight price map and a fare tracker. It's not a beautiful site but it's

speedy, functional and takes the hard work out of trip planning.

flycheapo.com If you've ever wondered which budget airline flies to which airport in Europe but passed out at the thought of searching for hours on Google, flycheapo will come up with the answer. Though not quite 100% reliable in our experience, it's better than most. Type in where you start and where you want to finish and the site does the rest. You can't book or search available dates so it's a starting point to check out individual airlines rather than a booking site.

skyscanner.net Another good flight comparison site. One handy feature lets you choose the dates you want to go away - for a short break, a week or longer - and it will bring up some of the cheapest flights available all over Europe, in ascending order - good if you aren't sure where you want to go or are just looking for a bargain.

hipbmunk.com This chirpy new site displays results in easy-to-understand form. Flights, including those using multiple carriers, are displayed on a timeline and accommodation options (including those offered by sites such as airBnB) on a map. So instead of multiple pages of information you see everything at a glance.

Adventurous trips

Want to bore your friends to tears with tales of "the most amaaaaazing" place ever? Even if you'd rather go independently and set up a trip yourself than pay an adventure operator you can get great ideas by perusing the sites of the most inventive adventure operators. We love Wild Frontiers (**wildfrontiers.co.uk**), Mountain Kingdoms (**mountainkingdoms.com**), High and Wild (**highandwild.co.uk**), On The Go Tours (**ontheготours.com**) and the sheer volume of options from Explore (**explore.co.uk**) and Exodus (**exodus.co.uk**).

aito.co.uk The Association of Independent Tour Operators brings lots of great small tour operators together on one website. All offer interesting independent or group tours, lovely accommodation, adventurous breaks and inspiration and you can search for them by destination or type of holiday. All the operators on here offer financial protection for their trips too, and often have last-minute deals. Many specialise in certain places (Journey Latin America, Inside Japan); others in a certain sort of break (Arblaster & Clarke Wine Tours, Regaldiver). Many have their own Facebook pages, Twitter accounts, forums and YouTube pages where you can learn more.

Last-minute package deals

travelrepublic.co.uk For packaging up your own cheap or last-minute combination of flights, car hire and accommodation. Other sites worth looking at are **directflights.co.uk**, **travelzoo.com/uk**, **travelsupermarket.com** and **hotels.com**.

Eco/Green/Volunteering

muchbetteradventures.com The premise is to support local businesses and reward those who embrace ethical practices by rating companies according to their eco-values. The site gathers - and vets - independent



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