

Resolve to Travel

Happy New Year! It's the time of year to make resolutions, so I'll go ahead and throw one out. Resolve to have more fun in 2016. And while we're dreaming the dream, how about resolving to travel more?

For many of us, even when we do travel, it's for business. For me, it's really hard to detach from the daily grind unless I physically travel away from home and the office. Even as a digital marketer (and perhaps because of this!), I think it's incredibly important to get away sometimes.

Last summer, I took a sabbatical, and while I didn't go on a huge trip, I did travel and made priceless memories with my family. The most important factor wasn't where we went – it was how it felt to truly live my priorities and spend precious time with my son who is getting less little all the time! I'll never regret this time away.

After this eye-opening summer, I thought I'd share some digital tools I used to enhance my travel experience and continue to use as often as I can.

First, you've got to get there. If you're driving and use the included map app on your phone, I encourage you to change things up and try **Waze**. I also love Google Maps (which owns Waze), but Waze has a social component. Other drivers tell you about real-time traffic, where police are, road hazards and more.

You can choose from various voices to give you alerts, and in an unbelievably clever product placement, you can now choose C3PO to give you directions. A friend or family member can even tell you when they're on their way home, and it will alert you when they will arrive. Give it a try!

If you are flying, a great way to check flights is **Hipmunk**. When you search flights, the display of results is nice, and you can also select to receive an email when the price for your searched flight goes down. But the best part is the sorting – in addition to sorting and filtering by the standard



options, you can sort by "Agony," which is a mix of duration and price.

Like other booking engines, Southwest Airlines isn't included in the listings on Hipmunk; for that, the **Southwest** app is needed. But luckily that app is useful as well.

Now for my top recommendation for hotels, restaurants and more when I travel, the clear winner is **TripAdvisor**. Don't you just love a good recommendation? TripAdvisor is another social app that gives you the chance to see reviews from other travelers all over the world.

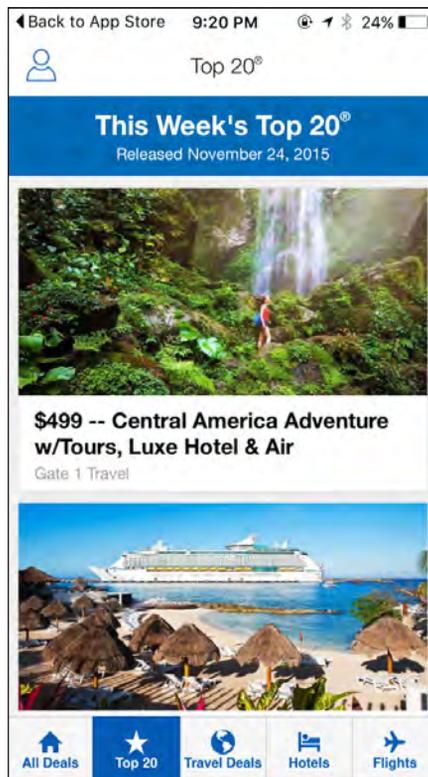
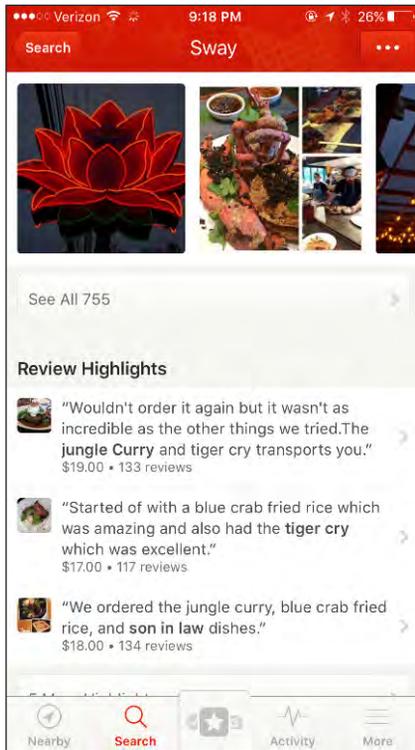
TripAdvisor offers lots of ways you can filter by what is important to



you, like a hotel pool, seafood at a restaurant, etc. You can even filter to see reviews and ratings only by certain traveler types, like families, couples, friends and more. In my mind, you can't beat TripAdvisor for overall great recommendations for travel. Especially for hotels, I never book without it.

For local jaunts and especially for restaurants, I love **Yelp**. I'm sure many of us use Yelp, so I thought I'd share a few different features you may not have tried. First, I almost always Filter (top left corner) and sort by Rating. Sometimes if I'm looking for what's popular, I sort by Most Reviewed. But the default Best Match is almost

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never my favorite sort order.

To take the recommendation to the next level by actually helping you order food, navigate to a restaurant and scroll down to Review Highlights. The bolded words will be the ones that are mentioned most in reviews. Often, these will be the most popular dishes. I use Yelp for other things too, but restaurant info is by far the most helpful for me.

Once you're at your destination, I encourage you to think about using **Uber** for quick and inexpensive rides. It isn't available everywhere, but I've had great experiences with rides all over the country. Uber's technology alone is far superior to taxis.

You can see exactly where cars are when you're looking for a ride. Uber estimates your fare and shows you the route. You enter your credit card when you sign up, and it automatically charges you when your ride is complete.

But of course the best part of Uber is the price. It is consistently much less expensive than taxis. And as far as driver quality, you rate each driver when your ride is complete. Drivers must maintain a 4.5 rating, so they are very motivated to give you a high-quality, safe ride.

So there you have it. These are the tools I use the most often in travel. But I do love a bargain. So I'd be remiss if I didn't mention a few ways to get great bargains when you travel.

I love **Travelzoo** for their Tuesday deals. **CheapCaribbean** has great deals if you happen to be going to the

Caribbean. **Southwest** consistently offers great add-on hotel and car deals (so much cheaper than if you book them separately). If you're ok not staying in a hotel, **AirBNB** is a great resource for staying in places that range from whole houses to rooms with shared baths. And **HomeAway** is a helpful resource for renting homes worldwide.

Or if you're feeling very gutsy, try **CouchSurfing.com**. You can stay on peoples' couches all over the world. And the price is right. It's free. I can't personally attest to this service, but I have a good friend who swears by it. I'll admit, he's a bit gutsier than I am.

Kendra Wright started her career managing non-profit fundraising events. Then in an "about face," she took a job managing global Internet strategies at a Fortune 1000 company in 1995, just as the Internet came to being. She left that company in 1998 to found Wright Strategies, working with clients like KEEN Footwear, Nike, Jeep, Chrysler, Intel and Panasonic. Then in 2009, Kendra launched Saffire to do integrated online marketing and ticketing for hundreds of events, venues and destinations. It's been a wild ride! Kendra can be reached at kendra@saffire.com, and more information about Saffire can be found at www.saffire.com.