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Travel Apps

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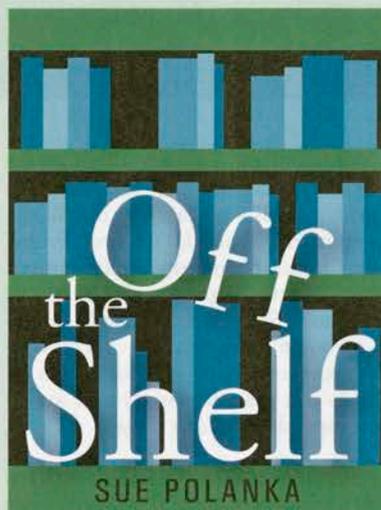
Travel Apps

L ike many people, I love to travel. And doing so with my smart phone or tablet device allows me to keep information at my fingertips. Whether you are traveling to a local park, across the country, or internationally, there are a variety of apps to enhance your experience.

Before you leave for your trip, make sure to prepare your mobile device. This may require performing a variety of tasks, including removing unnecessary apps or multimedia files to allow for new content, downloading appropriate apps for the type of vacation and destination, updating remaining apps and mobile-device software, or backing up and syncing the device with your home computer. If traveling internationally, check your service plan for any international data, text, or call plans.

There are thousands of travel apps available for Apple, Android, and BlackBerry devices. Many apps are free but may include advertising. Don't overlook the fee-based apps—in addition to eliminating advertisements, they may offer additional features useful for your adventure, such as offline access.

When searching for travel apps, look for navigation, transportation, hotel, and restaurant apps. Below is an annotated list of apps for Apple, Android, and BlackBerry.

Flight Track (Apple, Android).
For the avid air traveler, this app provides real-time flight tracking for more than 4,000 airports worldwide. Color maps feature zoom, satellite, weather-radar imagery, and weather forecasts.

GateGuru (Apple, Android).
In addition to providing real-time flight status and push notifications for flight information, the app offers a directory of airport amenities for 125 airports worldwide. Additional features include real-time security wait times and reviews of airport food and shopping.

Kayak Mobile (Apple, Android, BlackBerry).
This all-around travel app provides flight, hotel, and car-rental comparisons; manages itineraries; tracks flight status; checks airline baggage fees; and more.

Lonely Planet (Apple, Android).
Fee-based apps include more than 70 travel guides for major worldwide cities and offer GPS tracking and offline maps, recommended places to visit, and editorial content from the guidebooks. Additionally, phrase books for 20 languages are available. Content is available for offline use.

Roadside America (Apple).
Looking for the largest ball of twine, odd buildings, natural wonders, or tourist traps? Roadside America offers a guide, complete with directions, addresses, hours, and pictures, of thousands of roadside attractions.

TripAdvisor (Apple, Android).
This app features more than 50 million reviews and opinions by travelers. The main app provides information on flights, hotels, restaurants, and attractions anywhere in the world. Additional apps are available for specific worldwide cities and states such as London, New York, or Hawaii.

TripIt (Apple, Android, BlackBerry).
This app is a master travel organizer. Users can send travel-confirmation e-mails to plans@tripit.com, and the app will automatically recognize the reservations. More than 3,000 booking sites, from airline to restaurant reservations, are included. TripIt also syncs to a calendar and social-networking sites.

Tripwolf (Apple, Android).
The various Tripwolf apps offer city guides and travel tips on hotels, restaurants, shops, nightlife, and other attractions. They are based on the German Marco Polo and Footprint guides and include recommendations from travelers. Multiple languages are available.

Urbanspoon (Apple, Android, BlackBerry).
Shake your phone and Urbanspoon will suggest a restaurant (BlackBerry users spin the slot machine). The U.S., Canada, and major metro areas in the UK and Australia are included. Users can search and limit restaurants by cuisine, price, or neighborhood. Additional features include reservations, dining history, and ratings and reviews.

Wi-Fi Finder (Apple, Android).
For those looking to access free or fee-based Wi-Fi while traveling, this app from JiWire offers more than 650,000 locations in 144 countries. Using the GPS function on the phone, Wi-Fi Finder will list hot spots in the area, which can be filtered by location type (restaurant, café, hotel, etc.).

Zagat (Apple, Android, BlackBerry).
Restaurant ratings and reviews for more than 30,000 establishments in approximately 41 major cities worldwide. Features include reservations, menus, signature dishes, GPS location, and offline access.

Sue Polanka is Head of Reference Instruction, Wright State University Libraries, Dayton, Ohio. Her blog, *No Shelf Required*, deals with issues related to e-books.