

# Hotels on the Web, beyond the usual go-to sites

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By ANNE WALLACE ALLEN, For The Associated Press – Mon Oct 12, 10:57 am ET

Go online to book a hotel room, and you'll be bombarded by options from Las Vegas to Laos, in no particular order.

There's also a constellation of hotel-sorting Web sites to help travelers find their way to the deals. Some of these businesses, such as [Expedia](#), [Priceline](#), and [TripAdvisor](#), have been around for years.

But other, less well-known sites can also steer you toward exceptional hotel deals or experiences. Some specialize in [boutique hotels](#); others offer unusual amenities such as [eBay](#)-like auctions for hotel rooms or even surprise vacations.

Here's a sampling of some providers that have found a niche in this crowded market.

**PRICELINE'S HOTEL PRICE MAPS:** <http://travels.priceline.com/travelguides/HotelPriceMap/>. Priceline, famous for the service that lets its users bid for hotel rooms online, has launched a handy new mapping service that has hotels popping up in major cities all around the globe, listed by price. Let's say you need a place to stay on Puerto Vallarta's Banderas Bay. Using Priceline's price map, you can quickly narrow down the 58 hotels on Priceline's city map to ones that fit your price and rating. Priceline says its site includes hotel maps in thousands of cities.

**JETSETTER:** <http://www.jetsetter.com/sales>. This luxury-loving, members-only Web tool launched just this month with feature stories on a few top-of-the-line hotel experiences. Jetsetter sends staff to almost all the resorts it recommends to write first-hand reports. Then it runs two-day sales.

"We're constantly bringing in new opportunities and new offers," said CEO and founder Drew Patterson. "If you see something today and you like it, great, you can buy it. Tomorrow there will be a new set of offers."

Mesmerizing photography makes the Web site an exciting destination on its own.

**HOTWIRE:** <http://www.hotwire.com/>. Do you just want to get away — and it doesn't much matter where? Hotwire offers a "today's top deal" that could land you in Portland, Ore., or London. The site is all about saving money, and includes a nifty hotel-themed graphic showing just how Hotwire's prices measure up to those of Orbitz and Priceline.

**GET A ROOM:** <http://www.getaroom.com/>. Get a Room, which describes itself as a partner with Travelocity, also places a premium on price, promising to "unlock the lowest rates on the Web." And it gives users the option of booking the hotel through a toll-free number, 800-468-3578. A helpful person answers promptly.

**SHERMAN METER:** Click on "Hotel Reviews" at <http://www.shermanstravel.com/>. The Sherman Meter tabulates hotel reviews from around the globe and produces a score that helps you find the best balcony view in [Copenhagen](#) or spa in Barbados. Traveling around Sherman Meter's busy Web site is a journey in itself. [ShermansTravel.com](#) also uses its own reviewers to supplement the writing it gleans from other publications.

**LUXURY LINK:** <http://www.luxurylink.com/>. As the name suggests, the 13-year-old Luxury Link focuses on premium travel experiences. The site auctions off its travel packages and helps the winning bidder with travel bookings. It also offers no-auction purchase plans. Perhaps its most unusual feature: mystery vacations. The destination isn't revealed until the package is sold — generally at about 50 percent of its retail value, said site co-founder Diane McDavitt. Mystery vacation bidders do see hints about the destination through the course of the auction, said McDavitt.

"It's meant to be entertaining and fun, and at the end of the day the lucky winner ends up with a terrific package," she said. And while Luxury Link does cater to upscale travelers looking for one-of-a-kind experiences, "everyone loves a deal, no matter how affluent," said McDavitt.

**OYSTER:** <http://www.oyster.com/>. Oyster sends reviewers to check out hotels in a limited number of locations — just a half-dozen now, though the new site promises it is building that list. The reviews make

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good reading and the photo tours are spectacular. But with so much territory left unexplored, the Web site's offerings are limited right now.

CHEAPO STAY: <http://www.cheapostay.com/>. Enter the city where you plan to go, or ask Cheapo to give you a list of popular cities with its best hotel deals. We found a room at the three-star Hotel Praga in Madrid in November for a non-refundable \$66/night. The site has some quirks; the number of stars on the hotel we were booking changed from four to three as we went through the process.

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