

10 Reasons Travel Agents Are Better Than the Internet

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Credit: Shutterstock

While you might put travel agent right up there with VCR repair man and video store clerk on the list of jobs that have gone the way of the Yellow Pages, there's a reason you still see them wedged into strip malls between your dry cleaner and the new VaporZone. Turns out that -- even in a world where everybody coordinates their own vacation plans -- travel agents account for about *one-third* of the travel industry's revenue. Seriously, in 2014. Who knew.

Not only can they do things the Internet can't, but they also still collect a lot of their fees from vendors, which means... best part, they don't even charge you! Which is why we've compiled these 10 reasons you might want to go old-school and let a travel agent plan your next trip.

1. They know whether you're actually getting a good deal.

Since 90 percent of the airline tickets you buy are for a domestic flight to see your parents, your knowledge of the relative value of a flight to London is, how shall we say, limited. A travel agent, however, books, like, 74 of those a day and will know immediately if the \$600 whatever website told you is a "smoldering price" is actually reasonable.

2. Travel agents know where to go in a city, or know someone who does.

If you don't happen to be headed to one of Thrillist's 30 cities, it helps to have a reputable resource available who knows the best restaurants, dive bars, or cockfighting arenas without having to sift through a thousand ridiculous reviews about how the waitress didn't bring the table enough bread. Since they book trips all the time, TA's know this stuff like the back of their hands. And if they don't, they're one call away from getting you an answer.

More: [The 15 Most Annoying Travelers In The World](#)



Credit: Flickr User Jason Tester Guerrilla Futures

3. They've got your back when it comes to flight delays/cancellations.

Try calling a website when your flight gets cancelled and the line to rebook stretches through the terminal. Even if you get through to the airline directly, they still don't have a clue who you are. Call your travel agent, though, and they'll get you squared away on another flight while you get squared away at the [airport bar](#).

4. They can actually get you seats together, on the same flight, for the same price.

Rather than spend a week on a group text trying to coordinate your big Splashin' Safari Water Park Summer vacay, only to book your flights separately online and find you're all sitting next to different [people who clip their toenails](#) (and paid different fares), a travel agent can get your entire group the same ticket price, with seats together, on the same flight.



Credit: [Flickr User Mystic Country CT](#)

5. They can get you VIP status without being a VIP.

Restaurant supposedly booked for months? Yeah, that's no issue for a travel agent. Need a table at the hottest club in Sioux Falls? They've got more promoters on speed dial than a South Beach swimsuit model. Thanks to the relationships they maintain across the tourism industry, they can also score you tix to special tours, private tastings, and other events the Internet doesn't even know about. Or, if it does, has hidden so deep it'll take you hours to find out about them.

6. And speaking of hours on the Internet, TAs do all the research for you.

Websites don't seem to understand that when you say "search nearby airports," it doesn't mean "I'm totally fine with being the guy who asks my roommate for a ride to an airport 75 miles away so I can save \$45". Travel Agents know your airport preferences, and won't tease you with cheap flights that involve leaving and returning to airports that're in different states. Unless you want them to.

7. They get better prices, first

That \$49 one-way flight your email update indicated was a "fresh new deal" was actually available to your travel agent last week, because they have better relationships with airlines and wholesalers. Which also means their prices are... ready for this... usually *better* than online. Especially for complicated or premium fares.



Credit: U.S. Army Corp of Engineers Europe District

8. They do more than book flights.

That African safari looks like a great time, but you do realize it requires a lot more legwork than just pressing "Buy Now" on the roundtrip ticket to Kinshasa, right? In addition to visas, you'll likely require a series of semi-crippling inoculations before you go, too. Unsure where to go for either visas or shots? Well, lo and behold, guess who can set both of those up for you?

9. They have Southwest's prices too.

Fun as it is planning your flight, calculating baggage, seat selection, and [water fees](#), then repeating the whole process on Southwest.com to seeing if it's cheaper, a travel agent can do the comparison shopping for you. And he or she can do it with any other airline that doesn't play the online search engine game.

10. No-hassle 24-hour changes

"Non-refundable" on your online reservation -- be it a flight, hotel reservation, Duck Tour, whatever -- usually means you have 24 hours to make changes without penalty. Most people don't realize this. Yes, even a "non-refundable" airline ticket can be changed. The only catch, you have to actually call and deal directly with the airline. Or, instead of spending hours on

hold listening to "all agents are currently busy", you can let your travel agent happily fix the ticket. Your call.