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# Competitive Analysis

Analysis of Trip Planning Websites

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# Report Overview

## Heuristic Evaluation

This competitive analysis focuses on the process of planning a trip, how information on the site is presented, and the intuitiveness of each site's features.

The key areas of interest are organization of information and ease of editing the information collected.

This evaluation focuses primarily on three NNG usability heuristics: **Match Between System and the Real World**, **Recognition Rather than Recall**, and **User Control and Freedom**. Each website is also given an overall evaluation score according to the 10 NNG usability heuristics.

### Website Scoring Scale:

○ = poor ○○ = average ○○○ = okay ○○○○ = very good ○○○○○ = excellent

### Key Heuristics Defined\*:

#### **Match between system and the real world**

The system should speak the users' language, with words, phrases and concepts familiar to the user, rather than system-oriented terms. Follow real-world conventions, making information appear in a natural and logical order.

#### **Recognition rather than recall**

Minimize the user's memory load by making objects, actions, and options visible. The user should not have to remember information from one part of the dialogue to another. Instructions for use of the system should be visible or easily retrievable whenever appropriate.

#### **User control and freedom**

Users often choose system functions by mistake and will need a clearly marked "emergency exit" to leave the unwanted state without having to go through an extended dialogue. Support undo and redo.

\*Definitions from [nngroup.com](http://nngroup.com)

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The three sites analyzed offer similar ways for users to compile, organize and share travel plans. Sites were chosen because of their popularity among surveyed users and relevance to project. For the purpose of this survey, mobile apps were not included. Below is a summary of each site analyzed.

## Airbnb

Airbnb is a website and mobile app that allows users to explore homes, experiences, and places around the world and plan trips offered by hosts through their site. 85% of surveyed users said they use Airbnb while planning a trip.

Overall score: 

## Tripadvisor

Tripadvisor began as a social media platform to share ratings of restaurants, hotels, and give tips about different travel destinations. It has since expanded to offer hotel reservations and the option for users to plan trips by saving hotels, restaurants, and attractions on the site to their “Saved Trips” feature. 65% of surveyed users said they use Tripadvisor while planning a trip.

Overall score: 

## Tripit

Tripit is a travel itinerary planning site created by Concur Travel Management. It allows users to forward emails about travel plans to the site and creates a travel itinerary based on the information pulled from these emails. No surveyed users mentioned using Tripit but it does offer unique solutions to travel planning solutions not offered by other websites including: importing information from emails, adding travelers to collaborate, and creating a detailed timeline.

Overall score: 

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# Airbnb



Heuristic Analysis | airbnb.com

## Overall Analysis

Airbnb's website is aesthetically appealing, easy to navigate, and intuitive. It gives users a variety of ways to find places to stay, explore and activities offered through their site. Negatives about this site include: low contrast with text overlaid on photos and it is difficult and cumbersome to share and collaborate on plans with others.

Score:

## Heuristic: Match Between System and the Real World

Text in general is kept to a minimum, most written content is created by Airbnb hosts.

Score:

Pros:	Cons:
<p>Text is kept to a minimum, when present it is short and simple.</p> <p>Site greets you personally after log in.</p> <p>Information is presented in a logical way.</p> <p>EX: Airbnb's landing page gives you search bar offering examples of things you can search on AirBnB.</p> <p>Copy is different for each location and tells the user what makes each city unique.</p>	<p>Text is sometimes too small to read. Low contrast when overlaid on photos.</p> <p>Some descriptions are only shown in other languages and are not able to be translated.</p>

## Examples:

**What can we help you find, Bridget?**

**Pro:** (Top) Personal greeting and quick links to searches offers users friendly and quick access to site features.

**Con:** (Right) Small, thin text in light grey font (below image) and white text overlaid on photos are difficult to read.

Things to do in Florence / Drinks & Nightlife

**Drinks & Nightlife in Florence**

Where local Airbnb hosts say to go sip on a good cocktail or dance the night away. Enjoy!

Nightclubs      Bars      Everything Else in Nightlife

## Heuristic: Recognition Rather Than Recall

Navigation of the site is overall simple and intuitive although the quality of visual cues vary.

Score:

Pros:	Cons:
<p>All buttons are in the same color, giving the user a visual cue that an action can be taken there.</p> <p>On every applicable page, Airbnb asks if you want to explore Places, Experiences or Homes along with search results.</p> <p>Sticky header allows user to navigate to main pages from any page.</p>	<p>Sub-heads seem to be color coded but it is unclear what these colors indicate.</p> <p>Relies heavily on images rather than icons for visual cues, images are not always descriptive. Text accompanying images is often difficult to read.</p>

## Examples:

**Guests**  
Share the trip itinerary with your guests. [Manage Guests](#)

**Check In** Sat, Sep 29  
2PM - 12AM (midnight)    **Check Out** Tue, Oct 02  
11AM

**Self check-in**  
Instructions will be visible during your stay.

Your host, Josette And Nino

Have a question about your reservation? The best way to get information is to ask your host directly. [Message Host](#)

**Pro:** (Top) Buttons are the same color, size, and shape across the site. This allows users to quickly see where they take action.



**Con:** (Right) White text overlaid on images is difficult to read.

(Right bottom) Color of sub-headers varies with no explanation. Color cues on site are hard to follow.

**NIGHTLIFE**

**Nightclubs** **Bars** **Everything Else in Nightlife**

**BIKE RIDE**  
Bike Sunset scents and colours of Rome  
\$43 per person  
★★★★★ 180

**HISTORY WALK**  
Colosseum, Palatine and Forum journey  
\$42 per person  
★★★★★ 78

**KAYAKING**  
Castelgandolfo Lake in Kayak  
\$48 per person  
★★★★★ 59

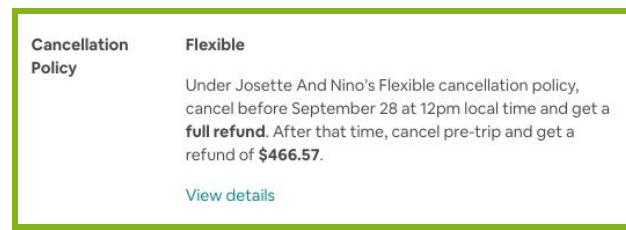
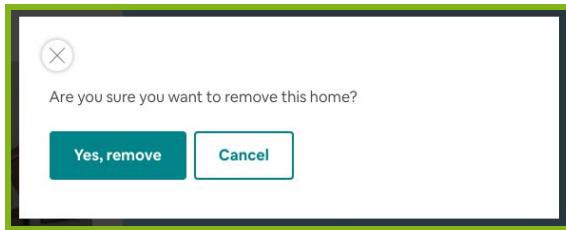
## Heuristic: User Control and Freedom

Airbnb makes all information that a user needs available and in most cases offers users the ability to confirm their actions before they move forward. There are no “undo” options.

Score: 

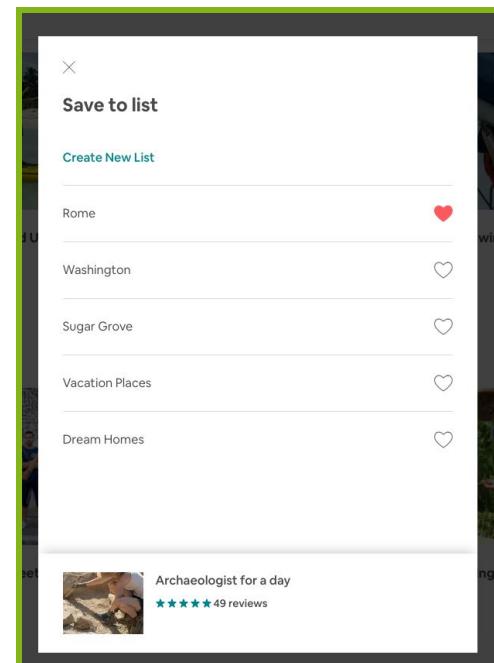
Pros:	Cons:
<p>When moving around on the map a button at the top allows the user to refresh at any point.</p> <p>When removing places/experiences/homes from saved list, an “Are You Sure?” prompt appears.</p> <p>Airbnb requires all hosts to give cancellation policies for their homes.</p>	<p>No option to undo or recall items once they are removed from “Saved” list.</p> <p>After adding an item to a list, there is no “save”, “cancel” or other way to confirm you have saved the item to the correct list, only an “X” in the top right corner.</p> <p>After selecting a date for an experience, there is no way to change dates or check that they match up with dates of your trip. They only way back is through the browser, losing your place in your checkout.</p> <p>The only action that can be taken on this page is “confirm and checkout”.</p>

### Examples:



**Pro:** (Top left) Asks user if they are sure they want to remove an item from their “Saved” list. (Top right) Cancellation overview for rentals as well as option to see further details.

**Con:** (Right) Saved list only offers exit button after trip is selected. This can confuse users as they are not sure if their changes will be saved. This could be solved with a “save” or “continue” option.



# Tripadvisor



Heuristic Analysis | tripadvisor.com

## Overall Analysis

Tripadvisor is fairly intuitive and offers users a variety of ways to save and coordinate plans with other though information could be better organized.

Score:

## Heuristic: Match Between System and the Real World

Text in general is kept to a minimum, most written content is created by airbnb hosts.

Score:

### Pros:

Language is plain and minimal. Although it is not as conversational as Airbnb, Tripadvisor uses common and easy to understand phrasing.

### Cons:

Information on the site is provided by the Hotels or restaurants are often written in their native language and not translated.

## Examples:

The screenshot shows a search result for "Want to save money?". It features three icons: a dollar sign, a thumbs up, and a heart. Below the icon is the text "Want to save money?". A brief description follows: "TripAdvisor compares prices from 200+ booking sites to help you find the lowest price on the right hotel for you." Below this is a section titled "Top beaches around the world" with two images: one of Punta Cana and one of Playa del Carmen.

**Pro:** (Top) Simple and conversational language.

**Con:** (Right) Text populated by Tripadvisor is in English but title and description are in Italian.

The screenshot shows a listing for "APT Re di Roma 1". At the top, there's a navigation bar with tabs for Overview, Reviews, Amenities, Availability, and Map. Below the navigation is a large image of a bedroom with a double bed, white bedding, and a white nightstand. On the wall above the bed is a painting of the Justice League. To the right of the image, there's a rating of "Very good" based on 25 reviews. Below the main image is a smaller image of the same bedroom with the caption "1 of 20 Bedroom double". Underneath the images is a "Overview" section with the following details: "Condo/Apartment - 2 Bedrooms", "1 Bathroom", "Sleeps 5", "Rome, Lazio", and a "Send to a friend" button. A note at the bottom states: "APT Re di Roma è una Casa Vacanze sita nel cuore di Roma, 65mq di appartamento composto da Camera da letto, Cucina abitabile, Bagno con sanitari italiani e doccia XL con cromoterapia a telecomando, Salotto/Camera da letto.Nella prestigiosa zona di San Giovanni a soli 400 metri dalla stazione metropolitana linea rossa Re di Roma, gode di un' ottima posizione, tranquilla ma nello stesso tempo vicino a molti ristoranti, bar e supermercati.Lo stile dell' appartamento è di design (Pop Art Style), curato nei minimi particolari e con tutti i comfort necessari per una deliziosa vacanza romana."

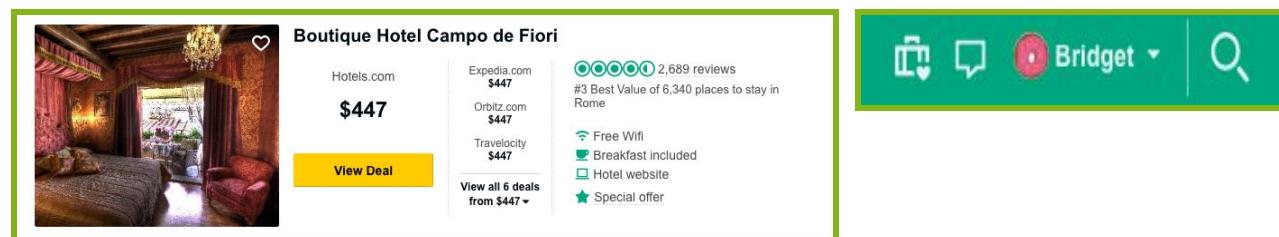
## Heuristic: Recognition Rather Than Recall

Navigation of the site is simple, consistent, and intuitive.

Score: 

Pros:	Cons:
<p>Rating system is consistent for all areas of site.</p> <p>Buttons are all in the same shape and color indicating action can be taken.</p> <p>"Save" button is heart, a universally recognized icon across popular websites.</p> <p>Filter options are available on every page.</p> <p>Breadcrumbs available at top of page.</p> <p>Site uses recognizable and easy to decode icons.</p>	<p>Save icon is not available for every item.</p> <p>EX: Save is available for restaurants and hotels but not rental apartments</p>

### Examples:



**Boutique Hotel Campo de Fiori**

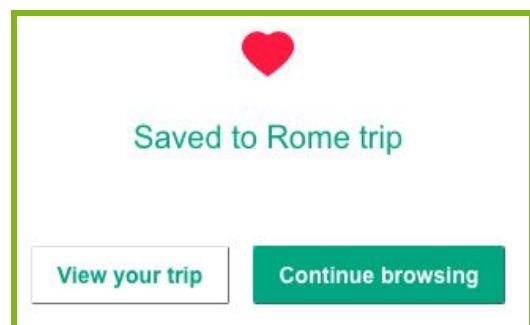
Hotels.com \$447 [View Deal](#)

Expedia.com \$447  
Orbitz.com \$447  
Travelocity \$447

View all 6 deals from \$447 ▾

2,689 reviews #3 Best Value of 6,340 places to stay in Rome

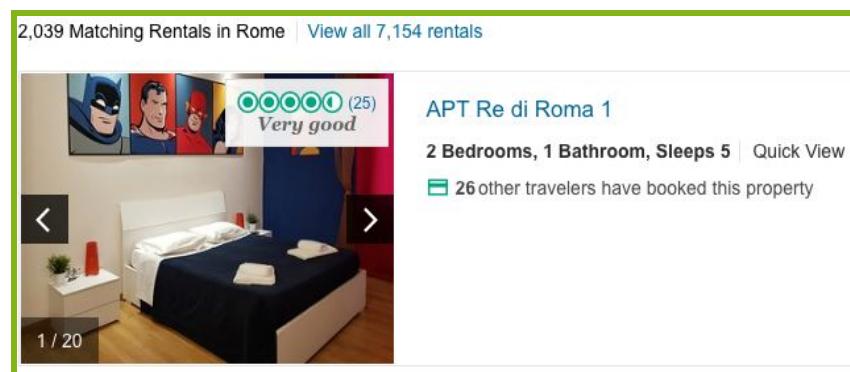
Free Wifi Breakfast included Hotel website Special offer



Saved to Rome trip

[View your trip](#) [Continue browsing](#)

**Pro:** (Above) Icons in header are familiar and easy to translate and navigate.  
(Left and Top Left) Heart-shaped save button, rating system, and button shape are consistent across site.



2,039 Matching Rentals in Rome | [View all 7,154 rentals](#)

 **APT Re di Roma 1**  
2 Bedrooms, 1 Bathroom, Sleeps 5 | [Quick View](#)  
 26 other travelers have booked this property

**Con:** (Left) Users are unable to save "Apartments" on Tripadvisor unlike nearly every other feature on the site.

## Heuristic: User Control and Freedom

Tripadvisor makes it simple for users to manage their information and offers several ways to view and organize it. While options to sort and filter results are well organized, they could be paired down or condensed to be more streamlined.

Score:

### Pros:

Site offers users multiple ways for information to be displayed.

EX: Lists, maps

The process of creating a trip flows easily from step to step.

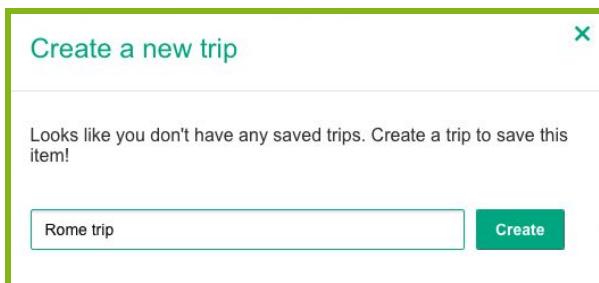
It is simple to edit components added to trip:  
Delete, move to another trip, add comments.  
Saves search settings from page to page when applicable and it is easy to edit these settings.

### Cons:

There are many filter options per page. It would be easy for user to unknowingly apply filters resulting in irrelevant results.

Filter options are not available on landing pages.

### Examples:



**Pro:** (Top) The process of creating a new trip list is simple and Tripadvisor offers unobtrusive prompts for each step. (Bottom) Listings show quick descriptions, ratings, and offers users quick ways to add and remove notes and items on their list.

**Con:** (Right) Filter options are only available after searching. User must scroll down the page to view all options.



Heuristic Analysis | tripit.com

## Overall Analysis

Tripit offers unique ways for users to organize trip information and collaborate with others. However, the site is not well organized and the interface is outdated, inconsistent and not intuitive.

Score:

## Heuristic: Match Between System and the Real World

Copy is sparse and technical when present, icons are familiar but outdated.

Score:

Pros:	Cons:
Icons are recognizable.	Icons look outdated and are inconsistent. Information is duplicated and displayed in several places. Tripit presents lots of technical information but not in a conversational way. Additional features are presented with very little information.

## Examples:

You don't have any connections on Tripit yet.

**Pro:** (Right) Overall, icons are identifiable and based on real world objects.

**Con:** (Top) Text is not conversations, placed in illogical order.

Rome, Italy, September 2018  
Sep 28 - Oct 9, 2018 / Rome, Italy  
Travelers: Bridget Roddy, Test Roddy... Add  
Viewers: Add  
Planners: Add  
Fri, Sep 28 New York, NY, Partly Cloudy 68°F / 60°F Add Plans  
JFK to DUB | Aer Lingus 104 Confirmation #: KY7BUK  
5:15 EDT PM Depart New York Terminal: 5 Gate:  
Sat, Sep 29 Roma, Italy, Partly Cloudy 76°F / 62°F Add Plans  
4:55 IST AM Arrive Dublin Terminal: 2 Gate:  
Duration: 6H, 40M Layover: 1H, 25M Connects to: BA 2138 (operated by El 402)  
Seat(s): 45K  
Traveler Info: bridget marion Roddy  
Frequent Flyer #: Ticket #:   
Aircraft and Service Details: [Travel Agency](#) [Supplier Info](#) [Booking Site](#)  
Notes: [Photos](#)

(Right) Some copy would be helpful to explain features. Information is not organized in an intuitive way.

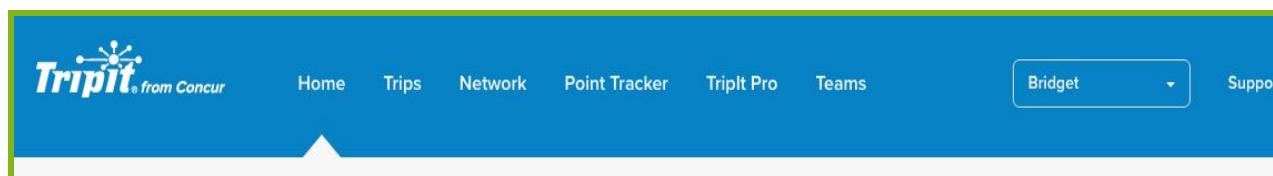
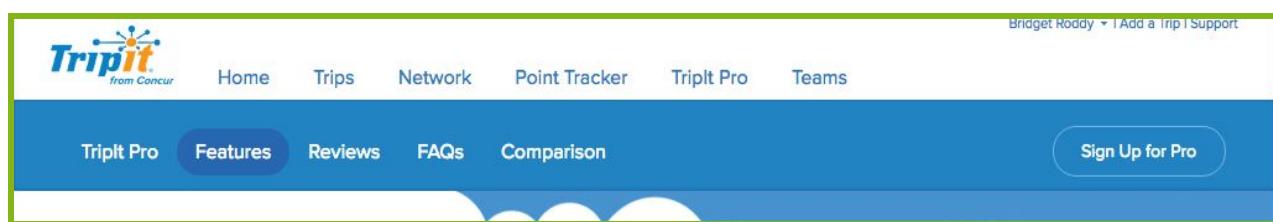
## Heuristic: Recognition Rather Than Recall

Trip information is organized in chronological order but lack of copy and explanation makes the interface difficult to use. Visual cues are inconsistent and change from page to page.

Score: 

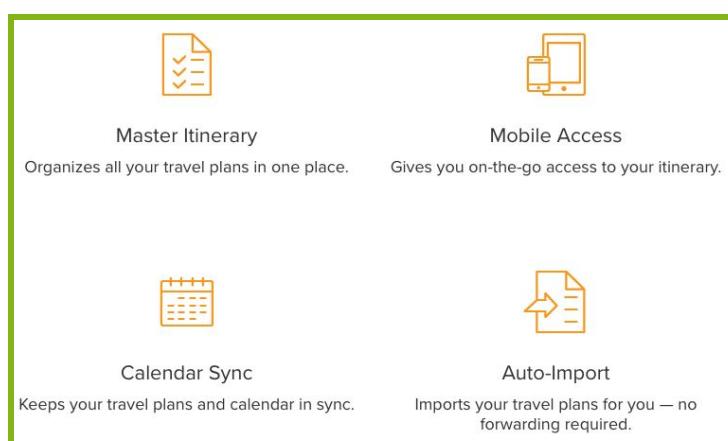
Pros:	Cons:
<p>Information is presented as both a list and a calendar.</p> <p>Icons are recognizable but outdated.</p> <p>Users most recent trip information is available as soon as you log in.</p>	<p>Presentation of information varies from page to page.</p> <p>Style and feel of site changes from page to page.</p> <p>Some icons are inconsistent from page to page.</p> <p>EX: Plane icon (shown below)</p>

## Examples:



**Con:** (Top) Style of pages, headers, and organization of information differs from page to page.

(Right) “Flight” icons are different depending on what page the user is on.



 Master Itinerary Organizes all your travel plans in one place.	 Mobile Access Gives you on-the-go access to your itinerary.
 Calendar Sync Keeps your travel plans and calendar in sync.	 Auto-Import Imports your travel plans for you — no forwarding required.

**Pro:** (Left) Icons are descriptive and accompanied by descriptive text.

## Heuristic: User Control and Freedom

Users are able to delete and undo deletion of information on the site as well as edit information imported from emails. However, information is not always fully deleted and further editing is unintuitive and cumbersome.

Score: 

Pros:	Cons:
<p>Information is automatically populated from emails forwarded to site.</p> <p>Deleted info is presented with strike through text and an undo button is present until you hit "save".</p>	<p>Edit buttons are small and not placed intuitively.</p> <p>There is no way to quickly edit or add information without scrolling through users entire itinerary.</p> <p>Dates for deleted information still shows in itinerary.</p> <p>No option to add multiple cities to a trip but users can merge them with different trips</p>

### Examples:



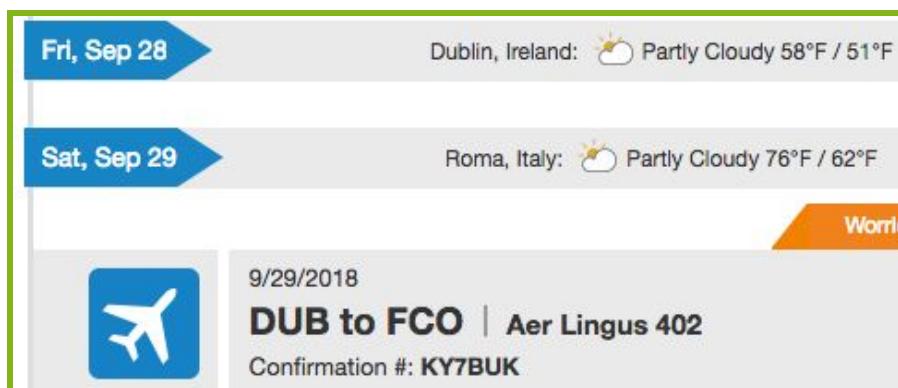
The screenshot shows a flight record for a flight from New York (JFK) to Dublin (DUB) on Aer Lingus 104. The departure date is 9/28/2018, and the arrival date is 9/29/2018. The flight number is 5:15 PM EDT PM and arrives at 4:55 AM IST AM. The confirmation number is KY7BUK. The flight is listed under 'Add Plans'.

**Pro:** (Left) Users can forward confirmation emails from hotels and airlines and information (dates, times, flight gates). Information is automatically populated in Tripit. (Below) Deleted information is displayed until changes are saved.



A screenshot of the software interface showing a deleted flight entry. The text 'Flight 1: from New York (JFK) 5:15pm to Dublin (DUB) 4:55am' is displayed, followed by a green 'Undo' button.

**Con:** (Right) After information is deleted from a list, dates must also be removed separately (EX: Flight information for Sept. 28 was deleted, dates still present in itinerary).



A screenshot of the software interface showing a partially deleted flight entry. The flight information for 'Fri, Sep 28' is visible, but the flight for 'Sat, Sep 29' is partially visible with a redacted date. The flight number 'DUB to FCO | Aer Lingus 402' and confirmation number 'KY7BUK' are also shown.

# Final Takeaways

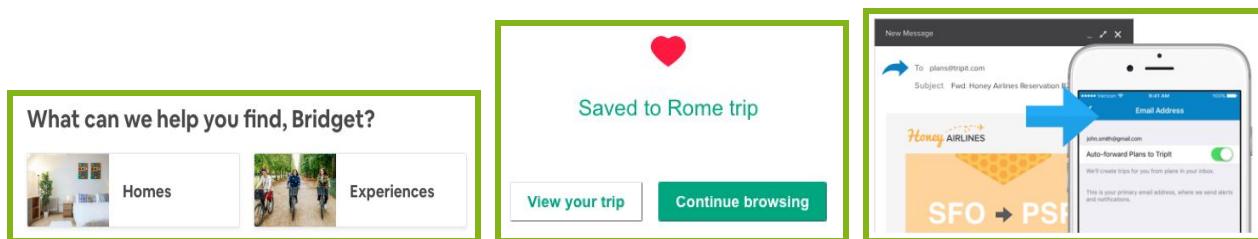
Each site offered unique solutions for helping users plan a trip as well as their own challenges. These are the best and most problematic features.

## Best Features:

**Airbnb** greets users personally and uses unique and friendly copy to explain their offerings.

**Tripadvisor** uses consistent branding, colors, and visual cues to make user's experience seamless and the site intuitive to use.

**Tripit** makes adding information to their itinerary simple by letting users forward emails directly to the site, requiring very little effort from the user.



## Most Problematic:

**Airbnb**'s use of small font and low contrast colors makes copy and captions difficult to read.

**Tripadvisor** allows hosts and restaurant owners to write their own descriptions. These are often written in host's native language and not translated.

**Tripit**'s site is overall outdated and not intuitive.

