

From: Meier, Sharon

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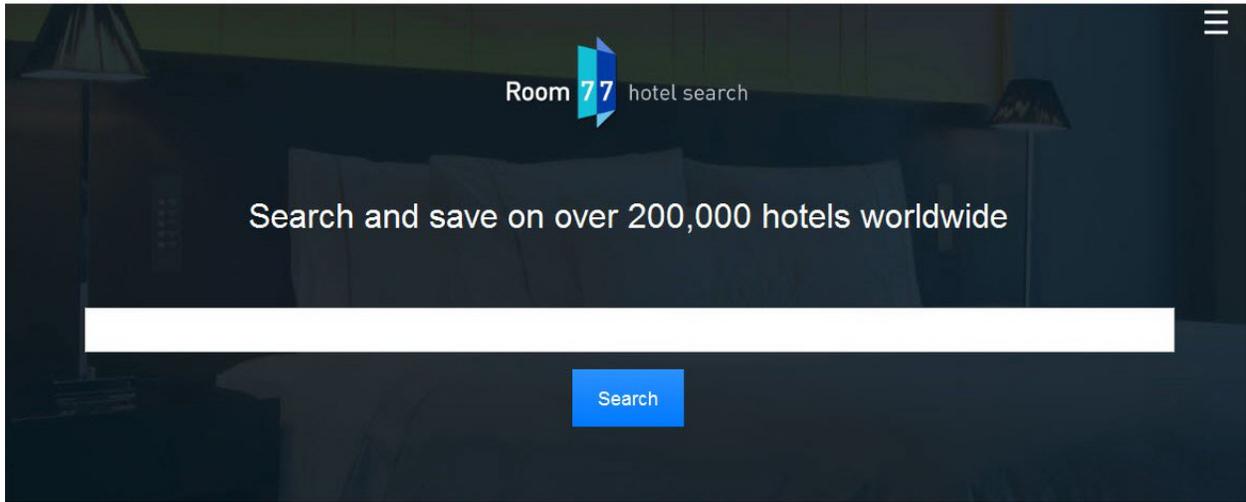
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Attachment Information:

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Files: web9-1.jpg, web9-2.jpg, web10-1.jpg, web10-2.jpg, web10-3.jpg



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TRAVEL
4 Cool New Sites to Help You Save on Hotels

By Brad Tuttle @bradtuttle

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Designed for the mobile reader

In the quest for the perfect room, more video
basic things: 1) a great room for news alerts
they're paying less than the person in the room next
door.

These four sites—all new, still in or recently out of beta—can help on both fronts:

DealAngel: How do you tell if the rate given by a hotel is actually decent—i.e., cheaper than the price normally available at the property? DealAngel promises to give travelers a clue. Enter a city and set of dates into the search box, and DealAngel returns a list of hotels and rates, and each rate is rated on a spectrum of "Great Deal" to "Rip-Off," with "OK Deal" and "Not a Deal" in the middle. The ratings are determined by historic room pricing data and how prices compare with similar properties, with info culled from 30 different booking sites. DealAngel doesn't claim access to rates that aren't available elsewhere. It can, however, save travelers time and help eliminate the stress involved when trying to figure out

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whether a “deal” is, in fact, a deal. So far, the one downside to the site is that it is young, and that the number of hotels and cities it covers is limited compared to the travel heavyweights like Expedia and Priceline.

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GuestMob: The “opaque” booking options from Priceline and Hotwire can result in major discounts at hotels. The problem, from some traveler’s perspective, is that they hate the idea of having no clue what hotel they’re staying at until after they’ve paid for their room in an entirely nonrefundable, nonchangeable fashion. GuestMob, which launched in 20 U.S. cities in March, offers a somewhat less opaque alternative. Before a traveler agrees to a price—prices that are 20% to 50% off the best available rates, mind you—he sees a handful of hotels (names, addresses, everything), one of which he’s guaranteed to be booked at. With the traditional opaque model, all a traveler knows before paying up is a star rating and perhaps a rough sense of hotel location. What’s more, rooms booked via GuestMob are refundable and changeable, with no fees whatsoever.

HotelTonight: As the name indicates HotelTonight specializes in helping travelers book a hotel at the last minute (i.e., that very night), with last-minute discounts to boot. Booking through HotelTonight can mean as much as 70% off the rack rate (which almost no one pays), though a 20% discount is more likely. The service was created for people on the go; it doesn’t even bother with a website, functioning solely as an app for Androids and most Apple products. Created last summer, HotelTonight doesn’t claim to have the world’s most comprehensive database of properties. But it’ll suffice for most travelers in North America, with deals in 33 major U.S. metropolitan areas, as well as 11 U.S. airports, and just recently, a pair of Canadian cities (Vancouver and Toronto).

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Tingo: Several years ago, the travel site Yapta gained a following for its automated airfare tracking service: It constantly tracked flight price fluctuations, and notified travelers when a requested route dipped below a specified price threshold. Tingo, created by industry giant TripAdvisor, has similar appeal, only for travelers hoping to track hotel rates. Room prices can and do rise and fall quite regularly, and unless travelers are conducting regular price checks, they’re none the wiser. Once you book a room via Tingo, though, the site keeps track of the latest rates offered by the hotel for the dates and room type at hand. If and when the rate drops below the previously-booked price, Tingo automatically rebooks the customer at the lower rate. The service works only for refundable bookings—the vast majority of hotel

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reservations fit the bill—and there are no fees involved at any stage of the process. The one drawback with Tingo is that customers are charged in full at the time a reservation is made; if a lower rate is found, or if the customer decides to cancel, the money is refunded back onto one's credit card. Under normal circumstances, a hotel guest's credit card isn't charged until the day of check-in.

Brad Tuttle is a reporter at TIME. Find him on Twitter at @bradrtuttle. You can also continue the discussion on TIME's Facebook page and on Twitter at @TIME.



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Brad Tuttle covers business and personal finance for TIME. He lives in Massachusetts with his wife and four sons, and also teaches journalism at **UMass-Amherst**.

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