

Using the Internet to... Travel



Using the Internet to **Travel**

by Colessa Humphreys, South Dublin County Library and
Mary Murphy, Kildare County Library.

Lifesteps offers you a range of online and printed guides. Written by staff from Irish public libraries, each guide contains easy to follow, step by step explanations of how to use the Internet to achieve a specific goal or 'life step'.

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Note: words in red appear in the glossary at the end of this module.

Introduction

This booklet guides you through the process of booking travel and accommodation arrangements online. It provides an example of each transaction and provides links of similar web sites for online booking. After working through the guide, you will be able to book holidays, short breaks and plan trips online.

Why book online?

Many companies now have websites that facilitate online booking. This gives you, the consumer, the opportunity to organise your own travel plans (flight, ferry, bus, car hire, accommodation in hotel, hostel, B&B) to suit you, compare prices across companies and to do so at your own convenience as Internet sites are open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Cost

Booking travel online lets you **find and compare prices** across different sites and allows you to ensure you are getting the best deal you can.

Sites can vary in price and non-Irish sites can look very competitive. However, check the currency that the price is quoted in and for all sites check whether the price includes any taxes or insurance costs.

Cancellation

It is worth reading any on-screen confirmation of bookings for details of cancellation procedures, late arrivals at accommodation and refunds. If you are booking an onwards flight, the carrier of the first flight may not be liable for any loss of flight incurred as a result of delays or cancellation.

Need to Know

A basic familiarity with a PC and the Internet is necessary.

Need to Have

1. A **credit card** for payment.
2. An email address.

Related Guides

- 'Internet Basics' – a basic guide to PC and internet use.
- 'Family Health' – a guide to health matters.
- 'Shopping' – for information about paying for goods/services online.

Quick Guide

The following are the most important steps to making travel plans online:

1. Finding/searching for the sites through which you can book a holiday. See the Links section for some suggestions.
2. Check **availability** by putting in the dates you want to travel.
3. Find the best price and most suitable times for you to travel.
4. Read the terms and conditions carefully.
5. Decide if this is really any better than (for example) going through your travel agent.
6. Fill in personal details i.e. your name and address, email address.
7. Pay by credit card.
8. Note transaction reference number and save to hard drive or print out and keep.

Step-by-Step Guide

This section deals with the actual booking of travel and accommodation. The first example is of booking a flight to Warsaw and the second example demonstrates how to book accommodation in Warsaw.

Flights

Step 1: The Website

In order to book a flight, a bus tour, arrange car hire, book a hotel or a B&B, you need to find a website that provides the information and allows you to book online. If you have no website in mind or do not find what you want in the links section of this guide, you need to use a search engine.



There are many search engines but in this instance, Google will be used (www.google.ie). This has an option for searching Irish sites or the entire web.

Choose a site that matches your needs, e.g. www.aerlingus.ie

Click on the options you require – book or you can use the booking screen on the left of the page.

Step 2: Availability

To find the actual prices, you will have to search the site for the dates you want to travel. Pretty much every online airline has a search form on the front page, to help you find the flights they sell.

Enter the dates you wish to travel to your destination and return from it, what time of the day you wish to travel (as there may be more than one flight per day to your destination), the number of passengers and click on the **Go** link.



Most sites include **pop-up** calendars or you may wish to have one to hand.

Repeat the searching process until you have found flights that meet your requirements.

When you have found flights that fit your requirements, you may be asked to select them by ticking a box. Having done this for both **outbound** and **inbound** flights, you will see your flight details and the cost per journey, as shown here:

Flight Details	Leaving From	Returning to	Price
WAT 12607H 0230Z	WAT/UK - Thu, 24 Jul	WAT/UK - Thu, 24 Jul	£25.00
WAT 12607H 0230Z	WAT/UK - Sat, Aug 06	WAT/UK - Sat, Aug 06	£25.00

Category	Fare	Taxes & Charges	Total
1 Adult	25.00	25.70	507.00
Maximum travelling time (excluding layovers)		4.00	4.00
TOTAL			511.00

Step 3: Is a cheaper flight available?

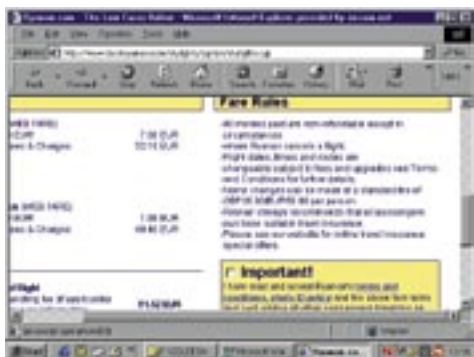
A number of online services exist that collect and compare prices for similar goods on the Internet. They aim to give the user the best price, while benefiting from advertising revenue. A good example for travel is Pricing Central (www.pricingcentral.com).

You may wish to search other websites separately for cheaper flights.

Not every site or airline will offer a **direct flight**. For example, if you wish to travel to Bologna with Ryanair, you need to complete two bookings – Dublin-Stansted and Stansted-Bologna. You might need to consider leaving plenty of time between flights. Bear in mind that some airlines, at least, do not sell connecting flights – this means that if the first flight is delayed, you will not be compensated for missing the next flight. This ‘point to point’ type of flight is cheap, but you must be prepared to deal with delays.

Step 4: Read terms and conditions

Before you proceed you may be required to click in a box confirming that you have read and agree to terms and conditions about travel, cancellation, baggage allowance and proof of ID for a **‘ticketless flight’**. In this case the confirmation notice sent to your email address is your flight ticket. Note that some airlines allow less baggage than others.



Step 5: Booking with confidence

When booking a flight or a holiday, make sure that it is **bonded**, to ensure that you, the consumer, are protected and that it shows symbols testifying to that. Symbols to look out for are the following:



Step 6: Payment

Once you have everything, you can proceed to pay for the transaction.

Note that **airport taxes, fees and charges** may be added and you cannot avoid these charges. However, the total, including all such charges, will be shown before you pay, and you can still back out at this stage. A credit card is necessary for payment. Some sites may allow you to provide credit card information over the phone.

Once you have provided the relevant information- name, address, type of card, card number, the only problems that may arise are sections not filled in such as zip/postal code. It may be necessary to put a 'dummy' number there to satisfy the **vendor** site.



Once you have supplied all the information you click on the **Continue** or **Proceed** button and await confirmation.

Do not click again if it appears nothing is happening because at this stage your credit card is being checked.

A **confirmation email** which includes a reference number will be sent to the email you provided - this may include a set of conditions under which the flight was booked such as cancellations etc. and also the same flight information as on your screen, which you may wish to print or save to your hard drive. Remember to check your emails regularly in case the flight details change and to *bring the print-out of your flight details when travelling.*

Accommodation

Step 1: The Website

You need to find sites on the Internet that allow you to book accommodation. To do this, use a search engine such as Google (www.google.com):



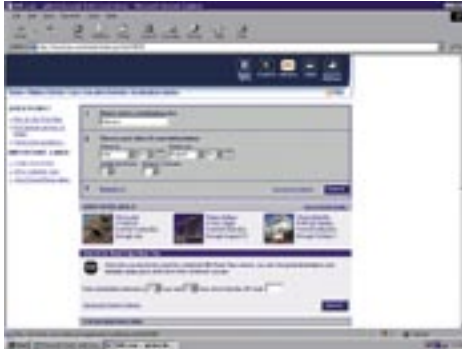
Some sites offer deals on accommodation when you book your flights. You can buy a 'package' of flights and accommodation, or book the flights and the accommodation separately.



Step 2: Availability

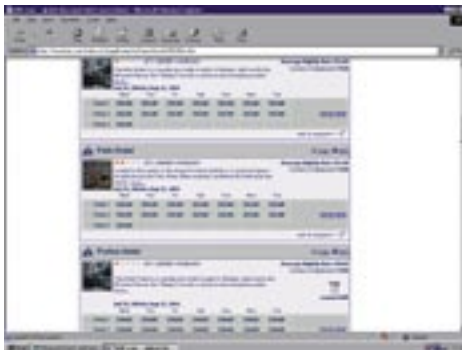
For this example we are going to use the site www.lastminutedeals.com

Enter your travel destination and the dates you want to book the hotel.



Step 3: Booking

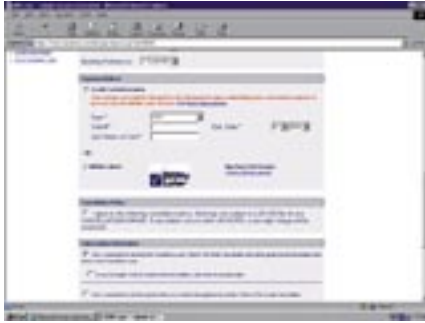
From the selection you decide to book a two star hotel in the centre of Warsaw, click on the **book now** button.



Step 4: Payment/terms and conditions

You need to enter your personal details and entering your email address is particularly important in order to ensure your booking is confirmed.

Payment by credit card is necessary and you can see the hotel requires acceptance of their cancellation policy.



A reference number may be given for your online booking. Keep this safe as you may need it if any queries arise.

Security on the web

The software you use to browse the internet should comply with industry standards for online transactions. This means the information you send is scrambled and not accessible by anyone other than the **vendor site**. Often you will see a yellow padlock at the bottom left of a screen, or a Verisign symbol or a sentence about **SSL** (secure socket layer) technology which implies that the site is secure and you can send your details with confidence.



The screen below contains a pop-up screen which has an alert message. The message asks if you want to display both secure and non-secure items. The site may not **encrypt** all information or contain items that do not conform to the security protocol.

If you click **yes**, you will be allowed to proceed.

If you opt for **no**, then navigation of a site may be hindered.



You may wish to consider applying for a separate credit card with a low credit limit for online transactions but you will be charged €40 Government charge annually for every credit card you have.

Further information about paying online is provided in the 'Online Shopping' LifeSteps Guide.

Glossary

- Availability:** Many hotels/airlines might from time to time set limits on their availability, particularly if they are offering special deals.
- Bonded:** Guaranteed or secure.
- Confirmation email:** An email sent to you by an online shop, airline or other website, which confirms the details of a transaction you have just completed. A confirmation email will typically review what you have just purchased, as well as giving additional information such as a flight reference, or delivery details. A confirmation email remains available in the longer term (once you receive an email, you can print it out, save it, etc.), and is typically used as a record of a web-based transaction, which is no longer visible after you leave a website.
- Direct flight:** Flight with none or some stops but no change of aircraft required.
- Encrypt:** Convert into a code.
- Forwarded:** Some web pages automatically load a different web page, either immediately or after a short delay. This then looks as if you have clicked on a link, without actually doing so.
- Inbound:** Return part of a journey.
- Link:** A link, or hyperlink, is a part of a web page that, if clicked with a mouse, opens a different web page. Links are usually shown in blue and underlined on a webpage.
- Online:** A word used as shorthand for 'on the Internet' or 'connected to the Internet'.
- Outbound:** Departure at the start of a journey/holiday.

Pop-up:	Information that generally appears suddenly or unexpectedly. There may be an icon/picture to click on.
Search engine:	A program running on a web server computer which creates and maintains a directory of web pages on the Internet. The engine has a web page with a form; you type in words describing what you are looking for; the engine looks up its directory and sends back a list of web pages that it thinks will fit your search criteria.
SSL:	Secure Socket Layer - a procedure to convert information to code so that it is secure.
Status bar:	The bottom line of a browser window. Usually, this is blank, except for 'Internet' on the lower right (when you are online) and a small logo at the bottom left. When connected to a secure server, a small padlock appears on the lower right. When you hover the mouse over a link, the address pointed to by the link usually appears here. (Tip: If you cannot see the status bar, click 'View-Status Bar' on the menu at the top of the browser.)
Ticketless flight:	No ticket issued for your flight.
Vendor:	The seller.
Web Browser:	A computer program, running on the human user's PC, which gets information from web servers and displays it on the screen. These instructions are usually in the computer language HTML.
Website:	A website is a collection of web pages which displays information on a particular topic. Common types of websites include company websites (all about a company), online shops (where you buy goods and services and pay by credit card) and personal websites (where individuals share their interests). A website may consist of just one page of information, but will usually contain several pages, all linked together. All the pages in a website usually share the same 'domain' name. For example, all the pages in the large online shop 'Amazon' have an address (URL) that starts with 'www.amazon.com'

Links

Many of the links listed below have the facility to book flights, accommodation, car hire and insurance all on the one site. The large number of links is only an indication – there are endless thousands of travel and accommodation sites on the Internet. For more websites on related topics please see our website at www.lifesteps.ie

Travelling by air/package holiday

www.aerlingus.com: sells a wide range of flights from Dublin, Cork and Shannon.

www.ryanair.ie: the major discount airline. Sells a small range of flights from Ireland, but serves a wider network via Stansted.

www.ebookers.ie: flights, accommodation and packages. Usually worth a look.

www.gohop.ie: good for last minute package deals.

www.britishairways.com: good range of European and Worldwide flights, mainly via Heathrow.

www.usit.ie: student based site but also has some fares open to all.

By sea

www.irishferries.ie: car ferries to the UK and Europe.

www.stenalines.ie: car ferries to the UK.

www.eurolines.ie: combines coach and ferry trips.

www.cheapferry.ie: intermediary offering ferry tickets to the UK and Europe on several different ferry lines. Worth comparing with booking direct.

www.aranislandsfastferries.com: serving the Aran Islands.

www.norsemerchant.com: Dublin to Liverpool.

Car hire

www.dan-dooley.ie: a car hire company.

www.europcar.ie: another car hire company.

www.budget.ie: another car hire company.

The following sites allow you to book cars for countries you may be travelling to:

www.aaireland.ie: insurance, route planner, breakdown services.

www.rac.ie: European travel, hotel finder, route planner.

By land or rail

www.buseireann.ie: included regional services well as national routes.

www.irishrail.ie: rail travel in Ireland.

www.dublinbus.ie: for local bus timetables.

www.luas.ie: the new Dublin tram system.

www.rail.co.uk: UK rail services – included timetables.

www.eurostar.com: Channel Tunnel services.

Accommodation

www.irishtouristboard.ie: provides information on accommodation, things to do and see in Ireland.

www.tourismresources.ie: Irish country inns and houses.

www.choicehotelsireland.ie: a range of hotels nationally and internationally.

www.dirl.com: provides information on accommodation, travel, currency, and the weather in Ireland.

There are many hotel and accommodation resellers worldwide. Search for 'hotels in Warsaw' (for example) on Google to find some.

Health

www.vhi.ie: frequent travel insurance.

www.aaireland.ie: frequent travel insurance.

www.oasis.gov.ie: for European Health Insurance Card.

www.tmb.ie: Tropical Medical Bureau – advice on vaccinations and health abroad.

http://www.who.int/ith/: World Health Organisation information about the latest health situations worldwide.

Currency

www.xe.com: a convenient currency conversion site.

Travel requirements

www.foreignaffairs.gov.ie: details of passport applications, loss and renewal, embassies in Ireland, embassies and consulates abroad, accredited embassies, advice about travelling to "hotspots".

www.oasis.gov.ie: details of passport application loss and renewal, free travel conditions.

For details of visa requirements when travelling abroad, contact the relevant embassy.

Country information

www.library.ie/public/index.shtml: link to public libraries nationwide. Many have on-line catalogues to search for travel books which may be borrowed.

<http://www.lonelyplanet.com/destinations/>: information about countries aimed at the traveller.

<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/index.html>: up to date facts and figures about countries of the world. Quite useful, especially for more remote destinations.