



**maxymiser**<sup>®</sup> AND  
Optimizing Every Customer Experience

**TRAVEL WEEKLY** PRESENT










# 4 ROUTES TO A WINNING SEARCH EXPERIENCE

BEST PRACTICES IN TRAVEL WEBSITE  
TESTING AND OPTIMIZATION

**PART 2**

## Table of Contents

- 3  The Search is On
- 4  Elements of a Search Experience
- 5  Route #1: Search Widget
- 6  Route #2: Display and Pricing
- 7  Route #3: Sort and Filter
- 8  Route #4: Maps
- 9  Case Study: Enhancing Search Results with a Recommendations Widget

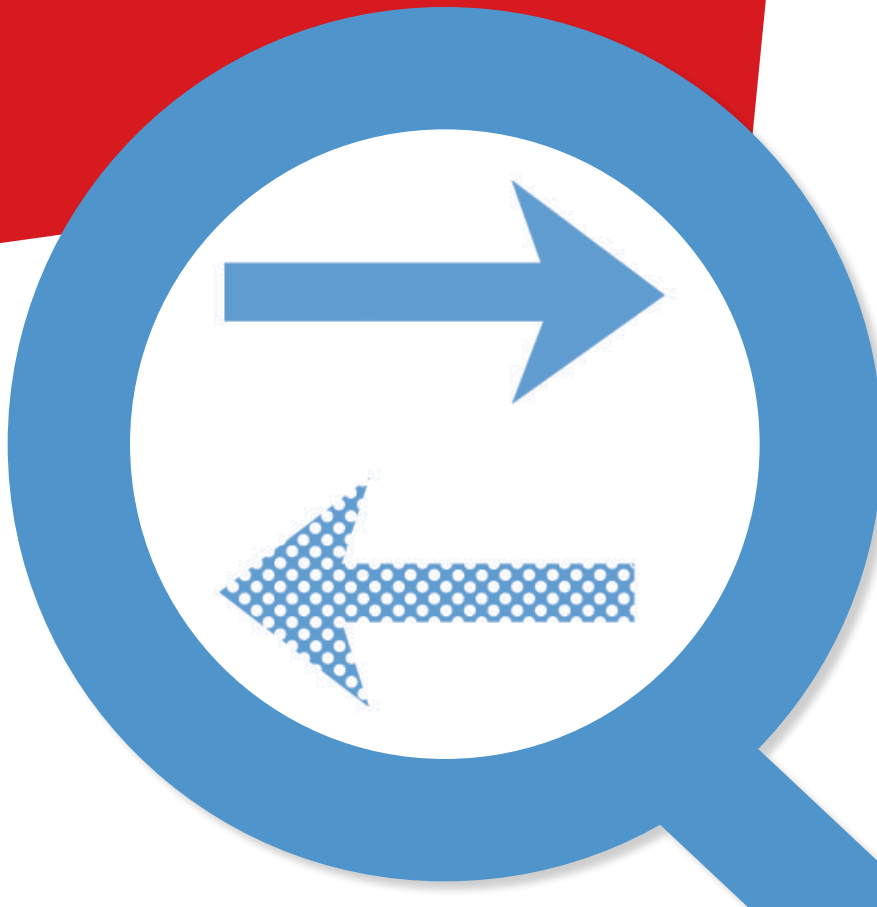
## The Search Is On

Behind every great trip, there's a great deal of research.

Vacations, flights and hotels are not impulse purchases. With much less expendable income, consumers are inevitably pickier about who they book with, when they travel and how much they will spend.

In reality, the path to a final, booked trip is fraught with decisions, compromise and questions.

Questions only a well-optimized search process can answer.



## Elements of a Search Experience

Your website must provide the easiest way for visitors to embark on their trip research. And once it has begun, they need key information to seamlessly move into the booking funnel.

### When am I leaving?

It may be obvious, but dates of travel are a number one priority for would-be bookers. Your visitor might have a timeline in mind, or may be flexible in order to reap some cost savings. Either way, dates are an essential part of the search phase and should always be prominent.

### Who is coming with me?

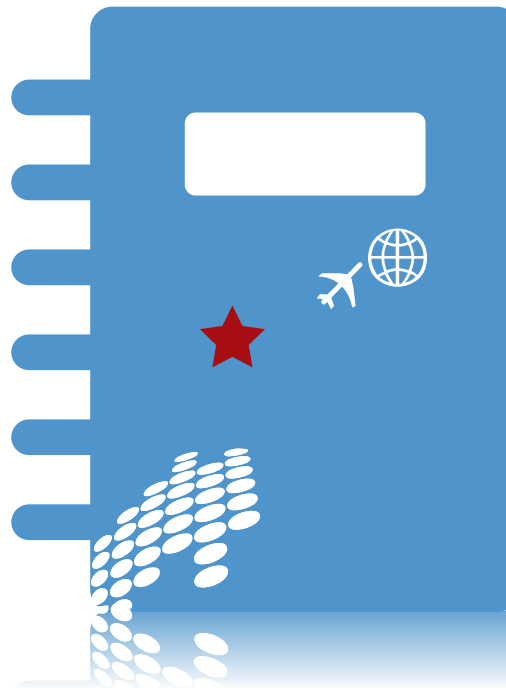
Whether it's a solo trip or spring break for 10, being able to search and display options by group size has a big impact on final decisions. Presence of children also impacts pricing and trip type.

### How much will it cost?

It's a no-brainer: knowing the range they are going to be paying play a part in decisions, trip customization and loyalty program participation.

### Where am I going?

Getting visitors started with their exact location is crucial — where they land within that location is as well. If you have multiple hotels, car pick-up locations or airports, they must be highlighted accordingly.



There are

4

elements to spruce up for an optimal search results experience...

# Route #1 Search Widget



When the travel research journey begins, simplicity, clarity and ease of use are a necessity. Straightforward actions within your search widget can make or break this process, such as clicking on “date field” to trigger a calendar pop-up, automatically populating checkout or return dates, and even saving recent searches in a drop-down field, can boost conversion rates.

Just remember: make this widget accessible at all times during the search phase.

**Widget is very small initially, implying simplicity in the process.**

**If users have searched on Delta.com before, then their searches will populate in the drop-down.**

**On click, the search widget expands to include more fields.**

**Pre-populating calendar**

**Choice of adding SkyMiles award tickets**

**Number of travelers and age level**

**“Add special rate codes” helps draw attention to the viewer.**

The screenshots show a search widget with fields for 'From Airport', 'To Airport', 'Recent Searches', 'Leave', 'Return', 'Passengers', 'Cabin', and 'Book SkyMiles Award Ticket'. A second screenshot shows a 'Find a Hotel' section with fields for 'Where are you going?', 'Arrival', 'Departure', 'Rooms', 'Adults', 'Children', and 'Add special rate codes'. A third screenshot shows a 'Hilton' logo and a 'Points & Miles & No Blackout Dates' banner.

## Route #2

# Search Results Display and Pricing



Once your visitors have moved from the search widget into the results phase, it's important they have accessibility to all needed information without having to leave the funnel. The first step in this process is providing a layout that cleanly displays a lot of information, including prominent pricing. Never leave them in the dark.

The image shows two screenshots of travel websites. The top screenshot is from Hertz.com, showing a car rental search results page. The bottom screenshot is from Southwest.com, showing a flight search results page. Red callout boxes with arrows point to specific features on both pages.

**Hertz.com Annotations:**

- Clean layout, including a progress bar.** Points to the top navigation bar with steps: 1. Edit Itinerary, 2. Choose a Car, 3. Choose Extras, 4. Review & Book.
- Search widget remains for easy modifications.** Points to the search filters on the right side of the Hertz page.

**Southwest.com Annotations:**

- Column format of results makes it easy to read times, dates and other information.** Points to the flight results table.
- Very prominent pricing, as well as a choice to use loyalty program points.** Points to the fare columns and the 'Business Select' and 'Anytime' options.
- Surrounding dates are included so the user can toggle between options without re-starting the search.** Points to the 'Quick Air Light' calendar.
- Once flights are added to the cart, total pricing is displayed.** Points to the 'Shopping Cart' sidebar on the right.

**Southwest.com Flight Results Table:**

Depart	Arrive	Flight #	Routing	Travel Time	Business Select	Anytime	Wanna Get Away
7:40 AM	11:05 AM	4066/4736	1 stop Change Planes MDW	4:25	\$279	\$263	\$159
8:40 AM	9:25 AM	4130	Nonstop	1:45	\$268	\$252	\$148
10:40 AM	1:30 PM	1330/4512	1 stop Change Planes MDW	3:40	\$279	\$263	\$193
11:30 AM	3:20 PM	1330/4512	1 stop Change Planes BWI	4:50	\$279	\$263	\$230

## Route #3 Sort and Filter



With the abundance of options your site has to offer for room types, flight times, price points, airports, etc., it's important to give travelers the ability to easily scale down these results to get more custom choices based on their needs. Sort and filter widgets allow users to easily check out what they want — and don't want — while remaining in the booking funnel.

Filter choices are static next to results. Results change upon user selections.

Simple functionality like checkbox and dropdowns, cleanly displays all filter choices.

Sliding scales provide quick ways to filter pricing, timing or room size.

The collage shows three different travel search interfaces:

- Top Interface (TripAdvisor):** Shows 'Vacation Rentals in Buenos Aires, Capital Federal District'. A 'Refine search' sidebar is open, showing filters for '791 of 1236' results, 'Search within' (radius), 'Desired stay' (1-3 weeks), 'Price range' (\$0 - \$5,000+), 'Bedrooms' (Studio - 10+), 'Bathrooms' (1 - 4+), and 'Sleeps' (1 - 10+).
- Bottom-Left Interface (Kayak):** Shows flight search results for New York, NY to St Louis, MO. A 'Stops' filter is highlighted with a red arrow, showing options for nonstop (\$230), 1 stop (\$233), and 2+ stops (\$390).
- Bottom-Right Interface (Flight Search Results):** Shows a list of flight options with various filters. A 'Stops' filter is highlighted with a red arrow, showing options for nonstop (\$230), 1 stop (\$233), and 2+ stops (\$390). A 'Times' filter is also highlighted with a red arrow, showing options for 'Take-off - Departure' (Tue 5:00a - 8:30p) and 'Take-off - Return' (Tue 5:30a - 7:30p).

## Route #4 Maps



Travel often involves venturing into the unknown. Providing consumers with a visual reference point of their hotel or attraction location will not only enhance their booking experience, but keep them on your site — and on the path to a completed booking.

Incorporating maps into the search results page is becoming increasingly common and sites are often leveraging third parties, such as Bing or Google Maps, for an interactive, and familiar, widget.

The search results page automatically displays a map at the top of the page.

“Show Area Map” link reloads the page with a map at the top of the page.

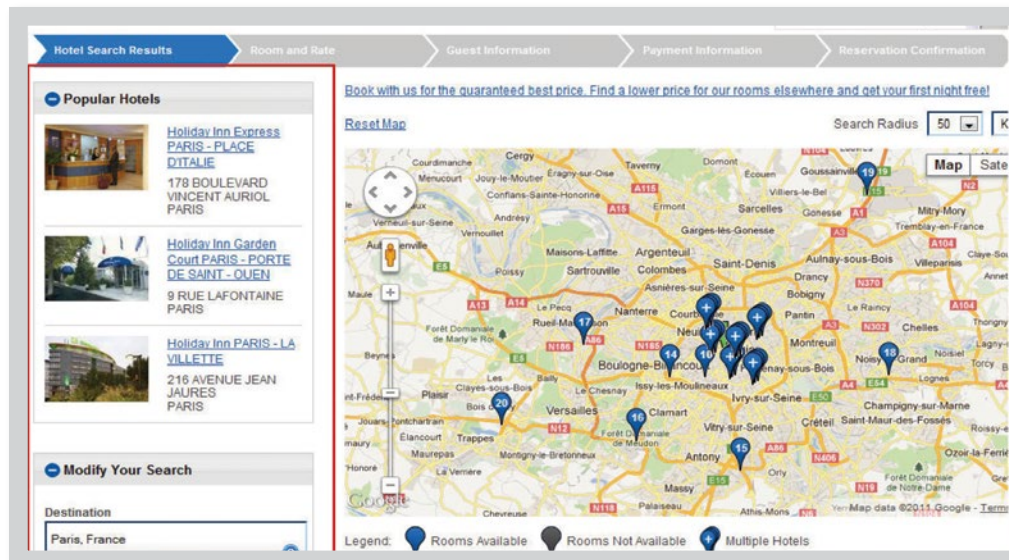
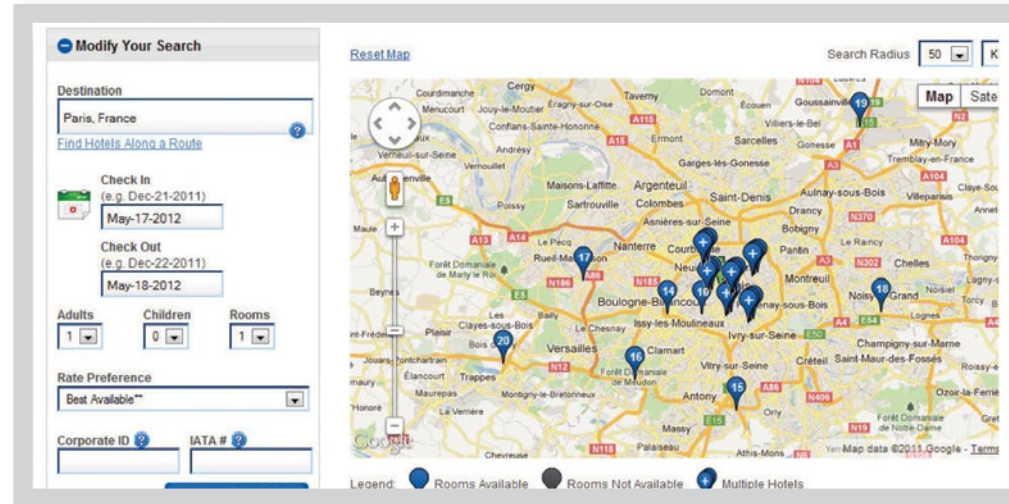
## Case Study

# Enhancing Search Results with a Recommendations Widget



A global hotel chain wanted to understand the impact of offering a retail-inspired recommendations campaign on its search results page.

Powered by learned visitors' preferences and previous behaviors, the recommendations widget replaced the search widget atop the results page. The campaign reviewed specific metrics to determine its success — such as bookings, revenue, number of nights booked, and the overall engagement with the recommendations model.



Over a matter of weeks, the hotel leader earned more than a 5% increase (or \$658,000!) in revenue from bookings as a result of the personalized recommendations.

## Your site is now en route to becoming a great travel research resource.

Committing to a flight, hotel or vacation is a big decision, but if your visitors enjoy their search and booking experience, you'll be golden. Providing savvy online travelers with a more optimized and relevant research experience means you'll be able to count more of them as booked revenue, time and time again.

**You're in the homestretch.**



Next, it's time to buff up that booking funnel...

# Want more travel best practices?

Join Maxymiser and Travel Weekly for a webinar on  
March 6, 2013 at 2:00PM EST



The graphic features the Maxymiser and Travel Weekly logos at the top, with the text 'PRESENT' to the right. Below the logos is a navigation bar with three circles and a globe icon with an airplane. The main title '11 ROUTES TO A WINNING TRAVEL WEBSITE' is displayed in large, bold, black letters on a red ribbon background. Below the title, the subtitle 'BEST PRACTICES IN TRAVEL WEBSITE TESTING AND OPTIMIZATION' is written in smaller, red, uppercase letters.

**Register here:**

<http://bit.ly/TravelWeeklyWebinar>

Exclusively for travel marketers who want to get on a path to better customer experiences and more bookings, this webinar takes a deep dive into three main site areas: homepage, search and sort, and the booking funnel with some of the world's biggest brands like *Delta*, *Hertz*, *Holiday Inn*, *Carnival Cruise Lines* and many more.

**We'll cover:**

- Industry case studies and best practices
- Tips, hints and tricks for CTA's, product imagery, homepage design, shopping cart funnels and much more
- How to test these elements to ensure your content works for your site visitors