



Toolie's Business Travel Newsletter

January 2005

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Meet Toolie in Hong Kong at the Business Travel Expo, Booth 217

Not only will I be exhibiting in Booth 217 at the Business Travel Expo (<http://www.businesstravelexpo.com/>) in the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Center, March 22-23, 2005, I will be presenting a seminar there! This month's tip lays the groundwork for my talk, and I'll be expanding on this subject in the months to come.

Tickets to the show are free, but you should reserve them in advance. If you know you're going to be in Hong Kong during that time, by all means, let me know and I can arrange for tickets at the Will Call counter.

This Month's Travel Tip: Calculating Costs on the Ground

I hope your January has been rewarding and productive. I've finally gotten over the Cold That Will Not Go Away, and I apologize for the late delivery of this month's newsletter! One of my New Year's resolutions was to get this newsletter out earlier in the month. So much for January: I'll try to do better next month.

Over the last year and a half I've been pondering the question of how a business traveler selects their accommodations for any particular trip: what the decision points are, how those decisions affect productivity, and most importantly, how much those decisions cost in terms of dollars (euros, etc.). I keep coming back to the same three elements, and in this month's newsletter, I'm going to lay the groundwork for discussion in the next few months' newsletters.

Ground_Costs == (Hotel + Internet_Access + Transit)

My use of the double-equals sign is not a typo: those of you with a background in computer programming will recognize a vague attempt at a formula to calculate costs. Indeed, each of these elements affect a business traveler's ability to get his or her job done while controlling costs for the company.

Hotel: The most obvious cost is the hotel room. It's not unusual for large corporations to negotiate corporate rates for their travelers by hotel chain, or even on a hotel by hotel basis. When I worked for Microsoft, the Corporate Travel department had a list of hotels in dozens of cities worldwide for which they had individually negotiated rates, especially if the company had an office in that town. Not every company is going to have the bandwidth or leverage to negotiate at that level; most companies dictate hotel choices by price or by hotel chain, and business travelers have some autonomy in choosing where they stay.

As with my lengthy diatribe on airline loyalty last month, I find myself gravitating towards one or two hotel chains in an effort to accumulate points towards free hotel stays. Some business travelers choose the same hotel property in every town they visit because they can rely on the same level of service or amenities. These are all good reasons to find a hotel or hotel chain you like and select them whenever you can. I am a member of most of the big hotel chain loyalty programs, but lately I find myself staying Marriott properties most of the time.

Internet Access: This is the new player in the travel game: with more and more companies providing external access to their employees, having decent Internet access quite often means the difference between being productive during travel or not getting much done. The trick is decoding what hotels mean when they SAY they provide Internet access. We'll take up that issue in a newsletter later this year! Suffice it to say for now that having broadband access is becoming essential, and finding and using it to be productive has moved from the Optional to Required column in our "decision grid."

Transit: For domestic travel (most especially in the US), the usual routine is to find a flight, find a hotel, and rent a car. The US does not have the kind of transit infrastructure that Europe and the bigger cities in Asia have, so renting a car becomes almost automatic. One important

feature of my Gateway Guides™ is to provide first-hand evaluations of mass transit options in all the cities I cover so that car rental does not have to automatically be part of one's travel costs.

Calculating the Cost

Here's where the magic in reducing travel costs lies: choosing your hotel plus Internet access plus transit as a package. Think of these items together, not separately, and you have a greater chance of 1) reducing your overall ground costs, and 2) being more productive while you're at your destination. Naturally, I have an example from my most recent trip.

When I visited San Francisco this month, I stayed at a small hotel just a block from the Powell Street Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) station. The Powell Street BART station is right in the heart of the Financial district (right next to the Cable Car terminus) and one of the BART lines runs right from the San Francisco International Airport to the center of town. From baggage claim you can walk to the inter-airport train and get off at the BART station. Buy a ticket, take the escalator down one level, and you can hop on the BART train that leaves every 20 minutes from early morning until almost midnight. This is the kind of transit combination that I love: I didn't have to rent a car just to get to town, and I wasn't stuck with a \$25 per night charge to park the car!

Now, how and why did I choose the hotel I chose? Well I literally sat staring at my Microsoft MapPoint program for an hour, looking at all of the hotels shown on the map in the immediate vicinity of the Powell Street BART station and the Civic Center BART station a few blocks further up Market Street. I used Google Advanced Search http://www.google.com/advanced_search?hl=en to find the corresponding hotel websites and I sifted through the sites to find out their room rates and what kind of Internet access they provided. I found a lovely hotel called the Monticello Inn that was around the corner from the Powell Street BART station, opposite the Renaissance Parc 55 Hotel. I have stayed at the San Francisco Marriott several times in the past, but for that particular week in January (MacWorld to be exact), both the Marriott and the Renaissance's room rates were well outside my budget. The Monticello Inn was considerably less expensive AND they offered wireless Internet access throughout the hotel. I also consulted other travel sites that mentioned this hotel.

I took a chance on staying at hotel that was not part of one of my large hotel chains, and it worked out very well. I got off the BART train, took an elevator to street level, and had to drag my roller bag only one block to the front door of my hotel. I spent the rest of the week riding BART and its connecting transit to get my work done, renting a car for only part of one day in order to take some photos in less accessible parts of the city. I picked up the car in the morning at the downtown Avis office, and returned it late that night at the airport, riding BART back to my hotel and avoiding completely the \$25 it would have cost just to park the car.

This description of my recent trip is a good start at examining how these cost elements work together. In the months to come, we'll delve deeper into this process of selecting hotels, transit, and Internet access as a package.

[Chat or Ask Toolie Questions Online](#)

You can chat with me or ask questions online by visiting my website and clicking on the button in the middle of the top of each page. I welcome the following inquiries, whether in live chat or by email:

- General questions on travel procedures
- Questions about specific destinations
- Productivity ideas and needs during travel
- Questions about my speaking, writing, or travel guide services
- Feedback about my newsletter and (soon) my products
- General customer service needs

Here is the link to my site: <http://www.tooliethetravelguide.com>. I love to hear from my subscribers anytime!

[Relief for Tsunami Victims](#)

Please, if you have not already done so, log onto either MSNBC.com or CNN.com and choose from their lists of agencies an organization to whom you can contribute money for relief for the victims of the tsunami waves that hit 12 Asian countries on December 26th. The need for help is staggering, and I know that you'll be generous in your support for this global relief effort.

Here are the links to get you started:

- MSNBC's list of aid agencies: http://www.msnbc.com/modules/interactive.asp?id=/d/ip/tsunami_aid_04/data.js&navid=6758618&cp1=1
- CNN's list of aid agencies: <http://www.cnn.com/2004/WORLD/asiapcf/12/28/tsunami.aidsites/>

Thank you in advance for your kindness.

Toolie's Travel Plans

My first research trip for 2005 was to San Francisco to complete the research for that guide. My never-ending cold prevented me from completing all the work I had to do there, so I am planning a touch-up tour that will probably take me back to Orlando, Atlanta, and San Francisco to grab those last few timings.

I leave February 2nd for Los Angeles for 10 days of training. I'll also be speaking briefly to the Technology Professional Emphasis Group for the National Speakers Association's Winter Workshop in Burbank.

Our booth at the Business Travel Expo brings me to Hong Kong in late March, and I'll be heading home immediately afterwards to wrap up work on the last of the travel guides.

In addition to the business travel guides I write, I can also provide Custom Travel Guides written for your Convention Center, your corporation, or your event (large or small). Contact me at JocelynG@ToolieTheTravelGuide.com for more information.

Reminder: Toolie's Samples and Previews CD

If you're an event or meeting planner, Toolie can create a custom travel guide you can distribute to your event attendees to smooth and enhance their travel experience to your event. Toolie now has a no-cost mini-CD of samples of her work that you can request by email. Included on that disk is a 24-page sample of a Custom Travel Guide, two of her newsletters, and a 12-minute preview of her new web seminar "What You Need to Know to Travel Internationally."

To get your mini-CD, send your full name, email, and mailing address in an email to JocelynG@ToolieTheTravelGuide.com. Your mini-CD will be sent promptly by US mail.

Very "Toolie" yours,

Jocelyn Garner

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