

Need a loo? There's an app for that

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Boarding pass? Check. Sensible shoes? Check. App that'll steer you to the nearest public toilet? Wait, what?

If you still consider your iPhone, iTouch or smart phone device as nothing more than a way to play Angry Birds during your flight, you're likely as addicted as I am. But you're also missing out. Here's a look at the top free travel apps:

Skype: If you want to avoid shocking international roaming charges or if you're carrying an iTouch, add this handy app and voila - instant phone. As long as you're in a Wi-Fi area, that is.

Free Wi-Fi Finder: You want to use Skype, but don't know if there's a Wi-Fi spot nearby? Download Wi-Fi Finder. It can help you search for free Wi-Fi spots nearby, or cruise through a free hot-spot finder that'll locate one for you anywhere in the world. A searchable offline database is also available.

Restaurant Finder: Feel like a little tapas in Toledo? Restaurant Finder will locate any style of restaurant in a pre-determined radius based on where you are at the moment. Results provide ratings, a map, distance to the restaurant, a phone number and the URL of the restaurant's Web site.

Gate Guru: Delayed at an airport with nothing to do? Say it isn't so! Use this app to check in, add a photo, locate food - from Au Bon Pain to Wendy's - shopping or services. Users also provide ratings, though the reliability may vary.

For example: Dunkin Donuts in Terminal A at Logan between gates A13 and A22 only gets three stars, while the Dunkin Donuts at baggage claim gets five stars. In my world, a medium regular is a medium regular.

Users can also submit info about wait times at gates, allowing those on their way to prepare accordingly.

Kayak: Does what a travel app should - gets you your information quickly, with no extras bogging everything down. Find a flight, searchable by cost, time in the air or how soon you want to leave; hotel rooms are searchable in a similar manner, but add in the wild-card classy option. Invaluable for getting from here to there.

Southwest/American Airlines [AMR]/Fly Delta/Whatever airline you're flying: Get fare alerts, make car reservations, check in for your flight (and get that coveted A designation if you're flying Southwest). American has an AA sudoku and Fly Delta will allow users to download a mobile boarding pass. Airline apps are the bare minimum for the smart phone-equipped traveler.

EarthCam: For the virtual traveler, daydreamer and Walter Mitty in all of us. [EarthCam](#) is just that - a live look at destinations around the world. Good for prompting trips and sparking interest in faraway locations. It also gives a glimpse of where you're headed. Trafalgar Square looks busy yet beautiful, while an eyeful of snowbound Wolfeboro, N.H., reminded me that it may be time to revisit Admiral Nelson's column.

Sit or Squat: Call it an icky wiki, but you can't deny it: Sometimes the urge hits, and finding an adequate restroom becomes a very high priority. Sit or Squat can help. Locate a room to rest in nearby, or choose from a list sorted by distance. Best of all, read reviews - yes, reviews of toilets - before you go (no pun intended).