

How to: Help travelers navigate 2021 using location technology



Travel is set to boom in Summer 2021. Travel apps and location data can help travelers stay safe while on their adventures

FOURSQUARE

Introduction

As COVID-19 restrictions begin to loosen and more and more people are vaccinated, global travel is poised to take off this summer.

Indeed, foot traffic to airports across the U.S. fell by -77% and hotel traffic slid by -56% in April of 2020 -- but recent foot traffic numbers hint at a travel-rebound, with foot traffic to airports down by just -31% and hotel visits down by just -12% as of May 7, 2021 - a significant boom compared to last year. As more people think about satisfying the urge to come out of hibernation, app developers are likely working to deliver the best user experience possible for travelers looking to navigate and explore a forever-changed world. In this e-book, Foursquare and Alex Grebnev and Viktor Mangazeev, co-founders of the popular travel app Maps.me, share tips for developers on how to use location data and technology to drive better user experiences as well as advice for travelers looking to stay safe in the months ahead.



What's going on in the world of travel apps?

[Maps.me](#), an app designed to help users download maps and explore the world, has over 60 million users and is designed to help travelers search and discover new places, access tourist guides, and navigate all over the world (including places without an internet connection). Maps.me co-founders Alex Grebnev and Viktor Mangazeev share a few important insights about the travel landscape.

Maps.me: The pandemic has sparked many shifts in consumer travel behaviors and expectations, and apps like Maps.me must adapt quickly to meet users' new needs. Plus, it's important that we do what we can to help users stay safe as they begin to travel again. Here are a few trends we're seeing -- or predict that we'll see -- that will affect travel apps and the travel industry as a whole:

1. **People may remain leery of traveling on a plane -- which could lead to more road trips in Summer 2021.** This could mean a boon for travel apps that provide navigation and can help users find places to explore within driving distance of where they live.
2. **Maps may look a little different than a year -- or even a few months -- ago.** The pandemic had a significant impact on the travel and hospitality industry, forcing many businesses to alter their operating hours, temporarily close, or shut down entirely. This means that apps need to be sure they stay up-to-date with their maps and venue recommendations.
3. **Cleanliness reviews will likely influence where travelers choose to stay.** Even as more people are vaccinated, many travelers may still wish to avoid crowds whenever possible. Most hotels have heightened their cleanliness standards by increasing the cleaning of public spaces and guest rooms. Consumers will likely turn to user-generated hotel reviews to see what steps they are taking to stay clean and safe.



Tips and tools for developers

Location data and technology are the secret ingredients to a more engaging app experience - particularly for travel, hospitality, entertainment and leisure apps. Here are just a few ways that developers can leverage location to help and delight travelers in summer 2021:

1. Leverage foot traffic data to better understand where people like to go and what they like to do.

Foot traffic data can tell powerful stories about how people move through the world, including illuminating the “hot spot” destinations for travel, leisure, and entertainment. Last year, for example, more people than ever took advantage of outdoor recreational activities - in August 2020, foot traffic in parks and trails surged, rising 84% and 102% respectively in the Northeastern U.S. compared to February 2020. Armed with this kind of information, developers can incorporate content that appeals to such users.

2. Provide directions and recommendations using point-of-interest data and user-generated content.

Point-of-interest (POI) data helps developers build maps of the world, which can help users navigate the world around them. With so many businesses impacted by the pandemic -- through closures, changes in operating hours, etc. -- accessing accurate, high-quality, and fresh POI data has never been more important. In addition to providing an up-to-date map of the world, POI tools like Foursquare's Places -- which Maps.me integrates into its app -- also enable users to contribute to their own images, reviews, and recommendations that provide more complete pictures of specific venues -- for example, not only can a Places-powered app tell you how to get to a bakery in a Greek village, it can tell you which one has the highest rated baklava.

Bonus tip: Developers can boost user engagement by offering geo-tagging features that enable users to add location information and other details to their photos

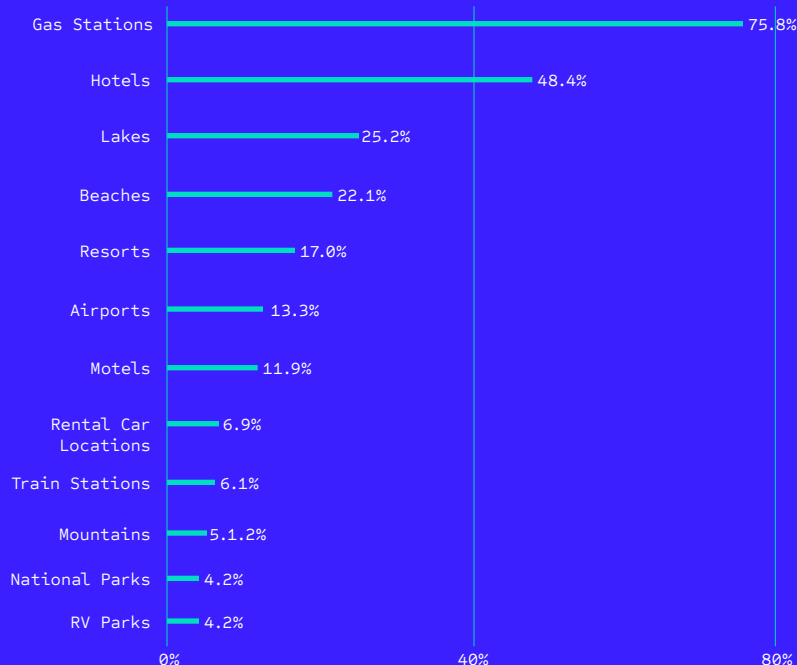


3. Show users hidden gems based on what's around them.

Travelers love to find hidden gems and unexpected adventures. They also love to make plans and identify places they want to visit. Using tools like Places API can help developers get users excited about their upcoming plans by surfacing curated photos and other place-related content directly in the app, giving them a fuller depiction of what is surrounding where they are staying so that they can identify venues to visit ahead of time. Users can also use search functions to locate the best-rated venues around them -- allowing them to stumble upon a local treasure they may not have found otherwise.



A look back at Summer 2020: Percentage of consumers who visited...



Top U.S. destinations for Spring Break travelers this year:

Orlando, Phoenix, Las Vegas, Tampa/St. Petersburg, Dallas, Los Angeles, Atlanta, Miami/Ft. Lauderdale, Nashville, New York, Denver, Knoxville, Washington DC, Ft. Myers/Naples

Find Foursquare Places Data on AWS

With 95M+ points of interest sourced globally, Foursquare provides map-building and Search & Discovery features for the world's largest Travel & Hospitality (including dining) brands -- making digital experiences more location-aware and engaging for consumers at significant scale. AWS plays a crucial role in this by powering the workloads that enable Foursquare to provide millions of data points to customers on a daily basis with security, reliability and accessibility at the forefront.



4. Help travelers score deals in real-time.

Knowing when a user is nearing or has entered a specific venue can help developers reach those users with timely, relevant offers. Using tools like Foursquare's [Pilgrim SDK](#), For example, if a user is approaching a coffee shop, restaurant, or store, the app can ping that user and deliver a coupon or ad that may entice them to go inside that venue. This can be useful to travelers looking to score a deal or even explore a venue they may otherwise have missed.



Conclusion

For travelers, Summer 2021 is poised to be an exciting step toward normalcy. But with many COVID-restrictions and cautionary measures still in place, travelers will benefit from apps that can help them navigate to new adventures without compromising their safety. Location data and technology can help developers create travel experiences that are engaging, informative, and unique for users.

Want to learn more about location data and the travel industry? Contact us at [Foursquare.com](https://foursquare.com).

More about MAPS.ME

[Maps.me](#) is the world's leading off-line mapping application for travelers. Launched in 2012 it has been downloaded more than 140 million times. More than 60 million users worldwide were active in 2020 planning and navigating their excursions in 195 countries. Maps.me users can download maps for their intended travels and then access their maps without the need for expensive roaming connectivity. An open-source advocate, Maps.me users are a primary contributor to the OpenStreetMapping Project globally. Beginning in 2021, the app will integrate payment, currency exchange and passive income services in 35 currencies to further enable explorers worldwide.

About FOURSQUARE

Foursquare is the leading independent location technology company, powered by our deep understanding of how people move throughout the world. Our solutions help businesses make smarter decisions, developers create more engaging experiences, and brands build more effective marketing strategies.

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