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Web sites stray off the beaten path

Many guidebooks and Web sites offer things to do and places to see on your travels, but a few new companies think there are niches still to fill.

Sites such as WallBounce.com, SixNewThings.com, ThingsToDo.com, and DailyCandy.com try to give travelers ideas for vacations, side trips, attractions and new restaurants that are not on the well-trodden tourist path. Some are geared specifically for travelers, while others cater more to locals looking for something new.

WallBounce offers to arrange learning experiences, while the others traffic largely in information.

Each month, SixNewThings gives its corporate road warrior subscribers an idea of what's new and interesting in 70 cities across North America. The six items featured are gleaned from the publishers' own sources as well as the Internet, blogs and podcasts.

Publisher Jeff Herrington said the idea is to give subscribers things to do but not overwhelm them or duplicate what would be in a standard guidebook.

"It's what's new; what's brand new," he said.

ThingsToDo and DailyCandy offer a slightly different potpourri. ThingsToDo bills itself as a provider of U.S. travel, recreation and entertainment information. Users click on a state and receive a couple of spotlighted travel suggestions, plus links to more information about the area, regional attractions, lodging, outdoor recreation and coming events.

DailyCandy promises a guide to what's hot, new, and undiscovered in nine cities - eight in America, plus London. The site is geared more to the cities' residents who are looking for activities, but travel is a focus.

"It's like getting an e-mail from your clever, unpredictable and totally-in-the-know best friend," the Web site says.

Rather than just suggesting activities in a city, WallBounce actually arranges offbeat and unusual forms of entertainment or learning experiences for those

_____ with plenty of disposable income.

Advertisement _____ "It's for people who don't want to do the mundane," said chief executive officer Robin Wilson. "Our goal is to be the premier provider of lifestyle experiences, offering the same sort of access a politician or a celebrity would get."

The site launched this month, so it's still working out the kinks, but its current offerings include an eight-course dinner for six at the chef's table at Alain Ducasse at the Essex House in New York (\$5,000); private screening of a movie at a 100-seat theater in Washington (\$2,800); a behind-the-scenes chocolate tasting at Debaube & Gallais in New York (\$1,400); and a five-day shark diving experience off San Diego (\$12,200).

Wilson has lots of big ideas. She wants to offer the chance to watch the Super Bowl from a blimp, design your own Nike running shoes or put together your own music show on satellite radio.

WallBounce currently charges its customers a fee for the experiences plus a markup for itself. Wilson said her goal eventually is to earn her fees directly from the providers themselves, offering them a way to market themselves or their services to a broader audience.

SixNewThings offers its listings for \$2 a month, or a discounted rate to employees of companies that participate. Herrington said IBM Corp. is the company's first corporate client. DailyCandy and ThingsToDo are free, relying on advertising and referrals.

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