



PlanAway

PlanAway the details so you can focus on the fun! Travel planning made easy

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Summary

A product to help travelers optimize their vacation itinerary.

Problem Background

Problem Statement: How might we create an optimized itinerary for travelers so that they can plan their key activities stress-free?

Industry

Traveling is a popular way to take time off, destress, and learn about a new environment. Lifelong memories are created, activities are ticked off in the bucket list, and precious time is spent with loved ones. In 2019 alone, [Americans took 2.29 billion domestic trips](#) and spent [\\$972 billion](#) on those trips. The market size of the tourism industry in the U.S is [\\$1.2 trillion in 2023 and expected to increase 4%](#). The rising popularity of tourism among the general public may be attributed to increased disposable income, the rising influence of social media and new technologies, and a growing sense of curiosity.

Most travelers already have ideas of where to go and what to do before heading on vacation. The problem now is that there is no effective tool to aid travelers in creating a well optimized itinerary based on their planned activities. Travelers are left by themselves in creating day-to-day schedules and must do extensive research to find the best routes and timings to visit their key activities for a city/area they're likely not familiar with.

Currently, there exist products that help in vacation itinerary planning. Users are able to input their activities, accommodations, transportation, and more into one centralized platform in order to have easy access on-the-go (examples include Wanderlog, TripIt). Some products also offer advice on how to get from Point A to Point B (mapping services, transit planners). These products all help travelers in being more organized, not more optimized. Travelers are expected to already have decided on the order to visit their key activities and products do not offer suggestions or advice on how to structure itineraries to ensure routes are optimized. PlanAway will fill this need by offering users suggestions on how to structure itineraries on a day-to-day basis based on activity locations.



Users

Five 1-on-1 user interviews were conducted with a total of 34 survey respondents. Only existing travelers were targeted - those who have not taken a holiday or vacation in the past 12 months were not asked to participate. This was decided due to targeting a group with recent experiences that can still be clearly recalled, with current post-COVID travel experiences, and reaching passionate travelers who are likely to travel again and often.

User Segmentation

- Travelers for business
 - This segment was abandoned due to the differing demands of business travelers (mandatory activities both work-related and social) as well as a lack of available resources for user research (it was difficult for me to find a large enough sample pool in my network).
- Travelers for family reunion
 - This segment was not surveyed due to the differing goals of this group. Travelers who return home to visit often have predetermined commitments with family in a familiar city/area. Their pain points differ from the problem.
- Travelers for leisure
 - Duration of travel: Weekend, week-long, more than one week
 - Number of travelers: solo travelers, duo travelers, group travel (groups of three or more)
 - Types of groups: family, friends
 - Frequency of travel: once a year, twice a year, three times or more a year
 - Type of travel: local, national, international

User segmentation was done to detail the types of travelers and in what conditions they travel in. Some segments have been abandoned, however different segments may still share the same pain points and user journeys. With the main pain point being a stressful and difficult time planning out itinerary routes, the focus will be narrowed down to these relevant user segments:

- Leisure travelers,
- Who travel at least once per year,
- By themselves or with groups,
- To national or international destinations,
- For at least a weekend.

Although frequency of travel and type of travel are also important, current research into user stories and journeys do not reveal a significant difference in pain points. No matter how many times a traveler goes on vacation, the planning process occurs each time. Similarly for travel types, both national or international destinations are considered foreign cities/areas that require research and planning.

Pain points

From research, there are five key pain points users currently experience.

- **Users know which activities they want to visit, but don't plan for when to go to each**



- 91.2% of surveyed users have at least 1-5 activities they plan to go to and 76.5% place high importance on visiting those planned activities. However, 79.4% don't plan when to visit or in which order.
- **Users enjoy researching for activities, but don't enjoy planning out routes**
 - In user interviews, every interviewee enjoyed the process of researching which activities they would like to do. However, they all identified that plotting routes for each day was the aspect they disliked the most.
- **Users would like to cut down time spent on researching specific locations and business hours**
 - In user interviews, although researching for activities was the most time-consuming, it's a task that users enjoy. Planning day-to-day logistics is the second-longest task of the process, but users don't experience the same joy and typically do not plan in detail as this task is more tedious.
- **Users want a well optimized itinerary, but don't want to create one themselves**
 - 76.4% of surveyed users place high importance on a well optimized itinerary. But only 20% actually create a detailed itinerary where they plan each meal, every activity, and how to get to each spot. This suggests that optimization is important for a pleasant vacation experience, but many don't plan in that much detail.
- **Users want to plan a well optimized itinerary with a group of friends or family and ensure everyone is on the same page**
 - 76.5% of surveyed users went on vacation with at least one other person. In user interviews, users revealed that there is usually one main person who researches activities, plans out the itinerary, and coordinates with other group members on their preferences. This process involves a lot of stressful back-and-forth.

Goals

By creating an easy, stress-free way for travelers to plan their daily activities, it will allow travelers to save time on the nuances of planning locations and routes.

- Help travelers organize their vacation by deciding on the order of visiting activities
- Allow travelers to cut down time spent on planning the route of each day, since that task is considered "tedious"
- Increase likelihood of travelers actually visiting their planned activities and achieve a higher level of satisfaction during and after vacation
- Provide a simple and smooth experience
- Support travelers in hosting their activities and routes effectively on one platform that can be shared with a group (this goal is seen as an additional feature and will not be mentioned in user personas or scenarios in order to keep the solution as simple as possible)

User Personas

User Persona 1: Lia (heavy planner)

Lia is an energetic person who enjoys traveling. They plan their trips well ahead of time and their itineraries are extensive and thoughtful but researching routes is tiring and takes a lot of effort, but they need to make an itinerary in order to feel secure. Lia wants to have a route presented first and just make small changes based on their personal preferences.



Goals:

- Cut down amount of time spent planning optimized routes
- Be reassured that there will be time to see all planned activities

Stressors:

- Planning is time-consuming and tedious

User Persona 2: Lucie (casual traveler)

Lucie loves to take time off work to travel to different cities and relax. She has specific activities in mind and has ideas of what she wants to do, but as a last-minute planner, she often arrives at her destination with a list of activities and no idea where to start. Lucie is worried about not being able to see as much as possible.

Goals:

- Have an easy way to create an itinerary
- Have an optimized itinerary so she's not disappointed on missing out on activities

Stressors:

- Doesn't want to plan routes but want to visit as many activities as possible

Based on above user personas, a glossary will be used to specify the type of traveler:

- Lia is an intense user
- Lucie is a casual user

User Stories

User Story 1: As a casual user, I want to have an optimized itinerary, so that I can visit as many planned activities as possible.

User Story 2: As a casual user, I want to be able to group key activities based on location, so that I can create an optimized, efficient itinerary.

User Story 3: As a casual user, I want an easy way to plot my route in between each activity, so that I can reduce time spent on this tedious part of planning.

User Story 4: As an intense user, I want to check the best routes for getting to and from each activity, so that my planned order of activities makes sense.

User Story 5: As an intense user, I want to easily share my proposed itinerary with others.

Proposed Solution

Problem Statement: How might we create an optimized itinerary for travelers so that they can plan their key activities stress-free?

Users enjoy researching activities, but the main pain point is what comes after: planning the order of visiting each activity. Users would ideally want to visit closely located activities together, instead of trekking across town each day.

A possible solution would be a way for travelers to decide on the order of activity. The solution would consider the location (and business hours, as a bonus) of each activity so that



travelers don't need to search for each location themselves. These activities would need to be arranged and presented to users based on proximity so travel between each activity is minimal. To help with clarity and organization, activities will be grouped by date and time slots (i.e morning, afternoon, evening).

It would be ideal if the platform can be easily accessed by multiple people so groups of travelers can stay updated on the most current itinerary.

It would be a bonus if multiple people are able to view and edit the same itinerary. Groups of travelers would be able to input their own preferences and receive notifications when items have been edited.

Scenarios:

Basic functionality for MVP:

As a casual user, I want to be able to group key activities based on location, so that I can create an optimized, efficient itinerary.

- Scenario: Add multiple activities
 - User uses a search bar to enter the address of desired activity
 - User is shown the activities in a list format
 - Activities are grouped into time slots (morning, afternoon, evening)

As an intense user, I want to check the best routes for getting to and from each activity, so that my planned order of activities makes sense.

- Scenario: See all added activities together in one map
 - User has already added their list of activities
 - User presses the map icon on the top right of screen
 - User interface flips into one of a map, with an icon on each activity location
 - Bolded lines with arrows indicate routes

Potential features:

As an intense user, I want to easily share my proposed itinerary with others.

- Scenario:
 - User presses "Share this trip" button in the overview page
 - User can share generated URL with others, displayable in any browser
 - Users are able to edit activities in itinerary (moving to different time slots, dates)
 - Users will be notified that there has been a change in their itinerary

Measuring Success

Co.Lab Success Metrics



For the most basic MVP, the definition of done would be to complete the functionality of User Story 2. Users would be able to input multiple activities and receive a list organized by location proximity.

Product Success Metrics

- Time saving
 - Surveying users on how much time was reduced in planning itineraries
- Reducing stress
 - Surveying users on how whether or not they were less stressed when using PlanAway
- Increasing organization
 - Surveying users on how much more organized their itineraries were before and after using PlanAway

Milestones & Timelines

Since I am not very familiar with software development timelines, I've defined development in phases. Since development will be done agilely, several phases can happen simultaneously and iterations can occur at any phase.

Phase 1: Problem space and user research

- Problem space identification
- Problem background research: existing solutions, gaps in current offerings
- User research: surveys, interviews

Phase 2: Solution ideation

- User flows
- Basic wireframe development to gather more user research
- Develop product backlog and prioritize features

Phase 3: Wireframe development

- Mockup development
- Prototype development

Phase 4: MVP development

- Front and back-end development
- Usability test
- Iterate features

Phase 5: Alpha testing

- User research: hands-on feedback
- Iterate features
- Research at-scale development needs
- Marketing development: promotional graphics, copy

Phase 6: Beta testing

- User research at scale: feedback from a larger sample size



- Iterate features
- Research at-scale development needs

Phase 7: Launch

- Marketing development
- User research: user feedback
- Development requirement research: how to consistently provide service