How to build a travel website like mine and earn an income

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To get the most from the information in this guide, **print it**. Then get comfortable and read it through..

I decided to build a travel website about **Cape Town** South Africa. It's my home town, a great place to be - and it also happens to be my favourite destination.

Why am I telling you this? Because I realised that having lived in Cape Town since 1988 I would **not** want to live anywhere else. I also knew that I wanted to tell the rest of the world to come over and visit my unique coastal town on the southern tip of the African continent.

I decided that it was time to set up a website to promote Cape Town from **my own** perspective, providing the type of useful information that travellers and tourists would be searching for. I also had to find the most **cost effective** way to go about it. This is what I have done - and now my travel information site which is still expanding, is in the top 2% of Alexa rated sites and providing me with a **growing** income.

So how did I go about doing that?

Lots of preparation for a start, **dedication**, and perserverance. Fortunately I make use of an excellent set of tools which helps me set up my website, and handles all the technical aspects of site design, promotion and search engine submission.

In fact I just need to **concentrate** on my subject matter which is easier for me because I am fascinated with Cape Town and I have the motivation to put it all across in my website.

My site's a part time project. It's been up for three years now, and hardly a day goes by when I'm not adding content, improving existing pages and **researching** my next subject. I enjoy what I'm doing which makes it that much easier.

How do you start?

I found out that if you set up a website based on travel, or in fact any subject about which you are **knowledgeable** or passionate, and provide the sort of information people search for, then turning it into a profitable internet business, at minimal cost is not difficult!

Forget about get-rich-quick schemes. There's plenty out there, but who do **you** know has benefitted from them? If you want to be successful you need to do the work and go about it the right way.

There's nothing like building your **own website**, watching its pages rank high in the search engines and eventually earning an income for supplying useful information people want. It's not difficult if you have the determination and the right tools. You start with an **idea**. Follow that up with lots of research, dedication and perserverance like me, and you'll soon be on the road to personal and financial success.

Choose a town, city or destination. Preferably one you know well or at least have some **knowledge** about. It could be your favourite destination or home town and could well be attracting many tourists or travellers but this is not essential. You need to find ways to promote your chosen venue in the form of a website consisting of useful, keyword optimised pages of **information** that your readers will find useful.

Once you have a number of information filled search engine friendly pages on your site, you'll be ready to start attracting traffic and eventually monetising it. How? Read on ..

As I said, The **important point** to remember is not to expect a get-rich-quick website solution. The patience and dedication you put in when you build a travel website now will pay off but it takes time and you need to work on it.

Start with a plan or **blueprint** of what you intend to do with your site. eg. will it centre on tourist information, attractions, holiday accommodation or tours? What will be the most sought after aspects of your site? These factors will determine its **popularity** and performance against the competition.

Research your information and keywords

Keyword Research is one of the most important aspects of your site preparation. If this is done properly you'll find a search engine friendly **domain** name and base your site pages on keywords which your readers will be searching for.

What aspect of your favourite destination attracts the most interest? What information are potential travellers searching for when they search the Web? You need to do some **research**. It's time consuming but will pay off in the long run. Here's a free advanced **search tool** which I use, You'll find ideal for researching the information you need. I find it essential and use it regularly. SearchIt!

I began my keyword research with a simple Google query on 'Cape Town' which is a broad keyword, and expanded from there. You need to determine which related keywords are used by information seekers and which **keywords** would have the least competition on the main search

engines such as Google and Yahoo!

You could start with the Good Keywords tool which will provide you with a list of the most searched for keywords based on the one you enter, but will not compare their search engine popularity or competition. I also suggest the **Google Adwords** tool which will not only provide a list of keywords plus their popularity and marketing value, but also let you know what they're worth. Google Adwords

A really **effective** method of determining how competitive your keywords are is to make use of Wordtracker which will give you a free trial, after which you subscribe for a minimum time period of 12 hours. You eventually drill down to a list of competitive keywords and design your webpages around them. Wordtracker however will not show you how to optimise your pages

The system I use includes a **Brainstorming** module which is all you'll ever need for your keyword research and selection. It's just one of the **many** integrated modules in this excellent set of tools which I find indispensible in my travel site research and preparation, and which will help **you** through - right from the start whether you're building a travel site or any website based on your knowledge or passion of a particular subject. The beauty of it is - it's **affordable**, and you don't need to know anything technical about designing or building a website.

NEXT ..
Designing, building and **getting traffic** to your travel site pages.

Here's **part 2** on how **you** can design and build your own travel site about your destination of choice as I did, by making use of the best tools available, at minimal cost.

My story is that I wanted to design and build a professional travel site providing useful information about Cape Town set out in an attractive but straightforward easy to read manner - and not only that..

If I was going to spend a lot of my valuable time in researching and providing the type of content on my site that potential visitors to Cape Town would benefit from. I wanted the exercise to be worth my while.

There are some factors I had to take into **consideration** during my site preparation.

I didn't want to too be concerned about the technical aspects. Site design and search engine submissions are techniques I know a little about but have **little time** to concentrate on.

You see, I wanted to make things as **easy** for myself as possible. I would be spending my time researching and gathering material for my travel site, so I wanted a **reliable host** and site building tools which would make the task of keyword brainstorming and website page design simple. I didn't want to have to worry about technical issues.

I found there were a number of options available to me. I had never designed a website before and I had **no idea** how to go about it. A free website such as hosted by Yahoo! Lycos, or similar free-for-all hosts, was also not the way to go because I wanted to be professional about my travel business.

When deciding on the host for **your** travel site, consider the **features** on offer for the price you pay. I **know** that there is nothing comparable with the all inclusive package I use.

Here you can see some case-studies of successful web sites created with the system I use: Case Studies

Of course you could **buy** a course to show you how to build your site and take it from there. Could be useful yes, but ultimately there would be a lot of work for you to do. From choosing a domain name, to finding a reliable **host** for example, submit regularly to the search engines for another. That said, see what you get for your time and money here.

Simply putting up a pretty website is not enough. If you want it to feature in the search engines, provide **useful** information, attract traffic and ultimately be financially viable there's a lot more to it than that. Firstly you need a reliable host as discussed. Then, besides keyword research, you need to set up optimised travel information pages to attract traffic to your site, submit these pages to the search engines and build up from there. Fortunately the system I use provides **all** those features and many more.

Take a videotour of the system I'm using to build and develop my website into a successful internet business.

You start by checking out your potential competition. Do a simple search on Google or Yahoo! using the main keyword associated with your travel site selection. eg. if you want to set up a travel site about **New York**, start with 'New York'

Research these sites for ideas. Find topics for your travel site which are original yet searched for by your visitors. Lots of work? Depends how you go about it. The task is that much easier if you make use of a good search tool. Here's one called SearchIt! You'll find it useful and indispensible.

You'll likely come across many sites containing lots of flash, ads. and color but minimal easy to find information. Your goal should be to put the emphasis on providing **quality optimised pages** consisting of the sort of travel information your visitors are seeking. This task is made much simpler by combining your knowledge with the **right tools**.

Get yourself a **good** text editor for a start. Preferably one which incorporates HTML editing and libraries. You'll need it for setting up your pages before uploading them. Here is my recommendation. It's **freeware**, easy to learn and simple to use. NoteTab Light

Here is another more advanced free html editor I also recommend, it has different levels of complexity and contains many useful scripts. 1st Page 2000 There is also an excellent Open Source **WYSIWYG** (What you see is what you get) editor called NVU (N-view) which is available as a free download. Get it here NVU

Your Domain Name
The correct domain name is essential and should be carefully researched. Not only is the name you choose a reflection of the destination you are promoting, it should contain keywords which are search engine friendly. Fortunately, following the Action Guide included in the all inclusive package I use makes your choice of an ideal domain name a snap. Building a travel site

Designing your pages
'Keep it simple' is the rule. You need a logo to start with, and a straightforward template design which could be applied to all your pages. You could make use of graphic software such as PaintShop Pro for your logo. Do a Google search for template designs which are available on the internet. You'll also need a basic knowledge of **html** in order to set up your pages.

Getting traffic and monetising your site
By the time you get to this all important stage you will have set up a number of keyword focused information pages based on your destination of choice, and your site would be listed at least on the **Google**, Yahoo and MSN search engines. Of course being in the top **10 or 20** listings on these SE's is what you should be aiming for because that's where your **traffic** will come from. You achieve this goal with **quality** content on your pages containing relevant optimised keywords, a strong linking program and lots of dedication.

An optimised, **information rich**, keyword focused travel site which attracts lots of targetted traffic, offers a number of income producing opportunities. There is the Google Adsense program, various affiliate sites marketing accommodation and tours, eg. Travel Now or Commission Junction, referral arrangements with tour companies, accommodation listing sites, advertising etc.

Researching your travel site concept, setting up your information and putting it all together in a keyword focused format, can be difficult without **step by step** guidance, not forgetting having to submit your completed pages to the search engines on a regular basis. So why not make use of an **integrated** set of tools that does all the hard work for you?

It was a user recommendation which pointed **me** in the right direction. I learned about the benefits of using a host and site building system incorporating a step by step Action Guide, all the tools I needed, and a reputation for promoting the success and financial independance I was searching for at a reasonable price. What could be better than recommendations in the form of case studies from actual users? Case Studies

Here is a **guide** to the outstanding features included in the package I use: Reference Guide

Without this guide it I would have been unable to achieve my travel site goals and make the

exercise financially viable.

What You get:
- A comprehensive Help/Action Guide.
- Site hosting, ftp, and ongoing page submissions to the top search engines.
- A sitebuilder containing a variety of libraries and site templates.
- A keyword brainstorming and research module.
- A traffic centre for page analysis and statistics.
- A complete newsletter module.
- An information centre containing numerous techniques and resources.
- An active forum where SBI! owners exchange ideas, advice and techniques.
- Many other features.

Want to know more? Here's a step by step: Video Tour

I'd really like to have your **feedback** on this guide! Please leave your comments here

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