

REI Explorer

Role

user research & testing, IA, Design

Tools

Sketch, Invision, iPad + Paper app

A complex problem translated to a straightforward experience and tailored to user and business needs in a way that makes sense for both.

The Project

This website fights a trend of less people going on camping trips year over year by promoting amateur campers to go on more camping trips. It does so by showcasing and helping them find trip destinations and providing a platform for planning and coordinating trips as a group, their 2 main “pains” related to camping.

To guide the project I created a persona I called Jane Holton.



Jane Holton

Late 20's
Washingtonian
Currently employed
Outdoorsy

Things Jane says:

I always go out camping with my friends.

I wish I could go out camping more, but my busy life doesn't allow it.

I've had my equipment for a while now and it works fine.

I plan my trips weeks in advance.

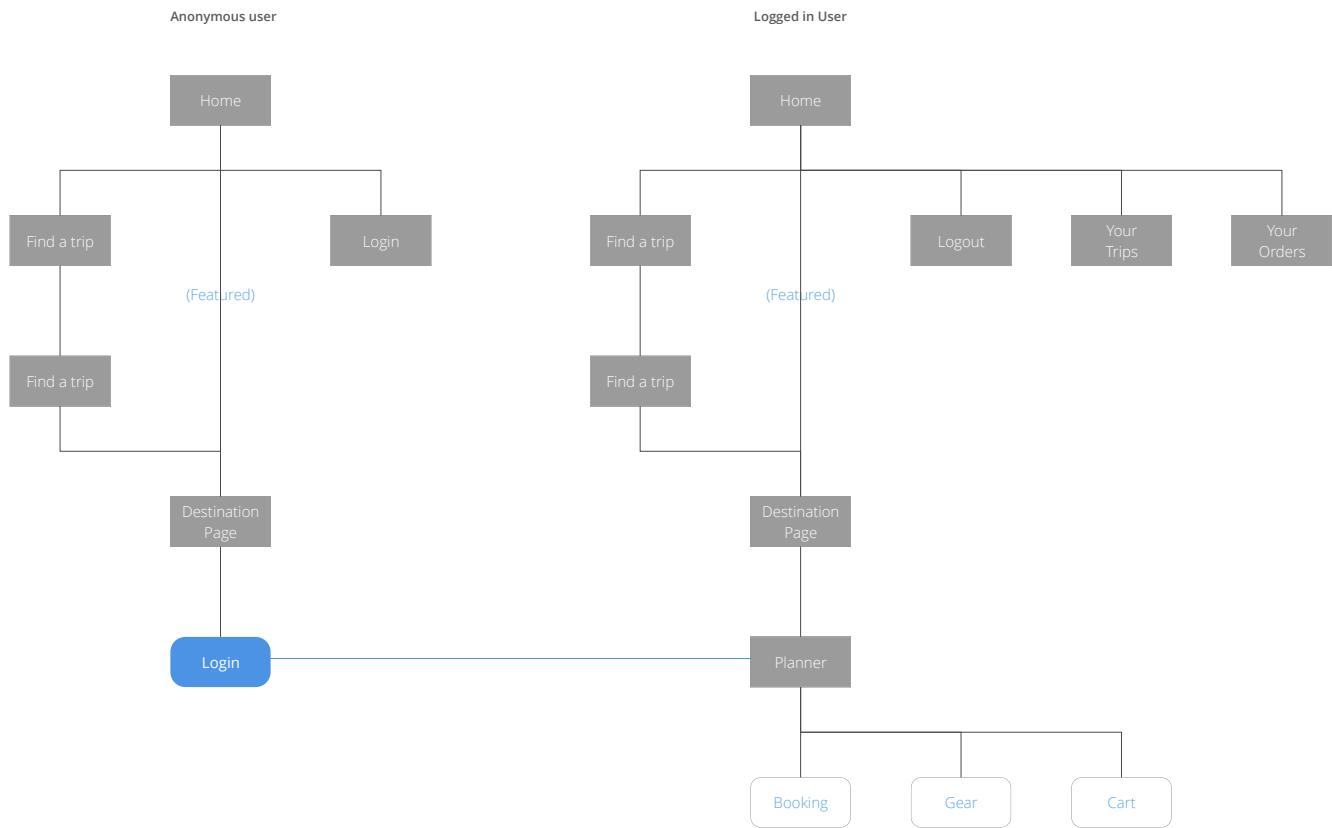
Goals:

Relax and escape city noise
Enjoy being part of her friend group
Experience nature

Pains:

Don't know where to go
Coordinating amongst friends is hard

Before we dive into the key design decisions, here is the sitemap for the site:



There were 4 key insights about Jane that shaped the design and structure of the site:

1. She doesn't know of places to go camping to

This is why the site starts by focusing on helping her find a destination.

The screenshot shows the homepage of the REI EXPLORER website. At the top, there's a dark header bar with the REI EXPLORER logo on the left and navigation links for "Featured Trips", "Find a trip", and "Log in" on the right. Below the header is a large dark rectangular area featuring a "Summer Highlight" for "El Pino Grande Falls". A "See Destination" button is visible in the center of this area. To the right of the destination name is a "Let's find it →" button. Below this section, the text "Your perfect trip is waiting" is displayed. The main content area is titled "Featured Destinations for Summer" and contains three cards, each with a placeholder image and a title and description. The first card is for "Takhlahk Lake", described as a quiet place for those who don't mind a little rough. The second card is for "Lake Ann", described as one of many nice things about Lake Ann in the Mount Baker-Snoqualmie Wilderness. The third card is for "Lake Taylor", also described as one of many nice things about Lake Ann in the Mount Baker-Snoqualmie Wilderness. Below this section is another titled "Cool trails for the Summer" with three corresponding cards, each with a placeholder image and a title and description, mirroring the layout of the previous section. At the bottom of the page, a "Home page" link is visible.

[Home page](#)

A search page is also available where, using a language natural to her and a straightforward interface, she can find trips (with queries like “kayaking, with a lake, 50 miles from Seattle”).

The screenshot shows the REI Explorer search interface. At the top, there's a header with the REI Explorer logo, a "Featured Trips" link, a "Find a trip" button, and a "Log in" link. Below the header is a dark banner with the text "We'll help you find the perfect trip". The main content area starts with the question "What do you want in your trip?". A text input field below it says "Type here to select activities" and includes the message "You haven't added any activities yet". To the right, under "What kind of place?", are four categories: "Lake", "Sea", "Forest", and "Desert" in the top row, and "Mountains" and "Snowy Mountains" in the bottom row. Further down, there are sections for "Where will the trip start?" (with a text input field "Type here to select your city") and "What's the furthest you are willing to travel?" (with a text input field "Enter top distance you are willing to travel Miles"). Below those is a section for "What ammenities are you looking for?" (with a text input field "Type here to select ammenities"). At the bottom center is a large "Search" button.

Search page

Destination pages show the information amateur campers reported they looked for during interviews. The option to start planning a trip is only shown at this point so Jane can focus on the searching first.

The screenshot shows a destination page for "Lake Taylor" on the REI EXPLORER website. The top navigation bar includes links for "Featured Trips", "Find a trip", and "Log in". The main title "Lake Taylor" is centered above a large, dark gray call-to-action button labeled "Plan or book a trip here".

The left sidebar contains contact information: "4th Avenue, Seattle", "Phone: 206 746 7353", a "Go to website" link, and a "Contact" link. Below this is a section titled "Photos" with three placeholder image boxes. Further down is a section titled "Activities Available" with three placeholder image boxes.

The right sidebar provides information under several headings: "What you might find" (Bears, Mosquitoes), "Amenities" (Public bathrooms, Camping sites), and "Reviews" (with a heading "See all reviews"). It lists two reviews:

- Anne Hathaway ★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Those who like it quiet—and don't mind it a little rough should come here and have a blast! Y'all should come here for sure!
- Martin Scorsese ★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Those who like it quiet—and don't mind it a little rough should come here and have a blast!

A "Review this destination" button is located at the bottom right of the sidebar.

Destination page

2. She knows just enough about camping to do it
3. Jane already owns the equipment she needs to go camping

The planning dashboard starts with 2 panes. The page layout is intended to stay simple and portray Jane, an amateur camper, can handle planning a camping trip.

The screenshot shows the REI Explorer dashboard for a trip organized by Jane Taylor. The top navigation bar includes links for Featured Trips, Find a trip, Your Trips, Your Orders, and Log out. A message indicates that the user is the trip's organizer. The main content area is divided into two panes: 'Booking' and 'Gear List'. The 'Booking' pane contains sections for 'Book a space' (listing Camp Site, Cabin, and RV Parking options) and 'Activities' (listing Kayaking and Rock Climbing). The 'Gear List' pane is currently empty. A 'Trip Chat' sidebar on the right is also empty.

Dashboard - Booking Pane

In this first pane booking a space to camp in or activities to do is simple and a step by step guided process.

The screenshot shows the REI Explorer dashboard with the following interface elements:

- Header:** REI EXPLORER, Featured Trips, Find a trip, Your Trips, Your Orders, Log out.
- User Information:** Lake Taylor (with a help icon), Members (represented by four circles and a plus sign), You are this trip's organizer (with a help icon), Change organizer.
- Booking Section:** A large box titled "Booking" (highlighted in grey) contains the text "Booking your stay" and "Select dates for your reservation:". It features a July calendar with days from 1 to 31. A legend indicates that dark grey boxes represent "No spaces available" and light grey boxes represent "Spaces available". The 16th, 17th, 18th, and 21st are highlighted in dark grey, while others are light grey.
- Gear List:** A smaller box next to the booking section.
- Trip Chat:** A box on the right labeled "Trip Chat" containing a text input field and a "Send" button.
- Buttons:** "Cancel Booking" (in the booking section), "Continue" (in the booking section), and "Send" (in the trip chat box).

Dashboard- Booking pane - Choosing dates

The second pane in the dashboard allows Jane to add the gear she plans to bring on the trip. She can do so searching for items (with autocomplete) or choosing from suggestions the site offers based on the destination and activities she has booked.

The screenshot shows the REI Explorer dashboard for a trip titled "Lake Taylor". The top navigation bar includes links for "Featured Trips", "Find a trip", "Your Trips", "Your Orders", and "Log out". Below the navigation, the trip title "Lake Taylor" is displayed with a refresh icon, followed by "Members" and four user icons. A note indicates that the user is the trip's organizer with an option to "Change organizer".

The main content area is divided into two main sections: "Booking" (which is currently active) and "Gear List". The "Gear List" section contains tabs for "Personal gear" and "Group gear", both of which show a message: "Nothing added yet, use [+P] to add items here." To the right of these tabs is a search bar with the placeholder "Type to search and add gear". Below the search bar is a "Suggestions for your trip" section listing items with "+P" and "+G" buttons:

Suggestion	+P	+G
Sleeping bag	[+P]	[+G]
Canoe	[+P]	[+G]
Climbing shoes	[+P]	[+G]
Klean Kanteen	[+P]	[+G]

To the right of the gear list is a "Trip Chat" panel, which is currently empty. At the bottom right of the "Trip Chat" panel is a "Send" button.

Dashboard - Gear List pane - Adding Gear

Jane is also able to buy items straight from here through a guided experience.

The image consists of two side-by-side wireframe screenshots of a mobile application interface for REI Explorer. Both screenshots feature a header with the REI Explorer logo, navigation links for 'Featured Trips', 'Find a trip', 'Your Trips', 'Your Orders', and 'Log out', and a user profile section for 'Lake Taylor' showing 5 members.

Left Screenshot (Gear List): This section is titled 'Gear List' and contains two main sections: 'Personal gear' and 'Group gear'. Under 'Personal gear', there are three items: 'Sleeping Bag', 'Climbing shoes', and 'Camelbag', each with a 'Shop on REI' button. Under 'Group gear', there is one item: 'Tent', also with a 'Shop on REI' button. A 'Send' button is located at the bottom right of this section.

Right Screenshot (Shopping for a tent): This section is titled 'Trip Chat' and has a message: 'Great, we'll help you choose the tent you need'. It features a 'Sleeping Capacity' section with five options: '2 Person', '3 Person', '4 Person', '6 Person', and '8+ People', with '8+ People' being the selected option. Below this are buttons for 'Exit Shop on REI', 'Select an option to continue.', and 'Continue'.

Gear added to list

Shopping for a tent

Gear suggestions + buy individual items from the gear list (with a guided buying experience) is what I opted for instead of a conventional online store since Jane will be more likely to buy what she knows she needs for the trip (and potentially doesn't have) and we already know she has the basic equipment needed for camping.

4. She only goes camping with friends

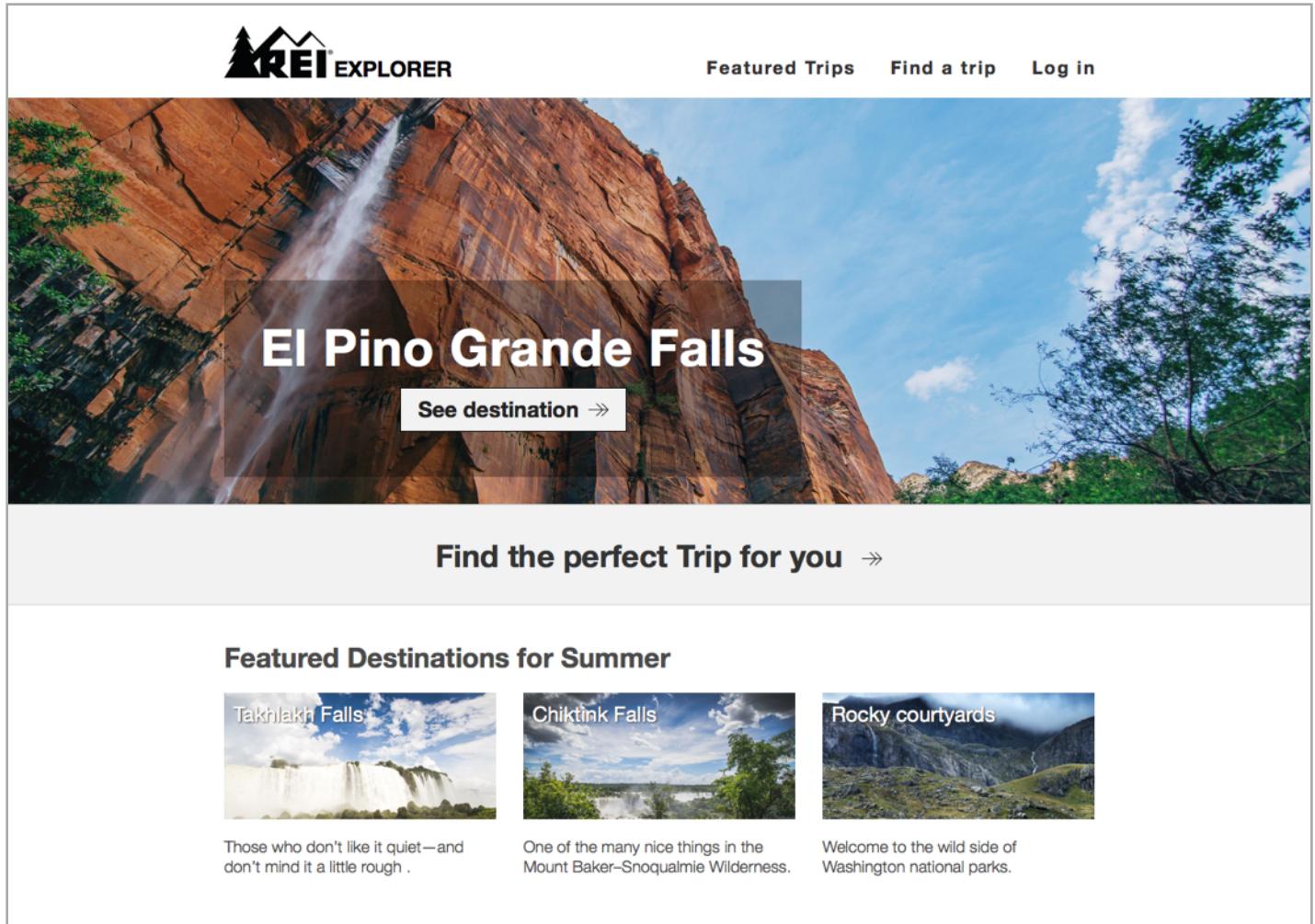
Because the trip will be planned with people Jane trusts, we can simplify the way to add people to plan the trip together: sharing a link. Once a person visits that link, they are presented with a login/signup screen and after that arrive straight into the dashboard to plan the trip together. There is, though, an option to manually manage the people on this trip.

The screenshot shows the REI Explorer dashboard for a trip titled "Lake Taylor". The top navigation bar includes links for "Featured Trips", "Find a trip", "Your Trips", "Your Orders", and "Log out". Below the navigation, the trip title "Lake Taylor" is displayed, along with a "Members" section and an "Invite members" button. A message indicates that the user is the trip's organizer. A central modal window is open, prompting the user to "Invite people and plan this trip together" and explaining that recipients only need to log in. It provides a shareable link: [Http://reiexplorer.com/invite/18362728](http://reiexplorer.com/invite/18362728) and a "Copy Link" button. The background of the dashboard shows sections for "Booking" (Camp Site, \$ 50 / day), "Activities" (Kayaking, Rock Climbing), and a "Trip Chat" sidebar.

Dashboard - Adding Friends

Testing and next steps

The site was tested twice with users, the first time helping identify improvement opportunities when logging in, adding gear and simplifying the design of the trip planning dashboard. The second tier of testing helped verify the changes worked.



The screenshot shows the homepage of the REI Explorer website. At the top left is the REI Explorer logo with a stylized mountain icon above the word "REI". To the right are links for "Featured Trips", "Find a trip", and "Log in". The main visual is a large photograph of a waterfall cascading down a red rock cliff. Overlaid on this image is a dark rectangular box containing the text "El Pino Grande Falls" in white, bold, sans-serif font, and a smaller white button below it with the text "See destination ➔". Below the main image is a light gray banner with the text "Find the perfect Trip for you ➔" in bold black font. Underneath this is a section titled "Featured Destinations for Summer" with three cards: "Takhlakh Falls" (a wide waterfall), "Chiktink Falls" (a waterfall surrounded by greenery), and "Rocky courtyards" (a landscape with rocky mountains). Each card has a caption below it: "Those who don't like it quiet—and don't mind it a little rough .", "One of the many nice things in the Mount Baker-Snoqualmie Wilderness.", and "Welcome to the wild side of Washington national parks." respectively.

High fidelity Home

The next steps are to further test the current design with more people. Pending design are also a few sections from the site: "Your Trips" (where you can access all the trips currently being planned) and "Your Orders" (where you can look at the products you have bought and each order's status). After finishing and user testing those sections, the last step is to work on a high fidelity version of the whole site and developing it.

There's more to this project and I'd love to tell you about it. Send me an email to arturo@arturogoicochea.com and let's schedule something.