

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.

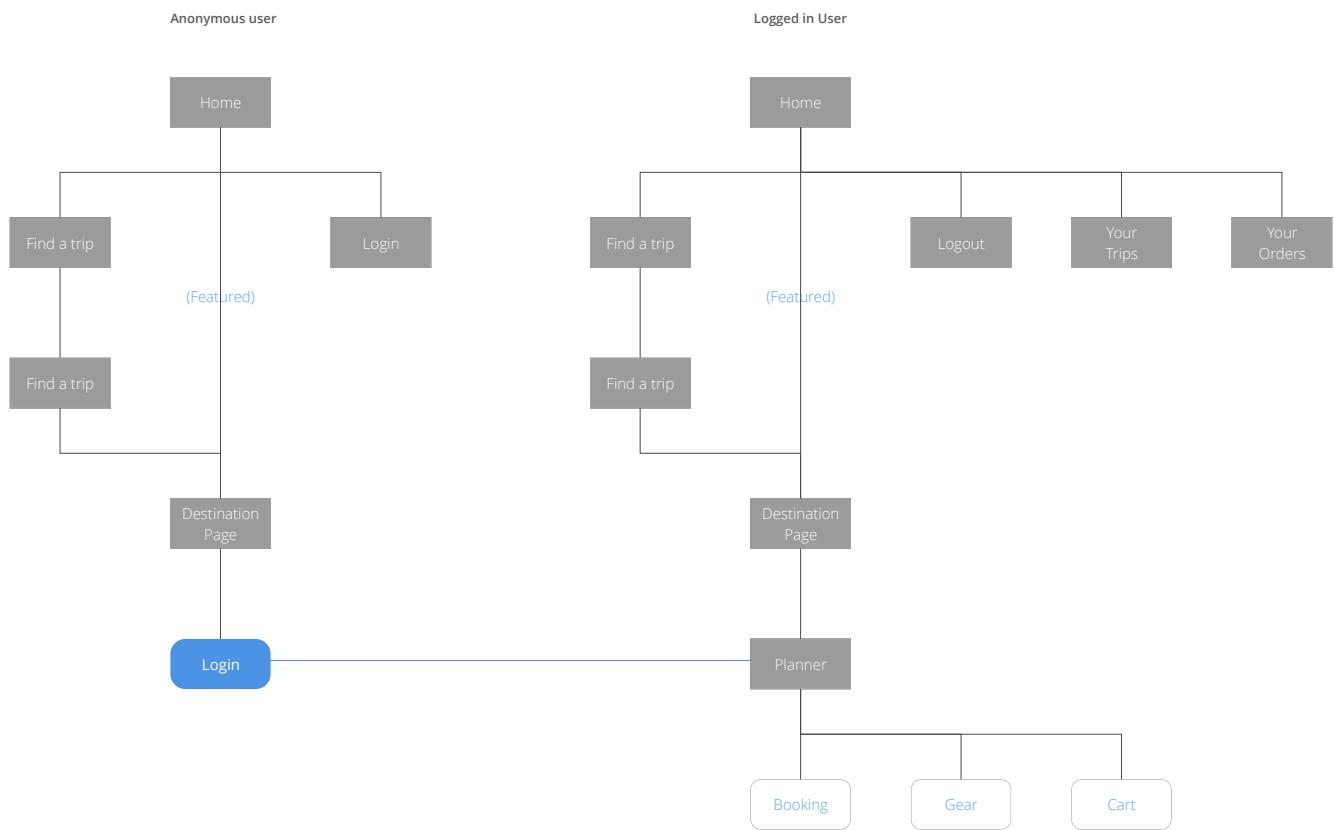
Goals:

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 navigation bar with the REI EXPLORER logo, 'Featured Trips', 'Find a trip', and 'Log in'. Below the header, a large dark banner features the text 'El Pino Grande Falls' and 'Summer Highlight' with a 'See Destination' button. To the right of the banner is a 'Let's find it →' button. The main content area has a light gray background with the text 'Your perfect trip is waiting'. Below this, there's a section titled 'Featured Destinations for Summer' with three cards. Each card has a gray placeholder image at the top, followed by the destination name, a short description, and a detailed paragraph. The first card is for 'Takhelch Lake', the second for 'Lake Ann', and the third for 'Lake Taylor'. Below this section is another titled 'Cool trails for the Summer' with three corresponding cards. At the bottom of the page, a blue button labeled 'Home page' is visible.

REI EXPLORER

Featured Trips Find a trip Log in

El Pino Grande Falls
Summer Highlight

See Destination

Let's find it →

Your perfect trip is waiting

Featured Destinations for Summer

Takhelch Lake
Those who like it quiet—and don't mind it a little rough.

Lake Ann
One of the many nice things about Lake Ann in the Mount Baker-Snoqualmie Wilderness.

Lake Taylor
One of the many nice things about Lake Ann in the Mount Baker-Snoqualmie Wilderness.

Cool trails for the Summer

Takhelch Lake
Those who like it quiet—and don't mind it a little rough.

Lake Ann
One of the many nice things about Lake Ann in the Mount Baker-Snoqualmie Wilderness.

Lake Taylor
One of the many nice things about Lake Ann in the Mount Baker-Snoqualmie Wilderness.

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 navigation bar with links for "Featured Trips", "Find a trip", and "Log in". Below the header, a dark banner displays the text "We'll help you find the perfect trip". The main content area is titled "What do you want in your trip?". It includes a section for selecting activities (with a placeholder "Type here to select activities" and a note "You haven't added any activities yet"), a section for choosing a place (with options for "Lake", "Sea", "Forest", "Desert", "Mountains", and "Snowy Mountains"), and sections for starting location ("Where will the trip start?" with a placeholder "Type here to select your city") and distance ("What's the furthest you are willing to travel?" with a placeholder "Enter top distance you are willing to travel Miles"). There's also a section for amenities ("What ammenities are you looking for?" with a placeholder "Type here to select ammenities"). A large "Search" button is located at the bottom of the form.

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 header includes the REI Explorer logo, navigation links for "Featured Trips", "Find a trip", and "Log in", and a search bar. Below the header, the title "Lake Taylor" is displayed, followed by a large button labeled "Plan or book a trip here".

The main content area features a quote: "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!"

On the left side, there is a sidebar with contact information: "4th Avenue, Seattle", "Phone: 206 746 7353", a "Go to website" link, and a "Contact" link. Next to it is a "Map" button.

Below the sidebar are sections for "Photos" (with three placeholder boxes) and "Activities Available" (with three placeholder boxes). To the right of these are sections for "What you might find" (listing "Bears" and "Mosquitoes"), "Amenities" (listing "Public bathrooms" and "Camping sites"), and "Reviews" (listing reviews from "Anne Hathaway", "Martin Scorsese", and "Martin Scorsese").

A "See all photos" button is located above the photo placeholders, and a "See all reviews" button is located above the review section. A "Review this destination" button is at the bottom right.

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 to Lake Taylor. At the top, there's a navigation bar with links for 'Featured Trips', 'Find a trip', 'Your Trips', 'Your Orders', and 'Log out'. Below the navigation, the trip name 'Lake Taylor' is displayed along with a member status indicator and a 'Members' section with a 'Invite members' button. A note says 'You are this trip's organizer' with a 'Change organizer' link. The main content area is divided into two panes: 'Booking' (the active tab) and 'Gear List'. The 'Booking' pane contains sections for 'Book a space' (with options for Camp Site, Cabin, and RV Parking) and 'Activities' (with options for Kayaking and Rock Climbing). The 'Gear List' pane is currently empty. A 'Trip Chat' sidebar on the right is also empty. A 'Send' button is located at the bottom right of the chat area.

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 (with four circular icons and a plus sign), You are this trip's organizer (with a help icon), Change organizer.
- Booking Tab:** Booking (selected) and Gear List.
- Booking your stay:** Select dates for your reservation.
- Date Picker:** July month view. The 18th is highlighted in dark grey, indicating it is selected. Other days are light grey. A legend indicates dark grey for "Selected date" and light grey for "Normal date".
- Buttons:** Cancel Booking (left) and Continue (right).
- Trip Chat:** A panel titled "Trip Chat" containing a large empty text area and a "Send" button at the bottom right.

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 interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with links for 'Featured Trips', 'Find a trip', 'Your Trips', 'Your Orders', and 'Log out'. Below the navigation, it displays 'Lake Taylor' as the current location, 'Members' (represented by four gray circles), and a note that 'You are this trip's organizer' with an option to 'Change organizer'. The main content area is titled 'Gear List' and contains a search bar with placeholder text 'Type to search and add gear'. It features two sections: 'Personal gear' and 'Group gear', each with a note to 'Add items here'. To the right of these sections is a 'Suggestions for your trip' section listing items with quantity controls (+ and -): 'Sleeping bag' (quantity 1), 'Canoe' (quantity 1), 'Climbing shoes' (quantity 1), and 'Klean Kanteen' (quantity 1). On the far right, there's a 'Trip Chat' panel with a large empty text area and a 'Send' button at the bottom.

Dashboard - Gear List pane - Adding Gear

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

This screenshot shows the REI Explorer mobile application interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with the REI Explorer logo, 'Featured Trips', 'Find a trip', 'Your Trips', 'Your Orders', and 'Log out'. Below this, the user profile 'Lake Taylor' is displayed, along with a 'Members' section showing four members and a plus sign to add more. A message says 'You are this trip organizer' with a 'Change organizer' link. The main content area has tabs for 'Booking', 'Gear List' (which is selected), and 'Gear Use'. Under 'Personal gear', there are three items: 'Sleeping Bag', 'Climbing shoes', and 'CamelBak', each with a 'Shop on REI' button. Under 'Group gear', there is one item: 'Tent', with a 'Shop on REI' button. A 'Send' button is located at the bottom right of the gear list section. To the right, a 'Trip Chat' section is partially visible.

Gear added to list

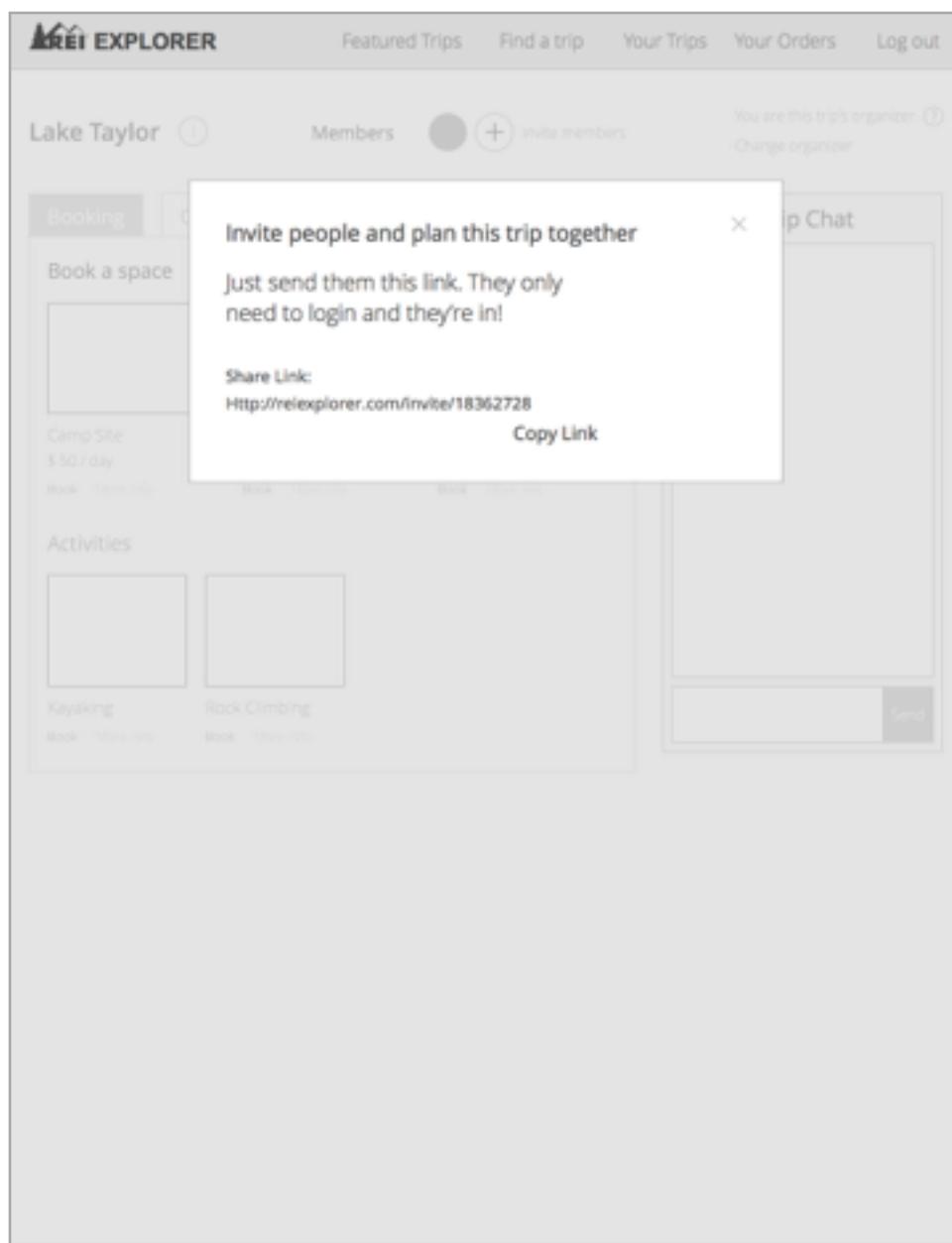
This screenshot shows the REI Explorer mobile application interface, continuing from the previous screen. The top navigation bar and user profile are identical. The 'Gear List' tab is still selected. A message says 'Great, we'll help you choose the tent you need'. Below this, 'Sleeping Capacity' is listed with four options: '2 Person', '3 Person', '4 Person', and '6 Person', each represented by a small square icon. Below these, a larger square icon represents '8+ People'. A 'Buy this on REI' button is at the bottom left, and 'Select an option to continue' with a 'Continue' button are at the bottom right. The 'Trip Chat' section is visible on the far right.

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

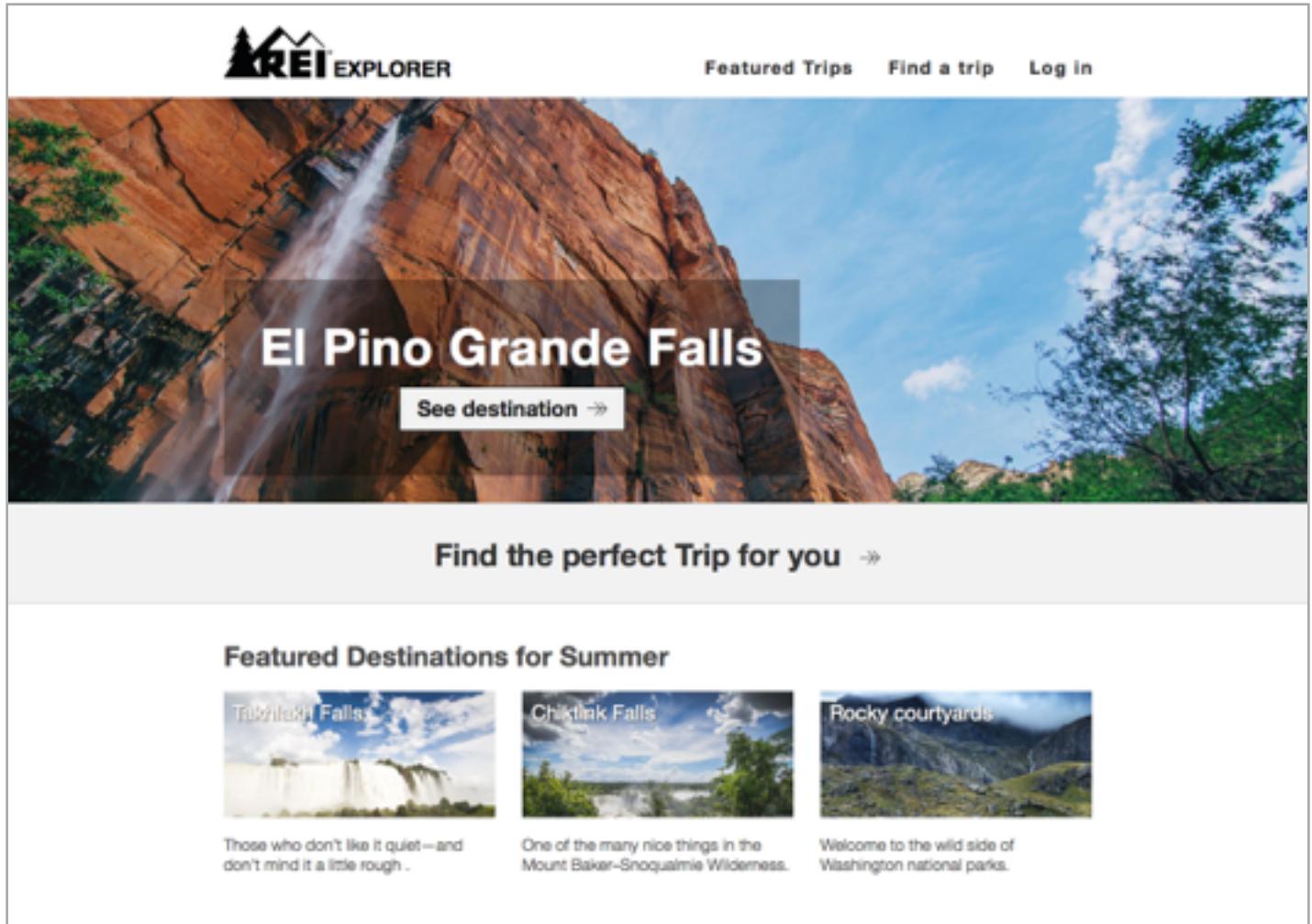
Because the trip will be planned with people Jane trusts, we can simplify the way to add people to plan the trip together: sharing a link. Once a person visits that link, they are presented with a login/signup screen and after that arrive straight into the dashboard to plan the trip together. There is,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



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 REI Explorer website homepage. At the top left is the REI logo with the word "EXPLORER" below it. To the right are links for "Featured Trips", "Find a trip", and "Log in". The main visual is a large photograph of a waterfall, "El Pino Grande Falls", cascading down a red rock cliff. A dark overlay box contains the text "El Pino Grande Falls" and a button labeled "See destination ➔". Below the main image is a call-to-action button: "Find the perfect Trip for you ➔". Underneath this is a section titled "Featured Destinations for Summer" with three smaller images: "Takhlakh Falls" (a waterfall), "Chiklink Falls" (a waterfall in a lush green setting), and "Rocky courtyards" (a view of a valley with rocky mountains). Each image 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.".

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.