

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.

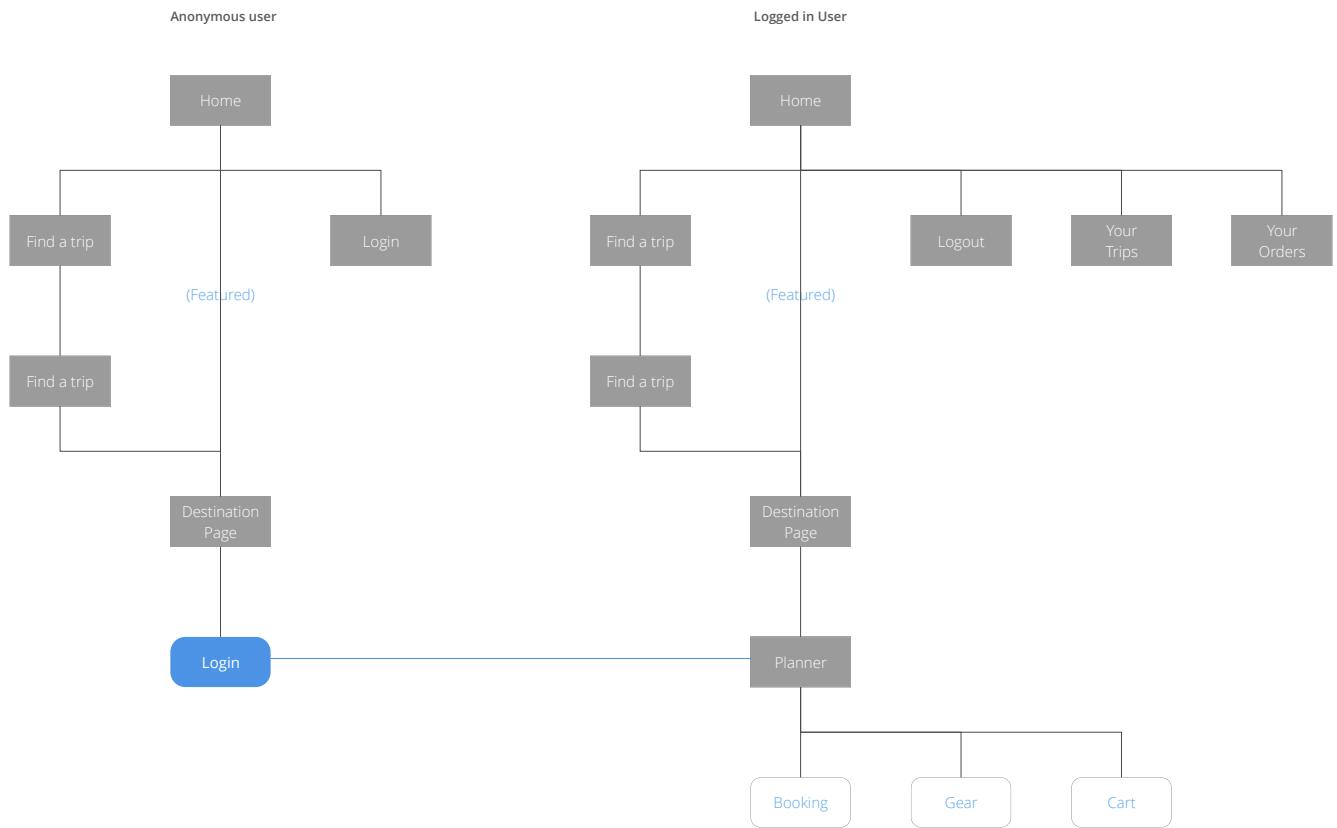
Goals:

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 located in the bottom right corner of this area. To the right of the main content area, there's a 'Lets find it →' button. The main content area has a light gray background and contains two sections: 'Featured Destinations for Summer' and 'Cool trails for the Summer', each with three placeholder cards.

El Pino Grande Falls
Summer Highlight

See Destination

Lets find it →

Your perfect trip is waiting

Featured Destinations for Summer

Takhlah 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

Takhlah 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 header with the REI Explorer logo, 'Featured Trips', 'Find a trip', and 'Log in'. 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 note 'You haven't added any activities yet'. To the right, under 'What kind of place?', there are four categories: 'Lake', 'Sea', 'Forest', and 'Desert' in a 2x2 grid. Further down, there are two more sections: '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'. At the bottom, there's a section for 'Ammenities' with a text input field 'Type here to select ammenities' and 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 button labeled "Plan or book a trip here".

Text Content:

- Description:** 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!
- Contact Information:** 4th Avenue, Seattle
Phone: 206 746 7353
[Go to website](#)
[Contact](#)
- Map:** A button to view the location on a map.
- Photos:** A section showing three placeholder image boxes under the heading "Photos". To the right is a link "See all photos".
- Activities Available:** A section showing three placeholder image boxes under the heading "Activities Available".
- What you might find:** Bears, Mosquitoes
- Amenities:** Public bathrooms, Camping sites
- Reviews:** Average ★★★★☆
Anne Hathaway ★★★★★ Those who like it quiet—and don't mind it a little rough—should come here and have a blast!.
Martin Scorsese ★★★★☆ Those who like it quiet—and don't mind it a little rough—should come here and have a blast!.
Martin Scorsese ★★★★☆ Those who like it quiet—and don't mind it a little rough—should come here and have a blast!.
- Buttons:** "Plan or book a trip here", "Review this destination", and "See all reviews".

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 count of '1 Member' and a button to 'Invite members'. A note indicates that the user is the trip's organizer. The main content area is divided into two main sections: 'Booking' and 'Gear List'. The 'Booking' section contains a 'Book a space' section with three options: 'Camp Site' (\$50 / day), 'Cabin' (\$50 / day), and 'RV Parking' (\$50 / day). Each option has a 'Book' and 'More Info' button. Below this is an 'Activities' section with two options: 'Kayaking' and 'Rock Climbing', each with a 'Book' and 'More Info' button. To the right of the booking section is a 'Trip Chat' panel with a large input field and a 'Send' button at the bottom.

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 Panel:** Title: Booking your stay. Subtitle: Select dates for your reservation:
 - A July calendar showing dates from 1 to 31. Dark gray boxes indicate "No spaces available" (e.g., 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 12, 13, 14, 15, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31).
 - Legend: No spaces available (dark gray) and Spaces available (light gray).
- Buttons:** Cancel Booking (left), Continue (right).
- Trip Chat Panel:** Title: Trip Chat. A large empty text area for messaging.
- Message Input:** A text input field with a Send button.

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, it says "You are this trip's organizer" with a "Change organizer" link. The main content area is divided into several sections:

- Gear List**: A tabbed section currently active. It contains a search bar ("Type to search and add gear") and a list of "Suggestions for your trip":
 - Sleeping bag: +P +G
 - Canoe: +P +G
 - Climbing shoes: +P +G
 - Klean Kanteen: +P +G
- Booking**: A tab showing a "Done" button.
- Members**: Shows four user icons and a plus sign for adding more members.
- Trip Chat**: A large empty text area for communication, with a "Send" button at the bottom right.
- Personal gear** and **Group gear**: Sections with placeholder text: "Nothing added yet, use +P to add items here."

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 interface for a trip named "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 name "Lake Taylor" is displayed along with a "Members" section showing five users and a "Change organizer" link. A message indicates "You are this trip's organizer".

The main content area features a "Gear List" tab selected, showing sections for "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 the gear list area.

Gear added to list

This screenshot shows the REI Explorer interface continuing the gear selection process for the "Lake Taylor" trip. The top navigation bar and trip details are identical to the previous screen.

The "Gear List" tab is still selected. A message at the top says "Great, we'll help you choose the tent you need". Below this, a "Sleeping Capacity" section offers five options: "2 Person", "3 Person", "4 Person", "6 Person", and "8+ People", with "8+ People" currently highlighted. Buttons for "Exit Shop on REI" and "Continue" are present at the bottom.

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

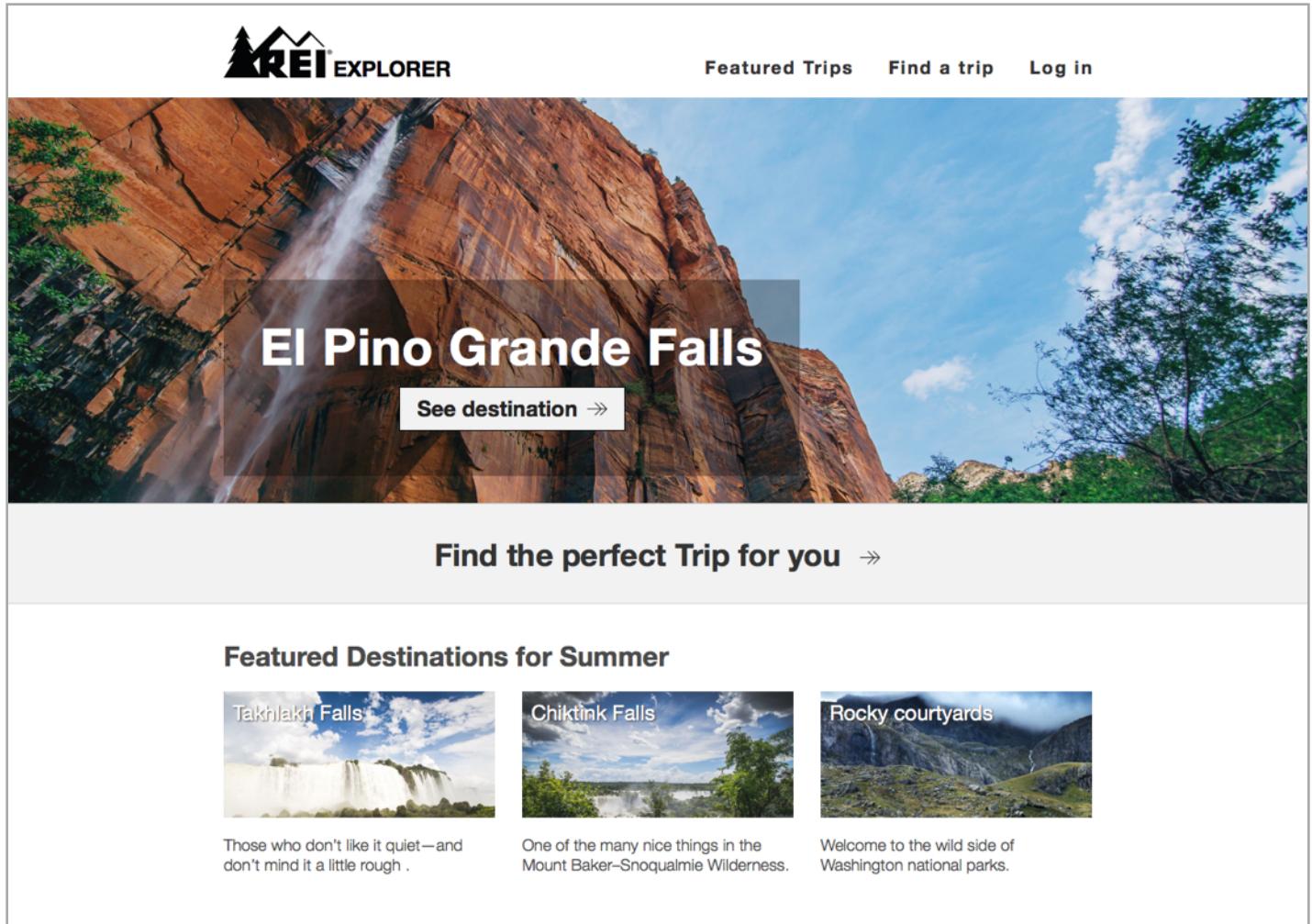
Because the trip will be planned with people Jane trusts, we can simplify the way to add people to plan the trip together: sharing a link. Once a person visits that link, they are presented with a login/signup screen and after that arrive straight into the dashboard to plan the trip together. There is,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

The screenshot shows the REI Explorer dashboard for a trip titled "Lake Taylor". At the top, there are navigation links: "Featured Trips", "Find a trip", "Your Trips", "Your Orders", and "Log out". Below the title, it says "Members" and "Invite members". A message box is open, stating "Invite people and plan this trip together" and "Just send them this link. They only need to login and they're in!". It includes a "Share Link" button with the URL "Http://reiexplorer.com/invite/18362728" and a "Copy Link" button. In the background, there are sections for "Booking" (Book a space, 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 REI Explorer website homepage. At the top left is the REI Explorer logo with a stylized mountain icon. 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. The first card is for "Takhlakh Falls" showing a wide waterfall, with the text "Those who don't like it quiet—and don't mind it a little rough .". The second card is for "Chiktink Falls" showing a waterfall surrounded by greenery, with the text "One of the many nice things in the Mount Baker-Snoqualmie Wilderness.". The third card is for "Rocky courtyards" showing a landscape with rocky mountains and green fields, with the text "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.