**UNDERSTANDING UBER: PROS AND CONS**

While most corporate travel policies and meeting-travel details are silent on the usage of ride-sharing offerings such as Uber, Lyft, Sidecar and the like, the chances are high that your travelers are using these services. With Uber in more than 55 countries (the company is valued at $50 billion, as reported on CNN), it behooves planners to understand how the service works.

**Uber Upsides**

* Uber’s app is really slick and easy to use. You can select a level of service and request an estimated fare before deciding to book, or compare fares for different service levels. See how much time it will take for a drivers to get to you (often just a few minutes) and how many Uber cars are in the vicinity.
* Fares are usually lower than taxis and black cars. However, watch for surge pricing during emergency or peak times. The Uber app clearly reveals when surge pricing is in effect. Choose to be alerted when such pricing ends or decide to take the higher fare (which at that point might be higher than a taxi or car service).
* The drivers I’ve encountered have been friendly and courteous. A few have offered amenities such as mints, tissues, or bottled water.
* A receipt is emailed to me within minutes of getting out of the car and has the driver’s name and plate number (useful just in case I have left an item behind).

These are some of the reasons why so many people are now “Uber-ing it” not only for personal transit but also for meetings and business events. However, the service isn’t perfect.

**Uber Downsides**

* Uber cannot pick up at all airports due to airport licensing/fee challenges. Transportation to airports usually is allowed; pickup upon arrival at the airport might not be.
* If splitting a fare with someone else, they also are required to have an Uber account.
* GPS location services aren’t perfect. I have drivers looking for me blocks away. Yes, I can and should verify the address, though I might not know it if standing outside a hotel’s front doors. Every driver I’ve had phones me, so we work out the location issues, albeit with occasional time delays (Be sure your online profile contains your current cell number; updating that via the app isn’t always possible).
* Drivers often do not live in the area in which they drive, so unfamiliarity with the roads and major attractions has been common, in my experience. They rely on GPS navigation systems and don’t always take the most efficient route. If you know a better way, tell the driver.

Uber features are expanding rapidly and vary by location (for example, in five cities UberEATS can deliver dinner to your hotel), so it’s challenging to keep abreast that this company offers (not to mention its competitors). For now, these fundamentals should give you a good start toward guiding your travelers.