



*drifter*<sup>+</sup>

A mobile experience that reduces the work of browsing  
and booking for the last-minute traveler.

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# 01 INTRODUCTION

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

When booking a trip within a week of departure, the last-minute traveler doesn't feel that there is a booking experience that offers the personalized, trustworthy, and flexible process they desire.

The travel booking experience is clumsy, and it can be even worse for the last-minute traveler who has time-constraints. Travelers have myriad options when planning and booking travel. Travelers we spoke to identified 32 unique travel apps and websites that they use; most of these travelers use up to 4 of these services to book a trip.

Our solution to this problem is *drifter*<sup>+</sup> all-in-one travel planning and booking app.

Drifter provides travelers with a place to become inspired by the beautiful destinations they want to visit, find last minute travel deals curated to their personal preferences, and have the flexibility of a ticket marketplace to sell back their trip should the need arise.

Most importantly, Drifter fosters a trust relationship with travelers through transparency and consistency not offered in other travel booking services.

Drifter was created in collaboration with partners:



# TEAM BIOGRAPHIES



VAL BAYS

*role* prototyping + iteration  
*location* Japan

Val is a UX Design Manager, focused on crafting simple digital experiences for consumer security products. She has spent the past 15 years researching, designing and building digital and physical experiences to help users create efficiencies and ease in their daily lives.

She is interested in building a well-crafted and inspiring app experience that meets the needs of the last-minute adventurer.

Val is an avid traveler and looking forward to hitting her 30<sup>th</sup> country this year.



JOE BERNSTEIN

*role* ideation + pm  
*location* Bermuda

Joe brings experience in UI prototyping, a fond interest for paper prototypes, prior experience designing physical products, and a very math-and-analytical mindset to the team.

He has a dual BS in Mechanical Engineering and Innovative Product Design from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute and has experience working as a mechanical engineer in the aerospace and nanotechnology industries.

Joe has been to 34 states, three continents, and looks forward to a long future of travel ahead.



ANGELA NELSON

*role* visual design  
*location* Peru

During nearly two decades in technology, Angela held roles as Developer, Tester, Technical Project Manager, Designer, and Design Lead in User Experience. She now serves as Design Program Manager on the Xbox design team at Microsoft.

As visual designer on this project, she expanded her artistic zone and explored ways to adapt and grow the design for last-minute travelers.

Angela has spent many months traveling and living abroad in more than 40 countries, and has touched all seven continents multiple times.



NICK THROM

*role* research  
*location* United States

Nick has a broad range of research experience. His background is in psychology and has recently taken interest in the tech industry.

He has spent a lot of his professional career working closely to understand what people need and how to communicate those needs to others. Nick currently works at Microsoft as a design researcher on HoloLens.

Nick has yet to leave the United States.

# PROBLEM SPACE

## A Loss of Agency

The travel booking industry was one of the most-disrupted by the tech industry. Expedia is among many online travel websites that turned travel planning into a self-service industry. Only one-third of the retail travel agencies that existed in the 1990s exist today<sup>1</sup>.

Over those years, Expedia and its peers became particularly clever at improving the web experience for coordinating trips. Expedia itself even unveiled a new feature in 2014 called the Scratchpad<sup>2</sup>. After watching the number of flight searches per booking rise from 15 to 48, the company sensed the importance and encumbrance of comparing so many options and developed the Scratchpad to facilitate note-taking during the comparison process.

However, this feature applies mainly to those who spend the requisite time to thoroughly vet their travel options. Of course, there are those who book trips without comparing options at all. Some people travel for emergency and others for spontaneity, and a clear gap in online travel booking is a feature that considers such a user.

With an interest to dig in deeper with an untapped user segment, Expedia approached our group with this problem space in mind: how can we improve the browsing and booking experience for last-minute hotel and flight shoppers?

*"We really lost something when we stopped using travel agents. My travel agent knew what I liked; the places I liked to stay, how I liked to get there, and could recommend alternatives. She was also helpful in planning things that I couldn't find on my own."*

## DESIGN QUESTION

*“How can we improve the browsing and booking experience for last-minute hotel and flight shoppers?”*

Our approach to solving this question was fourfold, answering the following questions:

What exactly is last-minute travel?

In order to design for our users, we needed to determine where exactly the functional divide between long-term and last-minute behaviors is.

What does the process of travel-booking look like to the last-minute traveler?

It helps to understand the current and prevailing methods of travel booking. We asked travelers what their preferred apps and websites are, as well as the exact sequence they engage in their search.

What are the strengths and weaknesses of existing travel-booking services?

Of course, the important part of a competitive analysis is to know what features work well for existing services. We asked travelers why they prefer their favorite apps and websites to understand where we can add some benefit.

What are the barriers currently preventing casual travelers from becoming spontaneous travelers?

We also inquired what gets in the way of many travelers and would-be travelers. We can expand the potential market by determining which barriers we can remove from the process.

# PROJECT GOALS

## Focus on understanding the user need

From the perspective of Expedia and other large-scale travel services, the needs of the last-minute traveler aren't sufficiently understood. Starting from scratch, we front-loaded our efforts on this project to ensure that research was sufficiently well-informed, accurate, and unbiased. As with any novel problem space, a good design must be built upon a foundation of good research. Even if we don't find the best design solution for our problem, we can rest assured that we have established a solid basis from which to attempt the next design.

## Validate our design decisions

Likewise, this is a problem space none of us were familiar with. That allowed us to proceed forward unbiased by an existing status quo, but our lack of domain expertise meant that our ideas required more validation. We placed value in an iterative design process that allowed us to test a few features at a time in front of real potential users. Their feedback served to both encourage our good ideas and discourage our bad ones.

## Deprecate breadth and focus on “happy paths”

With a strict, short timeline, along with a front-loaded research process, we prioritized certain elements of our final design. We identified our critical features and separated them from the standard ones--those which don't differentiate our product. Elements such as a sign-up screen, payment transactions, and error handling did not contribute to our goal of last-minute browsing and booking, so we black-boxed those features. Our high-fidelity prototype displays the visual elements of a few key interactions that emphasize our product's value. However, this is at the expense of robustness as these screens only facilitate a very narrow path unforgiving of mistakes.

# PROCESS

## RESEARCH

Competitive Analysis  
Long Survey  
Targeted Survey  
Semi-structured Interviews

## IDEATION

Requirements List  
Features List  
Information Architecture  
Sketches

Our process was broken into three distinct milestones, each highlighting important phases of the UCD process. The research, ideation, and prototyping phases each had four tangible deliverables to help inform the next phase and keep us moving toward a final project. The dotted paths not only fit our logo, but they serve as a reminder and reflection that our design path could have been more streamlined and efficient, but we did learn valuable lessons at every turn.

## PROTOTYPE + EVALUATION

Low-fidelity prototype  
Medium-fidelity prototype  
Usability summary  
Key visual mockups

*drifter* <sup>+</sup>



08 RESEARCH

# RESEARCH OVERVIEW

We used three research methods to gain insight into the behaviors and attitudes travelers possess about the travel booking process and last-minute travel.

## Competitive Analysis

We completed heuristic evaluation of 19 different travel apps and websites to learn what options currently exist for travelers. We created a list of features offered by each service and read reviews of each service to determine what features were working well and which were not.

## Surveys

We conducted two rounds of surveys to learn about travel habits.

Our first survey investigated the typical travel habits of 69 respondents. This survey helped us identify motivations for travel and pain points in the travel booking process.

The second survey was an exploration into the needs, attitudes, and behaviors of the last minute traveler. 113 respondents provided insight into common beliefs about the travel booking process and barriers that prevent travel booking from being enjoyable.

## Interviews

We interviewed 8 travelers about their prior travel booking experiences and what they wanted from a travel app or website.

Interviews provided insight into the extreme lengths people go to when booking travel and highlighted how much of an exhausting process it can be.

## RESEARCH INSIGHT ONE

Travelers can be overwhelmed by the wide selection of travel choices available.

Travelers reported using 32 unique travel apps or websites to book travel, and most travelers use up to 4 services when planning and booking a trip. Travelers have to go to extreme lengths to keep track of all of their travel options; which includes hours of research and tracking prices, points, miles, and other incentives in spreadsheets to determine the best value.

*"I hate the process of trip planning. There are so many options, so many places I can look. I have to consider miles and points, it's just a lot of work. After my trip I always feel like I missed something."*

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
1	Date	Cities	Transportation	Accommodations	Activity	Actual Cost (Transportation + Accomodations)	
2	17-Dec	STL -> Philly -> London	Plane flight (AA points)	N/A (flight)	N/A	90K AA miles + \$209 (50K - 5K back + \$104.50 per person)	
3	18-Dec	London -> Prague	Plane flight (AA points)	Sheraton Prague Charles Square Hotel (SPG points)	Explore London	7k SPG points	
4	19-Dec	Prague		Sheraton Prague Charles Square Hotel (SPG points)	Explore Prague	7k SPG points	
5	20-Dec	Prague		Sheraton Prague Charles Square Hotel (SPG points)	Explore Prague	7k SPG points	
6	21-Dec	Prague		Sheraton Prague Charles Square Hotel (SPG points)	Explore Prague	7k SPG points	
7	22-Dec	Prague -> Krakow	Overnight train Prague to Krakow	N/A (train)	Explore Prague	\$120 (\$60 per person for a 2 bed sleeper)	
8	23-Dec	Krakow		Holiday Inn Krakow City Centre (IHG points)	Salt Mines	15k IHG points	
9	24-Dec	Krakow		Holiday Inn Krakow City Centre (IHG points)	Auschwitz	15k IHG points	
10	25-Dec	Krakow		Holiday Inn Krakow City Centre (IHG points)	Explore Krakow	15k IHG points	
11	26-Dec	Krakow -> Berlin	Flight (British Airways Avios Points)	Grand Hyatt Berlin (Free Night Certificate)	Explore Krakow	\$75 annual fee, 9K Avios + \$26 (4.5K + \$13 per person)	
12	27-Dec	Berlin		Grand Hyatt Berlin (Free Night Certificate)	Explore Berlin	\$75 annual fee	
13	28-Dec	Berlin		Grand Hyatt Berlin (Hyatt points)	Explore Berlin	15K Hyatt points	
14	29-Dec	Berlin -> Amsterdam	Flight (Cash)	Airbnb	Explore Berlin	\$132 (\$66 per person on easyjet) + \$80	
15	30-Dec	Amsterdam		Airbnb	Explore Amsterdam	\$80	
16	31-Dec	Amsterdam		Airbnb	Explore Amsterdam	\$80	
17	1-Jan	Amsterdam		Airbnb	Explore Amsterdam	\$80	
18	2-Jan	Amsterdam		Airbnb	Explore Amsterdam	\$80	
19	3-Jan	Amsterdam -> Paris	High speed train	Marriott	Explore Paris	45K points + \$43 (half of annual fee) + \$100 (\$50 train per person)	
20	4-Jan	Paris		Marriott	Explore Paris	45K points + \$43 (half of annual fee)	

Figure 1: A sample travel itinerary highlighting the combination of transit and lodging options the user intends to book. This particular user leverages many different travel rewards points.

## RESEARCH INSIGHT TWO

Travelers believe that travel websites are manipulative in how they present booking information to users.

Travelers don't trust travel apps and websites to give them a good deal. Travelers lack trust in travel services because of inconsistent pricing and lack of transparency in the offers that are presented. Price instability is believed to especially affect last minute travel; nearly 75% of travelers surveyed feel that last minute travel is more expensive than booking well in advance.

*"In a way it's like betting at a casino. You place your bet on a flight and hope that the price doesn't go down later. I always end up second guessing myself because I know that the price is going to change."*

*"I don't trust the sites. I know they use cookies to track activity. If you've been searching for one destination the price starts to get higher. I always use incognito mode."*



Figure 2: Survey #2 results for opinions about travel. Results reveal some of the pain points involved in travel booking.

## RESEARCH INSIGHT THREE

Travelers want a travel booking experience that does not feel like a huge commitment of time and money.

Travelers possess a strong desire to travel. From our surveys, over 85% of travelers want to travel more often, and 63% maintain a travel bucket list. However, the travel booking process itself can be a huge barrier to fulfilling travel dreams. Nearly 80% feel that booking travel is a commitment that requires planning, and 60% believe that once a trip is booked they're stuck with it. This lack of flexibility paralyzes prospective travelers, preventing them from following through on booking.

*"Booking a trip just feels so final. Once you click the button to buy you're stuck. It's so hard to cancel and you lose so much money."*

*"The fantasy of travel is more fun than the reality of booking."*

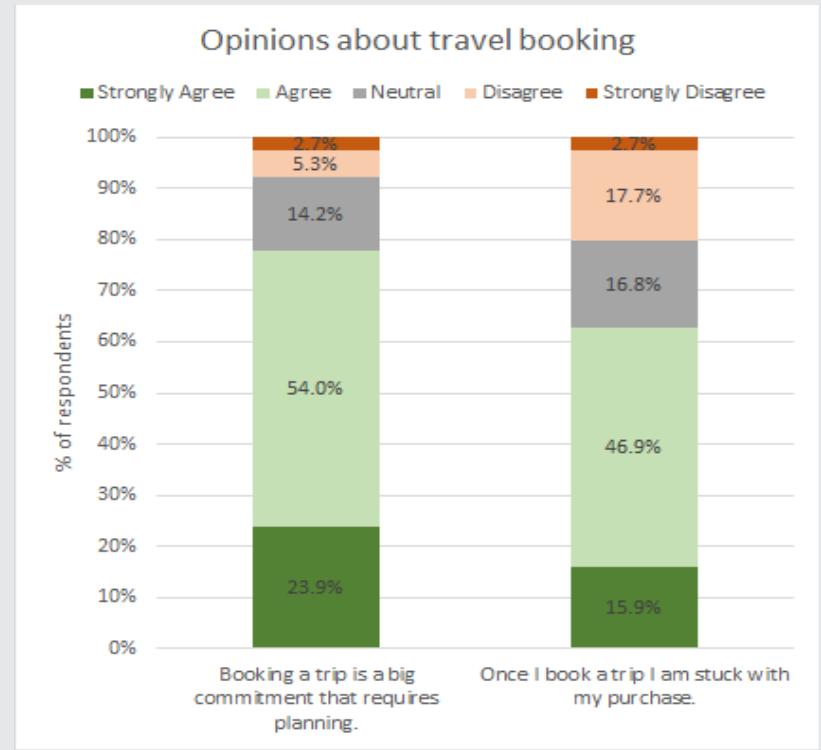


Figure 3: Survey #2 results for opinions about travel booking. Respondents were in agreement that travel booking is a commitment and that they are typically stuck with their purchase.

# PERSONAS

## Meet William

We combined data and insights about travel habits and behaviors to create a set of three personas. The primary persona used for the design process is Wishful William. William personifies some of the key attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors found in our research. At his core, William is the type of traveler that sees his friends and family taking amazing trips, but the difficult process of research and booking prevents him from acting on his own wanderlust.

We kept William in mind during our ideation and prototyping phases. We wanted to give William a travel booking experience that can keep the fantasy of travel alive while avoiding the hassle found in other travel booking services.



## wishful WILLIAM

*"People that can drop everything and go somewhere are my heroes. I'd love to be that person, but I don't think I can because it's so hard to plan for those kinds of trips."*

William doesn't travel nearly as much as he would like. He travels to visit his family in Texas 3-4 times each year. He also tries to take one larger vacation out of the country each year. He typically travels over long holiday weekends or when he can find time off from work. He likes the idea of being able to drop everything to travel somewhere for a weekend, but feels like he wouldn't be able to plan a fun trip in a short time frame.

William loves the idea of traveling, and has been keeping a "bucket list" of places he'd like to visit some day. He enjoys reading about travel and follows several travel bloggers to get ideas. However, William is not in love with booking trips. He feels like travel booking sites offer too many options, and that it can be confusing to navigate through all of the different websites and apps that are available. In the past year, William has started planning three different vacations and gave up after getting bogged down in planning an itinerary. On one occasion, he decided to abandon a trip idea when the cost of the trip suddenly increased by \$50.

William has accounts with a couple of travel booking websites and has an Alaska mileage card. When he books his trips, he often looks at these places first to see if he can use or earn more miles.

William has a long weekend coming up two weeks from now and wants to use it to his advantage. He wants to cross off one of his travel bucket list destinations -something that he wouldn't normally do. He is willing to find a new app to help him efficiently plan out his trip to make sure that he gets a great experience without a lot of research.

### MOTIVATIONS

- Wants to travel more frequently to cross off travel bucket list items, but has a hard time gaining momentum in the travel process
- Gets envious of the photos and videos he sees of friends on vacation, but doesn't quite understand how they do it so easily
- Wants to save time and energy in the booking process so that he can feel like he is one of the travel bloggers he follows online

### GOALS

- ✓ Wants to cross off a travel bucket list destination during a long weekend coming up in 2 weeks
- ✓ Wants to ensure costs stay low and that he can get a "local" experience
- ✓ Wants to keep up with friends he sees posting vacation pictures all the time

### PAIN-POINTS

- Doesn't want to spend too long researching and booking travel so that he can enjoy the actual travel experience
- Finds it difficult to manage points/miles through various airlines and travel sites
- Doesn't trust travel sites to offer the best deal

# DESIGN RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on our research findings, we created a set of recommendations to guide our ideation and prototyping efforts.

## Trust

Developing a trust relationship with travelers through:

Conveying transparent pricing

Being respectful to users

Being consistent and reliable

Providing superior customer service

Endeavoring towards improvement

## Curation

Allowing travelers to curate the content they see.

Demonstrating the source of recommendations made by the app

Giving users the power to change the types of recommendations they see

## Flexibility

Giving travelers a clearly defined way to cancel their trip in case something comes up.

Conditions of cancellation need to be clearly identified

Cancellation should not feel like a hassle or punishment.

# DESIGN PRINCIPLES

In the early stages, between *Research* and *Ideation*, we developed design principles. Later, some of these ideas were tabled for future-versions. Here is a look at the full list of possibilities we discussed.

## Tenets

Indulge the fantasy.

- Use full-frame photos
- Create guidelines for photos in product
- Choose fantasy over UI elements

Don't block the view.

- Simplify the UI at every turn
- Consider transparent elements
- Be wise about real-estate, going edge-to-edge with the most important focal point (images)

Immerse in culture.

- Favor what's unique in a location
- Call-out culturally significant facts
- Remember there's always more to see

## Themes

GOES with you to make your trip better. Includes social elements. *Make friends here. Your new crew is waiting.*

ENCOURAGES with quotes, lists, data.

IMMERSES in the cultural experience. Has a VR viewing option when available.

VALIDATES by showing other peoples' (friends') recommendations. FOMO.

CONNECTS to safe, fun people, tours, pub crawls, friends-of-friends, events.

OFFERS choice when you tailor a little, and gives a lot back.

IS SMART when out of mobile range, so there's less money to spend on cell fees.

RECORDS your rating preferences, which further tailors your experience, improving the system for your friends (and vice-versa).

SOCIALIZES, knowing where your friends have gone and rated experiences, and what people you admire recommend. Can connect you to your friends and meet new ones.



# 16 IDEATION

## THE CONCEPT

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Drifter is a mobile experience that reduces the work of browsing and booking for the last-minute traveler.

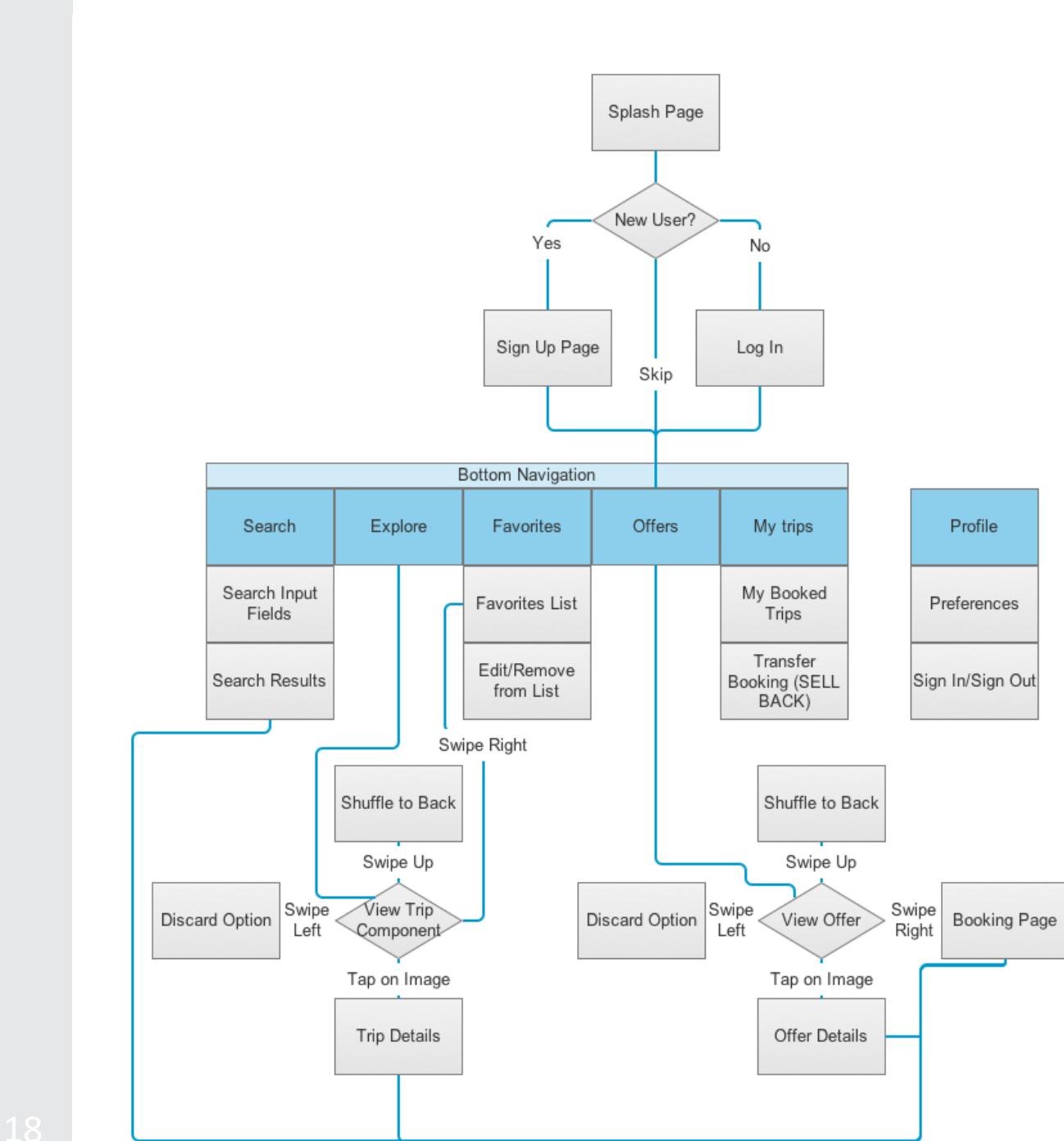
Drifter is a travel-booking app that facilitates the planning, browsing, and booking process specifically for last-minute travelers. Drifter's "discover" feature allows users to browse through potential vacation destinations and packages and indicate their level of interest. The interesting trips, along with user-inputted Bucket List items, inform Drifter of the user's preferences and alerts them when one of those trips goes on a last-minute sale. Users can also browse through deals available today. Drifter also contains a conventional flight search that feels familiar to other travel apps. Finally, to facilitate flexibility and low commitment, Drifter features a marketplace where previously-booked trips can be transferred over to another interested traveler in order to avoid cancellation fees.

# INFORMATION ARCHITECTURE

## Started from the bottom

After we defined our key features and tasks, we began our information architecture design by determining what core functions should be available from the bottom navigation.

These five functions (search, explore, favorites, offers, and my trips) guided the different paths a user could take to browse, book, or discard a trip in a variety of sequences. After we considered how these functions would play out, we then considered how the onboarding procedure and the profile personalization would peripherally relate to the rest.





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## PROTOTYPE + ITERATION

# USER FLOWS



## Discover

The Discover process inspires users with beautiful images and information about popular destinations, so they can learn about new places and add them to their bucket list.



## Add to Bucket List

The Bucket List is an aggregated list of the user's designated favorites. Here they can add destinations and activities to their wish list. Drifter curates trip deals based on these lists.



## View Deals

Trips are curated based on a user's bucket list, and provided in the form of last minute offers on the Deals page. Trips incorporate preferred destinations and activities for the highest level of personalization.



## Book Trip

Booking a trip is a straightforward concept, but Drifter adds the benefit of flexibility to vacation packages. Users can upgrade to a better hotel and the booking page will remind them that cheaper options are available.

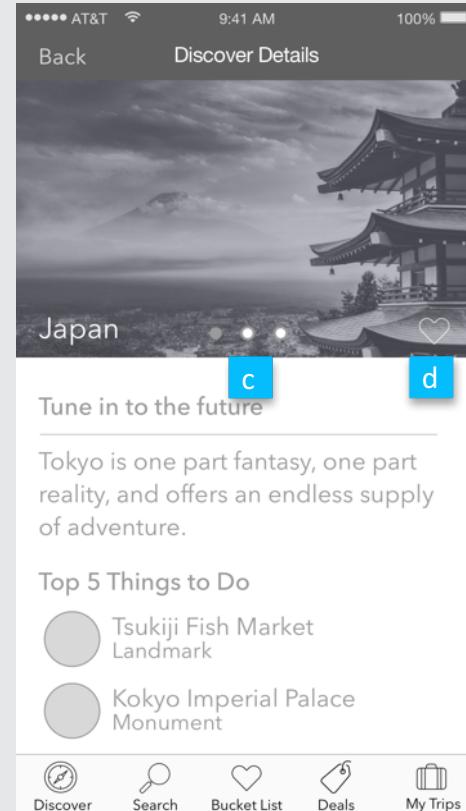
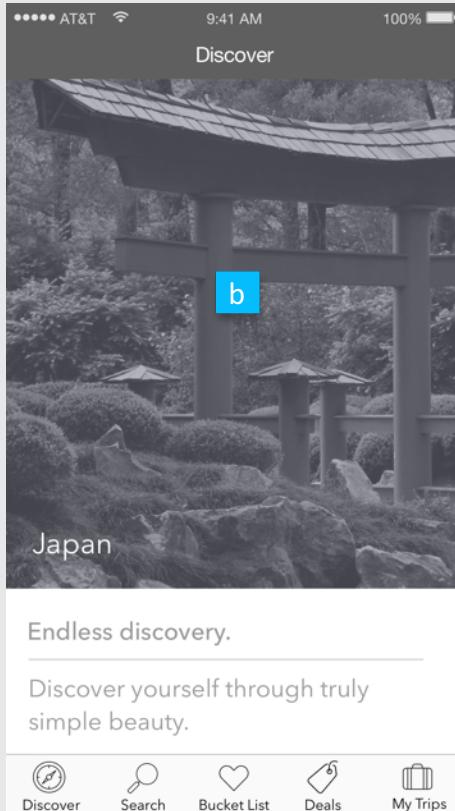
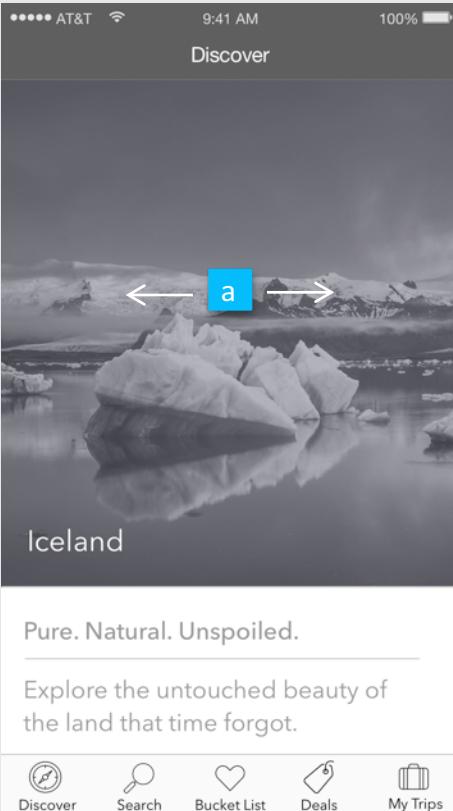


## Sell Trip

Life happens. Plans need to change sometimes. When users know that they can sell their trip back to another interested traveler, they can feel more secure when booking a trip, even before all the details are ironed out.

# USER FLOWS | Discover

1 2 3 4 5



**a Swipe to explore**  
Swipe left on a destination card to dismiss it. Swipe right to add it to your bucket list.

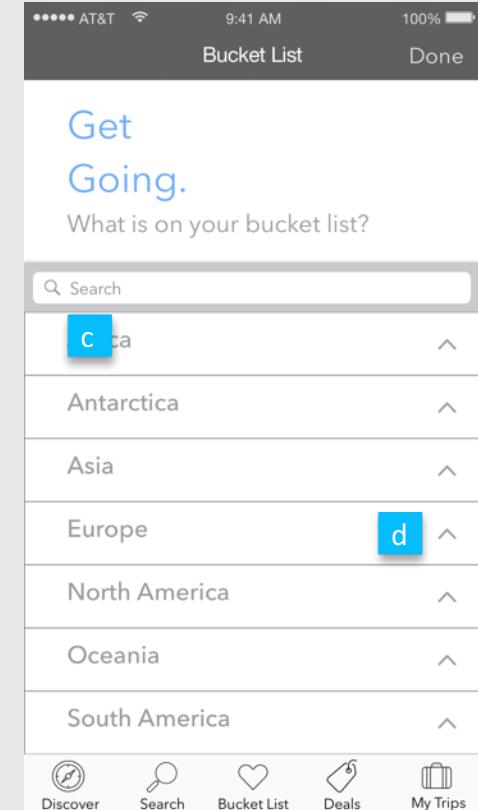
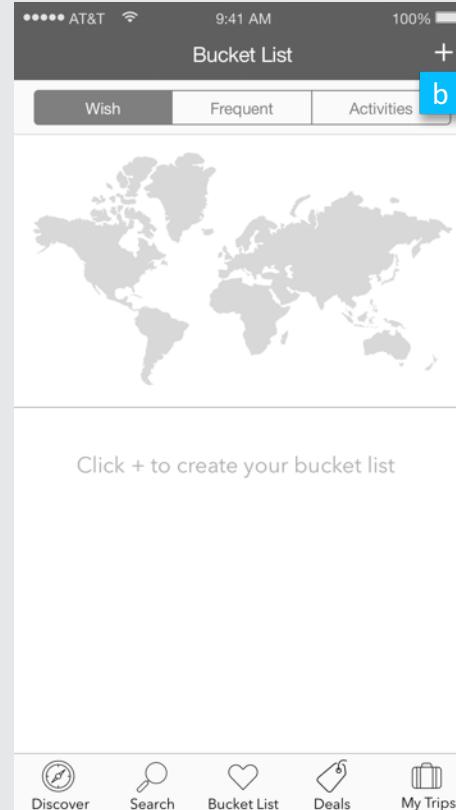
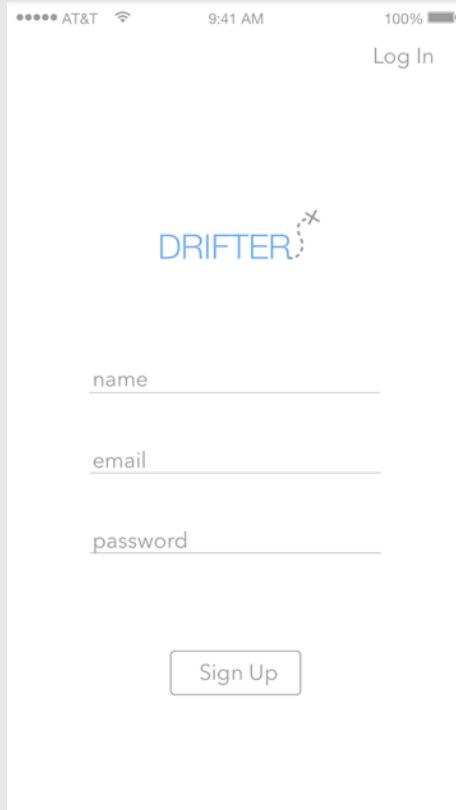
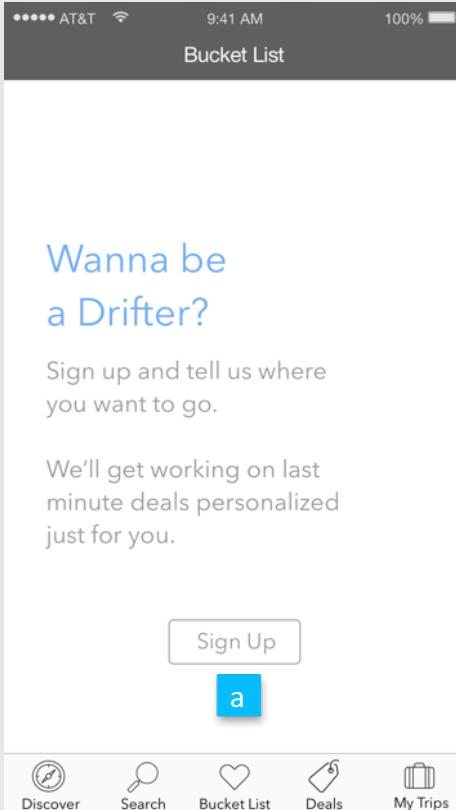
**b Click for details**  
Click the image to discover details about the destination.

**c Swipe for photos**  
Swipe left or right for more images of the destination.

**d Toggle heart to favorite**  
Click on heart icon to add destination to bucket list.

# USER FLOWS | Add to Bucket List

1 2 3 4 5



## a Sign up for favorites

Click the Sign Up button to create an account and start a bucket list.

## b Add destinations

Click the "+" icon to add a destination to your bucket list.

## c Search destinations

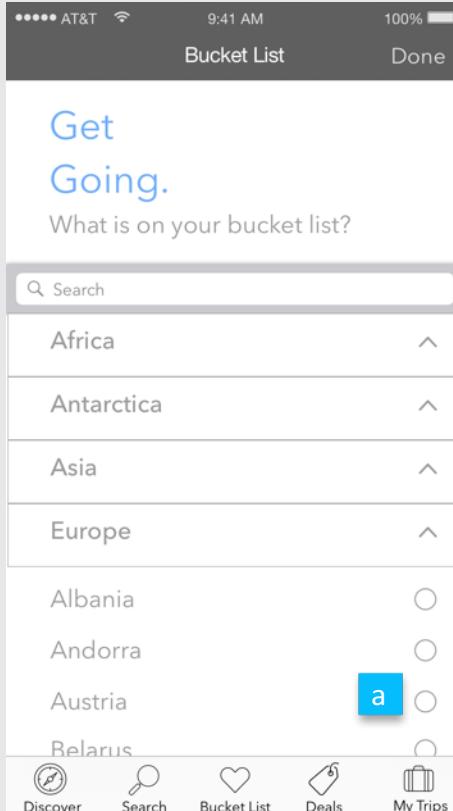
Enter a destination name to search for locations directly.

## d Expand countries list

Click on a continent to expand the countries list and browse destinations.

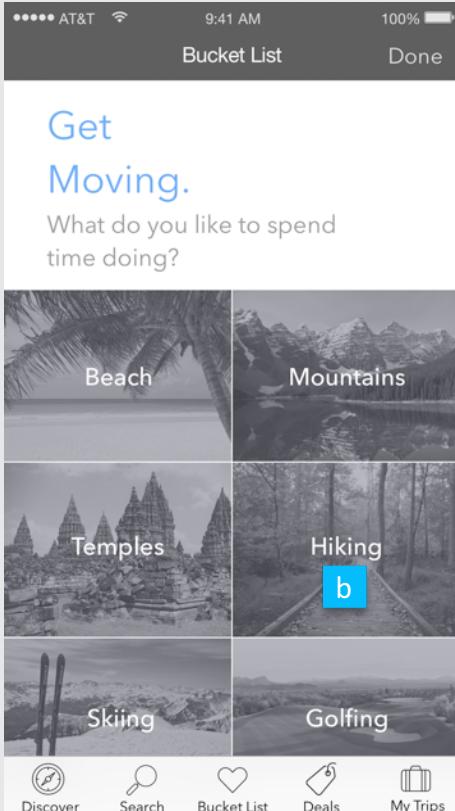
## USER FLOWS | Add to Bucket List (cont.)

1 2 3 4 5



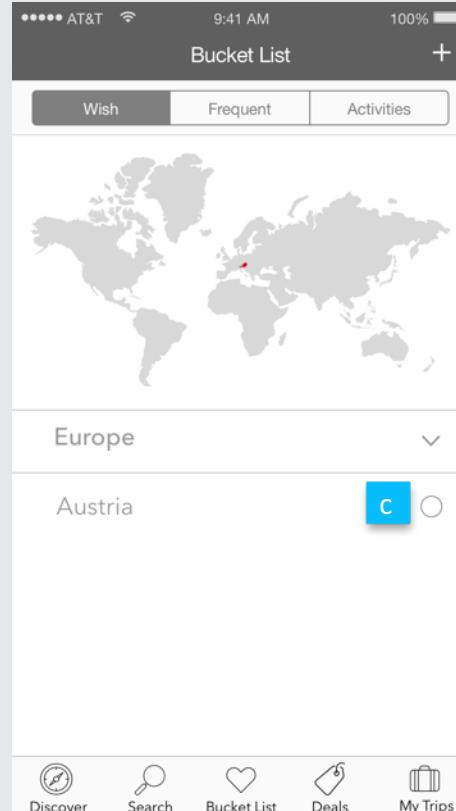
### a Select a country

Click on the country to select it and click "Done" to confirm your selections.



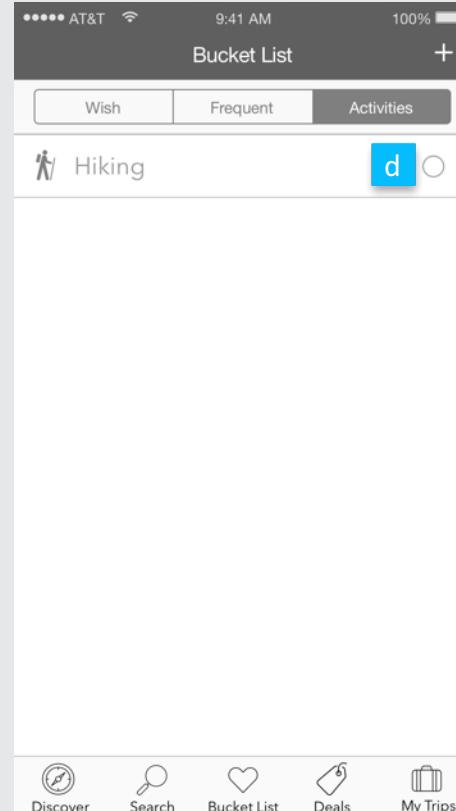
### b Add activities

Click on the activity to select it and click on "Done" to confirm your selections.



### c Remove destinations

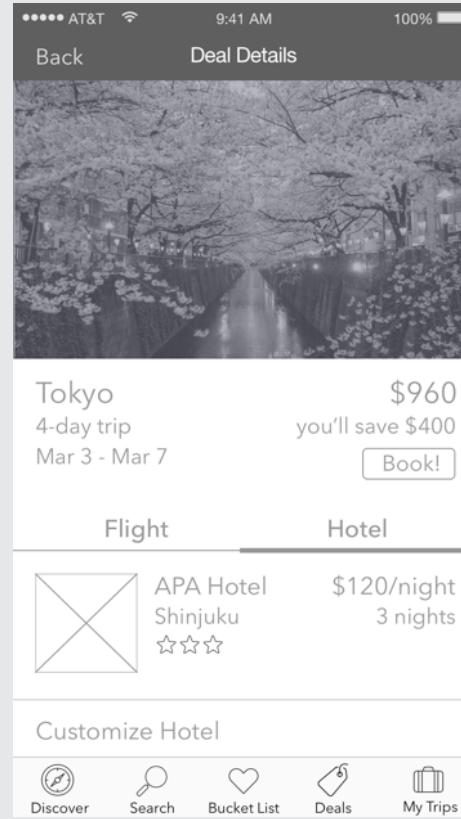
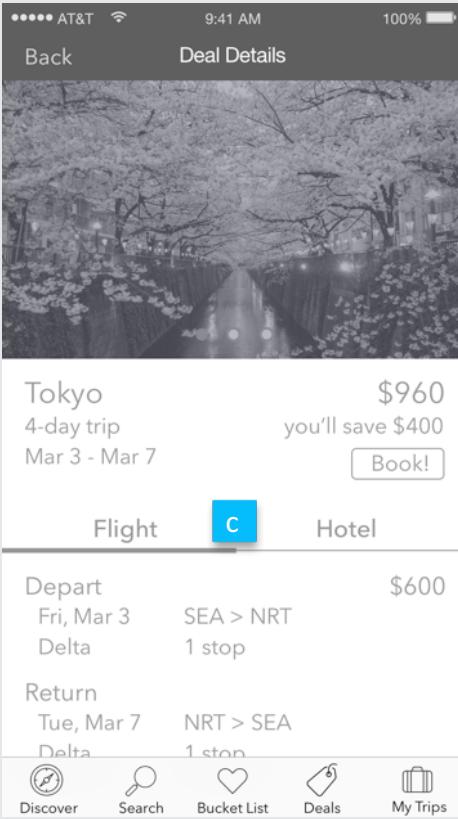
Click on the country to deselect it, and confirm the decision to remove the using a pop-up dialog.



### d Remove activities

Click on the activity to deselect it, and confirm the decision to remove the item using a pop-up dialog.

## USER FLOWS | View Deals



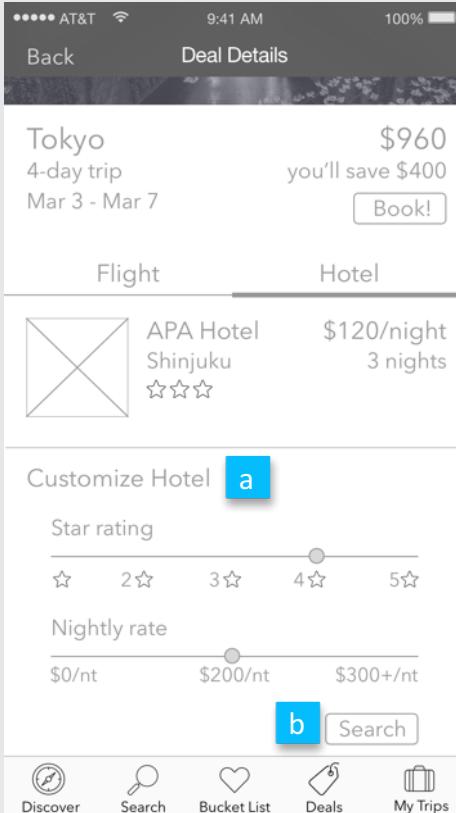
**a Scroll to view offers**  
Click on the country to select it and click "Done" to confirm your selections.

**b Click for offer details**  
Click the image to review details about the offer.

**c Click between tabs**  
Click between the Flight and Hotel tabs to review the details of the trip components.

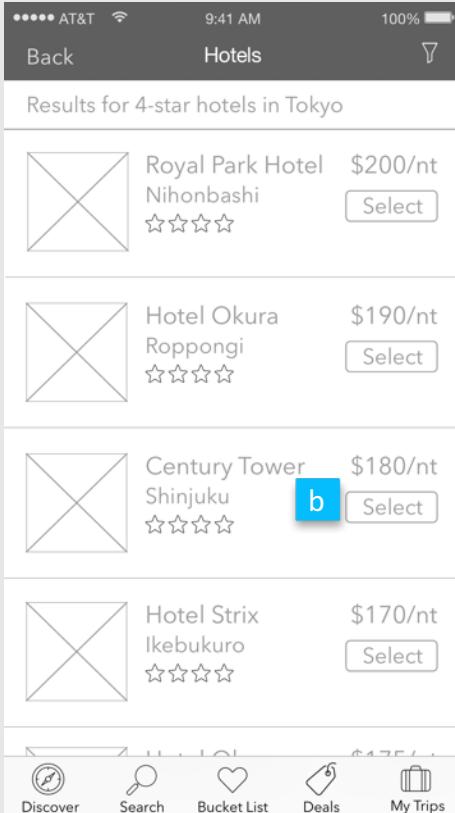
# USER FLOWS | Book Trip

1 2 3 4 5



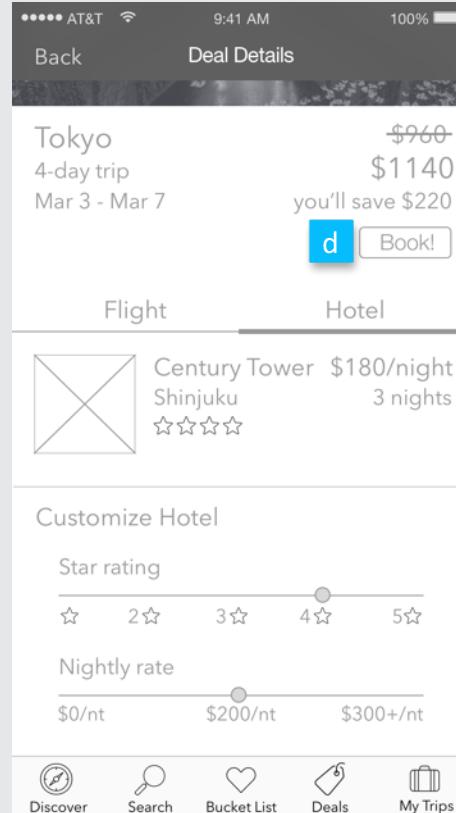
## a Customize trip details

Scroll down to customize hotel options for better personalization.



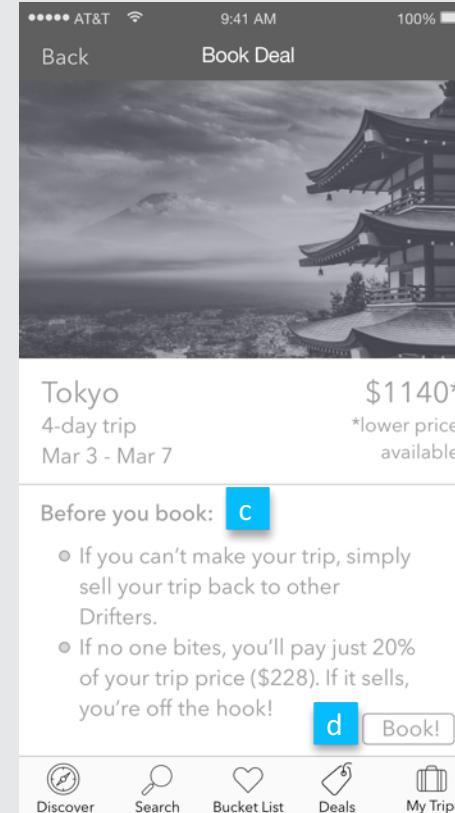
## b Search and select

Search for and select a hotel that matches your new criteria.



## c Review policies

Review the flexible cancellation policy before booking your trip.

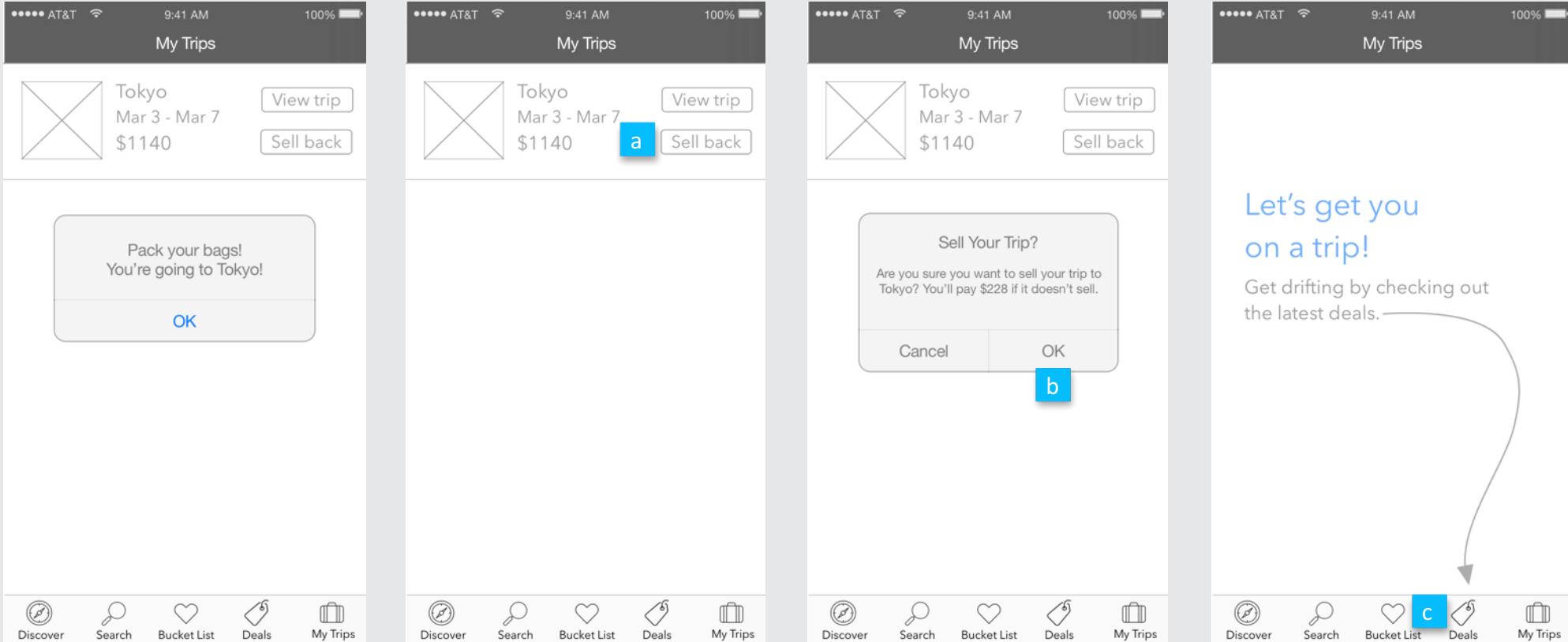


## d Book trip

Click "Book!" to start the booking process.

# USER FLOWS | Sell Trip

1 2 3 4 5



## a Sell your trip

Click on “Sell back” to start the process of selling your trip back to other users.

## b Confirm trip sale

Review the transparent sellback costs before confirming the sale.

## c Book more trips

Get prompted to check out more curated last minute deals.

# DESIGN EVOLUTION

## Initial Approach

Our original design was focused on providing users with immediate value through curated deals that moved them quickly to last minute travel decisions. Through user testing, we discovered that we needed to rethink a few key areas of the design approach.

### Personalization through Setup

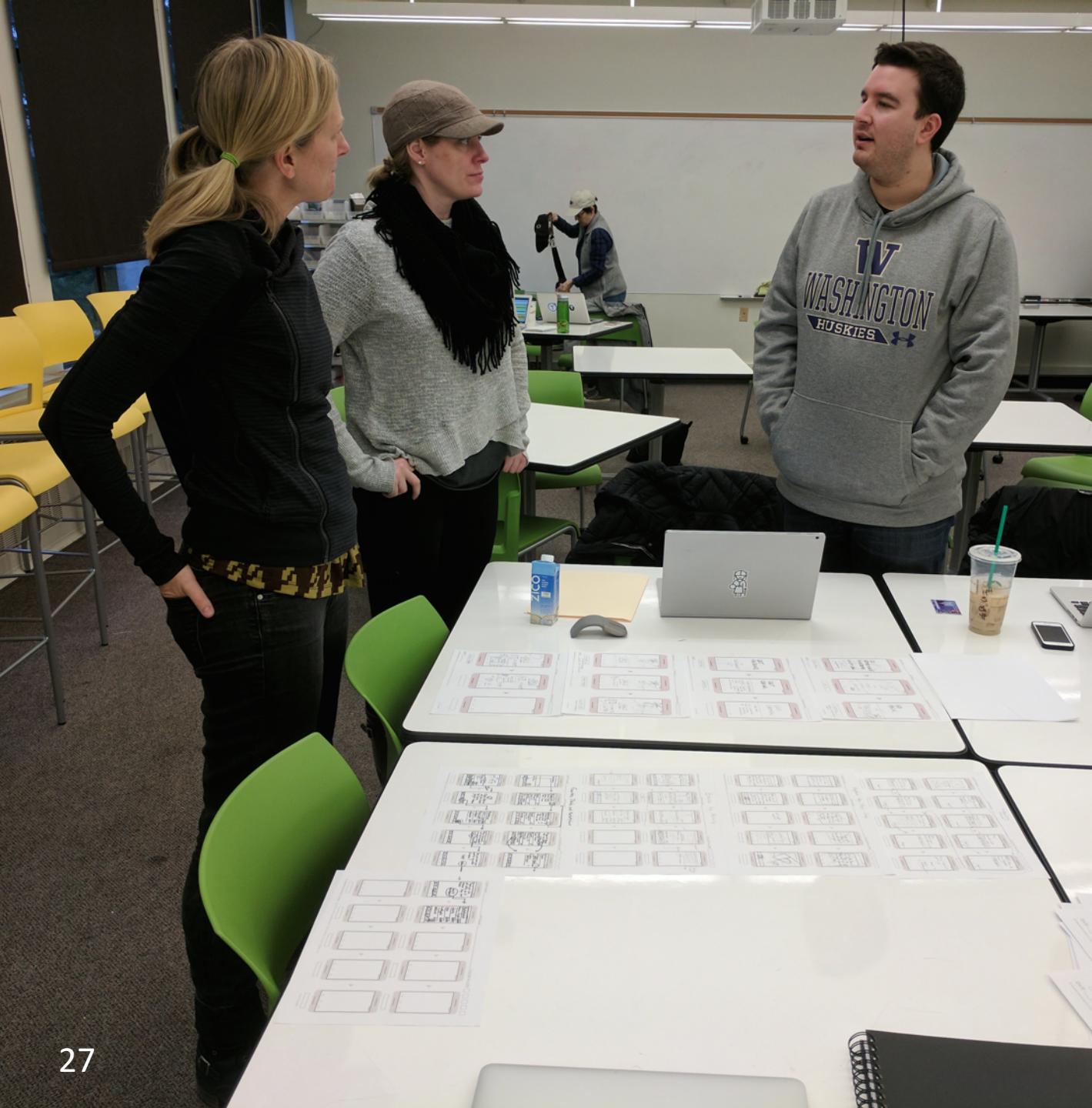
Sign users up to start personalizing their experience.

### Onboard Users

Gather their favorites up front in order to start curating deals.

### Swipe Deals

Allow users to make quick decisions about trip offers.



## DESIGN EVOLUTION (cont.)

### Don't require sign up before showing value

#### Finding

During user testing, two of the three participants skipped the sign in process entirely. They expressed frustration with apps that expect a lengthy sign in process before showing them what the app can do.

*"I probably wouldn't get value out of it immediately, so I would skip sign up to see if I do get value."*

#### Improvement

To increase trust and allow the user to see value in the app, we removed the extensive sign in process and allowed them to immediately start exploring. The bucket list onboarding process was integrated directly into the app for a more task-based contextual experience.



GO  
SOMEPLACE  
AWESOME.  
RIGHT  
NOW.

Explore new destinations and  
get curated recommendations.  
No gambling necessary.

[Start Exploring](#)

DRIFTER<sup>®</sup>

## DESIGN EVOLUTION (cont.)

Communicate the unique features of the app

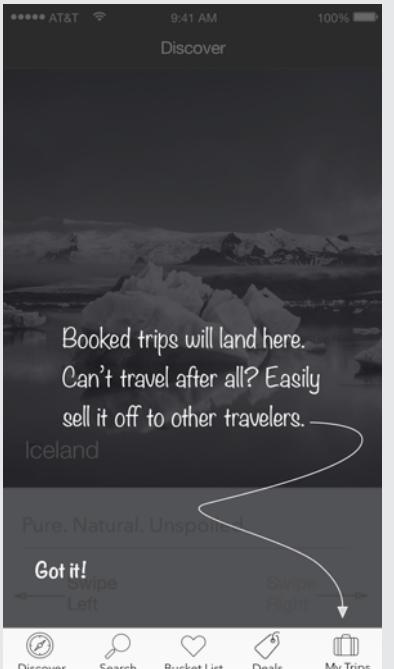
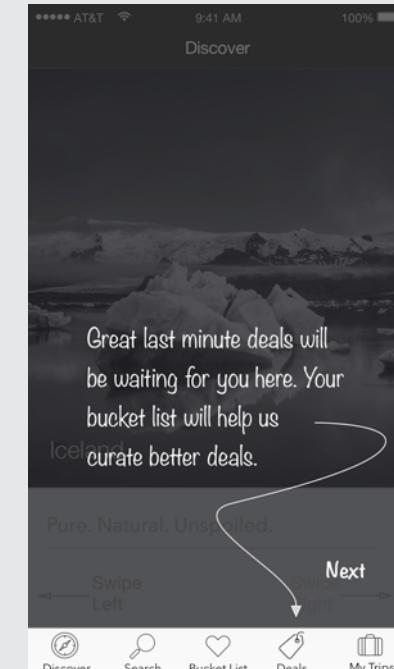
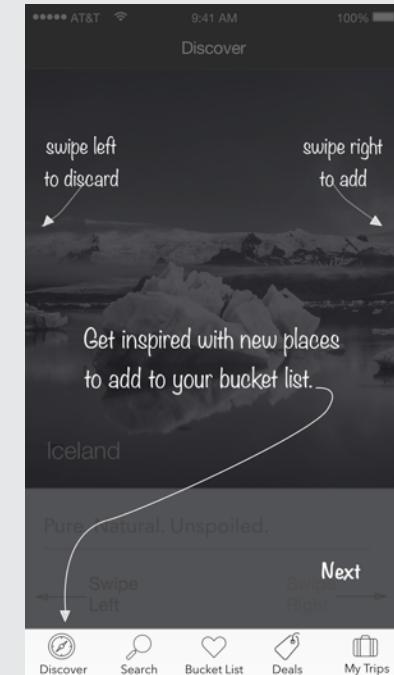
### Finding

Participants enjoyed the idea of seeing travel deals curated from their personal preferences; however, this functionality was hidden from them. Participants did not understand that the app was showing a curated list of offers until thorough exploration or when the moderator revealed that information to them.

*"I liked the coolness of the app once I understood the personalization, but wished I would have gotten information when I was being asked to sign up."*

### Improvement

To help users determine if there is value to using the app long term, we introduced coach marks to inform them of the unique features of the app up front. Prominently displaying features like curated deals or the ability to easily sell back a trip would help users see the value in the app.



## DESIGN EVOLUTION (cont.)

Allow users to scroll through deals

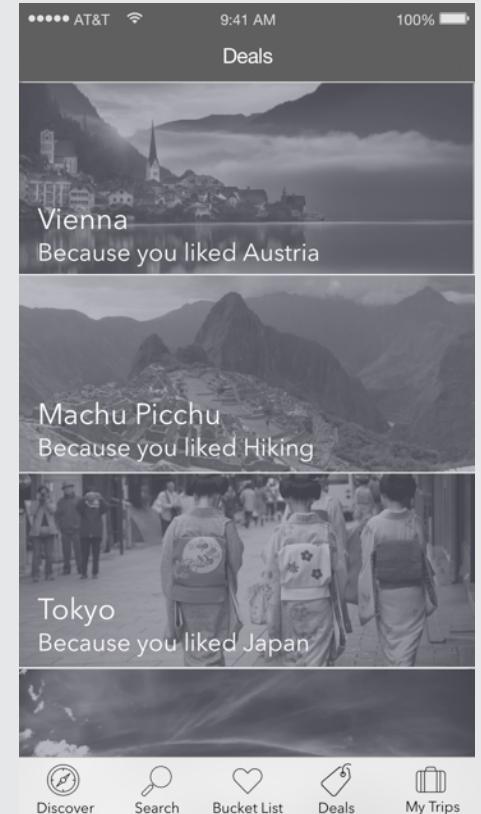
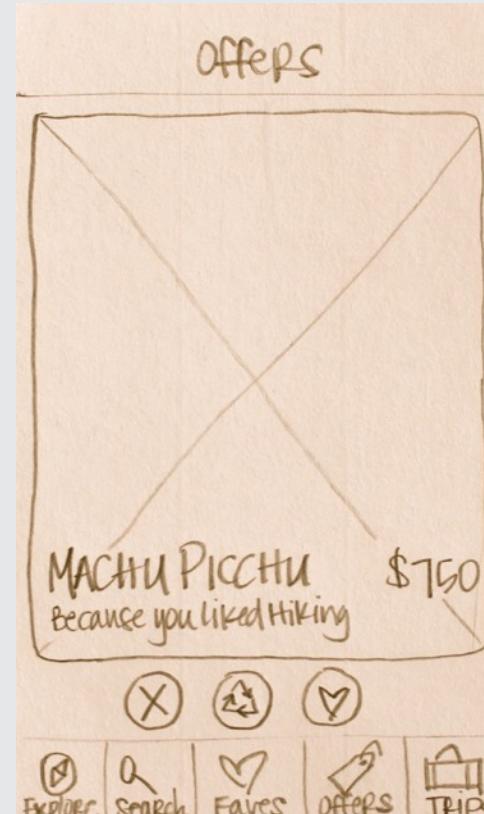
### Finding

Participants thought that the swipe method was an interesting way to browse content in the app, but felt that the mechanic was not appropriate for the feature. Participants expected the deals displayed on the Offers page to be a scrollable list where clicking on the offer would display details and give them the opportunity to purchase or ignore it.

*"I would prefer to scroll through the offers page rather than swipe card by card."*

### Improvement

Since the swiping mechanic wasn't conducive to the amount of research travelers are used to doing prior to booking a trip, we moved to an easy to scroll offer list. Users can more quickly scroll through the list to find a trip that fits their mood.



# CHALLENGES

## Swiping

The Tinder-style swiping method we explored was not well received in either feature page we tried it on. Participants in usability testing felt that it was not intuitive for looking at deals for last minute trips. The swiping interaction was also problematic when we attempted to use it within the Discover feature. Participants felt that the interaction is too shallow and impersonal; they felt that the interaction wouldn't allow them to do the deep dive style of exploration they expected from the Discover feature. These insights inform future iterations of the app as well as offer opportunities to expand on our research on travel planning and booking habits.

## Feature Introductions

We employed two different methods for introducing our unique features, but the execution of these introductions fell short. The first prototype offered users a quick tutorial about the features of the app after they first launched the app. We found that users forgot or skipped over these screens, leaving them unsure about the purpose of each feature. Our second attempt placed feature introductions in context of first use; however, users felt that these cues lacked sufficient information to communicate the connection between features. In the future, we would want to app language that is concise and clearly communicates what the app can do.

## Adjusting for Mobile paradigms

Customization features we attempted to use relied on button presses and sliders. Participants in usability sessions were often lost when trying to find areas of the app they could tap on. The typical mobile paradigm means that everything on the screen can be interacted with. Features like sliders or small radial buttons are often not a good choice; a lesson we learned in our second usability test. Future iterations of the app would benefit from larger buttons that are easy to recognize and interact with.

# FINAL BRANDING + STYLES

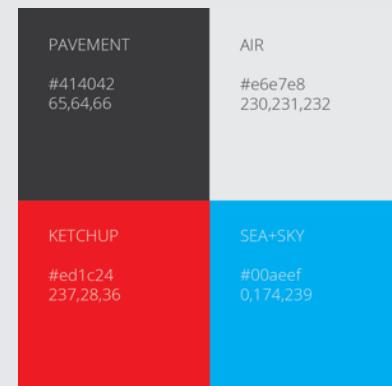
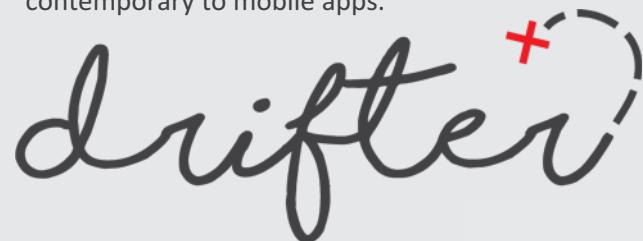
## Mood boards

Two rounds of mood boards helped our team to narrow in on one theme that suited the bright, bold style of our Drifter brandmark and design elements.



## Brandmark and elements

The Drifter mark is created from a cursive font, similar to what one might be writing in their travel journal. The red “x” signifies a location, like a treasure map. Together, these elements evoke the emotions around wanderlust and adventure our brand will convey. Supporting elements are a mobile-ready font and mono-stroke hand-drawn icons that are contemporary to mobile apps.



HEADER PAVEMENT, 50% opacity  
HEADTITLE Open Sans, Regular, 48pt, ALL-CAPS  
TITLE Open Sans Semibold, 72pt, ALL-CAPS  
SUB-HEAD Open Sans, Semibold, 72pt  
TEXT Open Sans, Regular, 48pt

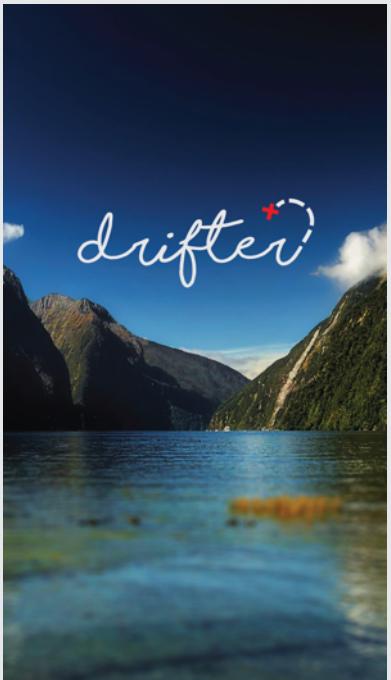
ICONS 2px stroke, hand-drawn  
ICON FONT Open Sans, Semibold, 24pt, ALL-CAPS  
BGCOLOR PAVEMENT, 85% opacity



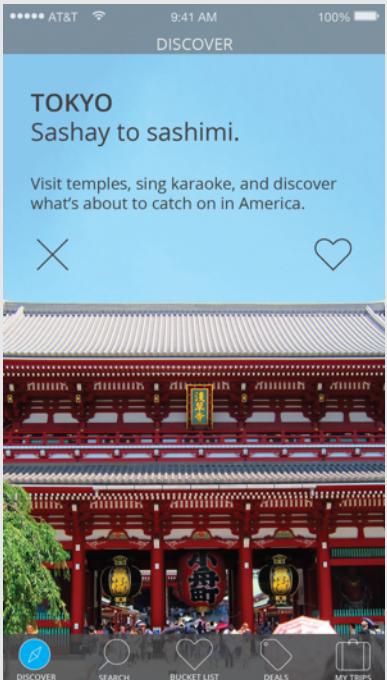
# FINAL SCREENS

## Key Mock-ups

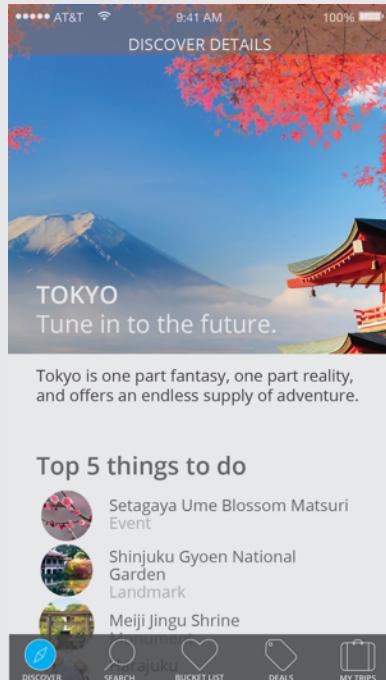
We mocked up several key screens to show our brandmark and elements in context. Because feedback continued to come in, you'll notice small evolutions from our wireframes. Special thanks to the Xbox visual designers who allowed us to run these through a critique with them.



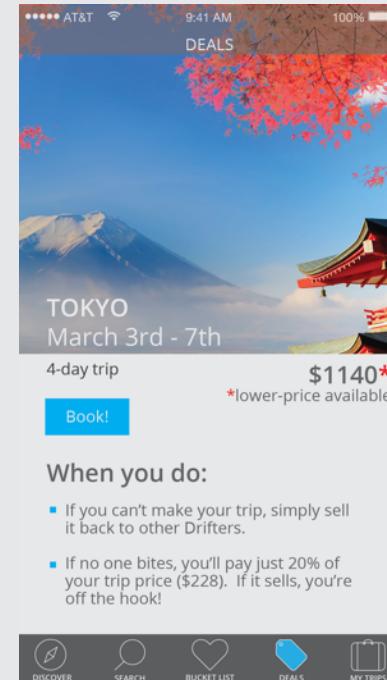
Loading



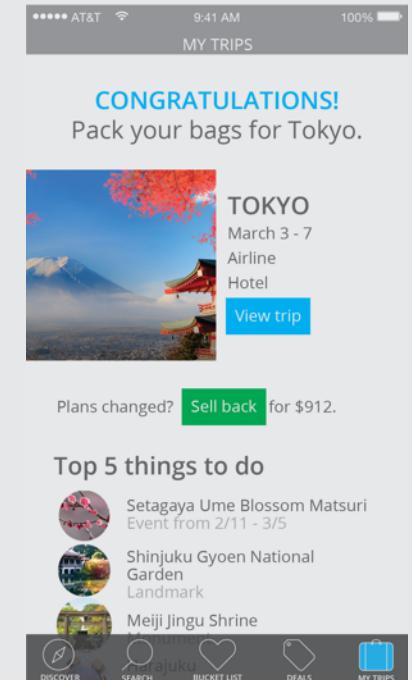
Discover



Discover Details



Deals



My Trips

A large, multi-tiered iceberg dominates the center of the frame, its surface a deep blue. The ice is textured with numerous vertical and horizontal crevices. In the foreground, a white, textured landmass or another part of the iceberg is visible. The background is a dark, overcast sky.

## 34 OUTLOOK

# REFLECTIONS

## On Linear Milestones

One way the workflow of a capstone project differs from one in industry is the synchronization of the workflow. Whereas large teams with several concurrent projects often use an agile method to push incremental changes in research, ideation, and design, the linear sequence of our milestone deadlines more closely resembled a waterfall method. This proved itself to be difficult as the many substeps of each milestone required input and tangible deliverables from prior substeps.

These handoff points highlight some of our biggest missed opportunities to have improved our workflow efficiency. What these transitions were and when they would occur was difficult to predict ahead of the tasks; otherwise, we may have had an easier time optimizing our workflow.

## On Positive Team Dynamics

Perhaps the biggest success of this project was the healthy team dynamic that we maintained throughout. While we each had good days and bad days over these last six months, we were successful at lifting each other up when necessary. We smoothly and flexibly converged our schedules around conflicts. We traded off roles and responsibilities to balance other commitments and meet deadlines.

We spent more time laughing than arguing during meetings. Ultimately, maintaining a good team morale is one of the best metrics for success on a project. When project plans change while the team dynamics are unstable, the team becomes vulnerable to blame and accusations. The positive dynamic allowed us to share equal senses of contribution and responsibility to both successes and failures throughout the project.

## On Patience and Bottlenecking

Just like the difficulties of synchronizing the milestones, sometimes it was also difficult to wait for the next step of the process. Several times throughout the capstone journey, we found ourselves eager to get ahead of ourselves. From the planning stages in late fall, we were advised to not rush into the research phase too quickly before we had solidified our proposal and milestone plans. Early into the research phase, many hypotheses and ideas bubbled up, but we needed to wait until the research dictated specific user requirements so that our ideas were research-based.

And during the ideation phase, we could have predicted some of the visual and content strategy concerns that might arise during the design phase, but without knowing which features would end up in the final design, we held back on those discussions. By the time each next milestone began, some of that withheld enthusiasm was lost as we rushed to move through the new phase quickly. Had we been able to channel that enthusiasm more consistently throughout the process, we may have had more successful solutions.

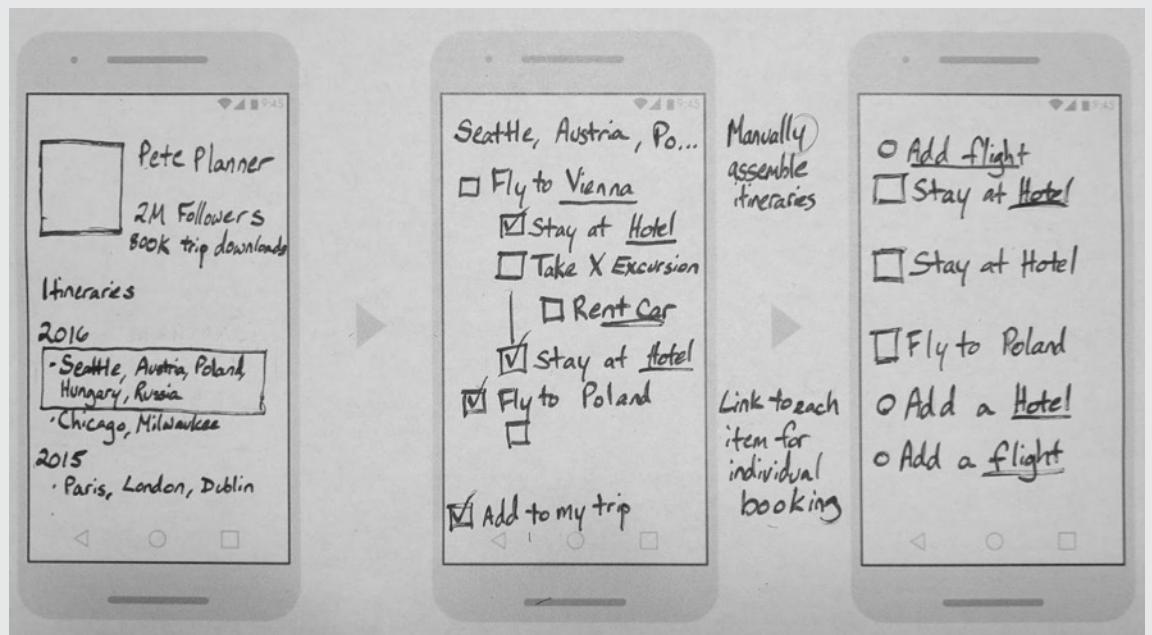
## FUTURE DIRECTIONS (cont.)

Our final deliverables for Drifter focused only on the “happy paths”—a narrow set of wireframes that confine a user to the “correct” interactions to achieve a particular goal. With additional time for this project, we would continue to build out the visual design of the rest of the app. Beyond that, we would add in the following features that we postponed during the Ideation phase.

### Social Features

We black-boxed the sign-up process for the sake of our high-fidelity prototypes, but we intend to allow users to sign up through Facebook or potentially other social media accounts. Not only would this allow us more access to a user’s location, history, and travel interests, but we could also provide endorsements from friends when recommending certain suggestions. Some users told us that they value word-of-mouth recommendations from friends, so we expect that they would rather see that their friend enjoyed their stay at a given hotel rather than read reviews from strangers.

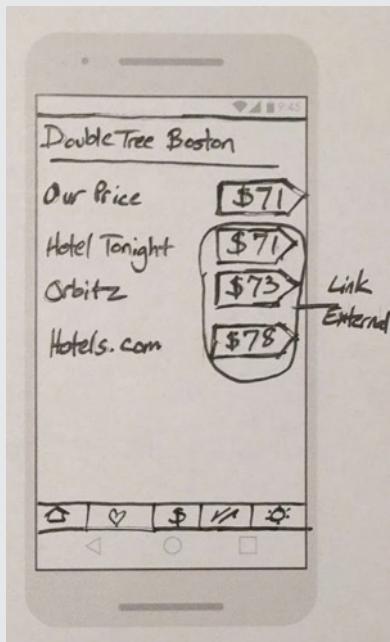
One social element that we scrapped in favor of simplicity was the ability to import and export itineraries from friends. This feature would create value to our anti-personas—long-term, detailed travelers. Many people tend to know one friend who knows a lot about travel. If that person could provide detailed ratings and reviews of their flight, hotel, and activity experiences, their friends could select the best items and add them to their own itineraries as desired. The app would need to expand into something much more complex to handle such a heavily detailed feature.



# FUTURE DIRECTIONS

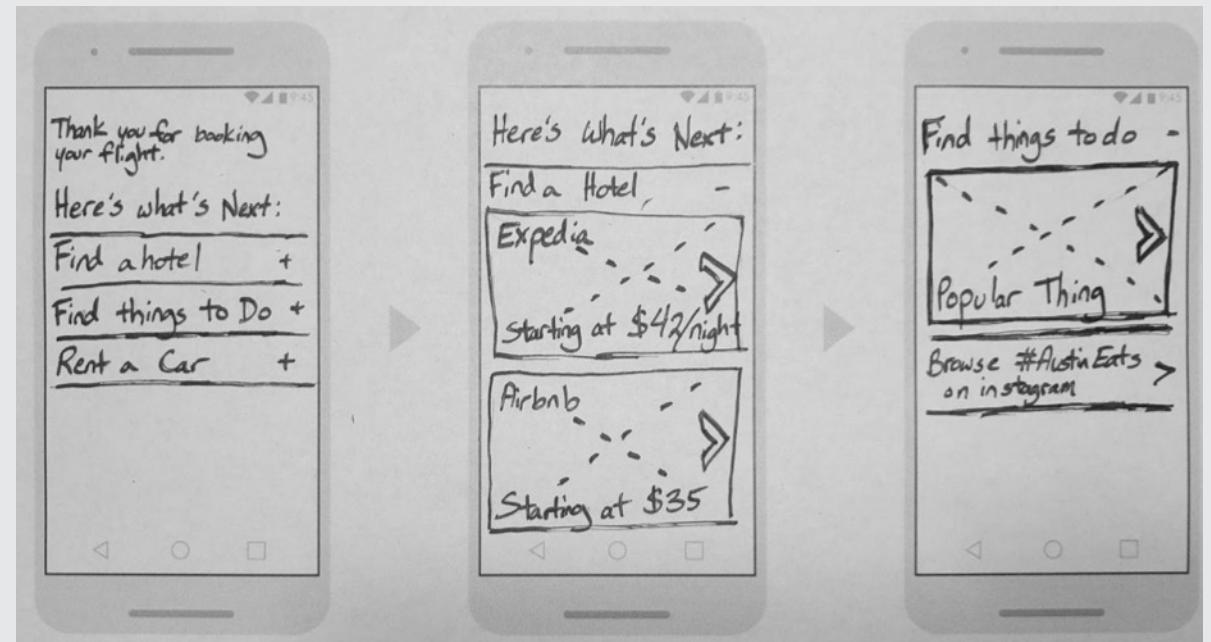
## Price Comparisons

We want to offer a direct price comparison that redirects users to offsite apps if a cheaper price is available. Of the many features we cut for our final high-fidelity prototype, this is the one that could gain us back the most trust.



## Here's What's Next Feature

An original idea that fell out of scope was a menu that appears after the flight booking process that facilitates the rest of the booking process. The menu guides the user through the next steps, from hotels nearby to activities and rental cars if applicable. The idea behind this feature is that it eases the burdensome feeling that comes along with the many steps of travel planning.





thanks you.

We would like to thank our project sponsors, Travis Fleck and Gilia Angell, from Expedia, Inc., for their guidance on navigating this problem space. We would also like to thank our instructors, Liz Sanocki, Tyler Fox, Jared Bauer and Ruth Kikin-Gil for their feedback and mentorship throughout these past six months.

## REFERENCES

<sup>1</sup> Weber, R. L. (2013, October 10). The travel agent is dying, but it's not yet dead. Retrieved March 6, 2017, from <http://www.cnn.com/2013/10/03/travel/travel-agent-survival/>

<sup>2</sup> Kim, J., & Bhutani, A. (2014, March 31). A Technical Look: How Expedia is Simplifying Travel Planning. Retrieved March 6, 2017, from <http://blog.expedia.com/how-expedia-is-simplifying-travel-planning/>