

## Google launches new AI travel planning tools for summer this year

- A Monitor Desk Report

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Dhaka: The US multinational company announces that users can now request an “AI overview” of a destination, which includes a detailed day-by-day itinerary of activities and recommended restaurants.

This feature is available not just for cities, but also for specific regions or entire countries. Additionally, users can customize the overview to focus on particular interests, such as creating an itinerary for Costa Rica with an emphasis on nature.

However, it should be noted that planning trips with AI Overviews is only available for English language queries in the US at present.

Users lucky enough to get a decent set of results, “can explore photos and reviews contributed by other users and see locations on an expandable map. And when you’re ready, you can tap “Export” to share

the recommendations through Docs or Gmail, or save them as a custom list in Google Maps for access on-the-go,” Google says.

#### Save money with hotel price tracking

Similar to its Google Flights price alerts, Google is now offering the same for hotels. Browsers on [google.com/hotels](https://www.google.com/hotels) will see a new option to track prices for selected dates and destinations. Users can track prices for chosen dates and destinations via the “price-tracking toggle”, set price check dates, and receive email alerts if prices improve. This feature is available globally.

#### Turn screenshots into plans with Google Maps and Gemini

The next feature to get a mention in the press release is in Maps where screenshots are being weaponised by Gemini, Google’s AI. Snap and save notetaking tools have been around for a while, from Pocket to Evernote, but Google’s new one claims to prevent screenshots of dream destinations being buried within the camera roll.

Simply saving an image in “Screenshots” will allow Gemini to “automatically identify places mentioned so you can review and save the ones you want.” That’s not all: the places saved will appear on the map and can be shared among friends. This feature came to the US in English at the end of March on iOS, and is said to be forthcoming for Android.

#### Turn Gemini into a personal travel expert

Google also claims that its AI can respond usefully to broader queries, for those who are not quite decided on a travel plan, by asking it for example to “find the cheapest flights to Europe and YouTube videos on what to do on a budget in each of those places.”

For a personalised travel guide, the firm advises using its “Gems” feature. Gems is a version of Gemini that can be customised for all sorts of purposes. There are premade Gems for topics like career guidance or coding, but users can also set up their own Gem for almost anything, including as a trip planner. The idea is to use Gems Manager and the “magic wand icon at the bottom of the text box” to give your Gem specific instructions. In a turn of events that feels like AI disappearing into a hall of mirrors, it’s even possible to use a Gem to help you set up a Gem.

However, even Google admits caveats here. Results are “for illustrative

purposes and may vary,” it says, warning: “Check responses for accuracy. Internet and browser for setup required. Available in select languages, and to users 18+.”

#### An AI-powered tour guide

Some users will already be familiar with using Lens to point their camera at written words in a foreign language, perhaps on a menu, to receive a translation. But now the feature goes further.

“Perhaps you’re visiting Florence and want to know the story behind the mysterious, wooden windows you’ve been seeing everywhere,” the firm suggests. Pointing Google Lens at an object and asking about it, will return an answer. The AI Overview response for Florence “explains that this is a wine window, historically used to sell wine directly to customers in Florence, Italy.”

Lens service currently exists “for English queries, and are expanding soon to Hindi, Indonesian, Japanese, Korean, Portuguese and Spanish, in most countries where AI Overviews are available.”

#### Do travellers really want a bot-planned holiday?

Some question whether AIs like Gemini are about to replace human travel agents and tour guides. Other criticisms have included AI not taking travel time between destinations into account or failing to provide the best route. Google spokesperson Craig Ewer argued at a press event that the firm is working to resolve those issues and that human travel agents can also use the tools to improve their practice and make them “even more productive.”

Still, trends in travel show that travellers are seeking out lesser known places, the serendipitous “happenstance”, and “authentic” experiences that help to build communities. Whether an AI itinerary that gives answers based on an agglomeration of mass information can provide any of that, remains to be seen.

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