

Sifting Swiftly Through the Fares

Just about every travel site trumpets its talents at finding the cheapest, most accurate airline fares in a flash. Many are good, but they're built on vexing, archaic architecture that's simply much too complicated to maneuver.

A new reservations engine developed by **ITA Software** may change all that. This booking technology, in beta at beta.itasoftware.com, is more modern, flexible, and comprehensive than other engines, which are built atop code developed by the airlines as early as the 1960s, says Jeremy Wertheimer, chief executive of ITA. ITA constructed its reservations engine from the ground up in a modern programming language, endowing it with staggering range and flexibility in finding the best fares.

"All the other Web sites put a different face on it, but use the same underlying technology," says Wertheimer. "They weren't designed to let you simultaneously search for different schedules, fares, and

combinations."

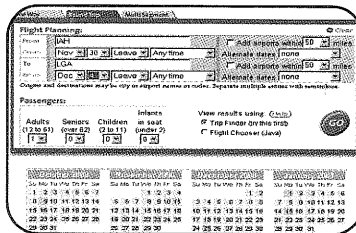
A quick spin around the beta site confirms that ITA is miles above the rest. It's fast, accurate, and intuitive, and lists more fares (and only for flights that have seats available) than any other site we checked. Not only can you look for the best fare for a specific itinerary, you also can search over a range of several days and destinations.

ITA currently offers complete access to fares and schedules in the United States; the company will add Europe early in 2001, Latin America by the middle of the year, and Asia by

the end of the year. For now, however, it's only a fare-finder. It will include reservations capabilities by early spring.

Several large travel agencies and airlines, including **Orbitz** (www.orbitz.com), the controversial upcoming Web site owned by five large U.S. carriers, have licensed the engine for use on their own sites. And when five competing airlines agree on one thing, you know it's gotta be good.

—*Elaine X. Grant*



Fares, fast and simple

EASY ON THE EARS

Audio files are on everyone's ears these days, from MP3 to WMA to good old-fashioned streaming audio. Finding and downloading those files, however, can be a chore.

Voquette (www.voquette.com) offers a great solution. The Voquette Web site provides a detailed catalog of free audio files that are organized into categories including audio books, entertainment, music, news, and sports, complete with descriptions of the files and links to other sources. Even better, it provides the Voquette Media Manager (VMM) application as a free download.

Download VMM, and the software places a 1-inch-square "basket" on your desktop. While you're surfing, you can drag and drop just about any kind of audio file into the basket, where VMM notes and organizes the URLs.

You then use VMM to download the files and play them, or record them to a hard drive, portable MP3 player, or writable CD. VMM even saves streaming media files, which is unique among media managers.

Voquette makes finding, recording, and playing Internet media a much more manageable experience. —*Kiersten Conner-Sax*

