

## App Wrap-Up

Free downloads for travelers on the go

### GateGuru

Between flights at the airport and need a snack or want to hang out somewhere more appealing than a plastic-covered chair? This mighty guru app offers a comprehensive list of airport amenities designed for travelers seeking quick reviews and information. The app locates the highest-rated food options, best brewed coffee, gift shops, ATMs, and even in-airport salons. The searchable directories are available in 100 U.S. airports and in London and Canada. Available on: Android, iPhone/iPad

### Oanda Currency Converter

That custom surfboard sure would be a sweet souvenir but negotiating in Costa Rica “colones” the country’s currency, takes more time than it does to catch a wave in a swimming pool. Oanda touts consistently high marks for quick access and reliability. You can select either the percentage add-on to better predict the actual rate charged by your bank or credit card company or select Interbank rates. It can access info on 180 currencies and four metals. Available on: Android, BlackBerry, iPhone/iPad

### SitOrSquat

Sometimes you just gotta “go” no matter where you are in the world, whether it’s riding the subway or cycling urban streets of alien territory. The app maps out a plethora of restroom facilities located in larger cities of the U.S. and Europe. It even lists the “hours available” so you do not have to cross your legs more than once. Available on: Android, BlackBerry, iPhone/iPad



## More Women Planning Adventure Travel

Research has shown that women travelers are increasingly seeking out adventure travel. We predict 2012 will up the number of women in search of solo active excursions with recognized tour companies. So what are you waiting for? It’s time to plan your adventure getaway.

“Voluntourism” has gained momentum and popularity over the past few years, and this year is no different. Travel experts agree that “volunteer” vacations remain a top trend for 2012.

### Wildlife Volunteer Vacations

One aspect of this trend is an ever-increasing number of wildlife conservation programs helping to preserve endangered wild animals and their ecosystems in remote parts of the world.



Those who want to give back and also have an active vacation might wonder how to distinguish a credible operator from one that is overly commercial and only seeking to profit from this altruistic trend? Dr. Matthias Hammer—executive director of Biosphere Expeditions, a non-profit wildlife conservation organization—along with partners Born Free Foundation and Tourism Concern, offers these hints to help you choose a wildlife volunteering vacation. **BONUS:** These tips apply to both “volunteer vacations” and any type of organized tour or trip.



**What will you get out of it?** Be clear about what you want to get from the experience—training, self-development, an adventure—then check whether the organization is clear in communicating what’s on offer for you.

**Reputation, reputation, reputation.** Has the organization won awards or accolades, who are they associated with, what is their philosophy, do they write and publish their results, and what’s their safety record. Carefully vetted tour providers can be found at [greenloons.com](http://greenloons.com).

**Consider animal well-being.** Steer clear of organizations that encourage handling of captive wild animals for anything other than crucial veterinary or neo-natal surrogate care. If wild animals are handled, it should only be for essential research and conservation work, and the organization should follow strict animal welfare guidelines.

For the complete list of tips, visit [biosphere-expeditions.org/toptentips](http://biosphere-expeditions.org/toptentips).

### Athletic Volunteer Vacations

Plenty of people have signed up for active sports vacations over the years, but now there is a surge in active travelers that combine “making a difference” with travel near and far. Some of the most popular combinations have been volunteering to work at marathons, bike and ski races, and Special Olympics around the world.