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EXCLUSIVE FROM SEATTLE TECH DAYS: What Google Travel has that Expedia doesn't

When you plan a trip, many online travel companies are vying to be the platform you book through.

[Google](#) Travel managing director [Rob Torres](#), however, said his company has an edge over travel platforms including [Expedia's](#) Trivago. The secret: Google's expansive backend system.

"I don't know if you've ever tried Google Flight Search. You should. Google Flight Search, it's just – it's instantaneous," he said. "We can provide the speed. Trivago couldn't provide that speed. I think that speed is one thing that will give us the advantage."

Google (Nasdaq: GOOG) earlier this year launched Destinations, a feature within search that helps customers find cheap flights and hotels without going to a new website or smartphone application. Users can type in vacation keywords and Google will present flights, hotels and suggested itineraries.

Torres – a 10-year Google veteran who works out of the company's Seattle office – said Google Travel has an advantage over leaders in online booking, which include Bellevue-based Expedia (Nasdaq: EXPE), because it's supported by the software heavyweight's data capability, speed and mobile expertise. Google has enormous amounts of data at its fingertips and many Google customers willingly

hand over their data — such as calendar and email information — when they use Google's apps.

“Although we’ve been around travel for a long time, we’re obviously new to this space,” Torres said. “We’re really trying to innovate in this space and push others to innovate, certainly when it comes to mobile.”

Google decided to get into online travel because many of the most-queried products and services relate to the travel industry. Additionally, smartphone users have reached 2 billion globally and Torres said Google doesn’t believe any existing travel company is doing mobile justice.

Google Destinations launched in March and the company is continuing to explore opportunities in travel. Moving forward, one of Google’s strengths will be the data it collects as a larger platform.

“We know when you land. We also know what you did on your last trip and the trip before. Why shouldn't we be sending you travel recommendations?” Torres said [Thursday during Seattle Tech Days](#). “We know your calendar. Why aren’t we telling you when’s something is happening down the street?”