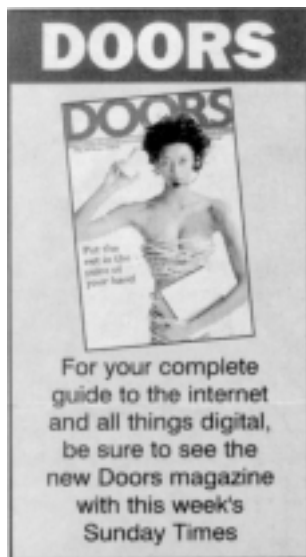




**MARK HODSON** turns up the sites that give you the inside track on the tourist industry. You'll never believe a brochure again...

**H**ow many travel websites are out there in cyberspace? Hundreds of thousands? Millions, maybe? And how many pages of information do they all contain? Tens of millions? Billions? It's a daunting thought, but there's no need to panic because the vast majority are irrelevant, unreliable, or both. A tiny proportion, though, are genuinely useful, publishing information that, without the net, we would probably never find. These are the sites worth tracking down: they enlighten and empower the consumer, cutting through the purple prose of the holiday brochure. Here are some of the best.



*'The Sunday Times',  
October 29, 2000*

**OAG GAZETTEER**  
[www.virgin.net/travel/resortfinder/index](http://www.virgin.net/travel/resortfinder/index)

The OAG Gazetteer is sometimes known as the "truth book", a warts-and-all guide to resorts around the world, traditionally kept by travel agents under their desks and rarely shown to the general public. The comments on some resorts are particularly caustic. Playa de las Americas in Tenerife, for instance, is described as being "popular with the British; also, sadly, with lowlives and drug peddlers". The contents of the book are published on Virgin's travel site.

**CRUISEOPINION**  
[www.cruiseopinion.com](http://www.cruiseopinion.com)

Cruising is confusing — all those ships look much the same. Many travel agents also struggle to tell one from another, which is why it's worth consulting an independent database such as this. Although American, the site contains more than 4,000 ship reviews, including all the main British lines, such as Cunard and P&O. There's a guide to each line, a summary of its strong and weak points and each ship is rated out of 100 in 42 categories, based on the views of visitors to the site. Exhaustive.

**HOLIDAYS UNCOVERED**  
[www.holidays-uncovered.com](http://www.holidays-uncovered.com)

Straight from the horse's mouth — this simple home-made site allows holidaymakers to post comments, both good and bad, about popular resorts and hotels. It's a fascinating insight into the British holidaymaker — "the beer was off ... watch out for bus drivers charging full price for toddlers ... no decent bars ... kids run amok until the early hours" — and, given time, it could grow into a mine of useful information.

**CHARTER AIRLINE DELAY STATISTICS**

[www.auc.org.uk/news/delay99.html](http://www.auc.org.uk/news/delay99.html)

Every year, a performance table appears in your newspaper showing the average delays of charter airlines. You read it, throw away the paper and forget about it. Then, when you want to book a holiday, you don't know where to find the information. Here it is, compiled by the Air Transport Users Group. The figures relate to last summer and are calculated using two methods: the proportion of flights more than an hour late, and the average delay in minutes. Among the big airlines, the best performer was Britannia; the worst, Air-tours International.

**THE THORN TREE**  
[www.lonelyplanet.com/thorn-tree](http://www.lonelyplanet.com/thorn-tree)

Say what you like about backpackers, but they do have a tremendous knowledge of obscure destinations around the world. A few years ago, they might have shared their hard-won wisdom around a campfire; today, they go to the Lonely Planet site and post it on the Thorn Tree, a giant message board. The subject categories are wide ranging, from staying healthy to using laptops; there is a women's section ("from tampons to crampons") and — of course — you can always find the address of that cheap hostel in Kathmandu.

**FLY IN THE SOUP**  
<http://flyinthesoup.com>

This is a site for restaurant staff, many of whom seem anxious to vent their frustrations at undertipping and arrogant customers, and to reveal the errant behaviour that goes on behind the kitchen doors. The site has recently been revamped in a typical victory of style over content, but many of the stories are worth reading, with categories such as "The worst thing I ever did to a customer". I suspect some of the most gross boasts have been censored, but there is still plenty here to put you off your lunch. You might never be rude in a restaurant again!

**BREEZENET'S GUIDE TO AIRPORT CAR RENTALS**  
[www.bnm.com](http://www.bnm.com)

The main purpose of Breezenet is to track down the cheapest car-hire deals at airports across America and Europe, a trick that it does rather well. But click around the site and you'll be presented with an easy-to-read explanation of how the car-hire business works, from drop-off charges to upgrades.

**TRAVEL HELPERS**  
[www.geocities.com/TheTropics/2442/database.html](http://www.geocities.com/TheTropics/2442/database.html)

The surest way to get the inside track on a strange city is to know someone who lives there, a friend who'll tell you which bars to visit and show you their favourite haunts. If you don't have that special person, the next best thing is a Travel Helper. This site puts travellers in contact with locals who are willing to answer e-mails and maybe even meet you for a drink. In Moscow, for instance, you can choose between Julia, who speaks English and will reply to e-mails, or Alexei, who will show you around at weekends, "preferably trips out of the city" to destinations several hundred miles outside Moscow. On second thoughts, I'm not sure I like the sound of Alexei.

**BRADMANS**  
[www.bradmans.com](http://www.bradmans.com)

So where do you turn if you don't get any joy from Julia and you don't like the sound of Alexei? Try Bradmans, a series of city guides aimed at business people but which is also handy for tourists, particularly in those out-of-the-way places. So, there is a 2,000-word essay on Moscow, with everything from a potted history to restaurant reviews.

But, because business people go just about everywhere these days, there are also reports on the sort of cities that normally only turn up in trivia questions: Ashgabat, Al Manamah and San'a. (The answers, by the way, are Turkmenistan — which, for some reason, is listed under eastern Europe — Bahrain and Yemen.)

# Eindexamen Engels havo 2002-I

havovwo.nl

---

*Lees bij de volgende vragen steeds eerst de opgave voordat je de bijbehorende tekst raadpleegt.*

## ■ Tekst 11 Trip-wired.com – industry secrets online

- Je hebt een waardeloze vakantie gehad.
- 1p 37  Wordt in deze tekst een website genoemd waar je je kritiek kwijt kunt op het hotel waar je hebt gelogeed? Zo ja, onder welk kopje?