Google unveils new updates to make trip planning easier for travelers

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Google Maps is launching new updates that are intended to make finding travel inspiration and local recommendations in your destination easier. Users will start seeing these lists of suggestions popping up in Google Maps in more than 40 cities across the U.S. and Canada this week. These updates will also be rolled out globally on Android and iOS mobile

platforms later this month.

With this trio of updates, users can discover curated lists of local recommendations from other users and esteemed websites, customize their own lists, and access key insights, making vacation planning a breeze and ensuring a seamless on-the-go experience.

To access the new features, simply search for a city in Google Maps and and swipe up to see curated lists of places from people who know the city inside and out. You'll also see lists from such reputable sources as Lonely Planet, The New York Times, and OpenTable.

And, when away from home, the question of where to eat is always top of mind. Now, whether you're a traveler or just want to find a trendy spot in town, you can use new restaurant lists created by Google Maps. These lists will spotlight the eateries people are showing interest in or rating highly on Maps at the time. Google has sorted restaurants into three separate lists based on various criteria, creating indices for trending, top-rated, and hidden gem locations.

The Trending list is updated weekly to spotlight places that experienced a recent spike in popularity on Maps, making it ideal for discovering the latest hot spots.

The Top list showcases the places that the Maps community has consistently shown love for. Use this list to find a neighborhood's longstanding favorites.

The Gems list is for places that are considered an area's best-kept secrets, highlighting great restaurants that still fly under the radar.

Creating Maps lists allows you to organize places you'd like to visit and places you've already been that you might wish to revisit. With the new

lists format, users will also be able to more easily arrange their selections for easy reference, as they can now choose the order in which places appear. Simply move them up or down in whatever order you prefer to have them displayed. Users can also link in content from their social media streams, such as their own reviews of a certain venue.

Similarly, to give users a good sense of each place at a glance, Google's AI pulls key insights to display from the Maps community. When you search a spot, you'll see select photos and reviews that encapsulate what patrons love about it. The AI function can even help you identify the name of a particular dish and display helpful information based on a restaurant's menu.

New design updates are also set to give Google Maps a fresh look, including a simplified home screen and new pin colors that make places on the map easier to find.

Trip-planning AI

Google has also just announced an update that's coming to its Search Generative Experience (SGE), which will enable users to create travel itineraries and compile trip ideas using AI. This means that Google will be taking on other companies that are already applying the generative AI's capabilities to help travelers plan their trips, such as Mindtrip and Layla.

To come up with its travel recommendations, Google's AI engine relies upon information from sites across the internet, as well as photos, reviews and other specifics users have submitted about any given place. Conversationally, users can ask the AI something like "plan me a five-day trip to New York City that focuses on entertainment" and receive a sample itinerary that includes local restaurants, attractions and points of interest. Once you've constructed your ideal itinerary, you can export it

to Gmail, or Google Docs or Maps.

This new capability is currently available only in the U.S. (in English) to those who are signed up for Google's Search Labs program, which invites users to experiment with early-phase Google Search functions. The company has not stated if or when this function will become more widely available. According to TechCrunch, Google is not only testing out new realms for using generative AI, it's also gathering data about consumers' travel purchasing intent, which would support its wider ad business.

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