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Amazon launches virtual tours and activities for destinations

By Kevin May (/Kevin-May) | September 29, 2020

Perhaps not the move some might have expected initially from **Amazon (<http://www.Amazon.com>)** - but the e-commerce giant is making another foray into the travel, tourism and hospitality industry.

Amazon Explore launched this week in a bid to capture an apparent demand in people going virtual to experience tours and activities in destinations.

The platform includes a sizable range of products ranging from virtual walking tours of cities and visiting landmarks to cooking courses and destination retail trips.

Users can select from three options: learning and creating, local shopping and culture and landmarks.

However, Explore is currently in beta mode and although the platform is open to all, virtual experiences are only available by "invitation only" - meaning users must make a request to the host of each experience.

Each session is estimated to take around 30 to 60 minutes and is handled through the usual Amazon checkout process.

Product is supplied by a range of partners including well-known tour and activity brand, Intrepid Urban Adventures.

The company's virtual tour of Prague will cost \$85 for a 60-minute session, for example.

Amazon is also looking for individuals to become suppliers of product in their destinations, essentially becoming two-sided marketplace that it is famed for having in countless other retail verticals.

The company has yet to respond to requests for comment.

The quiet unveiling of Explore comes 15 months after **Amazon launched a flight search and booking service for users in India (<https://www.phocuswire.com/Amazon-flights-india>)**, powered by domestic online travel agency, **Cleartrip (<http://www.cleartrip.com/>)**.

The integration works through the Amazon Pay section in the site, where members can select services ranging from utility bills to gift cards.

Carriers such as AirAsia, IndiGo, Air India and GoAir are shown in the search results.

In June this year **Amazon acquired autonomous vehicle technology company Zoox (<https://www.phocuswire.com/Amazon-buys-Zoox-autonomous-vehicle-technology>)** for an undisclosed fee (some reports suggested \$1 billion).

The company was six years old at the time of the deal and had created zero-emission, purpose-built vehicles for autonomous ride-hailing.

It is also almost five years to the day since **Amazon shut a previous travel-related experiment known as Amazon Destinations (<https://www.phocuswire.com/Amazon-Destinations-stops-selling-travel>)**.

After dabbling in something called Amazon Local a few years before, Destinations was an effort to sell a broader array of travel services besides hotels: "overnight tours," "guest houses," "cruises," and "airport shuttles."

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