

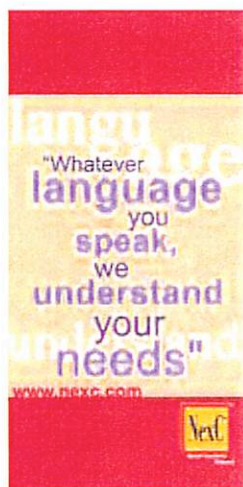
Anat Baron: Travel  
 Fanatic for Life

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## Anat Baron: Travel Fanatic for Life

Jeffrey Daroy  
 NexC Staff



Anat Baron

She's a self-confessed travel fanatic, someone for whom travel is "not just a love" but "a lifeline." Whether traveling on business or on vacation, she manages to have interesting experiences. She travels because, "the best bagels are in Montreal and my favorite Rizzoli's bookstore is in New York." Her well-known passion for travel made her a natural source of travel advice and help - ranging from where to go on a honeymoon to how to pack for a trip - for friends and colleagues. So, when Anat Baron decided to build a business on her passion for travel, she's really just extending the same service to a much bigger circle of friends.

Basically, that's the idea behind Baron's company called, what else, The Travel Fanatic.

"The idea was to provide one-stop shopping to the user," she says. "Basically, you could do everything from planning to booking to preparing and sharing your trip. There's no one online who provides this service. This will be linked to off-line activities a la Martha Stewart -- books, magazine, TV, radio and of course merchandise."

The Travel Fanatic already has a nifty Web site up and running. The site features a series of practical tips, called the 10 Step Program, for people who are traveling on business or leisure, and a Troubleshooting System that provides a set of guidelines on how to handle all sorts of travel problems from delayed flights to being overcharged when shopping.

But these are just the tip of the iceberg as far Baron's plans for the Travel Fanatic are concerned.

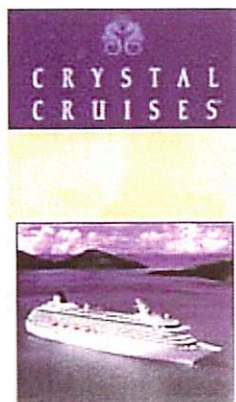
### Multimedia Company

"The company is more than the Web site," she says. "I appear on TV, radio and have been featured in major publications. The brand is about helping people travel better. It's all about incorporating travel into your [one's] everyday lifestyle."

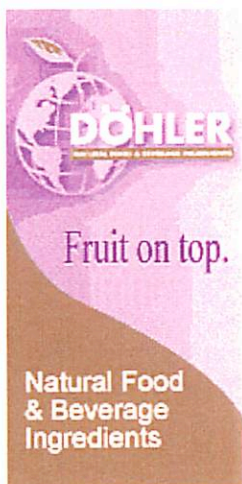
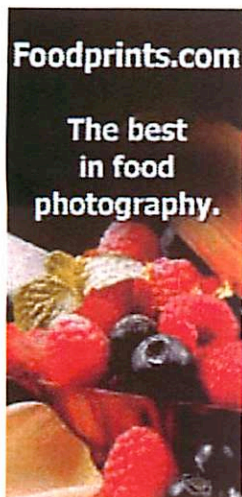
"The Web site is NOT the mainstay of the business but rather one component. The company is multimedia," she adds.

The company was all set for its launch in the fall of 2001. But that has changed following September 11.

"Things were going smoothly until Sept. 11. My business has been severely affected," Baron







says. "It delayed the financing. I'm now looking to summer 2002."

Such a delay, however, could well be just another side trip in Baron's life, which has been one interesting journey after another.

Born in Tel Aviv, Baron had a father who worked for El Al Israel Airlines. She spent part of her childhood in Tehran and Montreal. Her father left the airline business and opened a travel agency. And later on, he would be involved in several travel-related businesses.

What that meant for the young Anat Baron was travel-lots of it.

## Room Service

"I fell in love with airplanes early on. And then hotels. Room service was my all-time favorite. It was only natural that I pursue a career in the travel business," she reveals.



She did not take the direct route to that business, however. After studying at the prestigious [Cornell Hotel School](#), Baron went through several careers, constantly on the lookout for a new challenge. Before establishing the Travel Fanatic, Baron was a hotel company executive, the owner of a consulting business, and a movie producer.

"I have a low threshold for boredom and so I've looked for interesting careers. What they all have in common are people skills and deal making. In that order," she says.

Today, Baron is faced with a whole new challenge, as she is about to plunge into the travel business just when the face of travel has changed. She remains, as she says, "cautiously optimistic."

"I believe that travel will go from being a fundamental right to a privilege," Baron says. "People think twice about going on a trip now, whereas before Sept. 11th, it was second nature. People with families are taking new things into consideration: should they travel together, separately, have a will etc."

"Safety will continue to be a major issue. Flying especially will take a while to come back. I think that next summer things will start to return to 'normal.' The key will be for there to be an incident-free time span for people to get comfortable about letting travel be part of their lifestyle again."

In the meantime, Baron is taking comfort in something she knows well and loves dearly-traveling. From Christmas to the middle of January, she was going on a trip to Australia and New Zealand "for research, reflection and some R & R" while she's trying to "figure out Plan B."

Whatever plan B is, the Travel Fanatic has already made her mark. Just check out her Web site. If someone can be passionate enough to create what is essentially a tribute to the fun of traveling, then the rest of the world can have something to look forward to. ■

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# Business Trippin'

BY TAMARA NEELY

**Find deals on flights and accommodations and infuse some fun into your business travels.**

AIRPORT PHOTOS RAEFF MILES  
STYLING FIONA CURTIS

Business trips tend to be tense, expensive, erratic and quick. Many people travel for business, and many people dread it. And when you're getting your own business off the ground, spending your cash on travel expenses can be painful. But there are ways to make business trips cheaper, easier and more fun, whether you're on the road promoting your wares, hitting the conference scene or exploring global business opportunities. See if these ideas can take you away.

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which products do you always pack? flight attendants and frequent flyers tell all to siobhán mcgowan. photographed by andrew zuckerman

# all that you can't leave behind



"Chanel everything. The pigments used in Chanel products are probably the best. My Chanel makeup stays on all day. I don't have to fix anything except the lipstick. And I buy it all in Europe, because they use different ingredients there."  
*Laura, flight attendant*

"Foot fungal cream. I'm obsessed that I'm going to get athlete's foot or plantar warts from standing in all those strange hotel showers. Both waxed and unwaxed dental floss. Head & Shoulders shampoo, because airplanes always make my scalp dry. John Frieda's Frizz Ease tames the frizzies when I'm in Hong Kong. Imodium A-D in case of stomach upset. And condoms, although I never seem to have a reason to use them."  
*Jason, clothing designer*

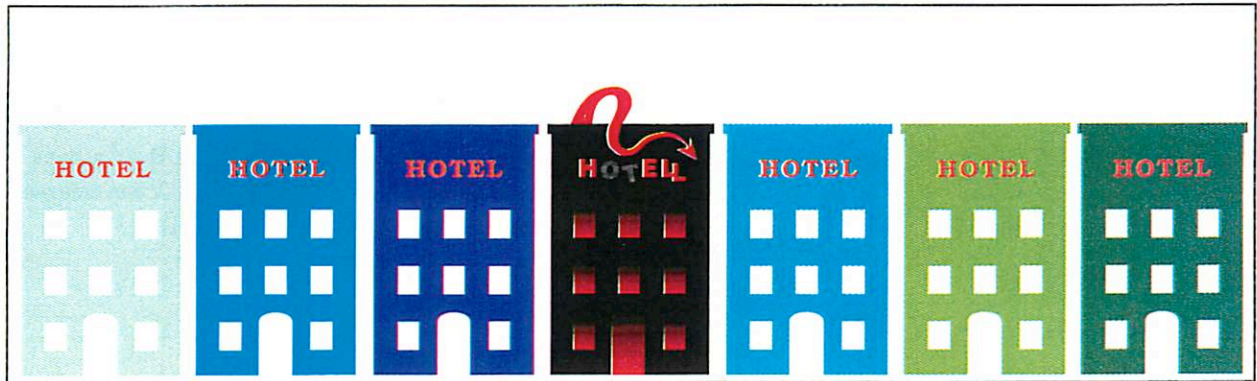
"For skincare, Neutrogena. L'Oréal mascara. Lots of lotion in the morning, and lots of water throughout the day."  
*Kristin, flight attendant*

"I follow the Ziploc bag method, and I separate everything into different categories. In one bag, I'll put shampoo, conditioner, shower gel—never soap, because the soap dish is too messy an endeavor—and a razor. The conditioner doubles as shaving cream. In a second bag, I'll pack cotton balls, Q-tips, Kiehl's Blue Astringent, and a small container of baking soda, which I use as a face scrub. The astringent is essential, because it gets that top layer of dirt that makes you feel really filmy. I also bring a tube of Kiehl's Lip Balm #1 and a little Evian spray can."  
*Trish, book editor*

"Anything labeled 'anti-wrinkle.' I alternate brands, but for me the best eye cream is Shiseido. And for cleansing, right now I'm using Aveda."  
*Linda, flight attendant*

"On a flight back to L.A. from New York, I was desperate to take off my makeup—I'd been on TV that morning and had rushed to make my plane—but the flight attendants had nothing remotely usable. In desperation, I asked for a tea bag and a cloth napkin. I put some lukewarm water on the tea bag and used it as makeup remover. It worked like a charm! It even took off my heavy mascara. That was an unusual situation. Normally, on flights, I spray rosewater on my face and apply Kiehl's hand lotion every three or four hours. On long flights, I remove my makeup with Pond's Cleansing and Makeup Remover Towelettes and put on eye and night cream before going to sleep. When I wake up, I wash my face with Cetaphil, then apply day cream, eye cream, and fresh makeup. I always brush my teeth before landing. And if I'm out of shaving cream, I use the hair conditioner at the hotel!"  
*Anat Baron, founder and CEO, Travel Fanatic*





Before she launched [www.travelfanatic.com](http://www.travelfanatic.com), a website dedicated to every travel-related need from how much to tip the bellman to when to take a stand against noisy rooms, Anat Baran spent a lot of years working behind the front desk of hotels, where she developed a lot of savvy. When we wanted some insider tips on how to have the best hotel experience possible, here's what she offered:

- \* "All rooms are not priced equally." Prices change all the time, warns Baran, and there's no guarantee you're not paying twice the rate of your neighbor. "Always call the hotel directly for the best rates and availability," she says, adding that when you are there, "ask for the room you reserved or a complimentary upgrade." Many times a hotel will gladly give you a better room if it would otherwise remain empty.

- \* If hotel staff enters your room when a "Do Not Disturb" sign is hung on the door, "they legally have violated your privacy," she says. "Ask to be compensated." It is not unheard of to get a discounted rate on your room, for example.

- \* Contrary to what you might assume, hotels will not automatically return items left behind in the room. "There were too many situations in which the returned articles belonged to someone other than the hotel guest's spouse," she says. (For the record, your unclaimed items usually go to the hotel maid who found them.)

- \* Forgot toothpaste or a razor? Before you head down to that overpriced lobby gift shop, call the concierge. Most hotels offer complimentary toiletries just for the asking. This, says Baran, includes the shampoo bottles and shower caps, "but not the towels or hairdryer." —Diana Friedman



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The  
**Travel  
Fanatic**

## **The Travel Fanatic Launches Preview Site**

(Los Angeles) -- In the aftermath of the worst travel season since the Exodus, travelers around the globe have resorted to unusual behavior, to say the least. Passengers have been known to give a standing ovation for a flight crew that arrives at the destination on the *day* printed on their ticket—let alone the hour. Curbside check-in agents are sporting Armani suits and driving Jaguars, reportedly from the increase in tips from desperate passengers.

Out of this madness has sprung The Travel Fanatic, an animated character based on a real woman, Anat Baron. The Travel Fanatic is the traveler's last stand against noisy hotel rooms, unnecessary rental car insurance and bad airline food.

The first offering of Anat's soon-to-be multimedia empire is the preview Web site: [www.travelfanatic.com](http://www.travelfanatic.com). The site features The Travel Fanatic's accumulated smarts including The 10 Step Program, a how-to-travel primer for business and vacation travelers. She'll tell you how to make the most of any trip—from the first phone call, to tipping the hotel doorman, to beating the post trip blues.

Since things can and do go wrong on the road, The Travel Fanatic's Troubleshooting System is a logical approach to resolving problems with commercial flights, hotels, rental cars, shopping and restaurants quickly with less hassle. If your own efforts don't work, you can Send in The Travel Fanatic to help you get satisfaction.

The Travel Fanatic is a multimedia travel and lifestyle company poised to revolutionize business and pleasure travel and enhance the entire travel experience.

Watch out world, here she comes!





The  
**Travel  
Fanatic**

## **The Travel Fanatic's 10 Essentials for Surviving Holiday Travel Disasters**

1. **Comfortable shoes.** For that hike to the next terminal or airport.
2. **A change of underwear.** In case you're stuck in Chicago while your luggage made it home.
3. **A cell phone with fully charged battery.** If your flight is delayed or cancelled, call the airline customer service number instead of standing in an endless line.
4. **Music.** Try either classical to soothe your nerves, or rap to clear out the seats around you so you can stretch out.
5. **"War and Peace."** The book. You can always use it as a footrest.
6. **Food and water.** Lines at the airport concessions are longer than at Toys R Us on Christmas Eve and you may not be able to leave the gate.
7. **A gift for the ticket agent.** Use your imagination (and be discreet).
8. **Busy work.** This is a great time to get those 2001 holiday cards out of the way, or get started on 2002.
9. **Sense of humor.** A crowded airport gate is a great place to try out your stand-up routine.
10. **Perspective.** You may be stuck spending Christmas Day at the airport, but, hey, you could be back home with nowhere to go.





## Surviving Holiday Travel: It Starts in Your Mind

Even for the most seasoned traveler, getting to your destination at this time of year can be a challenge. You pack your bags and get going just as you always do, but one *small* factor turns this simple routine into a major headache: the *people*. Sixty million of them. That's how many are sharing the air and roads with you during the month of December. Travel is always stressful, but this time of year, the usual snafus are magnified.

If you are part of this great migration – whether visiting relatives or on a winter vacation – here are some suggestions to increase your chances for a successful journey.

- **If you're planning to fly and you don't have a reservation by now,** there are a few things you can do to snag a flight to your destination without breaking the bank. Be flexible with your schedule: Consider flying on Christmas Day or the day after. Fly into an alternate airport: Burbank is less crowded than LAX.
- **Pack well.** Remember to plan for the climate at your destination. If you're a houseguest bring something to ensure you're invited back. The Travel Fanatic rule is *always* bring something for the kids and/or pets. Don't forget the grownups, but if you bring a gift for the beloved family dog, you'll be a hero. If you're celebrating the holidays away from home, pack the symbols that are meaningful to you: a small menorah or the heirloom mistletoe. Check out my general packing tips in Step 3 of the 10 Step Program.
- **Conquer the airport.** You'll find my basic guidelines for airport success in Step 5 of the 10 Step Program. In addition, if you're bringing your skis, golf clubs, bike or surfboard, remember that many large airports have a separate carousel for these bulky items. And always check in early so that you can be one of the first to board.
- **Keep the kids occupied.** Since school is out, expect restless children and stressed out parents – either in the mirror or sitting next to you. Do yourself and your fellow travelers a favor and keep your children busy or sedated. Reputable pediatricians will prescribe medication for babies and toddlers. For older children, flying is a great time to get those vacation homework assignments done. Your seatmates will be so impressed.



- **Make the most of it.** Don't focus on the negative aspects of holiday travel. You're not working, so each day can be an adventure. Be spontaneous. Change your plans at least once a day and if you're going home for the holidays, give your family the slip for a few hours to keep your sanity.

Not being an expert on the journey of the mind, The Travel Fanatic asked psychologist Dr. Beth Leedham to talk about dealing with family during the holiday travel season.

- **Think about your fantasies and expectations about the trip,** and assess whether they're realistic. "This is very important for any trip, but especially during emotionally-loaded holidays," says Dr. Leedham.
- **Let go a little.** "Use your time in transit to meditate on what this holiday is supposed to be about," suggests Dr. Leedham. "A little emotional preparation can help you get much more meaning out of the holiday." And it can help you to stop obsessing about how stupid Uncle Walter's puns are or how controlling your mother is.
- **Adopt the traveler's state of mind.** "For a lot of people, the most stressful part of the holidays is the family dynamic," says Dr. Leedham, a clinical psychologist. "They go home and somehow check their adult selves at the door. An hour later, and everyone's going nuts." One solution: pretend you're in a foreign country, especially if you're visiting your in-laws. "Observe the customs, go with the flow, and keep a traveler's journal," says Dr. Leedham. "It sounds funny, but it can really help you get some distance and recover your sense of humor."
- **Be gracious.** You'll be way more fun to be around, and you'll have a better time. If you're a houseguest, this means making sure you're a good one: make your bed, initiate conversations, pick up your towel, and for God's sake, leave on time.

Let's face it, no holiday is perfect. You can't control whether your flight leaves on time and you may be less than enchanted with that Big Mouth Billy Bass your brother-in-law gave you. Yet learning how to be a better traveler will help you survive the holiday season in good spirits.





The  
**Travel  
Fanatic**

## **Rants & Raves**

From The Travel Fanatic preview site  
[www.travelfanatic.com](http://www.travelfanatic.com)

### **Airline Cargo Speaks Up**

Call me travel-centric, but I believe that the reason "Meet the Parents" was the number one movie in America three weeks in a row was the airline scenes.

Ben Stiller loses his luggage and the wrong bag is returned to him. He is ignored by a ticket agent who taps endlessly on her keyboard. Sound familiar?

Is there a single person who has boarded an airliner in the past five years and NOT had a frustrating experience? I love to travel but, like you, I am sick of being treated like cargo.

Recently I was sitting at my gate at Los Angeles International Airport (LAX) waiting to board my flight to JFK in New York. The ground agent announced that the flight was delayed.

Everyone in the gate, more than a hundred people, groaned and reached for their cell phones. Were we stuck for three hours or 15 minutes?

Not one to hold back, I asked the agent why the flight was delayed. He told me there was an oil spill that had to be cleaned up before the plane could taxi. The delay would be 30 minutes. No big deal. I asked him to make an announcement; and he did. The flight was still late, but everyone was happier because they knew what was going on.

Information is power or, in this case, peace of mind. The Travel Fanatic site is dedicated to giving you the power by taking the mystique out of travel and showing you how to get what you want.

This is the debut of my Rants & Raves column, and is mild in comparison to what I have in mind for the future. The gloves will come off and I'll be naming names: a rant about the latest garment bag that won't zip properly or a rave about a sushi and sake bar I just discovered. I hope you'll be entertained as well as informed.

The Travel Fanatic





## The Travel Fanatic

## Meet The Travel Fanatic

From The Travel Fanatic preview site  
[www.travelfanatic.com](http://www.travelfanatic.com)

The real life person behind The Travel Fanatic is Anat Baron – a woman who has spent a lifetime perfecting the art of travel.

It's no wonder she was born with a travel gene. Her father was an airline industry executive and owned a travel agency. He kept the family in the air, traveling all over the world. When she struck out on her own, Anat chose the Cornell Hotel School, where she earned a master's degree. Moving on, she landed management positions at Four Seasons Hotels and Holiday Inn. Always restless, Anat packed her bags for Hollywood, where she became a successful movie producer and took note that being on location meant going back to her roots: finding the right hotel, the fabulous restaurant, the hip new bar. With The Travel Fanatic, she has come full circle to her first, and true love – travel.

We caught up with Anat at Los Angeles International Airport (LAX), where she was repacking the carry-on bag of a bewildered but grateful mother of 15-month-old triplets. At the same time, we discovered that Anat had arranged a free upgrade to first class, as far as possible away from this same mother.

### Why do you love to travel?

I have to travel because the best bagels are in Montreal and my favorite Rizzoli's bookstore is in New York. Travel is an essential part of my life. I love to escape from the real world, to discover a great place for jasmine sticky rice, to get lost in a strange city and buy fresh figs at the local grocery store. Even when I travel on business, I always end up having interesting experiences.

### Where did you get the idea for The Travel Fanatic?

For years, friends and relatives have come to me for travel advice. I recently sent some friends on a fabulous honeymoon to Barcelona and the Spanish Riviera; I helped a colleague close a deal by getting him a last minute reservation at Le Cirque 2000 in New York. I've just decided to expand my circle of friends a little.



**Why should I come to you for travel advice?**

Because I stay awake at night thinking about how to pack the perfect bag. I'm always looking for a secluded beach with a spectacular sunrise. To me travel is more than a journey to specific place, it's a way to live life fully.

**What is the secret of travel?**

Be as organized and fanatical as you can possibly be, and then let go and have a great time.

**Where is your next trip?**

I want to go island hopping in the Seychelles located smack in the middle of the Indian Ocean. I've heard that the coral reefs are spectacular. Being underwater is the ultimate escape -- no cell phones, pagers or e-mail!