

# Startup turns locals into virtual tour guides

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Frame grab of the iTourU from Apple's online App Store. Young Australian entrepreneur Andrew Dever used the South By Southwest Interactive festival in Texas to launch iTourU software that captures "living memories" by letting people with local insights become virtual tour guides on iPhone smartphones.

Young Australian entrepreneur Andrew Dever has gone from being mortified to being inspired by his dad's penchant for taking him and school friends on colorful tours of their home city.

Dever used the South By Southwest Interactive festival in Texas to launch iTourU software that captures "living memories" by letting people with local insights become virtual tour guides on [iPhone](#) smartphones.

"I founded iTourU because when I was a boy I would come home from boarding school with friends and dad would drive us around Canberra

for three hours giving them a tour," Dever told AFP on Tuesday.

"I would be embarrassed, convinced my friends would think me an idiot," he continued. "Years later, they all remember the stories that he told about those places."

The free iTourU application -- available at Apple's online App Store -- taps into the location-sensing capabilities of iPhones to map people's locations as they record descriptions or stories.

Guides can add pictures or text messages to tours, which become available to other iTourU users. Travelers are led along a route mapped on their smartphones, with content matched to where they are.

"Internally, we like to say it's the not so lonely planet," Dever said in a playful reference to the popular Lonely Planet line of travel books.

"It's like [YouTube](#) except instead of sharing video you are sharing audio tours."

Tours can be shared in posts at [social networking](#) hotspots [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#). Dever is working on a version of the application for smartphones running on Google-backed [Android](#) software and in Web browsers.

Along with capturing lore and history through the eyes of locals, iTourU "pocket tours" promise to be a boon to those who prefer the travel tips of friends or who can't break free to entertain visitors from out of town.

"We found that a lot of locals just love talking to the world about their city," Dever said. "They love to share their knowledge and pass it on to generation after generation."

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