

# Mobile apps offer last-minute deals

July 8 2014, by Stacy A. Anderson

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This May 31, 2014 image shows the interior of a space in Manhattan near Penn Station available for \$25 an hour from Breather, an app that rents private commercial spaces where travelers can "meet, work or rest" for 30 minutes to several hours at a time. Reservations can be made via the app on iPhone and Android devices, or online. The service is an alternative to crowded, noisy public spaces like cafes or train stations. (AP Photo/Stacy Anderson)

While new technology and mobile applications have made old-fashion

road trips easier, the thrill of spontaneity and surprise still remains. If travelers are flexible, apps can offer ease with last-minute deals, especially good for day trips and overnight stays.

Need a hotel room immediately? There's an [app](#) for that. Or for a quick turnaround— when you just need a space to rest for a few hours\_ there's an app for that too.

Here are three handy apps for mobile device users that I often use on weekend trips from Washington, D.C., to the Big Apple, which can be used for other destination cities.

## HOTELTONIGHT

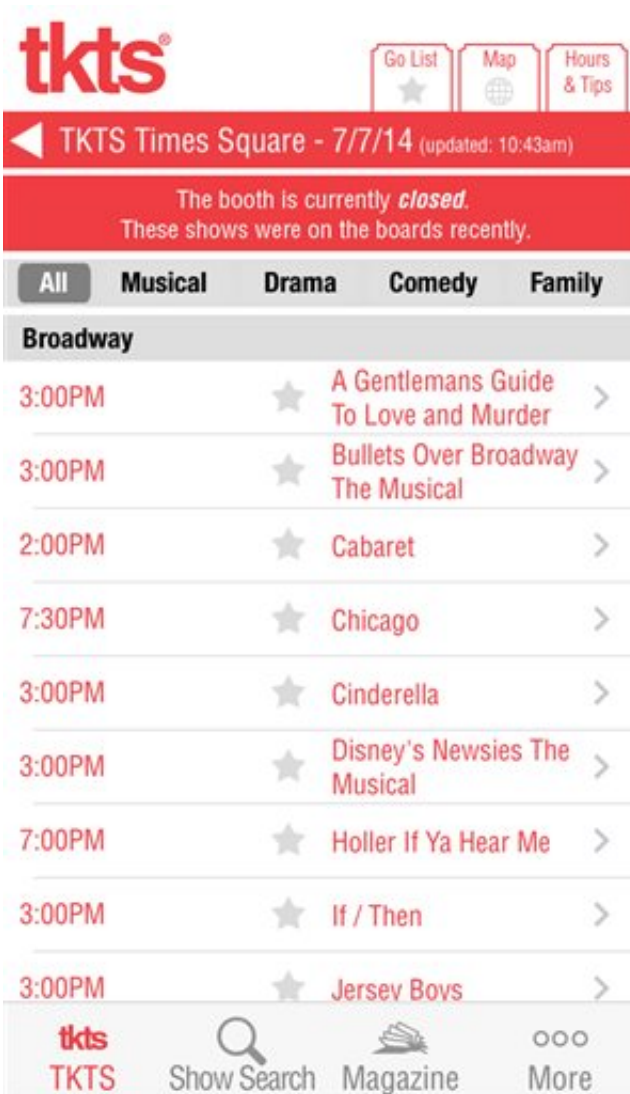
HotelTonight offers discounted rooms at more than 10,000 hotels in nearly 400 destination cities including Miami, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Chicago and Boston to international hotspots like London, Paris and Barcelona. Reservations are for the night of the day you select the discounted rate and can be booked up to five nights.

The app recently launched Express Check-in, which allows guests to immediately pick up their keys at the front desk without a lengthy process. This zip feature is only available for select hotels using the app on iPhones, and will roll out to Android users later this month.

Over a recent holiday weekend in New York— when locals often vacate the city and tourists take over— HotelTonight still offered substantial deals, especially for the early worm checking the app when new postings go live at 9 a.m. Rooms can be booked until 2 a.m.

For example, the Element by Westin in Times Square, a solid-rated Starwood Hotels and Resorts property, offered one king bed for \$129 on HotelTonight, compared to \$169 on its own website.

For a step up, the Soho House New York, a lux-rated hotel in the trendy Meatpacking District, posted a small room with a queen size bed for \$298 on the app, a nearly 15 percent savings compared to \$350 on its own website.



This image released by TKTS shows a screenshot from the TKTS app, which provides a list of which New York City live theater shows are offering discounted tickets for that night's performance. The app also lists other information including the show's description and monthly schedule, theater location, directions, closest subway stops and a link to purchase full-price tickets. (AP Photo/TKTS)

A perk of HotelTonight is that you can "look ahead" at other days later in the week to see the estimate price range for rooms. The app also notes major events in the city, such as conventions and parades, which may spike rates.

## BREATHER

If you've checked out of the hotel room already and don't depart until later in the day, or take a day trip and have some leisure down time, there may be a private space for relief in your city— or coming soon.

The Breather app launched in New York City earlier this year lets you check-in to a commercial space complete with a table and couch to "meet, work or rest" for 30 minutes to several hours at a time. Some rooms are available as early as 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. for \$25 an hour, and may accommodate up to 10 people. Reservations can be made via the app on iPhone and Android devices, or online.

Co-founder and CEO Julien Smith said Breather is a welcome alternative to loud, bustling coffee chains where travelers often fight for space and outlets.

"You're just constantly wondering around in cities that you don't know very well and you feel like you have no place to go," said Smith, who came up with the concept after frequently traveling for business and speaking engagements. "There's this huge scarcity of space going on in any major city of the world ... so, in a lot of places, people are just feeling that pain and when you don't have a lot of time, you don't mind paying for valuable time, or time that has what you want."

The 10 Breather locations in Manhattan span from Midtown near the

Rockefeller Center to Soho's shopping district. After having brunch with friends and a few hours to spare before catching a bus back home, I checked into a Breather room two blocks from Penn Station to duck out of the rain.

The Montreal-based app is all about a trendy, relaxing oasis, and it's in the details. The bright, airy room was equipped with the essentials, plus a white board, mini-book library on a wall rack, Tootsie Rolls on the coffee table and a yoga mat stowed in a corner.

Smith said Breather will add more rooms in New York to meet the growing demand for versatile uses of space such as business meetings, counseling sessions and acting rehearsals. Joining New York and Montreal, Breather expanded to San Francisco in June. Toronto, Boston and Seattle will soon follow in the third quarter.

## TKTS

New York is best known for big lights and live shows on Broadway, but that doesn't mean you have to pay hundreds for top-notch seats. The Theatre Development Fund has TKTS Discount Booths with locations in Times Square, South Street Seaport and downtown Brooklyn that sell Broadway and off-Broadway show tickets for 20 to 50 percent off.

Though discounted tickets must be purchased in person, a TKTS app lets customers see availability in real-time for evening shows that day and matinees (South Street and Brooklyn sites only), before reaching the cashier window or even getting in line. This saves you time and allows you to come up with a list of a few shows of interest, which TKTS recommends.

The app launched in December 2010, but became available to iPad users in April. The app also lists other helpful information including the

show's description and monthly schedule, theater location, directions, closest subway stops and— for the hard-pressed— a link to purchase full-price tickets.

After standing in line for about 10 minutes and deciding on my top three choices from the day's selection, I scored a half-off, front-row ticket for \$80 to see the Jazz Age-themed "After Midnight" starring Grammy-winning singer Fantasia.

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