

Metia and Rough Guides bring out the beauty of the world and the web with Microsoft Internet Explorer



Since the invention of photography, travellers have taken pictures to share their experiences and tell a unique story about their journeys. Now the latest web technology is helping Rough Guides readers do the same with geo-tagged images and social media.

Developed by Metia, The Rough Guide to the World is an online travel photography website, which uses the latest features of Microsoft Internet Explorer and integration with Rough Guides' content to capture and share authentic travel experiences with thousands of users. The objective of the site is to highlight Rough Guides commitment to unique travel experiences and build community among its readership.

200 content curated unique experiences from around the world

Thousands of users generated images of personal experiences

Integration with Flickr for photo-sharing geo-located images

Favourite experiences shared via Twitter and Facebook



Visitors to the site use an interactive compass to navigate a world map and select destinations based on their favourite activities from horse riding and cycling, to fine food and theatre. They can also build a top ten list of these experiences, drawn from the Rough Guides book, *Make the Most of Your Time on Earth*, and then share them with friends using Facebook, Twitter or email.

The site also showcases some of the new web technologies available in the latest version of Internet Explorer. The development team from Metia who created the Rough Guide to the World, took advantage of the latest programming language for the web, HTML5, to deliver sophisticated animations and other dynamic features that previously required plug-ins such as Flash.

Encourage and promote the sharing of experiences

Rough Guides is one of the leading travel content providers in the world. Well known for its 700 travel guides, as well as maps and phrase books, the Rough Guides brand is hugely popular with travellers of all ages, especially those who enjoy journeying off the beaten track.

In recent years, Rough Guides has acquired a strong reputation for digital content that complements its print inventory. More importantly, the company has also shown how a single content venture can be optimised successfully across multiple channels.



This means that it works closely with technology and digital content partners to remain at the forefront of the latest wave of online publishing.

Liz Statham, marketing and PR director at Rough Guides, says: “Rough Guides is an opinionated brand and our readers are just like us. They like and value the opinions of others, but they also want to project their own views. And online is a perfect environment to encourage and promote the sharing of experiences.”

The web is obviously central in this strategy and when Microsoft launched the latest version of its browser, Internet Explorer, Rough Guides saw the opportunity to take online content to a new level. Internet Explorer makes it easier to build interactive web pages that also run seamlessly on devices from smartphones to laptops. Put simply, it enables businesses to deliver consistent, immersive experiences to consumers wherever they are and across diverse devices.

Next Rough Guides needed to find a digital technology partner which could help them deliver this experience to consumers. The company selected Metia, a global digital marketing agency and Microsoft Gold Certified Partner. Metia’s technical credentials were strengthened by a deep understanding of end user behaviours when engaged in rich online experiences. Importantly, its user experience team had also helped deliver



projects for a range of consumer brands. This insight into consumer’s thinking helped craft a compelling user journey.

This blend of marketing, development and user experience resources played a critical role in Rough Guides’ decision. Liz Statham, marketing and PR director at Rough Guides, says: “We liked Metia instantly. They understood our brand straight away and like us we were prepared to explore how to deliver our content in innovative ways and have a bit of fun at the same time.”

Metia also provided content expertise that complemented Rough Guides’ own knowledge. Working together, teams from the two companies identified ‘*Make the Most of Your Time on Earth*’ as an ideal starting point for the project. This glossy, high-end travel book includes eye-catching photography and original descriptions for 1,000 memorable travel destinations. Together, the Metia and Rough Guides teams sought to translate this experience to the web, while making the most of all that HTML5 had to offer.

Called the Rough Guide to the World, the new site was designed to enable visitors to view and share photography from around the world. Taking a map of the world as its starting point the site dispensed with traditional vertical or horizontal menus. Peter Buckley, Digital Publisher, Rough Guides, says: “We wanted it to be less like a web site and more like an application that takes our content to the next level.”



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Visitors use a compass control to navigate an interactive map and select destinations based on their favourite activities from extreme sports to high art. They can also build a top ten list of their favourite experiences, drawn from the Rough Guides book, *Make the Most of Your Time on Earth*, and share them with friends using Facebook, Twitter or email.

Using Flickr, visitors were also able to contribute their own geo-tagged images to help build a photographic atlas of the world along with other members of the Rough Guide to the World community.

As a Microsoft Gold Certified Partner, Metia’s in-house software team had advance access to beta versions of Internet Explorer and its development environment. This enabled them to make the most of features such as, HTML5, to bring the new site to life and make it as interactive and engaging as possible.

The Metia user experience team also played a critical role, researching and then designing an immersive web site adapted to the end-user’s motivations and behaviours. At the same time they worked closely with the Metia development team to ensure that the final design could be built as rapidly as possible.

For the end-user, the ability to zoom in on experiences from all over the world and to share photography was an exciting departure from most static photo travel sites. “Rough Guides has always encouraged travellers to make the most of the world,” adds Liz Statham. “On or offline, the world is a beautiful place and we hope this Rough Guide to the World will encourage everyone to stop dreaming, start sharing and get packing!”

Steve Ellis, CEO, Metia, says: “We wanted the site to push the boundaries of what’s possible on the web. By taking advantage of the latest capabilities of HTML5, we are able to build online experiences that are closer to the applications that users run on user’s computers, rather than traditional Internet sites. It means that we can work with companies that already have great content and create compelling experiences that take the Internet to the next level.”

Microsoft was also impressed enough with the results to put *The Rough Guide to the World* at the centre at one of its Internet Explorer launch events. Site visitors were equally enthusiastic spending an average of more than five minutes on the site. The impressive dwell time was matched by a high percentage of click-throughs to the main Rough Guides web

site, demonstrating how engaging content can strengthen a brand’s relationship with new and existing consumers.

Visitors also made extensive use of the share features of the site, using email, Facebook and Twitter to exchange favourite travel experiences. This enabled Rough Guides to measure most popular destinations from ‘*Make the Most of Your Time on Earth*’. For example, the two most popular experiences juxtaposed the Icefields Parkway, a drive through Canada’s Rockies, and Durham Cathedral in the U.K.

The web site strengthened Rough Guides position as an innovative content provider that uses the latest technology to encourage travellers to choose exciting destinations and make the most of their journeys.

Peter Buckley concludes: “It has been genuinely exciting to work on this project at such a pivotal moment in the evolution of web functionality and design. New technologies are now allowing design creatives to define the way we use the Internet, rather than fitting design around clunky webpage structures. The web is becoming a very beautiful place to hang out.”