



# TRAVEL

Beyond The Obvious

## **Creating & Maintaining your Little Black Book**

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# In this lesson we'll cover

- How to find your recommendations for accommodations, tours, logistics, and food
- How to store your recommendations
- How to keep track of client feedback



This is an ongoing process, not something you sit down and create all at once. But, you can start!

# Your recommendations



Your personalized recommendations fall into 4 broad categories:

1. Accommodations
2. Activities / Tours
3. Logistics
4. Restaurants



But, your recommendations need to be much broader than just your own favorite places!

# Offer Personalized Recommendations

Within each category, you will need to make different recommendations for different travelers. As you do your research, think about sub-categories. For example:

- Average curious traveler
- Families
- VIP

Let's back up a second: As you find hotels, guides, drivers, and restaurants you want to add to your Little Black Book, where do you put them?



# Part I: Tools

- How to store your recommendations
- How to find them quickly when you need them
- How to keep recs updated



Store the minimum information needed. This might be just the home page URL of the business.

# Use browser bookmarks!

Create folders for destinations (cities or regions)

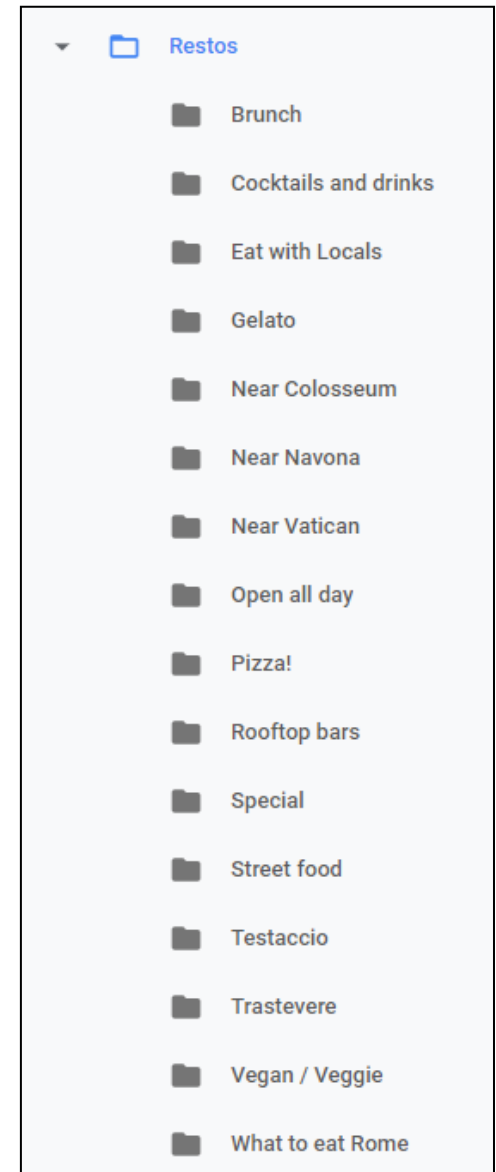
For each destination, include sub-categories of:

- Accommodations
- Activities & Tours
- Getting Around
- Restaurants & Food
- Off the beaten Track
- Museums & Monuments
- Family & kids
- Active

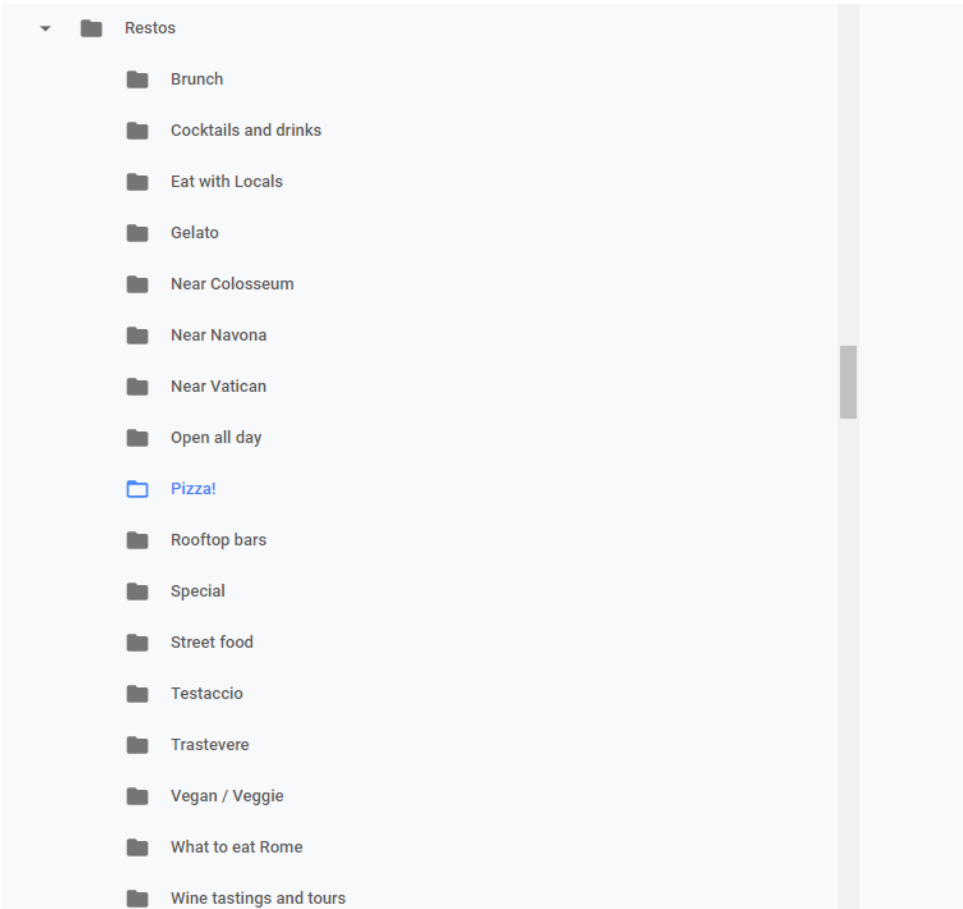
# Using browser bookmarks

## Example

- Italy Travel
  - Venice
  - Florence
  - Rome
    - Hotels
    - Guides & Tours
    - Getting Around
    - Restaurants



# Example of the Pizza folder



- Le MANI in PASTA WITH GABRIELE BONCI
- The Art of Roman Pizza: Learning From Italy's Famous Baker - Katie Parla - Life - The Atlantic
- 10 of the best pizza places in Rome | Travel | guardian.co.uk
- Rome pizza school: learning how to make Italy's favourite food - video | Travel | guardian.co.uk
- Da Remo - ranked as one of italy's 10 best by t&l
- t&l ranks as top 10 in Italy - Pizzeria Ai Marmi, Rome - Trastevere - Reviews, Phone Number & Photos - TripAdvisor
- beer and pizza in Rome rec by Gamb Rosso
- best pizza Roma acc to gambero rosso
- La Renella Panificio | Rome Trastevere | Just Go Italy
- Dar Poeta Trastevere - Pizzeria Ristorante Roma
- near Termini - Dalodi a Roma. La pizza e il gelato di Necci nel nuovo locale del Pigneto
- My five best pizzerias in Rome: 72 Ore tops the list
- La Fraschetta, Rome - Via di San Francesco a Ripa 134, Trastevere - Restaurant Reviews & Phone Number - TripAdvisor
- rec by katie parla - a bit south - Sbanco, Rome - Restaurant Reviews, Phone Number & Photos - TripAdvisor
- In Search of Rome's Holy Trinity: Pizza, Coffee, and Gelato - Corby Kummer - Life - The Atlantic
- beer and pizza in Rome rec by Gamb Rosso
- best pizza Roma acc to gambero rosso
- Pizzerias in Rome You Shouldn't Miss - The Roman Foodie

The image shows a browser window with a bookmark edit dialog open. The browser's address bar shows the URL <https://www.vogue.com/article/rome-restaurant-guide-under-the-radar-...>. The bookmark's name is "5 Restaurants in Rome Only Locals Know A". The "Folder" dropdown menu is open, showing a list of folders: Restos, Islands, Accom, Cooking classes, Tours and activities, Bookmarks bar, Other bookmarks, and a "Choose another folder..." option at the bottom. The background page is a Vogue article titled "5 Restaurants in Rome Only Locals Know About" under the "LIVING > FOOD" category. The page features a yellow dress image and the text "MOST SHARED" and "1 Writing the M Time".

# Tips for using browser bookmarks

- Modify the description with feedback
  - Client X loved
  - Client X hated
  - Rec by X
- Anytime you do deep dive research for a client, create a folder in your bookmarks
  - Example “New Year’s Eve in Berlin”
- Be picky about what you add to your bookmarks.
  - Use Pocket to read later
- If a site needs to be in two categories (for example tours and family), bookmark two different pages of the site

# Other ways to store your recs





# Other ways to store your recs

The screenshot shows the Booking.com interface for the Mezzatorre Hotel & Spa. On the left, there is a search sidebar with fields for destination (Ischia), check-in date (Saturday, June 22, 2019), check-out date (Wednesday, June 26, 2019), and number of guests (2 adults, 2 rooms). The main content area displays the hotel name, location, and a large photo of the hotel building overlooking the sea. A dropdown menu is open, listing various Italian regions with checkboxes. The 'Amalfi Coast' option is selected and highlighted in blue, with a link to 'Go to list'. Other regions listed include Veneto, Lake Iseo and Gard..., Matera, Emilia-Romagna, Mediterranean coast..., Clients did not li..., Dolomites, Langhe, Lake Maggiore, Lake Como, Florence, Sicily, Venice, Liguria, Sardinia, Puglia, Umbria, Tuscany, and Rome. The page also features a 'Reserve' button, a 'Saved!' button, and a 'Share your list' button.



Or, use a database, and include detailed history of client bookings and feedback. But, it requires a lot of effort and time to set up and maintain.



## Part II: Research



How to find your recs for accommodations, tours, logistics, food



# Accommodations

# Accommodations Research

Make sure you are familiar with your area's most famous hotels

- Subscribe to travel magazines that your clients might read such as Conde Nast Traveler
- For each area or city, make sure you are familiar with the top 10 hotels on TripAdvisor
- Subscribe to email newsletters from local tourism organizations
- Maybe: work with hotel groups, either marketing groups or ex Small Hotels of the World.



There are so many parameters for accommodations that the research *method* (discussed in the last lesson) is more important than your Little Black Book

# Accommodations: making the client rec

After using the hotel research advice in Lesson 4, do a quick google search to review recent reviews across many online review sites.

## [MEZZATORRE RESORT AND SPA - Prices & Reviews \(Isola d'Ischia ...](https://www.tripadvisor.com)

<https://www.tripadvisor.com> > ... > [Isola d'Ischia](#) > [Forio](#) > [Forio Hotels](#) ▼

★★★★★ Rating: 4.5 - 450 reviews - Price range: \$\$ (Based on Average Nightly Rates for a Standard Room from our Partners)

Travel feed: [Isola d'Ischia](#). ... [Via Mezza Torre 23, 80075 Forio, Isola d'Ischia, Italy](#). ... Response from [Dirlschia, Direttore generale at Mezzatorre Resort and Spa](#).

## [Mezzatorre Hotel & Spa, Ischia, Italy - Booking.com](https://www.booking.com)

<https://www.booking.com> > [Italy](#) > [Ischia Island](#) > [Ischia Hotels](#) > [Forio di Ischia](#)

★★★★★ Rating: 9.2/10 - 193 reviews

One of our top picks in [Ischia](#). Located on [Ischia](#), [Mezzatorre Resort](#) has an outdoor pool and sun terrace with views across to [Naples](#). ... Rooms at [Mezzatorre Resort and Spa](#) are air conditioned and have satellite TV and a mini-bar. ... The hotel's spa and wellness center offers a range of ...

## [Mezzatorre Resort & Spa - Ischia, Italy : The Leading Hotels of the World](https://www.lhw.com/hotel/mezzatorre-resort-spa-ischia-italy)

<https://www.lhw.com/hotel/mezzatorre-resort-spa-ischia-italy> ▼

[Mezzatorre Resort & Spa](#) Via [Mezzatorre 23, I-80075 Forio d'Ischia, Island of Ischia, Italy](#). ... This [Ischi hotel](#) proudly surveys the sparkling Bay of [Naples](#) and island of [Capri](#) beyond. ... Proudly surveying the seaside vistas from a rocky headland is the [Mezzatorre Resort & Spa](#).

[Back to top](#) · [Property Overview](#) · [Highlights](#) · [Rooms](#)

## [Review: Mezzatorre Resort & Spa \(Ischia Island, Italy\)](https://theluxurytravelexpert.com)

<https://theluxurytravelexpert.com> > [Luxury hotels reviews](#) ▼

Mar 14, 2018 - [Mezzatorre Resort & Spa](#) features in my top 10 list of the best luxury hotels on [Capri](#), [Ischia](#), and the [Amalfi Coast](#). In this review (more info ...

## [Mezza Money Mezzatorre - Review of Mezzatorre Resort and Spa ...](https://www.tripadvisor.co.za)

<https://www.tripadvisor.co.za> > ... > [Forio](#) > [Forio Hotels](#) > [Mezzatorre Resort and Spa](#) ▼

★★★★★ Rating: 5 - Review by a TripAdvisor user - Price range: R 4 076 - R 51 428 (Based on Average Rates for a Standard Room)

[Mezzatorre Resort and Spa: Mezza Money Mezzatorre](#) - See 450 traveller ... Province of [Naples](#) · [Isola d'Ischia](#) · [Forio](#) · [Forio Hotels](#) · [Mezzatorre Resort and Spa](#).

## [Mezzatorre Resort and Spa - Forio | Oyster.com Review - Oyster Hotel ...](https://www.oyster.com/campania/hotels/mezzatorre-resort-and-spa/)

<https://www.oyster.com/campania/hotels/mezzatorre-resort-and-spa/> ▼

★★★★★ Rating: 4 - Review by Oyster.com Investigators - Price range: \$163 (Based on average rates)

Set on a sprawling stretch of rocky parkland overlooking the sea, [Mezzatorre Resort & Spa](#) is one of the most luxurious hotels on the island of [Ischia](#). At the heart ...

## [Mezzatorre Resort And Spa from \\$221 \(\\$313\). Ischia Hotels ...](https://www.kayak.com)

<https://www.kayak.com> > [Hotels](#) > [Italy](#) > [Campania](#) > [Ischia](#) ▼

★★★★★ Rating: 9.1/10 - 319 reviews - Price range: Latest prices for hotel starting at \$221 per night (Save up to 25%)

Compare prices and find the best deal for the [Mezzatorre Resort And Spa in Ischia \(Campania\)](#) on KAYAK. Rates from \$221. Save 25% or more on Hotels with ...



For accommodations, you can rely on online reviews rather than relationships or 'insider' knowledge



# Tours & Guides



When you are physically in your destination, do not spend your time trying to personally visit or “check out” hotels or restaurants.

Instead, spend your time with local guides!

# Tours & Guides: the secret sauce

- An excellent private guide can be a highlight of a trip
- Travelers feel like they have connected to the locals
- Guides take the pressure off the “must-sees” with a personalized visit to main sights
- I recommend focusing on private guides and small group tours when you build your recs
- Spend the most time on this piece

Private guides are the people who are going to be taking care of your travelers on the road. They will be the face of “the local”

# Tours & Guides: online resources

Research small group tours and guides for your bookmarks online:

- Tripadvisor
- Get Your Guide
- Tours by Locals
- Viator
- Klook Travel (if in your area)
- Musement (if in your area)
- Facebook (join a travel group for your area!)
- WithLocals
- BonAppetour



# Tours & Guides: tips for vetting them

After you have a list of guides that look good, how do you decide which ones to add to your LBB?

- Read online reviews and focus on guides that have MANY positive reviews
- Google them, follow Facebook page, Instagram
- Connect to them on LinkedIn
- Sign up for their email newsletter
- Communicate with them **in English!** You want to understand how they interact with your clients.
- If relevant, ask about their license
- Goal: narrow down to a small number of excellent local guides per city or area

# Tours & Guides: your homework

Start finding and bookmarking local guides for your destination's major cities.

For each city, find a guide or small group tour that you might recommend for:

1. A general audience. Someone who wants the basics. A 2-3 hour tour for the curious traveler who doesn't necessarily want to go in-depth.
2. A family with kids.
3. A VIP tour. Behind the scenes or special access
4. An in-depth tour.

# Tours & Guides: client conversation

Remember, you are already the expert! Guide the client with options you *already* have in your LBB.



# Tips for interacting with guides

- ❑ Remember, the guide is running a small business. Help them be successful.
- ❑ Send them your booking request well in advance
- ❑ Inform yourself about their tour offerings so that you can give the best advice to the client
- ❑ Be clear about the meeting point, the payment amount and payment method, and any deposit needed
- ❑ Confirm with the guide a week or two in advance
- ❑ Respect them as a business owner and be easy to work with. Remember you want to be sending them clients for years.



Guides are accustomed to giving travel agents commissions. I tell my guides:

“Do a good job for my travelers and I will keep sending you business. No commissions needed.”

# Logistics



# Logistics

As you do research for a client, bookmark the following:

- Local train ticket booking or research sites
- Local ferry schedules
- Local bus schedules if relevant
- Car rental sites
  - I recommend AutoEurope if relevant to your region
- Local drivers
- Check [Rome2Rio.com](http://Rome2Rio.com)



# Logistics: tips re drivers

Private drivers make clients nervous!

- For airport transfers, if you have no suggestions, book via the hotel. Downside: expensive.
- Ask private guides to organize the driver. You get someone they work with. Get the driver info to bookmark for next time.
- Search and connect on LinkedIn
- Look for driver-guides if relevant in your destination
- If relevant, make sure driver is licensed
- Speak to the driver in English!



# Food



# Restaurants & Food: Research

Since food is often a major component of a trip, it's worth setting up your bookmarks in advance for all major cities.

- Tripadvisor
- Chowhound
- Yelp
- San Pellegrino World's Best Restaurants list
- Gourmet magazine
- Local famous chefs or food writers
- Michelin Guides
- Ask your local guides!



Keep lists of not only where to eat, but what to eat

Subscribe to local food blogs, by both  
locals and expats

# Restaurants & Food: Research Checklist

For each major destination, create sub-categories of bookmarks in your food & restaurants folder:

- Vegetarian
- Vegan
- Near famous monuments
- With kids
- Cocktails
- Hole in the wall / where the locals eat
- Fancy dinner / special occasion
- Cater to gluten free
- With a view



Remember that you are recommending restaurants that *your clients* will like, which may not be the same as what the locals like

# Tips for recommending restaurants

- Always (always!) clock the distance from the client's hotel to the restaurant. Very few travelers want to go across town to dinner after a busy day.
- Balance dinners across the trip so that the client doesn't have 2 or 3 fancy dinners in a row
- Set client expectations about levels of service, tipping, service charges, and other local customs
- Recommend the google translate camera app so that an English menu is not needed
- If client wants to discover their own restaurants, make a reservation on just the first night so that they don't get stuck.

Remember, the goal of your little black book is to *quickly* pull *personalized* recommendations for your client, after they have told you about their preferences.



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