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KANGO ANNOUNCES SERIES A FUNDING AND PRIVATE BETA STATUS

Travel Search and Discovery Application Announces \$4 Million in Funding from Shasta Ventures, Invites Consumers for a Sneak Peak at Personalized Travel Recommendations in Action

PALO ALTO, Calif. - December 18, 2007 - Travelers can now create a more satisfying vacation experience thanks to [Kango](#), a search and discovery application that aggregates and organizes the myriad of the internet's travel community and review sites into one place. The new venture, founded by Yen Lee, former general manager of Yahoo! Travel, today announced it received a Series A round of funding of \$4 million from Shasta Ventures earlier this year, and the opening of the site to its first beta users.

Kango addresses the problem of how travel research is a labor intensive, hit-or-miss exercise. Today, if a traveler knows where they want to go, they visit an online booking engine. However, if they want help about where to go and what to do, they are forced to hunt through dozens of disparate sites to glean bits of information they need for travel planning, often resulting in a time-intensive and frustrating experience.

According to a 2006 survey commissioned by MSN and conducted by Harris Interactive®, approximately three-quarters of U.S. adult respondents who have ever taken a vacation say they visit three or more Web sites when researching and/or booking their vacation plans. "The fact that three out of four vacationers spread their online research across multiple Web sites—with some visiting 10 or more—points to the huge timesaving benefits that a truly full-featured online travel planning site can deliver," said Jim Quilty, vice president of travel and tourism at Harris Interactive.

As a [travel review aggregator](#), Kango has collected and analyzed more than 20 million traveler opinions from more than 1,000 sites across the Web. The service uses natural language analysis and travel-specific term mapping to deliver reliable, relevant recommendations based on consumers' exact requirements and preferences. This means users can now include subjective criteria like 'romantic' or 'relaxing', or objective criteria like price and 'internet access' and get relevant results. For instance, Kango users looking for a [romantic getaway in San Francisco](#) will get different hotel and activity results than those looking a [family friendly vacation in San Francisco](#). Kango also understands consumers' intent regardless of the terminology they use, so 'good for kids' is interpreted the same way as 'child friendly' or 'family vacation'. The result is a travel search application that helps travelers discover new travel choices and make better decisions.

Industry analysts believe that travel today needs to improve its online shopping experience. "Existing booking engines are based on technology built to sell airline tickets in the 1960s, and aren't flexible enough to help consumers find more than price and availability. Web search engines' keyword approach is flawed for unstructured content and when consumers shop based on desired experiences," said Paul Keung, search, ecommerce and travel analyst for CIBC World Markets. "Kango is a natural evolution for online travel because travelers are starved for better search and discovery tools and for comprehensive, trustworthy and consistent information and recommendations. When travel moved online, consumers found it more efficient to book chain hotels and flights on travel agencies like Expedia. Then community and review sites like TripAdvisor made it possible for consumers to add and browse hotel reviews. Kango enables consumers to search hotel, activity, and destination reviews from all over the web so consumers can decide what to book.



"We are excited about Kango because it has a [team of proven leaders](#) with a solution to an acute consumer problem," said Tod Francis, managing director with Shasta Ventures, who has backed companies solving consumer-focused challenges such as Blue Nile, BabyCenter, Mint, and Wedding Channel. "Kango offers a unique combination of semantic and social search technology that is complementary to the travel industry. It will help booking sites get more qualified leads, travel communities and publishers to get more traffic, and advertisers to target based on experience, rather than price. Google organizes the universe of travel information for everyone; Kango will organize the universe of travel information for you."

"We started Kango to help you make better, more informed travel decisions whether you are looking for a [Yosemite family vacation](#) or a [romantic getaway in Boston](#)," said Lee. "Kango is committed to being a comprehensive search application that delivers the head and the tail of travel from five star hotels to non-commercial results like [beaches](#) and [parks](#). We want to help you find the right trip so you can make the most of your precious vacation time."

Initial beta users will be able to use Kango to search for romantic or family-friendly lodging and things to do in California and Hawaii. Results are based on tags and their weightings that have been extracted from the aggregated travel opinions (*e.g. based on 86 opinions from 7 sites, the [Spindrift Inn](#) has a relevancy score of 84% for romantic getaways*) and a consumer-guided filtering process to deliver fewer, more relevant results. All Kango search results are organized by their relevancy and are not altered based on paid advertisers or sponsored results.

Kango's management team has extensive experience in travel, search and customer acquisition. Lee has more than 12 years of online travel and search entrepreneurial experience starting as a co-founder of the CitySearch San Francisco office and helped grow the overall travel category at Yahoo! to approximately \$300 million in annual revenue. Dr. Huanjin Chen is Kango's search architect, a role he had previously at eBay, and Dr. Boris Galitsky is Kango's natural language scientist with more than 70 patents and publications. Elliott Ng is the company's vice president of marketing. Previously Ng founded two companies, Loyalty Matrix and Netcentives, where he launched the largest online loyalty program backed by frequent flyer miles. Ng most recently ran web marketing for Intuit QuickBooks.

To sign up to be a private beta user and experience personalized travel search first-hand, simply go to www.kango.com.

About Kango

Founded in 2006, Kango is a travel search and discovery engine that allows travelers to make informed decisions about where to go, where to stay and what to do. Kango uses semantic and natural language analysis to extract meta-tags from more than 20 million traveler reviews, ratings, and blogs from all over the Web to return unbiased, personalized recommendations based on travelers' exact requirements and preferences. Kango is headquartered in Palo Alto, California with global engineering teams. More information can be found at www.kango.com.

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