

"WHAT IS USE-IT?"



TOURIST INFO FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

THE HISTORY OF USE-IT

WHAT USE-IT DOES TODAY

WHAT MAKES USE-IT DIFFERENT

HOW IS THE NETWORK ORGANIZED

WHY JOIN THE NETWORK

HOW TO JOIN THE NETWORK

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WHAT IS USE-IT? // // // // //

TOURIST INFO FOR YOUNG PEOPLE	4
THE HISTORY OF USE-IT	6
WHAT USE-IT DOES TODAY	8
WHAT MAKES USE-IT DIFFERENT	10
HOW IS THE NETWORK ORGANIZED	12
WHY JOIN THE NETWORK.....	14
HOW TO JOIN THE NETWORK.....	16
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS	18

TOURIST INFO FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

YES, FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

USE-IT is tourist info for young people. Young travellers have different needs, so they need different tourist info. "Where are the free concerts? I only have time for one museum, so: which one? Do girls also pay drinks around here? I want a club without tourists - where do you guys go?"

With maps and budget guides, websites and information desks, USE-IT caters for young travellers in a growing number of European cities.

The bottom line is that USE-IT thinks beyond just tourism: USE-IT makes young people break out of the tourist bubble to meet their local counterparts and discover the REAL city actively.

We are not talking about a small target group, but about 20% of all individual travellers. This crowd needs special attention: it's called USE-IT.

A EUROPEAN NETWORK

USE-IT exists in different cities in Europe as a quality label for young tourist info. USE-IT Oslo, Rotterdam and Brussels have an info desk for young travellers, publish free maps or guidebooks, and run their own website. Others (like USE-IT Warsaw, Dresden and Ljubljana) make USE-IT publications but don't run an info desk. Every USE-IT initiative follows the guidelines in a USE-IT charter, but the subsidies always come from local governments. That explains why some USE-ITs are bigger than others, but they all share the same no-nonsense philosophy.

MADE BY LOCALS

Suppose: a foreign friend comes over to visit you. At breakfast, on a scrap of paper, you draw a rough outline of the city, with a few crosses:

"First, go the market here, then have coffee there - the view is fantastic, I promise! Then, well it's not far away anyway: visit the Photo Museum here. At 7 o'clock we'll meet here for a drink. Around the corner, there

is a super place for Norwegian sheep stew: you simply must have eaten that at least once.”

On this little map, you might also draw a couple of street names with crosses for the locations, perhaps a tram line, a cash machine ... That is really what USE-IT essentially is: the no-nonsense friend you really needed in this town, but didn't yet have.

USE-IT works exclusively with locals to ensure that the information given is a direct hit with the target-group and is always up-to-date.

FREE! FREE! FREE!

All USE-IT city guides and maps are given away for free. It's as simple as that. USE-IT believes in the stimulation of mobility and active participation of young people, so at least they need FREE information to cover their basic needs when travelling.

NOT FOR PROFIT

USE-IT is not for profit. Museums, bars, clubs, shops or restaurants don't pay to be included in the USE-IT publications, there are no commercial banners on the websites, and at the info-desks coffee and internet are usually free of charge.

The USE-IT staff, the freelance editors, the rent of the info-desk space and the printing costs are all paid for by subsidies.

ALWAYS UP-TO-DATE

As far as possible, every USE-IT publication in every USE-IT city is updated every year.

MORE THAN TOURISM

USE-IT has principles. All too often, tourism is just about beating money out of pockets and making people book as many nights in hotels as possible. USE-IT, however, fundamentally believes in youth mobility, participation, open-minded contact with peer groups and - in the end - the empowerment of young people. All these principles are written in stone in the USE-IT charter (see www.use-it.info). Meeting people in other countries and learning about their culture, will not only have a positive influence on personal development, but will also enlarge understanding of different cultures and tolerance to other opinions and ways of living.

As irony wants it, USE-IT is not for profit, but by pure quality it does generate profit. A young happy visitor will come back one day with the family to spend even more. So in the end, everybody wins.

THE HISTORY OF USE-IT

COPENHAGEN, 1971

The first USE-IT was founded in 1971, in Copenhagen. The Danish capital, that year, was swarming with beautiful people: hippie travellers (drifters) from all over the world, who slept wherever they found a place: in parks, on benches... Mayor Andersen decided something should be done about it.

Being a liberal type, he had begun to enjoy the vibrancy of the city, with its added spice of young foreign visitors in their bright clothes and bare feet. But this was not something he openly admitted to his friends, many of whom were tired of clambering over sleeping bags, and tripping over hipsters who appeared to wander aimlessly and confused around town.

Old military barracks were opened up for the army of drifters. In them, Sleep-ins were established following an Amsterdam model. Their purpose was to offer cheap and legal accommodation, at lower prices than Youth Hostels. Part of these Sleep-ins was an information desk, which gave an answer to three main questions:

WHERE TO SLEEP?
WHERE TO EAT?
WHERE TO MEET OTHER PEOPLE?

The information service was dubbed USE-IT. This is how they presented themselves:

“USE-IT is a friendly, information-gathering centre - a place to meet, relax, exchange ideas, find a cheap place to sleep and hear about all the city has to offer to those, like you, on a low budget.”

1989-2002: TWO MORE

In Oslo (Norway) a USE-IT was founded in 1989. Since then, it publishes the youth tourism guide ‘Streetwise’:

“By far the best budget guide to Norway Capital - as long as you keep it close, you’re bound to discover the true nature of Oslo and its inhabitants.”

1997 saw the start of USE-IT Rotterdam. At first this USE-IT was, apart from a tourist office, also an employment project for underprivileged youths, within

the Youth Information Point (JIP). Today, JIP and USE-IT work separately, with their own front-office, though both are part of the Stichting Jong Rotterdam. USE-IT Rotterdam also has its own budget guide: 'Simply the best'.

2002-2007: USE-IT IN BELGIUM AND EUROPEAN EXPANSION

In 2002 USE-IT was established in Belgium. Ghent was the starting point, but soon budget guides were made for Antwerp, Bruges, Brussels, Leuven and Mechelen. USE-IT considers all these cities as areas of one metropolis.

Also since 2002, all USE-IT initiatives meet on a yearly basis. In 2003, the first version of the European USE-IT charter was approved at the annual meeting in Rotterdam. It was revised in Oslo in 2004, and in February 2008 the current version was approved (see www.use-it.info).

Late 2006, the first publication of USE-IT Maribor (Slovenia) appeared, and in the summer of 2007, a USE-IT Map of Malmö (Sweden) and a USE-IT Map of Ljubljana (Slovenia) appeared.

2008: FOUNDATION OF USE-IT EUROPE

Beginning or existing initiatives that want to sail under the USE-IT flag, have been coached since 2008 by the new international association USE-IT EUROPE. This coaching

bears on content (text and layout) as well as on structural assistance (help with seeking local subsidies).

2008-2010: MOVING FASTER

In 2008, a new map of Copenhagen was prepared and finished with a local crew, assisted by members from the USE-IT Europe network, as was the first edition of the Map of Warsaw. In 2009, Dresden joined the network with the Map of Dresden. Meanwhile, all the existing member cities made their new yearly editions.

At the time of writing (June 2009), there are requests from Porto (Portugal) and Budapest (Hungary) for example. By the end of 2010, the USE-IT network will count more than 10 USE-IT cities with at least one USE-IT publication.

WHAT USE-IT DOES TODAY

FREE MAPS AND CITY GUIDES

Although USE-IT publications can look very different (sometimes a city map, sometimes a guidebook that fits in your backpack), they are all written in easy English, updated every year and FREE. Every publication starts from a specific target group with specific needs. Young visitors always want a mix of three types of info.

PRACTICAL TOURIST INFO

How to get there, where to sleep, how to get around, how to get away.

LOCAL TIPS

What are the popular drinks? How many kisses do you give? Where can I eat with the locals?

CITY INFO

What to visit, where to eat, where to go out, where to find authentic souvenirs (not the tourist rip-offs). Of course, these categories seem rather evident. How does USE-IT make final decisions on what to include and what not to include? How does USE-IT make the difference with other tourist publications? Here, the

organization crawls into the head of somebody who comes to the city for the first time. Some questions to ask yourself are:

- Is it unique?
- Does every local know it?
- Is it cheap and central?
- Is it really better than another similar thing in town?
- Is it a place that you would never notice if nobody told you?
- Is it promising to be a big hit in the following year?
- Is it the best spot for a special audience (vegetarians, gay girls, metal freaks,...)?
- If I was an alien on a worldtrip, would I still be surprised by this place?

IF THE ANSWER TO ONE OR MORE OF THESE QUESTIONS IS YES, THEN USE-IT WILL PROBABLY SELECT IT.

WEBSITES

USE-IT websites contain the same info as the publications, with a stress on the most urgent info before departure (How to get there and where to sleep?) and daily information (Is there a festival this weekend? What's the weather like?) Not every USE-IT runs an extensive website, but everybody offers at least free-to-download versions of the yearly publications.

Examples:

www.use-it.nl

www.use-it.no

www.use-it.be

www.use-it-warsaw.pl

INFO DESKS

USE-IT Oslo, Rotterdam and Brussels also run a full USE-IT info desk. The young staff and (international) volunteers give up-to-date info of what's on today. The approach is more personal than in a regular tourist office, and the desk becomes a meeting points for young travellers to chat and exchange travel experiences. People who walk in separately often walk out together. In Brussels, for example, 100 visitors per day are no exception. They come for free internet, free coffee, free city maps, and tend to stick around much longer than in a regular 'sell-them-a-map-and-they're-gone' tourist office.

MAKING THE NETWORK GROW

As the European network is growing larger, more cities want to jump on the USE-IT train. As a principle, every USE-IT initiative has to be run by locals, but once a local has taken the initiative, the existing USE-IT Europe network does help with practical support on three levels:

HELP WITH RESEARCH

USE-IT has an easy-to-use online tool to start making a map of a city, with different colours for bars, monuments, restaurants, etc. This helps to collect information in a practical way that easily flows into a layout later.

HELP WITH FINDING MONEY

City or government officials need to see examples - for this an existing USE-IT member can come to the city and present the network and the possible advantages for the city.

HELP WITH THE LAYOUT

USE-IT can help to make a first draft of a new USE-IT publication. A map or a guidebook? How big? Where to put texts and images? USE-IT will help the local layouter with any specific problem that turns up during the graphical process.

TOURIST INFO FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

THE HISTORY OF USE-IT

WHAT USE-IT DOES TODAY

WHAT MAKES USE-IT DIFFERENT

WHAT MAKES USE-IT DIFFERENT

NOT SOMETHING FOR EVERYBODY

USE-IT works for a specific target group of young people, and this is reflected in specific choices when it comes to content too. For example, the Map of Bruges does not include parkings (because young travellers mostly come by plane and train), shows hostels instead of Bed-and-Breakfasts (because young travellers don't want to spend their budget on sleeping) and shows all fries barracks instead of the tourist restaurants. USE-IT makes choices because it's NOT something for everybody. This seems logical, but when you look at most tourist brochures, you will see that they always target young families, group travellers, business travellers and citytrippers at the same time. USE-IT is convinced that "something for everybody" is actually nothing for anybody.

NO TRAVEL JOURNALISTS

Some travel guides like Lonely Planet or Rough Guide may be comparable to the USE-IT publications at first sight, but at closer inspection, they have a different working method and philosophy: these guides are mostly written by journalists instead of local young people. Some of

the journalists are not even from the same country, trying their best to research and write. USE-IT works with young LOCAL editors, who know when a club becomes outdated, because they simply go there every Friday THEMSELVES. This fundamental principle ensures that USE-IT always remains closer to the active living city.

NOBODY PAYS

Many hostels and tourist offices also spread free publications that target young people, filled with sightseeing, clubs and shops. However, these are almost always commercial publications, where everybody pays to be included. USE-IT works with subsidies to pay for editing, layout and distribution. This is the only way to ensure honest communication towards critical young travellers who always smell publicity from far away.

NO OLD STUFF

As opposed to most travelguides and tourist offices, USE-IT does not make a few phonecalls to update the prices of restaurants and hotels and then call it a new edition, but always checks all the information for every edition.

NOT JUST TOURISM

USE-IT is a unique merge between youth information and tourist information (and in some cities receives subsidies from both sides). Yes, it's practical tourist info for an international audience. Yes, it's ALSO a way to stimulate young people to get in contact and build lasting relations. The main philosophy of USE-IT is summarized in the catch phrase 'Act Like a Local': break the tourist bubble and get to know your local counterparts.

DISTRIBUTION IN HOSTELS

Just as USE-IT does not make something for everybody, the organization doesn't spread the publications everywhere. Instead of leaving the maps and budget guides between a million other flyers in bars or shops, USE-IT mostly distributes for free via the hostels where young people check in.

This no-waste distribution system has ensured, for example, that the USE-IT map of Brussels went from 50.000 copies (first edition 2007) to 150.000 (third edition 2009). Young people are not forced to take the Map of Brussels for Young Travellers, but they do because they need it. Who doesn't need a free map of

the city when they first arrive? The visitors are well-served, and the people at the desk are happy because they don't have to mark everything on a map themselves.

HOW IS THE NETWORK / ORGANIZED

MANY USE-IT'S

USE-IT initiatives exist in a growing number of European cities. Every USE-IT publishes free maps or guidebooks, most have a website, and some also run an info desk for young travellers.

ONE PHILOSOPHY

In spite of the differences, all USE-IT's are members of the European not-for-profit organization 'USE-IT Europe'. They all share the same philosophy, as defined in the USE-IT charter (see www.use-it.info).

USE-IT is a quality label for no-nonsense tourist info for young people: always not commercial, always made by locals, always up-to-date and always free. Apart from that, the products and service can vary from country to country.

WHO IS THE BOSS?

There is no boss of USE-IT. USE-IT does NOT work with a franchising system, but starts from local initiative. Existing USE-IT Europe members will help out future members with practical advice for finding money, doing

the research and finishing the layout, but never with actually giving money.

WHERE DOES THE MONEY COME FROM?

Every USE-IT is largely independent and does not work with commercial money. USE-IT does not sell anything, but works with subsidies. The money for every USE-IT comes from its own country (city, province or region). USE-IT Oslo is paid with Norwegian money, USE-IT Warsaw with Polish money, and so on.

Apart from this local money, the larger organization USE-IT Europe has a budget for travel costs. For example, a USE-IT representative can come to a city and make a test version of the publication with the locals who took the initiative.

IS IT YOUTH INFO OR TOURIST INFO?

USE-IT is both, which makes it a unique formula in Europe. This also means that money can come from both sides.

SO WHO CAN JOIN?

Basically, everybody can start a USE-IT in their city as long as they stick to the USE-IT charter. USE-IT is a name and quality label, it's not a commercial franchise. The first step is always a USE-IT publication, and websites or info desks can follow.

Anybody can join, but some things make work a lot easier. For example, people who are already connected to an existing youth or cultural or touristic organization have an advantage when it comes to finding money, publishing and distributing. Often, they even make guides that are similar to USE-IT already, but that are written in the local language and not aimed at an international crowd. This local expertise is already half of the work when it comes to making a first USE-IT publication.

Some of the most frequent questions and answers about joining USE-IT are in a separate brochure "I want to start my own USE-IT!" (download version on www.use-it.info).

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THE HISTORY OF USE-IT

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WHY JOIN THE NETWORK

GROWING MOBILITY

In the 1990's independent youth travel grew into a form of mass-tourism. Young travellers book through the same booking-websites and sleep in hostels, that, over the last few years, have become standardised through the ratings and reviews on booking-websites (mainly hostelworld.com). Today, youth travel makes for 20% of all individual travellers and generates over 100 billion euro worldwide. Young travellers spend 31,5% of their budget to transport (meaning: they move a lot) and 18,1% on accommodation (meaning: a bed is just for sleeping, so why pay for that?).

MOBILITY = USE-IT

USE-IT also surfs on the wave of growing youth mobility: it's a European network and a quality label for no-nonsense tourist info for different stops on the same trip. In Brussels for example, travellers can pick up USE-IT maps of Brussels, but also of Bruges and Antwerp and nearby Rotterdam in the Netherlands. Borders do not count for travellers, so why would they count for youth information?

GROWING HOSPITALITY

Recent evolutions point in the direction of a mentality shift from standardisation (everybody going to the same bars and hostels) towards authentic experience and meeting the locals.

Hospitality networks like couchsurfing.org and hospitalityclub.org are online communities of people offering free beds worldwide to each other through the internet. The system works with a user rating system (similar to the one on eBay for example) and works wonderfully well, purely on the basis of honest hospitality. In 2009, Couchsurfing reached the peak of one million members. These networks are growing fast and furiously, not just because they offer free beds, but also because there is simply no better way of getting to know new places and live unique experiences than to meet the locals. This means: locals who take care of visitors, just like USE-IT.

HOSPITALITY = USE-IT

USE-IT also surfs on the wave of the new hospitality: volunteers at the info desks don't give ready answers to same old questions, but give actual insider advice for a

concert in that new bar tonight, and serve a free coffee while they're at it. Likewise, all USE-IT websites and publications highlight the places where young locals go, to break open the tourist bubbles. If you don't know anybody in the city, USE-IT is like the friend you didn't have.

WHY JOIN AS A YOUNG LOCAL ORGANIZATION?

In cities all over Europe, youth or cultural organizations publish great information for young people, but they never focus on international visitors. This is strange, because it only asks some extra effort and not so much money to enlarge the target audience with thousands of international visitors. Young travellers are not just tourists with tourist needs: no, very often they want to see, smell, hear and live what the LOCALS do. Any organization that is addicted to walking the street, discovering new places and telling everybody about them could easily add USE-IT to their existing publications. They are the locals who know the real stories behind the city instead of only the tourist attractions, so why not share the expertise?

WHY JOIN AS A LOCAL GOVERNMENT?

Young travellers are not a small target group, but actually make up over 20% of all individual travellers. This massive flow of people should not just be ignored. They deserve their own no-nonsense information with a SELECTION of places specifically for them. This

selection is hard to provide for an official tourist info (because it is bound by 'objectivity' rules). USE-IT, however, CAN make the necessary choices, not on the basis of personal favourites, but of what YOUNG people need.

Besides this, most cities already invest in plenty of youth information and student information. So why not add USE-IT for the young international crowd that is (in spite of their numbers) all too often totally forgotten?

WHY JOIN AS A HOSTEL?

The first questions that guests ask at any hostel desk: "Where can I eat a good snack nearby? Do you have a map of the city centre? What's the typical local drink?"

Existing publications from the tourist offices or the city are not always free, and they mostly tell about the typical sightseeing spots. Other (commercial) maps and guides sometimes do aim for young people, but they are commercial projects, where bars or restaurants pay to get into the guide. USE-IT can provide better service to visitors because it works with subsidies and makes honest selections.

Guests will be happier, and might stay a day longer, just because there is so much they still want to do and see (but would never have heard of without USE-IT).

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AS A YOUNG LOCAL ORGANIZATION

USE-IT is not a fast and easy way to get rich. It's not a commercial organization (nobody pays to be in the maps or guides), so the money has to come from somewhere else. That means: subsidies. And subsidies are not always easy to get.

However, that shouldn't stop anybody from getting started. It's always easier to convince city or government officials with examples (existing USE-IT publications) and even a drafted layout of a USE-IT city map or guide. USE-IT can help out with that, thanks to an easy-to-use online tool.

Interested organizations should read "I want to start my own USE-IT!" on www.use-it.info, then contact support@use-it.info. Things can move to a quick start afterwards.

AS A LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Cities that want to put more effort into non-commercial and 'real' information for young travellers, can contact USE-IT Europe on support@use-it.info. When a serious

interest remains, a member from the existing USE-IT network may come over to discuss feasibility, budgets, and timing. However, research, layout and printing remain a local issue. USE-IT can help with practical matters (not money).

The first step is always a publication, and afterwards a website and even an info desk for peer-to-peer communication between young people can follow. USE-IT Europe has gathered an extensive experience that can make things happen faster and easier. In other words: it doesn't have to cost much, because USE-IT has the experience of talking to young local teams of enthusiasts, finding a local layouter, and editing texts when needed.

AS A HOSTEL

USE-IT publications are made by a young local team and the money comes from local subsidies. So what can a hostel do to help?

Hostels know what young travellers like and need. That means they are in the ideal position to evaluate any

USE-IT publication. Even if they don't have time to provide all the content and do all the writing, they CAN help with putting a local creative team together to start working and give input on the most frequent questions that young people have.

USE-IT will be glad to help, but the research and money have to come in locally. Mail support@use-it.info to know more.

Once the maps or guides are finished and printed, the hostel (and all other hostels and tourist offices) can help with the distribution of the free USE-IT publication.

WHAT'S THE FIRST STEP?

1. Send a mail to support@use-it.info to explain who you are and why you are interested.
2. Fill in a 'pre-membership information form'.
3. The existing USE-IT members will see what they can do to help you get started.

IS IT FREE TO BECOME A USE-IT?

All pre-membership assistance is free. Afterwards, USE-IT members who publish a map or guidebook pay a yearly contribution of 500 euro. This money needs to be part of the budget when applying for subsidies. The contribution goes to the USE-IT Europe organization, and is used to help out new members (for example to pay for a flight and get people started).

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

SINCE WHEN DOES USE-IT EXIST?

Since 1971: first USE-IT in Copenhagen.

WHAT DOES THE NAME MEAN?

It has nothing to do with drugs. The first publications (Where to eat and sleep in Copenhagen?) did not have a name, but said 'Use it!' on the cover. It stuck as a name because the organization kept making things that were no-nonsense and easy-to-use.

HOW MANY USE-ITS ARE THERE?

1971: USE-IT Copenhagen

1989: USE-IT Oslo

1997: USE-IT Rotterdam

2002: USE-IT Brussels

2007: USE-IT Ljubljana

2008: USE-IT Warsaw

2009: USE-IT Dresden

For an update: see the map on www.use-it.info

WHO CAN START A USE-IT?

You have to be a local. That's the difference with a lot of travel guides. USE-IT believes that you cannot write well about a city if you visit it for just a few weeks. If you have lived somewhere for a long time, you know the stories behind the buildings, the children's tales, the local expressions, the culinary specialties (and not the tourist traps).

WHAT CAN USE-IT DO FOR ME?

The USE-IT Europe network can advise you about three things: research, finding money, and a layout draft. This means that one or more USE-IT members will mail or Skype with you (in English) and may come over to your city for a few days to help.

HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE TO MAKE A MAP OR GUIDEBOOK?

That depends on your enthusiasm, but count on at least 4 months from the first ideas until the actual printed version.

HOW MANY PEOPLE DOES IT TAKE?

You need at least a team of young local informers, a writer, a layouter, and somebody to take care of the distribution and follow-up.

IS USE-IT ALWAYS IN ENGLISH?

Yes. USE-IT works for an international crowd, and the first language is English. Don't worry too much about English mistakes, they can easily be removed in the end. Besides, the English in your publication has to be simple (somebody from Japan does not know difficult English words either!).

CAN USE-IT GIVE MONEY?

No, sorry. USE-IT Europe gives practical help with getting started and making a publication, but not money. The money always comes from local subsidies.

HOW MUCH FOR A PUBLICATION?

That's hard to say, because it depends on so many things. Do you want to make a map or a budget guide? Do you need to print 30.000 or 100.000 copies to cover your city? Does the writer or layouter want to get paid for the work? Who will do the distribution? USE-IT can help with making an esteem, but first some of these things have to be sorted out.

DOES USE-IT WORK WITH VOLUNTEERS?

Yes. All members in the USE-IT network work with a mix of volunteers and paid workers. Most started with volunteer work that for some turned into a job afterwards.

ANYTHING ELSE?

support@use-it.info

USE-IT IS TOURIST INFO FOR YOUNG PEOPLE.

**YOUNG TRAVELLERS HAVE DIFFERENT NEEDS,
SO THEY NEED DIFFERENT INFO. THE BOTTOM LINE IS
THAT USE-IT THINKS BEYOND JUST TOURISM: USE-IT MAKES
YOUNG PEOPLE BREAK OUT OF THE TRAVELLERS' BUBBLE
TO MEET THEIR LOCAL COUNTERPARTS AND DISCOVER
EUROPE ACTIVELY.**

**WE ARE NOT TALKING ABOUT A SMALL TARGET GROUP,
BUT ABOUT 20% OF ALL INDIVIDUAL TRAVELLERS.
THIS CROWD NEEDS SPECIAL ATTENTION.
IT'S CALLED USE-IT.**



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