

## SHOPPING Best Websites (alphabetically)

### Booking Travel

#### **Sidestep**     [www.sidestep.com](http://www.sidestep.com)

SideStep has always been one of the coolest websites around, but now it has added a whole bunch of new features including a handy Web-only version of its travel search engine (it started out as a downloadable application for your PC, and that toolbar is still available) and separate search engines for vacation packages and cruises. You can also try newcomer Kayak.com, which promises to scour more than 100 websites to find the best deals on airfare and hotel rooms but only SideStep includes Orbitz.com listings in its search results. If you're picky about your plane seat assignment, Seat Guru provides detailed information (material, amount of legroom, location of video monitors and exit rows) by airline and type of aircraft.

### Classifieds

#### **Craigslist**     [www.craigslist.org](http://www.craigslist.org)

This previous "50 Coolest" pick just keeps getting better there are separate sites listing ads for bikes, boats, baby gear, musical instruments, jobs, apartments (you name it) in 120 cities in 25 countries. Only certain businesses pay listing fees. LiveDeal.com likewise works to connect buyers and sellers who share a zip code, to facilitate sales of used items that are difficult to ship or that most people would want to try before buying (furniture, cars) something you can't do on, say, eBay.

### Comparison Shopping

#### **Shopzilla**     [www.shopzilla.com](http://www.shopzilla.com)

BizRate's new-and-improved shopping search engine lets you quickly compare prices from the different online stores that sell the item you want. If your search words are broad, you'll get a list of Departments to choose from, and you can refine your search by price range, brand and other distinguishing features. Merchant ratings, a series of scores based on consumer feedback (we're talking hundreds of responses at least) help with the decision-making. Click the "All Depts." link at the top of the page to find an alphabetized list of hundreds of highly specific product categories, from action figures to yogurt makers. Covers some 30 million products from 55,000 retailers worldwide.

### Deal of the Day

#### **Woot!**     [www.woot.com](http://www.woot.com)

Here a consumer electronics distributor unloads excess inventory of a single item each day at a steep discount. One day it could be a home theater system, the next a digital camera. The item is available until it sells out, or until 11:59 pm Central Time that night, whichever happens first. This oddball approach has generated a cult following, which keeps the community forums abuzz with product reviews and other chatter. Selection of one too limited for you? Try Overstock.com, a perennial favorite among bargain hunters that sells excess inventory at great prices. New to that site: auctions.

## **Kitsch**

**Archie McPhee**      [www.mcphee.com](http://www.mcphee.com)

Seattle-based shop hawking all sorts of odd and wonderful things, like Bacon Strips Bandages (see Hygiene, under Lifestyle), Pink Lawn Whirlygigs (Lawn & Garden), Jesus, Beethoven and Edgar Allen Poe action figures (Amusements) and much, much more. Other product categories include Pirate, Hula, Voodoo and Elvis.

## **Shoes**

**Zappos.com**      [www.zappos.com](http://www.zappos.com)

Positively the best place to buy shoes online. The site's selection is massive, and browsing is a breeze. Click the Women's, Men's or Kid's buttons at the top of the page to narrow your search by type (slingbacks, mary janes, mules...) or scan the list of brands (there are hundreds everything except Nike). When you see a pair you like, select Multi View to examine it from all angles. Free shipping is a standing offer, and orders arrive quickly. Also check out Zappos Couture.

## **When Things Go Wrong**

**Complaints.com**      [www.complaints.com](http://www.complaints.com)

Come here to kvetch about a product that malfunctioned, or that customer service rep that let you down, or read about other people's experiences. The site, run by Sagacity Corp., will forward your complaint letters to any business, provided you include the email address; it does not act as an advocate or mediator, only as a forum for taking your case public.

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