

BUSINESS



A HANDY GUIDE

The best travelling companion is someone who can find their way around any foreign city, speaks the local languages and knows all the best attractions and local eateries. That's a lot to expect from a person, so while in Hong Kong, my favourite travel partner quickly became the handy, a smartphone I'd found seductively awaiting me in my hotel room.

Handy offers unlimited, 24/7 Internet access and can be linked to your email and Facebook accounts. It has a phone number you can give to anyone who needs to contact you and you can make free local and international phone calls too.

This spares you hefty roaming fees, although my hotel limited free international calls to China, Japan, the USA and Australia.

I used it to check Google Maps when I got lost, read entertaining articles about local sights and customs, check for upcoming events and figure out which metro to catch as I

toured the city. I also took photos with its camera and downloaded them to my laptop via Bluetooth. Any data you add to the device is automatically erased when you check out and to deter theft, it can be locked if a guest pockets it upon departure.

Hong Kong-based Tink Labs developed handy four years ago, but initially struggled to attract any interest. Now they're in 80% of Hong Kong hotels, half of those in Singapore and have a growing presence in London, Paris and Dubai. Hyatt and Intercontinental hotels are using them too, so it's only a matter of time until they're rolled out across the world.

Johannesburg's on the radar, says Phil Yuen, the CTO and Head of Special Projects, and I suggest he adds Cape Town to that list.

"It's something that will truly change the way people travel. We want to help you discover the lesser known, local stuff in the different cities."

With tourism boards now approaching Tink Labs to discuss citywide deals, Yuen believes every hotel room around the world will eventually include a handy. I think he's right. — **Lesley Stones**

ESSENTIAL TRAVEL TECH

Immersing yourself in the local lifestyle makes travel an addictive experience. New technology ensures you can always get your fix while on the road

TOURS AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

With over 250 tours in almost 80 cities (and new ones produced every week), VoiceMap offers immersive GPS audio tours in 35 countries around the world.

"I wanted to create a platform that anybody could use to tell location-aware stories in their own voice," says CEO Iain Manley, who created VoiceMap in Cape Town in late 2014.

"I wanted to match the immediacy of GPS with the intimacy of a real person's stories and voice."

On the one hand, VoiceMap is an audio walking tour app (iOS and Android) that uses your GPS location to play audio automatically while you walk. The second layer is an open platform, where contributors can attach audio to particular locations to tell their own stories about locations they're connected to.

"Listeners can plug in their earphones and explore a city with a musician, actor, tour guide, writer or passionate local," Manley says. "Our largest user groups are in the USA, UK and SA."

Educator, author and activist Bill Ayers described it as follows: "Each story is simply a single grain of sand, but each is also a lens that reflects and refracts a dazzling world beyond."

"People are increasingly looking for more authentic and meaningful ways to explore a city and our local perspectives fill that gap," Manley says. "I think the flexibility and independence of on-demand self-guided audio tours are also a big selling point." *Get a free tour when you sign up at: <https://voicemap.me/share/knxfdh> — Eugene Yiga*



Photograph by Anton Crane

Experiencing the Woodstock Street Art audio tour.