

BUILDING A LIFESTYLE TRAVEL BLOGGING BUSINESS WITH HELP FROM STAY22

www.goingawesomeplaces.com



GOING AWESOME PLACES WANTED

Help generating a consistent passive income from affiliate marketing.

GOING AWESOME PLACES GOT

- A 14x uplift in affiliate revenue.
- An engaged and accessible partner who's committed to evolving as travel blogging on the web evolves.

GOING AWESOME PLACES

William Tang is Chief of Awesome at GoingAwesomePlaces.com, the travel blog he accidentally founded in 2012, which is now one of the most successful travel blogs in the world. The site reflects William's own passions and interests, which lie in outdoor adventure and experiential travel.

William graduated in electrical engineering, only to find that relentless travel as a corporate consultant soon lost its charm. He resigned and took an epic trip through Asia to clear his head. A friend's chance remark before he left was fateful. The friend asked if he planned to do a travel blog. William liked the idea and before he set off "Going Awesome Places" was born.

AT A GLANCE

CHALLENGES

- Generating consistent passive income from affiliate marketing
- Finding an engaged and accessible partner to help with travel blogging
- Evolving as travel blogging on the web evolves

BENEFITS

- 14x uplift in affiliate revenue
- Accessible partner who's committed to evolving with the industry
- Ability to focus on creating content rather than worrying about technical details of monetization



WILLIAM TANG

Founder, GoingAwesomePlaces.com


52 countries travelled, loves capturing beautiful landscapes, and avid travel hacker. Usually loses one thing on every trip, and OCD when it comes to trip planning.

After the trip, William worked on a start-up and then – with a mortgage to pay – got a real job. But throughout, Going Awesome Places was maintained as a side passion. And the allure of building a lifestyle business never faded.

Meanwhile, William learned more and more about how to monetize the site and generate a reliable income. He loved to travel, write and take photographs. In particular he loved to share experiences and useful travel advice. He told himself that if the site could reach a certain income threshold it would be time to take a leap of faith. In 2017 he took it.

FULL-TIME GIG


Going Awesome Places immediately began to generate more income when William started working full time on the blog. When he's not traveling and writing content, roughly 40% of his time is spent on 'business development', which means building three income streams. These are:



Sponsored campaign work: paid transactional work from a travel brand/tourism board/tour operator. They'll pay a one-off fee to bloggers with the power to promote a destination/attraction etc. to lots of readers.

Display advertising: income comes from posting adverts on the site in banners, in-line ads, footers, headers, etc. This is Going Awesome Places' biggest income stream.

Affiliate marketing: a small commission is paid each time something is booked or bought via a link on the Going Awesome Places website. William says affiliate marketing income is the hardest to generate. He's brokered many direct relationships with brands for gear, cameras, luggage etc, and for accommodation with the key online travel agents (OTAs). It's then about creating content and embedding links that convince readers to click on them, and then buy the product/make a booking to generate commission. It's also a numbers game. Do it well, on a large enough scale, and your income will grow.



All the above also depends on driving readers to the site using **search engine optimization** (SEO). William admits that when he went full time with the blog, SEO became "...almost an obsession." It's about writing content that will rank well on search engines. It's also highly competitive as all publishers in the same space are continually adding new content and jostling for the all-important high first page ranking on Google.

ENTER STAY22

William heard about Stay22 from colleagues in the Toronto travel blogger community in 2021. Airbnb had pulled out of affiliate marketing in March 2021 and William was putting all his accommodation affiliate effort into Booking.com. But the demise of Airbnb sparked a lot of chatter about alternatives.

After conversations with Stay22 he decided to make the change, as long as Stay22 dealt with all his link conversions. He had around 5,000 links and Stay22 was able to programmatically automate their transition into Stay22 links. (That's now taken care of automatically using Stay22's Let Me Allez solution (see box)).

As to why he made the move to Stay22, it was a simple decision. Booking.com pays affiliates commission on a tiered basis, based on volume of bookings per month. Bloggers start off with the base rate and only if they do really well do they get ramped up to a higher commission for that month.

Stay22 has a different approach. As William explains: "Stay22 essentially takes you to the top tier of their commission right away irrespective of how much volume you do in the month. I'm going to make more money this way because if I have a down month, it doesn't matter, I'm still guaranteed that same level of commission."

As soon as he joined Stay22 in 2021, William's revenue increased "in leaps and bounds" – although admittedly the timing did coincide with a post-pandemic upswing in travel. But the really big uplift in income came next, when he joined Stay22 Nova.

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LET ME ALLEZ EXPLAINED

Let Me Allez (LMA) is Stay22's solution for travel bloggers and content publishers – helping them save time and increase revenue. It's a super simple copy and paste script that bloggers can drop into their website header. It then instantly converts every existing accommodation link into a Stay22 deeplink.

Thereafter, Stay22 passes on a regular commission payment for the accommodation that's booked; fixes 404's automatically by redirecting the link; and provides access to a partner hub where you can see how your links are performing. And, of course, LMA is entirely FREE. Stay22 only earns money when its partner sites do.

ABOUT NOVA

Stay22 Nova is a menu of linked booking options that infrequently shows up in front of readers of your site. The options are generated by a proprietary Stay22 algorithm that's based on the reader's browsing history. William was hesitant to adopt Nova at first but in October 2022 he took the plunge. The result was immediate and "kind of crazy" – suddenly his bookings increased about 14 times.

Nova was a game-changer because it introduced William's readers to a wider range of options. "Nova brought in people who prefer Expedia and VRBO or want to book car rentals, or packages, or cruises. It was really eye-opening for me," he says. "Readers are now getting the entire platter of options so they can book what they prefer."

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APART FROM REVENUE - FIVE OTHER GREAT REASONS TO WORK WITH STAY22

More accessible people

Working with Stay22 William benefits from working with real people. "I can ask questions and get answers. The larger companies won't give you the time of day."

The dashboard

Stay22 provides a dashboard that consolidates all the link activity across all the OTAs together into one screen. William likes being able to see the bookings all together, although there's a lot more "slicing and dicing" he'd like to do on his own.

The support package

Stay22 offers same day support, plus each blogger has a dedicated account manager who knows your account. "With Stay22 I can ask about things like best practice and get involved in the evolution of the platform."

Impact on SEO

William finds Stay22 has no impact on his SEO – which is a good thing because you really don't want it to have a negative impact as a result of heavy scripts or coding.

Stay22 keeps evolving and is dedicated to delivering for travel bloggers

"They're technology first and have the pulse of the industry," says William. "That's a huge benefit to travel bloggers like me. I can trust them to continue to evolve the platform and keep pace with what's changing, and to develop things like Nova that are good for my revenue. That's a pretty big thing for me, which is why I would not hesitate to recommend Stay22 to any travel blogger."

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THE FOUR-HOUR WORK WEEK

When William started out, he read a book called The 4-Hour Work Week by Tim Ferriss. The goal is to earn well, yet escape the treadmill of the 9 to 5, by running a lifestyle business that earns “passive income”.

As it goes, advertising and affiliate marketing generate passive income and are now William’s two biggest revenue earners. He’s not yet made it to the four-hour working week, but his lifestyle business is a reality, and he credits Stay22 with being “a significant part of that,” which is awesome for Stay22!

ABOUT STAY22

Stay22.com is a Canadian travel tech company that offers affiliate revenue generation opportunities for events, ticketing and travel media publications to monetize the travel intent of their audience or organization. After six years, Stay22 is working with more than 1,000 global partners; and has paid out more than USD\$2m in commission payments to partners.

Get in touch now to find out how we can help you

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