



Traveling to the Big Apple?

Get the Kolu App to Customize Your Experience with a Self-Selected Local Guide

NEW YORK, NY (Jan. 16, 2018) — Until now, visitors to New York City would have to jump on a tour bus with dozens of other outsiders or go at it alone to explore the largest city in the United States. Kolu, a travel-focused startup that connects travelers with local guides, is changing the way we see the Big Apple. They offer a distinctive experience that ensures both guide compatibility and an intimate group size.

“We are really excited to be launching in New York,” said Founder and CEO Alex Winkler. “This city is filled with people who are experts in one aspect or another. By linking those experts with visitors, I know we can offer a one-of-a-kind experience for any traveler.”

Kolu’s app will launch on Jan. 22 for iOS users and Feb. 1 for Android users, making the Big Apple its first travel experience for users, but looking to add Washington D.C., Boston, and Philadelphia in the near future. Travelers will be able to select tours ranging from one person to eight people in a given destination. The app uses an algorithm to pair travelers with a Kolu guide. The app also includes a detailed profile for each guide.

Unlike most other services, Kolu allows travelers to select their guide, length of activities and the start time. The customized tours can last as little as an hour to an entire day’s length.

“The idea for Kolu came while I was in Copenhagen,” said Winkler. “As an avid traveler who’s been to over 25 countries, I realized that a lot of the Americans who *are* traveling find themselves getting caught in tourist traps. Through my visits with numerous international friends, I was able to see a given city firsthand, from their point of view. Learning about different cultures and connecting with different kinds of people has always been a passion of mine, and if I can open a few people’s eyes in the way that mine have been throughout my own travels, then Kolu is a success. It’s about turning a trip into that authentic experience.”

From that idea nearly three years ago, to the launch of their app, Kolu has made great strides in making Winkler’s idea a reality. Here’s how it works:

- The user creates a profile by selecting their top three travel interests
- Kolu searches for guides in specified cities who most closely match those interests
- Kolu provides the user the top guides who match those interests
- The user reads the Kolu guide profiles
- The user then reaches out to a Kolu guide to negotiate price and potential day and time of tour

Kolu guides go through a comprehensive background check and on boarding process prior to being listed on the app. They're incentivized to do so by getting paid by travelers as an independent contractor within the sharing economy, similar to the model employed by companies like Uber and Airbnb. After these guides have been screened, they're ready to show visitors around the city at the hourly rate they set for themselves.

ABOUT KOLU: Kolu, Inc. was founded in 2017 by Alex Winkler, Emily Johnson, Riley de León, and Logan Muzzey in Columbia, MO. In early 2016 the co-founders brought on a fifth member to the team, Marin Meiners, who serves at the company's COO and has since played an integral role in launch efforts. The name 'Kolu' derives from a Hawaiian word, meaning 'three,' which mirrors the number of travel interests that a user selects when creating the profile and shaping their experience. The Kolu mobile app will be available for iOS devices on January 22, 2018 and to Android users on February 1, 2018. For more information, please visit koluapp.com.

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