



Rough Guides explore new worlds of Blog and eBay

Personal web pages, known as blogs, and shopping and selling on eBay, have taken Britain by storm this summer. While high street shops have sweltered and complained of a lack of customers, millions of Brits have been at home, discovering the joys of blog-posting, personal profiles and online auctions.

Registration of blogs, short for weblogs – user-friendly personal web pages – has more than doubled in the UK since the start of the year to at least 3 million sites, and worldwide estimates range between 50m and 70m. “Blogs are as simple as using a mouse”, says Jonathan Yang, the author of *The Rough Guide to Blogging*, a new guide to the blogosphere. “If you’ve got a computer of any kind, you’re almost certainly just a few clicks away from being able to register and operate your own blog.”

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Blogs are simple websites that are largely pre-formatted, thus avoiding the need to learn any special coding. “An 8-year old child could do it”, says Yang. In fact, many children are creating blogs, at social network providers like myspace.com and bebo.com, where the set-up is literally child’s play.

And what does a blogger actually do, once they’ve got their blog? “Most people use them to tell friends and family about what they’re doing”, says Yang, “with a mixture of short paragraphs of text, known as posts, and photos, often with lots of links to other websites. Blogs are especially useful if people are living far apart, or travelling, or just too busy to stay in touch face-to-face. But they’re also great for special interests, hobbies, academic enquiry and publication, small business enterprises, political and lobby groups, almost anything you can think of. And the key point is anyone visiting can leave a comment about a post that the blogger has made.”

eBay, which started life as a simple auction site, where people bid for items online, in September 1995, has become the internet's biggest website bar none. More than 120 million users, more than 10 million of them in the UK, log on not just to sell attic junk or pick up a bargain, but in the case of tens of thousands because their lives literally depend on it, as they run home businesses channelled entirely through this immense online trading base. Ian Peel, author of the new Rough Guide to eBay, is matter-of-fact about its future: "I'm sure it will become such a part of everyday life that we won't be able to imagine living without it, like telephones or transport." Already the business generated through eBay makes it the 88th largest economy in the world, just behind Kenya and Kuwait. In terms of numbers of inhabitants, it's bigger than Germany and France combined.

“eBay is like an unexplored country, with its own customs and currency”

So why the need for a Rough Guide to eBay? "To make full use of eBay, you need to know the whole shape of it", says Peel. "It's a complete virtual world, like an unexplored country when you first visit. It has its own customs and even its own currency, PayPal, and a distinct social scene. Like any new country, it's good to have some background info before you arrive. People do get ripped off. The Rough Guide to eBay is here to help people through culture shock, misunderstandings, and local etiquette. And it points them to what the rewards can be. People are already making fortunes."

Notes for editors

Rough Guides publish seven guides to computer and IT subjects. Six are either brand-new or just out in fully revised and updated new editions:

The Rough Guide to Blogging *NEW* £8.99. Author Jonathan Yang (<http://jonyang.org.blog>) is a professional blogger and online media journalist.

The Rough Guide to eBay *NEW* £8.99. Author Ian Peel is one of the UK's longest-running and most respected Internet journalists (<http://www.ianpeel.com>)

The Rough Guide Website Directory, Shopping Online and Surfing the Net *NEW* £8.99

The Rough Guide to the Internet 12th edition £9.99. The classic, bestselling Internet guide.

The Rough Guide to iPods, iTunes & Music Online 4th edition £5.99.

The Rough Guide to PlayStation Portable *NEW*, £5.99

Also available: **The Rough Guide to PCs and Windows** (2nd edition, £7.99) and **The Rough Guide to Travel Online** (2nd edition £6.99)

Review copies and reader giveaway copies are available

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