

1 Unforgiving click targets

Consider Fitts' Law. For ease and to reduce misfires, these targets should be larger and spaced further apart.

2 Alignment

There is poor horizontal alignment. Like small text, this is another detail that factors into a user's unconscious (and nearly-instant) first impression of the site—and by extension the company. It might suggest

3 Legibility

Some text is difficult to read, due to combination of typeface, small font size, and low-contrast background color. Hard-to-read text can affect the user at an unconscious level and erode the user's confidence in the website. On top of this, the webpage did not respond to my attempt to increase the text size via my browser settings. This is an accessibility issue.

4 "Call to action" buttons

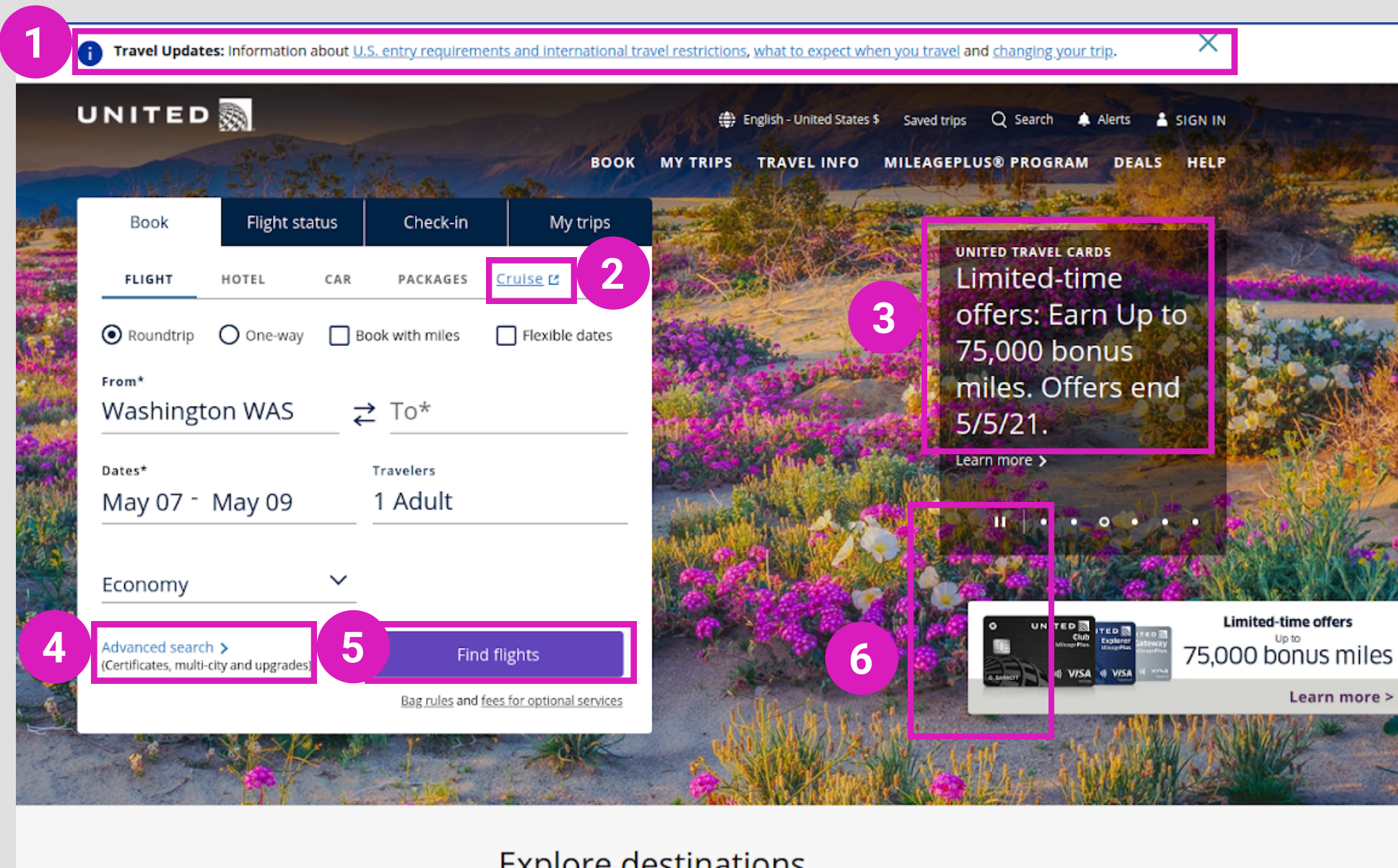
Button labels include "Learn more," "Search," and "Be in the know." Best practice is to be more descriptive. This especially helps users who may be navigating the site with screen readers, but in fact all users benefit from a site where navigation is clear and predictable.

5 Branding

"Get away in May." A wink to Southwest's trademarked "Wanna Get Away?" fare and the memorable ad campaign. The ads comcially portrayed people in embarrassing or catastrophic scenarios, with the suggestion that a vacation can help you get distance from any of your troubles.

Pop-up (not shown)

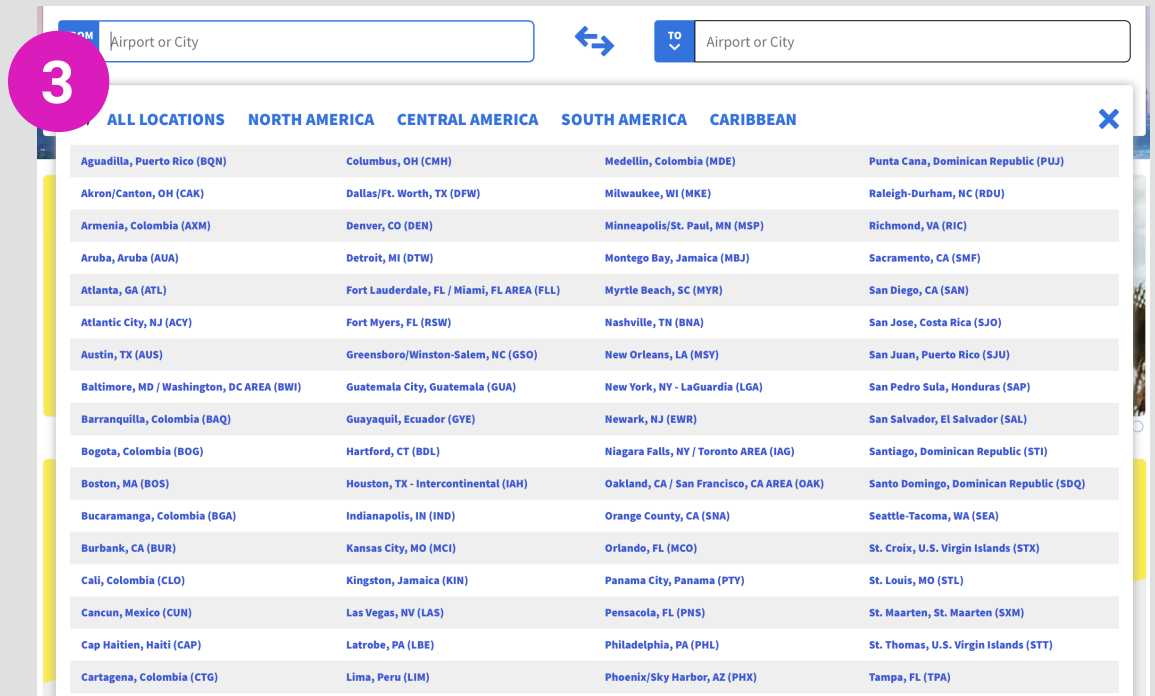
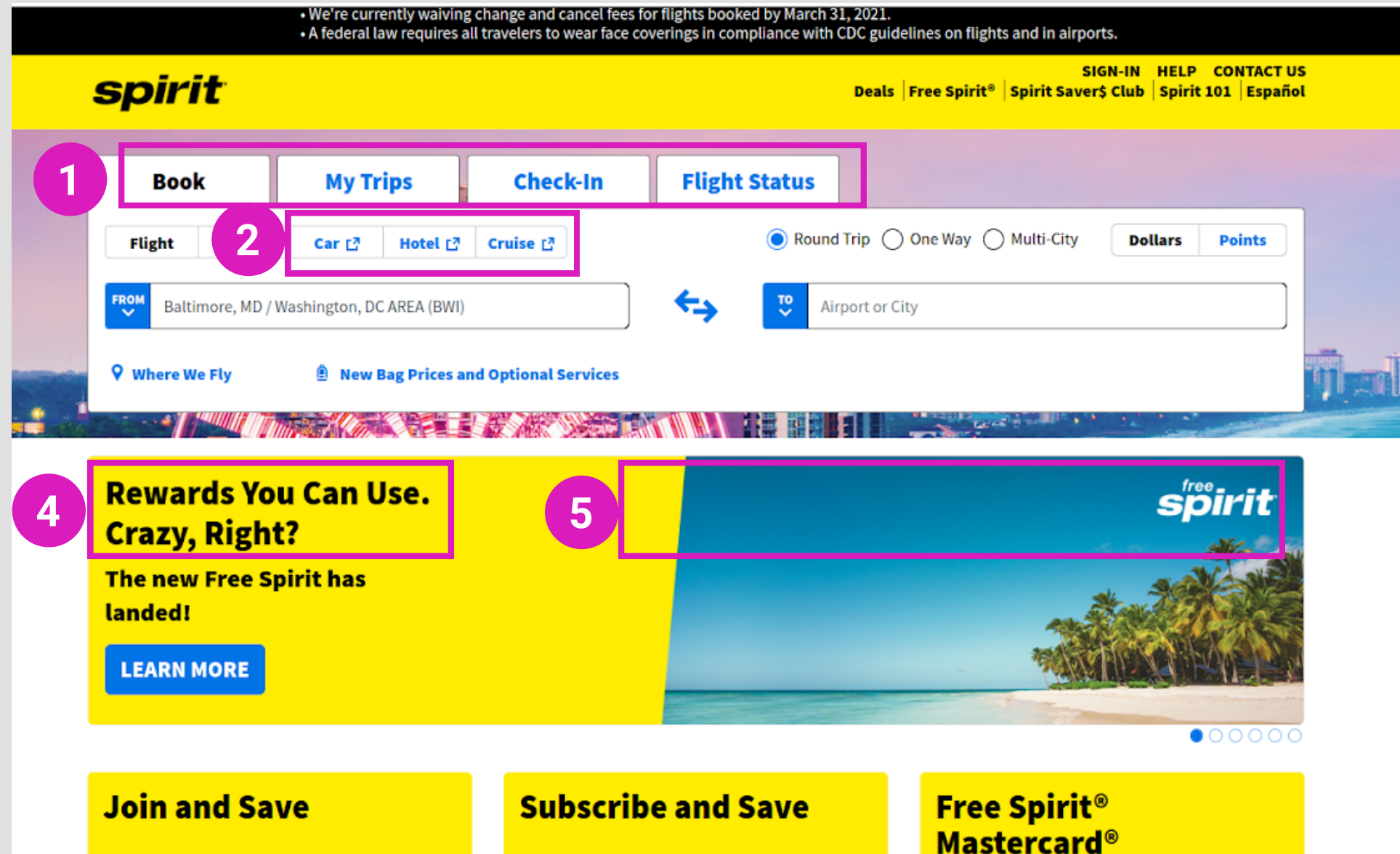
Pop-up (not shown) reads "Bienvenido a Southwest!" and asks user to select between Spanish (*default*) and English. Southwest's headquarters are in Texas, so the attention to Spanish-speakers makes sense. However, pop-ups are always annoying and this one is unnecessary: The site can determine the language for the user based on her default language settings in her browser. As a fallback, it follows the convention of having a language control at top right of the page.



- 1 Travel updates banner**
Follows convention of placing banner at top and using “info” icon. The links here are three descriptive options for quick access.
- 2 External links**
“Cruise” link is different style and has icon to denote external link.
- 3 Marketing copy**
Less is more. There is a slide in the carousel where they seemingly couldn’t decide between metaphors and left both in: “Our *nonstop* priority: At the top of our *travel checklist*? Your health and safety.” (Italics my own.) If this was a fierce debate internally, then A/B testing could be a way to settle it.
- 4 Hint about “advanced search”**
“Advanced” features can be intimidating and under-utilized. The helpful hint about “Advanced Search” tells the user what it does.
- 5 Large, descriptive “call to action” button**
The purple color is reserved for the main CTA button and provides visual emphasis.
- 6 Alignment**
Block elements are out of alignment and the layout is unbalanced—this can affect user’s perception of the site at an unconscious level.
- 7 Destinations map and the paradox of choice**
The “Explore Destinations” map shows maybe a hundred dots. It’s impressive, but “the paradox of choice” theory suggests that this number of options might only overwhelm users. A more effective approach might be to highlight 4-6 featured destinations.

Mobile first

There are four images on the homepage (below the fold) with smartphones depicted. United is emphasizing mobile and pushing its “award-winning app.”



- 1 **Tabbed navigation**
Navigation tabs (“Book,” “My Trips,” etc.) provide very clear affordance—users know what to do with these. The space between tabs might strengthen the effect. Note that Spirit doesn’t duplicate these navigation options in the header like the other airlines.
- 2 **External links**
Helpful UI feature: icon flags that some links will take user to an external site (e.g., spirithotels.com).
- 3 **Airport dropdown**
As soon as the cursor is placed in the “From” field, a dropdown opens with all airports. This is disruptive. Standard convention is for system to wait for user to type a few characters and then to open a dropdown once results can be narrowed.
- 4 **Self-aware marketing**
Acknowledges industry’s tricks and presents as more straightforward than competitors (“Rewards You Can Actually Use. Crazy Right?”)
- 5 **Diagonal lines**
The logo (oblique/slanted text) and the layout’s diagonal line suggest movement.

Clear value proposition / differentiation

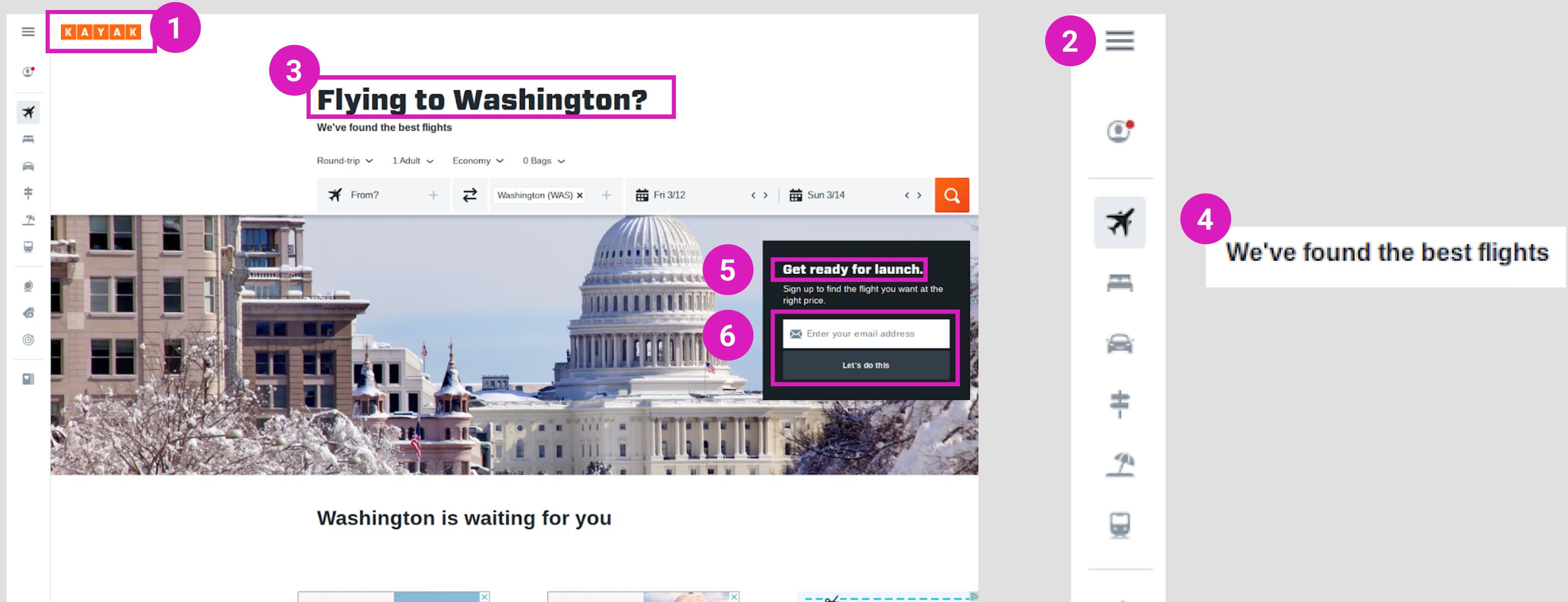
Homepage stresses savings and deals (“Join and Save,” “Subscribe and Save,” “Spring Savings is Just Around the Corner,” “Grab a Low Airfare Deal...”). Clear value proposition and differentiation as a budget airline.

Color

For those familiar with Spirit, the yellow and black color palette is immediately identifiable. The photographs are always in “cool” colors (purples, blues, greens), providing contrast.

Responsive web design

This website is responsive—the content resizes and rearranges for different-sized screens or windows.



1 Minimalist branding

The homepage is very white and open. This is a change from past iterations that relied more heavily on the orange color.

2 Vertical navigation—icon toolbar

Toolbar is reminiscent of complex photo editor software with an array of icons/controls. Upon hovering, though, the menu slides open to reveal text labels.

3 Smart(?) defaults

The heading says “Flying to Washington?” However, I live in D.C. and am visiting the site from here. Kayak is lacking common sense and using my current location as the “To” field instead of the “From” field.

The picture is also of Washington D.C. blanketed in snow, but it is nearly Spring (and nearly cherry blossom season—a big tourist draw for D.C.). Kayak’s attempt at smart defaults and personalization badly misses the mark.

4 Self-confident

Kayak is self-confident (“We found the best flights.” “Let’s do this.”)

5 Mismatched mental models

Or maybe just mixing metaphors. The text “get ready for launch” does not fit the commercial air travel context.

6 Different goal

Main call to action is for email sign-up.