

Duff on Hospitality Law

## **OTA & Travel Distribution Update: Booking.com launches standalone flight offerings to travelers across Europe; China proposes controversial regulations for travel platforms**

By Greg Duff on 10.24.19 | Posted in OTA Update

This week's OTA Update leads off with stories about two of the largest OTAs seeking to diversify their offerings through the addition of flights. As each of these travel platforms continues to evolve and seek to add more products and services, it won't be long until there will be little to differentiate them. Enjoy.

### **Booking.com Takes Off (Literally)**

*("Booking.com Launches Flights Through Partnership Across Europe," Skift Travel News on Oct 15, 2019)*

As further evidence of Glenn Fogel's planned evolution of Booking.com into a full-service travel platform, Booking.com rolled out this past week standalone flight offerings to travelers in the United Kingdom, Germany, Italy, Spain, Ireland, Austria, Belgium and the Netherlands. Travelers previously seeking airline tickets in these countries (and still today in other locations) were re-directed to sister metasearch site, Kayak, where travelers were then re-directed to other OTAs or the airlines themselves for booking. Now, travelers in the eight listed countries can book flights directly on the Booking.com website/application through Swedish travel partner eTraveli (though some travelers are re-directed to eTraveli's site Gotogate to complete the booking.)

### **China Proposes Controversial Regulations for Travel Platforms**

*("China's regulatory oversight of booming online travel platforms will include censorship of 'illegal' content," South China Morning Post - Apps & Gaming on Oct 15, 2019)*

Earlier this month (October 10), China's Ministry of Culture and Tourism issued proposed new regulations aimed at the rapidly growing Chinese online travel industry. The regulations, which address a wide range of consumer protection issues, include rules holding travel platforms responsible for the content (text, pictures and video) posted by users on the platforms and requiring the platforms to record users who post "illegal" content, and if necessary, report them to authorities. The regulations remain subject to public comment until November 11.

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Other news:

**Agoda Is Starting to Offer Flights to Take On Rivals in Asia**

*Skift Travel News on Oct 18, 2019*

Booking.com's Asian sister Agoda is also moving beyond selling just accommodations to selling flights. But unlike Booking.com, which has just introduced air in Europe through a partnership with etraveli, Agoda has built its own flights product where travelers can book airfares on its site without having to leave the platform.

**Marriott Drives Deeper Into Luxury Short-Term Rentals as a Loyalty Play**

*Skift Travel News on Oct 14, 2019*

Despite early hype, Marriott International doesn't intend to take on Airbnb and other homesharing companies with its recently announced homesharing business.

**'Follow the law!'**

*Business Mirror - Frontpage on Oct 18, 2019*

"PLEASE follow the law." That was the simple request of Philippine Tourism Secretary Bernadette Romulo Puyat to Ctrip cofounder and executive chairman James Liang when the latter paid her a courtesy call recently at her office at the Department of Tourism (DOT) in Makati City.