

Duff on Hospitality Law

## **Online Travel Update: Expedia continues to overhaul their leadership; Sabre partners with ByHours to distribute hourly room rentals; Google Travel includes vacation rentals alongside traditional lodging accommodations in search results**

By Greg Duff on 6.4.21 | Posted in Online Travel Update

This week's Update features a couple of stories (including one by Seattle's own Geekwire.com) detailing the recent executive shake up at Expedia. Enjoy.

### **[Expedia's Re-Structuring Continues](#)**

*("Expedia Group Hires Top Execs From Apple and Verizon as Part of Leadership Structure Overhaul," May 24, 2021 via [GeekWire](#); "[Expedia Trims Business Units, Sees a Trio of Executive Departures](#)," May 24, 2021 via [Skift Travel News](#) (subscription may be required))*

Over the past few weeks, we've featured stories detailing Expedia's ongoing re-structuring efforts. Last week saw another big change at Expedia as the company announced the departures of veterans, Cyril Ranque, Adam Jay and Tucker Moodey. Ranque's departure is particularly interesting as Ranque, the Travel Partners Group President, had been featured prominently in many supplier contract issues and negotiations. Joining Expedia are two top executives from Apple and Verizon, Jon Gieselman and Rathii Murthy, respectively. Gieselman will oversee the newly created business unit, "Expedia Brand," while Murthy becomes Expedia's new Chief Technology Officer. With these changes, Expedia also announced the creation of four new consolidated business units or "key pillars" within Expedia – Expedia Services, Expedia Brands, Expedia Marketplace and Expedia for Business. It will be interesting to note where Expedia's products and services fall within these units and how the units will work together to sell these products and services to their key supplier partners.

### **[Sabre Begins Distributing Hourly Room Rentals](#)**

*("Sabre Partners With ByHours to Sell Hotel Rooms by the Hour," May 27, 2021 via [PhocusWire](#))*  
Global distribution system, Sabre, announced this past week that it has partnered with booking platform, ByHours, to offer travel agents and their clients hourly room reservations. The partnership is a first for the legacy distribution providers. Barcelona-based, ByHours, claims to

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be the first online platform to offer hourly stays.

**[Vacation Rentals Continue Their March Toward Accommodation Legitimacy.](#)**

*("Google Travel Adds Vacation Rentals Alongside Hotels in Search Results," May 27, 2021 via PhocusWire)*

Although not the first to feature vacation rental listings alongside traditional accommodations (both Booking.com and Expedia do so today), Google's announced listing changes last week garnered a lot of attention. As of last Thursday, travelers searching Google for accommodations in a particular jurisdiction may see available vacation rentals alongside traditional hotel room accommodations in the same search result. According to Google, the combined listings will be ranked based on relevance to the traveler's search query. While the combined listing format may not be new, Google's use of the combined listings signals a broader recognition of travelers' growing demands for hotel room alternatives and for those hoteliers who have found success with the Google metasearch product, the potentially dilutive effect of the combined listings may make their direct booking efforts more difficult.

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Other News:

**[Supreme Court Ends Tax War, Says Cities Must Pay Litigation Costs to Hotels.com](#)**

*May 27, 2021 via Courthouse News*

The Supreme Court affirmed a two million dollar court costs bill Thursday (May 27) against municipalities that had accused Hotels.com and other travel booking agencies of shortchanging them on occupancy taxes.

**[Trip.com Group CEO Downplays Market Share Against China Antitrust Backdrop](#)**

*May 26, 2021 via Skift Travel News (subscription may be required)*

Given China's crackdown on internet platforms in February, Trip.com Group officials did something they rarely do — trot out specific market share numbers in a recent earnings call. After one analyst asked Trip.com CEO Jie Sun recently whether China's largest travel seller would be able to avoid penalties for price discrimination or monopoly power, Sun said Trip.com supports the government's efforts to create a "healthy" market environment.

**[The Push For Direct Bookings: Hotels Can Have It Both Ways](#)**

*May 24, 2021 via Phocus Wire*

Numerous reports suggest that hotels have seen a swing towards consumers booking direct as lockdown restrictions ease and travel resume.