

Duff on Hospitality Law

Exploring New Frontiers in Online Travel: From AirAsia's Flexible Fares to Hilton's Campground Ventures

By Greg Duff on 3.4.24 | Posted in Online Travel Update

This week's Update features a wide variety of topics – Hopper, Capital One vacation rentals, Expedia layoffs and Hilton campgrounds.

- **AirAsia Adds Cancel for Any Reason.** AirAsia announced this past week that users of its platform (both website and application) can now cancel bookings of non-refundable fares through an integration with Hopper's B2B Division – HTS (Hopper Technology Solutions). HTS offers a wide variety of ancillary products and services (e.g., travel portals, fintech products) to its corporate users. AirAsia currently offers flights from over 700 airlines. With the addition of HTS' ancillary cancellation product, fares that were once non-refundable (presumably a material term or condition of each airline's offered fare) are now fully cancelable for any or no reason. It would be interesting to know how these now "fully cancelable" fares offered through AirAsia comport with each effected airline's own terms and conditions and those of any applicable distribution agreement.
- **Capital One Adds Vacation Rentals.** Capital One announced last week that its Capital One Travel portal will soon feature vacation rentals from AvantStay, Boutiq and other property management companies (including eventually, Inspirato). The rentals will be part of Capital One's "premium" hospitality offerings.
- **Quantas Offers Price Guarantee to Drive Platform Bookings.** A lot can be learned from the airline industry. Quantas has announced a new price guarantee that guarantees fares for up to five days when travel agents book through Quantas' own distribution platform. The guarantee is one of the first for the airline industry (and the only offered by an Australia or New Zealand airline).
- **Hilton Campgrounds Coming Soon.** So why include a story about Hilton's newly announced partnership with campground operator, Autocamp? According to the recent announcement, Autocamp's Airstreams, cabins and tents will soon be bookable on Hilton's direct channels – presumably call centers, website, mobile application, etc. It will be interesting to watch how Hilton and its channels (which until now have featured primarily traditional hotel products) will treat these very untraditional products. It will also be interesting to see how long it takes these new products to make their way to large

third-party channels (whether unintentionally through existing parity commitments or intentionally), if at all.

- **Google's DMA Changes Continue to Draw Criticism.** Review site Yelp is the latest to raise concerns with Google's planned search results changes for flights, trains, hotels and restaurants in the EU. According to Yelp, the proposed changes, which are required to help smaller companies gain more traffic from Google, are having the opposite effect (driving users to Google products).

New FTC Rule Addresses Common Event Scams

March 2, 2024 via Skift

A new ruling by the Federal Trade Commission targets scammers seeking to rip off the business events industry, paving the way for direct monetary compensation from bad actors.

Québec Superior Court dismisses resort fees class action: Lussier v. Expedia. Inc. et al

March 2, 2024 via Lexology

On February 19, 2024, the Québec Superior Court issued its judgment on the merits of the class action Lussier v. Expedia, Inc. et al.[1] At issue was the manner in which certain fees charged directly by hotels, commonly referred to as "hotel fees," "resort fees" or "establishment fees" (Resort Fees) were displayed on the expedia.ca, travelocity.ca and ca.hotels.com websites (the Websites) during the class period.

AirAsia MOVE integrates fintech ancillaries from Hopper B2B solution HTS

February 29, 2024 via Phocus Wire

The new "cancel for any reason" option will launch later this year for customers that book non-refundable fares on the AirAsia MOVE app and at airasia.com.

Capital One Travel expands inventory with vacation rentals from AvantStay, Boutiq

February 28, 2024 via Phocus Wire

Capital One Travel is powered by HTS, Hopper's B2B division, which included vacation rentals from Vrbo until last summer when Expedia Group pulled its inventory from Hopper.

Qantas launches airline price guarantee for distribution platform bookings

February 27, 2024 via TTG Asia

Qantas has introduced a price guarantee of up to five days when agents shop and book using the Qantas Distribution Platform.

Hilton Partners With AutoCamp to Offer Outdoor Hospitality Experiences

February 27, 2024 via Lodging Magazine

Hilton announced a new partnership with AutoCamp to offer Hilton guests an experience that blends the spirit of an outdoor adventure with the hospitality and thinking of a boutique hotel in settings that include properties adjacent to popular national parks.

Marriott Bonvoy Adds 200 Millionth Member as Hotel Loyalty Race Heats Up

February 26, 2024 via Skift Travel News

Marriott Bonvoy signed up the 200 millionth member as the loyalty program aims to retain its title as the world's largest – Hilton Honors is hot on its tail.

Expedia Group cutbacks will impact 1,500 roles this year, more than 8% of workforce

February 26, 2024 via GeekWire

Expedia Group expects about 1,500 roles to be impacted, primarily in its Product & Technology division, under an operational review announced in an internal memo to the online travel giant's employees from CEO Peter Kern today.

Google Tweaked Search to Comply With EU Rules. Yelp Says It Makes Results Even More Unfair

February 23, 2024 via Wired

To comply with looming rules that ban tech giants from favoring their own services, Google has been testing new look search results for flights, trains, hotels, restaurants, and products in Europe.

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