

Duff on Hospitality Law

Online Travel Update: Kakao Expands Ride-Hailing Offerings; Agoda Offers New Payment Alternative; Airbnb Enables New Split Stay Functionality

By Greg Duff on 5.20.22 | Posted in Online Travel Update

Last week's Update features a variety of stories, including updates on several platforms that we don't routinely cover – Kakao, Agoda and Trip.com. Enjoy.

Kakao Expands Ride-Hailing Offerings

("Kakao Mobility Partners With Splyt to Expand Transportation App," May 13, 2022 via Phocus Wire)

Last week, South Korean mobile platform Kakao announced a new partnership with Splyt, which will expand the platform's ride hailing services to seven additional Asian countries. Users of the app can access taxis, private cars and motorcycles. Users of the expanded app will also have access to a variety of payment platforms, including micro payments.

Agoda Offers New Payment Alternative

("Agoda Partners With Visa to Offer Interest-Free Credit Card Instalments Across its Property Bookings," May 11, 2022 via Booking Holdings)

Last week, Agoda announced a new partnership with Visa to offer card holders in Asia Pacific the opportunity to pay for their bookings using interest free credit card installments. Initially, only holders of HSBC Bank Malaysia credits cards will be eligible to participate in the installment program, but Agoda and Visa expect to expand the offering across Asia through a number of additional issuing banks. Travelers using eligible cards will be presented this new installment option at checkout with a variety of available installment periods – all at no additional charge or fee. It will be interesting to see whether Visa's trial run with Agoda leads to a much broader relationship with Booking.com once (if ever) Booking's payment platform gains traction.

Airbnb Enables New Split Stay Functionality

("Airbnb Enables Split Stays" to Ease Inventory Woes," May 11, 2022 via Phocus Wire)

While we all know the havoc that the split stay practices of many of the large online platforms can cause traditional lodging providers (so much for length of stay pricing), Airbnb is publicly embracing the practice as part of its recent platform update. The new functionality will allow users to split stays of at least one week and up to six months. According to the Airbnb, the new

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functionality is being launched to help address supply challenges in key markets (which we have covered in several past Updates) for travelers seeking longer stays (according to Airbnb's recent earnings release, travelers seeking stays of one month or longer is its fastest growing travel category). How this new functionality might affect the pricing practices of short-term rental hosts and management companies remains to be seen.

Other news:

Expedia Group on “Deconstructing” Online Travel

May 13, 2022 via Phocus Wire

As part of its efforts to unify the disparate brands and technology under the Expedia Group umbrella, the online travel giant has introduced a new technology platform called Open World. Announced at Expedia Group's Explore partner event, the platform is designed for partners to leverage and configure products and services and contains an entire e-commerce suite, with components like payments, fraud, conversations and service.

Katanox Raises \$5.7 Million, Adds Expedia Exec Rob Torres to Board

May 13, 2022 via Phocus Wire

Katanox, an Amsterdam-based startup that facilitates direct B2B distribution of travel accommodations and payments, has raised \$5.7 million in a seed round. Investors in the round include Rappi and Yuno co-founder Juan Pablo Ortega; Jan Joost Kalff, co-founder of fintech Dimebox and current co-founder and CEO of Found; and Bas Blommaart, founder of hospitality tech iTesso.

The Department of Culture and Tourism - Abu Dhabi Partners with Top Global Travel Service Provider Trip.com Group

May 11, 2022 via PR Newswire – U.K.

The Department of Culture and Tourism – Abu Dhabi (DCT Abu Dhabi) has signed a strategic partnership with Trip.com Group, a leading global travel service provider, in an online ceremony at Arabian Travel Market. The partnership's social and economic initiatives will encourage and entice visitors worldwide to visit Abu Dhabi, promoting the U.A.E. capital as a top-tier travel destination in 13 markets across Asia and Europe, including in India, China, South Korea, Japan, U.S.A., U.K., Germany, France, and the Netherlands.

Airbnb is Launching its Biggest Redesign in a Decade. Travel May Never be the Same

May 11, 2022 via Fast Company

Tripadvisor. Expedia. Booking.com. Google. No matter where you begin the process of booking

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your next vacation, it's always the same: you type where you want to go into a search bar, then you choose your rental from the available options. And that's even been true for Airbnb, the gargantuan home-sharing platform that's booked 10 million years' worth of stays to date.

Tags: booking, mobile app, online group booking, Online Travel Agencies, OTAs, ridesharing, travel