

Duff on Hospitality Law

## **Online Travel Update: Are Cruise Passengers Ready to Book on Online Platforms?**

on 1.23.23

Our weekly Online Travel Update for the week ending January 20, 2023, is below. A new online cruise booking platform garnered most of the attention this past week, together with announcements regarding the continuing migration of group bookings to online platforms. Enjoy.

- **Are Cruise Passengers Ready to Book on Online Platforms?** [Cruisebound](#) says yes. This past week, Cruisebound, the first online platform dedicated exclusively to ocean cruising (on 14 different inaugural cruise lines), was officially launched. Historically, cruises have been thought to be too complicated to book online (e.g., multiple cabin types, fare codes, etc.). Because of these complications, traditional brick and mortar travel advisors have been the primary booking channels for most cruise lines. Cruisebound intends to change that. Backed by industry veterans, Jeff Boyd (Booking Holdings), Steve Kaufer (TripAdvisor) and Steve Singh (Concur) and led by the same team that founded Rocket Travel, Cruisebound hopes to attract first-time (younger) passengers through its easy-to-use online interface. Customers who require additional assistance will access to a team of travel consultants. In its initial testing, Cruisebound found that 91% of bookings were made via a mobile device and that the average age of customers was 36. Both statistics are appealing to cruise lines seeking to extend their passenger demographics. Cruisebound will earn its fees entirely through commissions paid by cruise lines and won't charge passengers booking fees.
- **Group Bookings Continue to Move Online.** Marriott and group booking platform, Groups360, announced this past week that 1500 Marriott properties in the United States and Canada will soon be available for online group bookings (both rooms and meeting space) through Groups360's "Instant Book" platform. Users of the platform will have real time access to hotels' rates and inventory. Although designed primarily for small meetings (i.e., 10-25 guestrooms on peak or meetings of 50 people), the platform also allows customers planning larger meetings to review hotels' available inventory before submitting an RFP.

Have a great week everyone. I hope to see many of you here in Seattle at HEDNA's annual conference.

**Are mobile cruise bookings on the rise? New OTA says yes**

*January 20, 2023 via Travel Weekly US - Top Stories*

A new cruise-focused online travel agency is betting its mobile-forward approach will enable success in attracting customers who have never cruised before. Cruisebound , which sells only ocean cruises, offers recommendations and helps demystify things that first-time cruisers could find confusing, like different fare codes and cabin types, said CEO ...

**A new OTA will pursue first-time cruisers**

*January 19, 2023 via [travelweekly.com](http://travelweekly.com)*

A new cruise-focused online travel agency, Cruisebound, launched Wednesday with former Booking Holdings CEO Jeff Boyd and Tripadvisor founder Steve Kaufer among the backers. Cruisebound is targeting new-to-cruise customers looking for deals, and has designed its user interface to be responsive on both mobile phones and desktop computers. It uses ...

**Marriott introduces Instant Booking for meetings and events**

*January 19, 2023 via [hotelbusiness.com](http://hotelbusiness.com)*

Marriott International and Groups360 have launched Instant Booking for Marriott's portfolio of hotels in the U.S. and Canada. Marriott is the first brand company to have a direct integration with Groups360 to offer the "Instant Book" functionality for both guestrooms and meeting space at scale on GroupSync Marketplace, according to ...

**Cvent to Integrate MeetingPackage Content for Instant Small Mtg. Booking**

*January 19, 2023 via Business Travel News*

Meetings technology company Cvent later this year will bring group booking provider MeetingPackage's 6,000-instant-availability venues into the Cvent Instant Book tool, the companies announced Tuesday. Through the partnership, Cvent customers will be able to book small and simple meetings with hotels and venues within MeetingPackage's network directly on Cvent's platform. ...