

Duff on Hospitality Law

## **Fall Frenzy: Updates on CA Resort Fee Legislation, Booking.com's Credit Card, and Emerging Corporate Booking Platforms**

By Greg Duff on 9.26.23 | Posted in Online Travel Update

We've found fall to be the busiest of all seasons in the online travel world as everyone returns to work from summer breaks and the dates of the major online travel conferences are fast approaching. As you can see from the long list of stories in this week's Update this fall is no different.

- **Resort Fee Updates.** Perhaps the biggest news this past week was out of California where previously discussed California legislation has made it to the California governor's desk for signature. Whether Governor Newsom will sign one or both of the new bills remains to be seen. Under the California legislation, it would be illegal to display a rate (or pricing generally) without including all mandatory fees and charges (excluding taxes). The legislation would apply to both hoteliers and online platforms and would require the display of total price to both listings (for properties wherever they may be) shown to travelers in CA and CA listings shown to those outside CA (which, practically, like in so many other contexts, will cause most hoteliers and platforms to convert to total price everywhere). Governor Newsome has until October 14 to sign or veto the bills. If the governor does nothing, both would become law by default. Other resort fee updates from this past week include Hilton's announced transition to displaying mandatory fees up front (exactly what that means remains to be seen). Hilton's announcement, like so many others, encouraged uniform treatment among hoteliers and their online platform counterparts. Also making news was Choice's announced settlement with state attorneys general in Pennsylvania, Colorado, Nebraska and Oregon. Under the settlement, Choice has agreed to move to total price by the end of 2023.
- **Booking.com to Launch U.S. Credit Card.** Many of last week's online travel headlines focused on Booking.com's "leaked" plans to launch a U.S. co-branded credit card. No one should be surprised by this announcement, particularly those that have spent any time considering the pros and cons of embracing Booking's payment platform. Booking.com's

financial partner for the card is unknown. With the launch of a co-branded credit card, Booking.com will be better positioned to leverage the many opportunities associated with its payment platforms include traveler credits, rebates and other traveler benefits.

- **MakeMyTrip's Corporate Booking Platform Making Progress.** While much of the attention regarding new corporate travel platforms goes to the larger, more established platforms, MakeMyTrip's corporate platform, MyBiz, has been quietly recording successes. With a goal to automate users' entire booking process (through generative AI and other technologies), the Indian platform now offers foreign and domestic flights, hotels, trains and cabs. In its four years of existence, the platform has already grown to over 50,000 users.
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### **Google increases its AI functionality for travel**

*September 22, 2023 via Travel Weekly*

Google is further integrating its generative artificial intelligence (AI) product, Bard, with its suite of apps and services, giving Bard the ability to answer more specific travel requests.

### **Hilton Says it Will 'Quickly' Move to Disclose Mandatory Fees**

*September 21, 2023 via Skift Travel News*

Hilton informed hotel owners on Thursday that it would “quickly” act to “ensure mandatory fees are displayed upfront on all Hilton websites and apps,” according to a message Skift obtained. Hilton on Monday wrote a letter to U.S. Senators Amy Klobuchar and Jerry Moran — co-sponsors of legislation to create ...

### **Settlement with Choice Hotels is AG Henry's Latest Action to Quash Hidden “Resort Fees” and “Drip Pricing” for Travelers**

*September 21, 2023 via Attorney General of Pennsylvania- Press Releases*

HARRISBURG — Attorney General Michelle Henry announced that her office has reached a multi-state settlement with Choice Hotels International, Inc. (“Choice”) regarding the disclosure of “resort fees” and “drip pricing” — practices that leave consumers with surprisingly larger bills at checkout.

### **Booking.com dominates review market share but is losing ground to Google**

*September 20, 2023 via Phocus Wire*

The Shiji Reviewpro Guest Experience Benchmark for Q2 2023 found overall consumer satisfaction with hotels is up but still trails 2019 levels.

### **Booking.com Is Launching a U.S. Credit Card – Who'll Be Its Partner?**

*September 20, 2023 via Skift*

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Booking.com hasn't announced a deal to launch a co-branded credit card in the U.S., but a LinkedIn post Tuesday by a relatively new employee and a job opening for "manager, co-branded credit card growth & strategy," provided grist for speculation. In the LinkedIn post, Jonathan Rossman, whose position is listed ...

### **Kayak, Tripadvisor on growing their in-house media studios**

*September 19, 2023 via Phocus Wire*

In the last two years both Kayak and Tripadvisor have created content studios that are becoming a growing part of their overall businesses and spurring plans for future investment.

### **MakeMyTrip's Corporate Travel Offering, MyBiz, Gains Traction**

*September 19, 2023 via Skift Travel News*

Skift Take Had it not been for quite a few differentiators, it would be impossible for MyBiz to surpass the 50,000-client user base mark within just four years of operations. Amrita Ghosh Share One of the segments that has started showing results for MakeMyTrip is its corporate travel platform, MyBiz. ...

### **Junk Fee Crackdown in California Would Hit Hotels and Short-Term Rentals**

*September 18, 2023 via Skift Travel News*

Skift Take California's proposed changes, if passed by mid-October, might impact how so-called junk fees are displayed nationwide. Many hotel companies and online travel agencies would likely seek uniform price displays across the U.S. for simplicity's sake. Sean O'Neill Share California legislators have passed two bills that could impact how ...