

# 2025 Travel Trends and Updates: AI's Impact, UK Travel Changes, and a Focus on Safety

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Good Sunday morning from Seattle . . . Our first Online Travel Update for 2025 is below. The past two weeks produced a number of interesting stories, including the Department of Justice's attempt to stop the planned Amex GBT / CWT merger, interesting predictions coming out of *Skift's* recent Megatrends events and valuable reminders for anyone looking to make major changes to their loyalty program. Enjoy.

- **Megatrends Conferences Produce Interesting Headlines and Other Important Considerations.** By now, most everyone has probably seen or read some of the predictions coming out of this past week's *Skift* Megatrends conferences in New York and London. Thomas Reiner, a partner at Altimeter Capital, believes that online travel platforms face a daunting future (and for metasearch sites, possible outright extinction) with the advent of AI powered search. According to Thomas, the advent of AI powered search tools will allow travelers to bypass traditional travel platforms and go direct to hotels and other travel suppliers. Kayak CEO, Steve Hafner, raised similar concerns about the future of existing travel sites and apps, though Steve suggested that a "major travel company" like Airbnb or Booking.com could be a big benefactor of AI by becoming one of the first platforms to successfully integrate an AI engine. While Steve's predictions about the likely effect of AI on traditional travel sites' futures received most of the headlines, other comments by Steve during his presentation caught our attention. Specifically, Steve's comment that Kayak was now making its "data" available to Google Gemini (Google's AI tool) raised a number of questions. Steve's comment combined with some recent discussions we've had with one of the largest online travel agents have caused us to begin re-examining our standard approaches with regard to IP licenses, confidentiality, privacy and data security and sales / marketing guidelines (e.g., SEO and SEM may soon fade away, but what comparable concepts will govern the use of AI tools and influence AI responses). For those of you wondering, paid advertisements are already a possibility on some AI platforms. This year may prove that AI and its effect and influence on travel was not just a bunch of hype. Stay tuned.
- **UK Adopts ETA Requirements.** So what, you ask? Unless you are traveling to the UK soon, why should you care about the recent adoption of new entry requirements for the UK? This past week, we were reminded that passport, visa and other entry requirements can have a huge effect on travelers' plans. Nothing like booking that dream resort stay only to be denied access to your flight (or entrance to your destination) because of the failure to produce needed visas or other authorizations. What obligations do travel platforms - or by extension, supplier websites - have to inform users or travelers of these requirements (or changes to these requirements)? It is an interesting question with no clear, absolute

answer. Disclaimers appear to work well and are often advised, but supplier websites rarely have the same set of robust booking terms and conditions found with travel platforms. It may be time to reconsider again your standard website terms and conditions or booking terms and conditions (if you have them).

To those of you effected by this week's horrible fires in Los Angeles, our thoughts and prayers are with you. Have a good week and be safe.

### **Justice Department Sues to Block Global Business Travel Group's Proposed Acquisition of CWT Holdings**

*January 10, 2025 via DOJ*

\$570M Acquisition Would Allow the World's Largest Travel Management Company to Eliminate its Second-Largest Rival, Limiting Travel Management Options for American Businesses The Justice Department filed a civil antitrust lawsuit today to stop Global Business Travel Group Inc. (Amex GBT), the largest business travel management company in the world, from ...

### **Altimeter Capital Partner Says AI Will Transform Travel Search: 'It's Already Happening'**

*January 8, 2025 via Skift Travel News*

Thomas Reiner says the best case scenario for online travel agencies is that they lose commissions. And metasearch engines could become things of the past. Thomas Reiner, partner of Altimeter Capital, believes that online travel agencies and metasearch engines are in trouble with the future of AI-generated search. ...

### **New UK entry rules: ETA now required for travellers from 54 countries**

*January 8, 2025 via Business Travel News Europe*

Travellers from 54 countries are now required to complete an online pre-travel check to enter the UK following the continued rollout of the country's Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) scheme. .

### **Kayak's CEO: First AI-Online Travel Deal Will Be Like 'A Dam Breaking'**

*January 7, 2025 via Skift Travel News*

There are huge stakes in how AI in travel will develop. And the truth is no one can say for certain at this point how it will play out. Kayak CEO Steve Hafner said he "fears" 2025 will see the first successful commercial agreement between an AI engine ...

### **5 Lessons from British Airways' Controversial Loyalty Program Changes**

*January 7, 2025 via Skift Travel News*

Last week, British Airways unleashed fury in some quarters with poorly received changes to its loyalty program. Here are five key learnings for other airlines considering a similar course. Share In Britain, the period between Christmas and New Year is usually a sleepy one. With many on vacation ...

### **Who Bought Whom in 2024**

*January 5, 2025 via Business Travel News*

The 2024 list of business travel mergers and acquisitions may not be as lengthy as some of those of the recent past, but it still includes some of the industry's heaviest hitters and some of its most storied names on the move.

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