

AI Takes Center Stage at Expedia Explore and Google I/O

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Good Monday afternoon from Seattle . . . For those of you celebrating and/or who have served, happy Memorial Day. Our weekly Online Travel Update for the week ending Friday, May 22, 2026, is below. Expedia Group and Google garnered much of the attention this past week as Expedia held its annual Explore event and Google held its annual I/O Developer Conference where advancements in online travel took center stage. Enjoy.

Expedia Explore 26 Highlights. Expedia's annual partner event this past week was the source of several announcements by the OTA behemoth.

- **Intelligent Experience Platform.** Among its many announcements, Expedia announced the launch of an AI toolkit, which among other things, includes a soon to be available MCP server to improve Expedia's B2B partners' access and use of Expedia's content. With the MCP server offering, Expedia can power partners' own AI travel experiences.
- **New Meta Partnership.** Not to be outdone by TikTok's recently announced travel partnerships for its TikTok GO platform, Meta (and Expedia) announced a new partnership this past week through which users of Meta's social media platforms can begin planning a travel itinerary or ask travel specific questions while using the popular platforms.

Booking Holdings to Soon to Consolidate Ad Sales Across Its Three OTA Platforms. For years now, Booking.com, Agoda and Priceline have rejected clients' efforts to consolidate commercial terms, arguing that the three platforms are entirely separate and distinct. That may no longer be true as Booking Holdings announced last week the launch of BKNG Ads, a platform for customers to work with a single ad team to purchase and place advertising across all three platforms. Suppliers, it may soon be time to reconsider your advertising commitments to any one of the three platforms and explore how this latest announcement might affect your annual marketing commitment.

Hotels Are Next Industry Vertical for Google UCP. In a series of announcements (including blog posts) this past week, Google officially acknowledged that its agentic commercial infrastructure (UCP) would soon be available to those seeking (via agents) to book travel. Hints at the move were made public weeks ago, but this past week the move became official. Agent Payments Protocol, Google's payment layer, is expected to be part of the same rollout. Timing for the expansion wasn't announced. Partners featured in the announcements include Expedia Group, Booking.com, Wyndham, Marriott, Choice and IHG.

Have a great week everyone.

Expedia to Launch Agentic AI Tools for B2B Partners

May 21, 2026 via Skift

Expedia hasn't said much publicly about when its B2B MCP server will arrive. Now an executive says it's expected in months - a key step toward letting partners' AI agents connect directly to Expedia's travel inventory.

Booking Holdings to Sell Ads Across All Three OTA Brands for the First Time

May 21, 2026 via Skift

Booking Holdings' brands are giving up a little of their independence when a single team handles ads across all three OTAs.

Google Names Hotels as Next Vertical for Agentic Shopping

May 20, 2026 via Skift

Google has been building toward agentic hotel booking in plain sight. Now it's said so out loud.

Airbnb's Updates Build Towards Wider Personalization and Community Ambitions

May 20, 2026 via PhocusWire

Airbnb continues to build out its Experiences and Services business lines alongside app updates as it strives to provide more to users-and in a personalized way.

A New Generation of Ads for the AI Era of Search

May 20, 2026 via Google

People come to Google to research complex topics and discover products and services that fit their needs. As the Search experience becomes smarter and more conversational, we're using Gemini models to experiment with new ad experiences designed to provide engaging, helpful answers that connect people with businesses.

How We're Helping Retailers Thrive with New Universal Commerce Protocol Features and AI Tools on Google

May 20, 2026 via Google

We're introducing UCP-powered features and AI tools to create a more intuitive, agentic shopping experience on Google for consumers and retailers.

Expedia Group Expands Meta Partnership Amid Push to Connect Social, Booking

May 19, 2026 via PhocusWire

Expedia Group is partnering with Meta on in-feed travel planning as it expands its B2B strategy and seeks to meet travelers wherever they may be searching and booking travel.

[Expedia at 30, the Inside Story: Online Travel Giant Navigates its Third Tech Disruption](#)

May 19, 2026 via [GeekWire](#)

From her office overlooking the atrium at Expedia Group's sunlit headquarters campus on the Seattle waterfront, CEO Ariane Gorin puts the online travel giant's 30-year history into three chapters, each tied to a major inflection point in the evolution of technology.

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