

Google's €890 Million Penalty Has Travel's Attention

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Good Sunday afternoon from Seattle . . . Our weekly Online Travel Update for the week ending Friday, July 24, 2026, is below. Everything Google dominated the industry's headlines this past week and hoteliers (particularly those with a significant presence in the EU, UK, Australia and perhaps beyond) need to take notice. I explain why below. Enjoy.

EU Commission Fines Alphabet (Google). For some time now, we've waited to hear Google's fate regarding its alleged self-preferencing in traditional search, which according to the EU Commission, violated the EU's Digital Markets Act (DMA). For months, Google and some of the largest travel industry members have engaged in discussions regarding proposed changes to Google's search results, discussions that failed to satisfy anyone, including most notably the EU Commission. Perhaps growing impatient, the EU Commission on Thursday fined Alphabet (Google's parent) approximately \$525 million for alleged self-preferencing of its own services (including travel industry services) in search results (together with another approximately \$500 million for app store practices). A copy of the EU Commission's press release explaining the decision and fine is linked below. Those most heralding the decision include members of EU Travel Tech – Kayak (Booking Holdings), Trivago (Expedia) and TripAdvisor. Google now has 60 days to comply (Google is apparently engaged in further tests now) or face periodic penalties of 5% of its worldwide revenue. Google can also appeal the decision and fine in court.

So why does this matter?

- **EU Regulators Won't Be Bullied by U.S. Administration.** Recall the many stories we've featured over the past year detailing threats made by members of the Trump administration and/or U.S. congressman against the EU regarding its allegedly overbearing regulation of U.S. technology companies. Clearly, those threats proved ineffective and in a week where many Europeans saw the unexplained reinstatement of trade tariffs, what do EU regulators really have to lose?
- **Effects of the Decision Will Be Felt Beyond the EU.** There is every reason to believe that the EU's view and handling of this issue will be shared by regulators outside the EU, including in the UK, Australia and New Zealand and perhaps beyond. Practically, this means that whatever solution is ultimately reached between Google and the EU Commission is likely to affect hoteliers (and other travel industry suppliers) and aggregators beyond just the EU.
- **The EU Commission's Views Extend Beyond Traditional Search.** In its press release, the EU Commission noted that in evaluating Google's latest proposals, it intends to monitor how Google's proposals will be applied to Google's AI products - AI Overviews and AI Mode.

- **Aggregators, Not Hoteliers, Stand to Benefit Most from This Decision.** Yes, that's right. To date, discussions with, and now the decision by, the EU Commission suggests that its efforts against Google's self-preferencing of its hotel products (i.e., aggregated hotel listings) will favor competing aggregators (Expedia, Booking.com, etc.), not suppliers themselves. If the EU Commission is most concerned with ensuring equal treatment among Google competitors, at least those most similar to Google, it is aggregators and not suppliers that will receive the most benefit from mandated changes to search. Applying this approach to popular AI platforms (AI Overviews and AI Mode) only accentuates the possible risk to hoteliers resulting from the EU Commission's ongoing efforts. Hoteliers, pay attention.

A Brief History of Hotel Taxes. Ever curious about the origination of hotel taxes and how those taxes are used (which has increasingly become a point of contention at state and local levels)? Rafat's piece from *Skift* provides a really helpful overview. Thank you

Have a great week everyone.

[EU Claims Google Buries Travel Rivals in Search as Part of \\$525 Million Fine](#)

July 23, 2026 via Skift

Brussels has spent a decade litigating who sits atop the results page. This fine won't settle it. Expect the fight to drag on.

[Google Fined €890M by European Regulator in DMA Breaches](#)

July 23, 2026 via PhocusWire

The European Commission has fined Google €460 million for not complying with the Digital Markets Act (DMA) by preferencing its own services in search.

[EU Travel Companies Urge More Google Concessions on Self-Preferencing](#)

July 23, 2026 via MLex

A trade group of online travel companies has demanded Google come forward swiftly with more proposals to end self-preferencing in how it displays search results. Welcoming an EU fine imposed on Google under the Digital Markets Act, EU Travel Tech said ...

[Commission Fines Google €890 Million for Breaches of the Digital Markets Act](#)

July 22, 2026 via European Commission

Today, the European Commission took two decisions finding non-compliance by Google with the Digital Markets Act (DMA) for self-preferencing its own services on Google Search, and for putting in place restrictions on businesses to direct consumers to alternative, often cheaper, purchase channels on Google Play (steering).

[Google Is Ending Third-Party Hotel Rates. Here's What It Means for Your Hotel](#)

July 22, 2026 via Hotel News Resource

Google will stop showing third-party hotel rates in its search results, requiring hotels and online travel

agencies to adjust their digital distribution and metasearch advertising approaches to maintain visibility and direct bookings.

[The Quiet Reinvention of the Hotel Tax](#)

July 21, 2026 via Skift

The modern American hotel tax was built on one Las Vegas idea from 1955. The argument now is over who controls the money.

[EU Digital ID Initiatives Gather Momentum, User Familiarity Lags](#)

July 20, 2026 via PhocusWlre

The European Digital Identity (EUDI) Wallet has been gaining traction as members states across Europe implement the eIDAS 2.0 regulation. By the end of 2026, countries must provide an EUDI Wallet to citizens, enabling them to store and share credentials such as drivers' licenses.

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