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Online Travel Update: Airbnb's blockbuster IPO arrives with \$100 billion valuation; Expedia dismisses launch of Google's Travel Insights; RVs gain popularity as new mode of accommodation and travel

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Last week's news headlines were dominated with a major milestone in the short-term rental industry as Airbnb's long-awaited IPO finally arrived. While many will continue to debate Airbnb's initial valuation, one thing is clear: Having just raised \$3.5 billion in the public markets, Airbnb has formally arrived. It presents formidable competition to the two current online travel behemoths, Expedia Group and Booking Holdings.

[**Airbnb's IPO Was Really, Really Big**](#)

(Airbnb valued at \$100 billion following blockbuster IPO - equivalent of more than five Expedias, December 10, 2020 via GeekWire)

Airbnb priced its IPO at \$68 per share. Shares closed on the opening day at \$144.71. The closing share price translated to a \$100.7 billion market valuation - five times Expedia's market valuation (closed at \$18.4 billion) and greater than the combined value market values of Marriott, Hilton and Hyatt. Founded in 2008, Airbnb now features four million hosts offering accommodations around the world. For the first nine months of 2020, Airbnb posted revenues of \$2.5 billion (compared to Expedia's \$4.2 billion) and losses of \$696 million (compared to Expedia's \$2.2 billion loss). Let the debate begin.

[**Expedia Yawns as Google Launches Data-Driven Tools for APAC Hoteliers**](#)

(Expedia CEO Shrugs Off Google's New Data Tools as Competitive Threat, December 9, 2020 via Skift Travel News) (subscription may be required)

Last week, Google announced the launch of Travel Insights, two data-driven tools for destinations and

hoteliers located in Asia-Pacific. The two tools - Destination Insights and Hotel Insights - use Google search data to help customers and non-customers track real-time traveler demand. Seeking to capitalize on the more advanced COVID-19 recovery in Asia, Google chose to make the free tools available first to destinations and hotels in Asia-Pacific. The industry response...Last week, speaking at a press conference at Expedia's annual partner conference, Expedia CEO, Peter Kern, wasn't buying into the hype surrounding the Google launch. According to Peter, Expedia would always be better positioned to provide its partners valuable data - data about actual transactions versus mere searches and clicks.

Here Come the RVs. Yes, I said RVs

*(RVs and the Open Road Inspire a New Work-From-Anywhere Generation, December 11, 2020 via Skift)
(subscription may be required)*

Why am I including a story on RVs' growing popularity in our weekly Online Travel Update? I include the story simply to underscore a point we make frequently (even before the pandemic began). Travel is changing. Travel is not going away (contrary to predictions early in the pandemic). Armed with easy access to, and use of, online platforms (which make offering and booking everything from cars to boats to RVs to vacation homes possible), travelers can choose among a multitude of new accommodations, modes of travel, activities and experiences. Add a pandemic to the mix (and the resulting need and ability to work just about anywhere) and travelers are now gravitating - perhaps only temporarily - to those new accommodations, modes of travel, activities and experiences that present the lowest perceived health risk while still allowing daily life to continue. For some, RVs and the open roads appear to satisfy both needs.

Other news:

Expedia: One in Two Travelers Optimistic About Taking Trip in Next Year

December 11, 2020 via Hotel Business - News

On the second day of its annual partner conference, Explore '20, Expedia Group revealed key considerations shaping travel decisions in 2021 and demonstrated technology enhancements to help travelers and partners make informed decisions and complete tasks.

Accommodation Experiences in a New COVID-19 World – STR

December 8, 2020 via Hotel News Resource

The period from July to September of 2020, defined by some as the summer of the staycation, was a time of relative freedom during which travelers around the world were able to resume leisure trips dependent on local restrictions and personal choices. The UNWTO's tourism and COVID-19 briefing note in September reported that travelers in the current environment are considering shorter trips and destinations closer to home, at least in part, due to restrictions which have hampered international travel.

GlobalData: Travelers May Choose Direct Booking Over OTAs Post-Pandemic

December 9, 2020 via Hotel Business

Online travel agents (OTAs) were the primary choice of booking channel for 44 percent of global respondents in Q3 2019, according to GlobalData, a data and analytics company. However, disputed refund

policies, coupled with a lack of efficient customer service, give leading service providers an opportunity to boost direct bookings in post-pandemic travel.

Google Launches Free "Living" Data Tools for Destinations and Hoteliers in APAC

August 12, 2020 via WIT

Google is leveraging the power of its search data to launch today Travel Insights with Google, two free real-time tools to help destinations and hoteliers understand live demand patterns and respond in an informed and tactical manner to customers.

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