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Duff on Hospitality Law

Online Travel Update: EU's Proposed Changes to Traveler Rights, Massachusetts Joins States Looking to Ban Junk Fees and a Crescendo in the Clash Between Ryanair and OTAs

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Our weekly Online Travel Update for the week ending December 1, 2023, is below. This week's Update features of variety of stories - resort fees, potential new EU traveler regulations and Ryanair's continued pursuit of OTAs. Enjoy.

- **New Traveler Rights Proposed in EU.** Privacy and data security, competition and now, traveler rights . . . Our friends at the EU Commission have been busy. The latest from the EU Commission proposes changes to existing traveler regulations, including free air travel for those accompanying persons with disabilities, deposit limitations on package travel and guaranteed refunds for expired travel vouchers. We will continue to keep an eye on these proposed changes in the months ahead.
- **Add Massachusetts to List of States Seeking to Regulate So-Called Junk Fees.** Not to be outdone by her contemporaries in California, Massachusetts Attorney General Andrea Joy Campbell announced this past week new regulations requiring hoteliers (and others) to display the "true" price of a night's stay. The proposed regulations will now be the subject of a public hearing on December 20, after which the AG can decide whether to move forward with putting the regulations into effect with or without changes coming out of the public comments. My bet is on the rules becoming effective.
- **Ryanair's War with OTAs Continues.** In the latest salvo in the ongoing war between Ryanair and OTAs, Ryanair's CEO called out those OTAs that allegedly charge travelers "unjustified fees and charges." OTAs making the illustrious list include Kiwi.com, lastminute.com, Opodo and eDreams. Ryanair went on to accuse the UK's Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) and Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) of ignoring OTAs' "rampant internet piracy and anti-consumer mis-selling." Earlier this year, some of the largest OTAs (Expedia and Booking.com) sent letters to these same UK authorities accusing Ryanair of "invasive, unnecessary and unfair treatment" of their customers. So, what's the real motivation behind these complaints by Ryanair? Is it simply a bizarre form of direct booking campaign? Or is someone finally drawing a line with certain OTAs and calling out their practices? Are there lessons here for hoteliers?

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- **Who Says Amazon Isn't into Travel?** Just ask American Airlines, IHG, Choice and Carnival Cruise Lines, all of which participated in Amazon's self-proclaimed first-ever Cyber Week Travel Deals. Users interested in the marketed offers were re-directed to the applicable supplier's website to complete the booking.

European Commission Proposes Enhanced Traveler Rights

November 30, 2023 via Skift

The European Commission has proposed revisions that would bolster traveler rights and protections. Here are some highlights: Persons With Disabilities: If an airline requires they travel accompanied, the person accompanying them will fly with them free of charge.

Trip.com Signs Multiyear Deal with Amazon Web Services For AI Tools

November 30, 2023 via Skift Travel News

This is one of the more significant announcements AWS made during a big news-making conference this week in Las Vegas.

$25 'convenience fees' on your concert tickets or hotel bill? Attorney General Campbell wants 'junk' charges outlawed.

November 30, 2023 via Boston Globe

Many consumers get an unwelcome surprise when they see a fee tacked on to their online purchase or their hotel bill. Examples abound: a $30 "resort fee" added to a lodging bill, a $25 "convenience fee" on concert tickets, a $30 "upgrade fee" for cell phone service.

Hopper's Lalonde talks profits, Expedia split, Booking.com competition

November 29, 2023 via Phocus Wire

In a far-ranging interview at The Phocuswright Conference, Lalonde also spoke of Hopper's layoffs and his "hacker" approach to business.

Updated: Ryanair steps up campaign against OTAs

November 29, 2023 via Travel Weekly

Ryanair today stepped up its war of words against online travel agencies by listing firms the budget airline claims are overcharging consumers. The carrier released data for November identifying Kiwi.com, lastminute.com, Opodo and eDreams for adding "unjustified fees and charges".

Amazon Debuts Cyber Week Travel Deals

November 24, 2023 via Skift

Amazon launched what one executive said was its "first-ever" Cyber Week Travel Deals. Amazon's travel deals hub offered sales from the likes of American Airlines, Disney, Universal, Budget, Choice, Avis, IHG and Carnival, for example.

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Posted in Online Travel Update

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