Foster Garvey

Duff on Hospitality Law

Online Travel Update: Trump Administration bans Alipay; JetBlue withholds flight information from Fareportal; outdoor booking startup Hipcamp connects landowners with campers

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This week's Update features a variety of stories (all of which pale in comparison to the tumultuous events last week in Washington, D.C.), including two stories about the recent antitrust claims brought by Fareportal against JetBlue for its refusal to allow Fareportal to distribute JetBlue's fares and flight content. Enjoy.

Trump Administration Bans Alipay

("Trump bars U.S. transactions with eight Chinese apps including Alipay," January 6, 2021 via Reuters)

Citing concerns over Chinese access to certain sensitive personal information, last week, the Trump administration issued an Executive Order banning transactions with eight Chinese applications, including the popular mobile payment applications Alipay and WeChat pay. The Order requires the U.S. Commerce Department to identify the types of transactions banned by the Order within 45 days. What effect the Order might have following the remaining 10 days of the Trump presidency is unknown. Joe Biden, the President-elect, who could revoke the Order immediately upon taking office, has not commented on the Order or more generally on the alleged Chinese trade abuses. Should the ban remain in place, it could pose potential challenges to those hotel companies that rely heavily on the mobile payment applications for bookings and other products and services in China.

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JetBlue Withholds Flight Information

("JetBlue calls Fareportal antitrust lawsuit "frivolous," January 8, 2021 via Phocus Wire; "JetBlue draws US antitrust complaint from Fareportal over withholding of flight information," January 6, 2021 via MLEX Insight) (subscription may be required)

Last week, Fareportal, parent company of both CheapOAir and One Travel, filed suit in New York federal court alleging JetBlue's refusal to provide the OTA (online travel agency) with fare and flight information violates U.S. antitrust laws. Following expiration of the parties' distribution agreement on January 5, JetBlue required that the OTA remove its fares and flight information. According to Fareportal, JetBlue's refusal to provide the critical flight information is motivated by its desire to limit the distribution of (and accordingly, to raise fares on) the routes that it dominates, which Fareportal claims ultimately harms consumers. Fareportal is allegedly one of several OTAs (other than Expedia and Priceline) that has had access to JetBlue's fares and flights terminated in recent months, as JetBlue has been seeking to direct travelers to its own websites. JetBlue has responded that the claims are frivolous.

Have a Vacant Field to Share? Hipcamp Has a Solution

("Hipcamp Raises $57 Million for Campsite Bookings as Outdoor Travel Trend Booms: Report," January 9, 2021 via Skift) (subscription may be required)

Ever wonder what to do with the "back forty" that you never use? Hipcamp can help. Hipcamp is an online platform that connects landowners with camps (think what "Airbnb" did for the rarely used mother-in-law apartment). Last week, Hipcamp announced that it raised $57 million in its recently closed Series C financing round. This latest round values Hipcamp at $300 million. Hipcamp hopes to ultimately appeal to both vacant landowners (with little or no campground experience) and professional campground owners and operators. Competitors in the space include Pitchup (campground rental booking engine) and Yescampa (camper rental booking engine).

Other news:

Reimagining Travel the Journey Beyond 2020 By Trip.com

January 8, 2021 via Travel Daily News

A sign of times to come, Asia-Pacific's limited travel recovery can be seen as eluding to trends that emerged over the last decade. All crises accelerate existing trends. According to the World Economic Forum (WEF), by 2030, Asia is expected to contribute roughly 60 percent of global growth, and that Asia-Pacific will be home to the overwhelming majority (90 percent) of the 2.4 billion new members of the middle class entering the global economy.

The Wrap: IATA Travel Pass Set for Q1 Release, Biglife Introduces a New Name and New Look, and More

January 6, 2021 via WIT

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) is set to release the IATA Travel Pass in Q1 of 2021, a mobile app that the association said would "help reconnect our world safely." According to IATA, the app will help travelers easily and securely manage their travel in line with any government requirements for

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COVID-19 testing or vaccine information. It is developed for both Android and the iPhone.

Southwest, Sabre Reach Content Agreement

January 4, 2021 via travelweekly.com

After two years of negotiation, Southwest Airlines and Sabre Corp. have agreed on a full-participation distribution agreement, meaning Sabre customers will have access to Southwest content. Southwest content will be available on Sabre's global distribution system (GDS) for travel management companies, corporations and government agencies beginning in 2021.

Posted in Online Travel Update

Tagged as travel, Travel and Technology

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