

The EU's Green Transition Directive Reaches Hotel and Travel Marketing

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Good Monday morning from Seattle . . . And for those of you in the U.S. enjoying the long holiday weekend (and unofficial end of summer), happy Labor Day. We are back from a short August break and include below our Update for the week ending Friday, September 4, 2026. This week's Update includes stories from the past several weeks, including the much publicized Google launch of "agentic" hotel booking. The most important story, however, relates to the EU's soon to be effective (September 27, 2026) Green Transition Directive, which affects nearly any hotel (or travel platform) involved in environment (green) marketing. Enjoy.

EU's Green Transition Directive to Take Effect This Month. By now, many of you have likely received notice of the soon to be effective Green Transition Directive (Directive (EU) 2024/825), which bans misleading environmental claims. Our initial summary of the Directive is below. We've also included links to the Directive below together with the EU Commission's Q&A.

- Hotels' environmental or sustainability claims must now be backed by demonstrated (objective) performance or a legitimate third-party certification. Hotels are not required to obtain a green certification.
- If a hotel makes no "green" claim, nothing changes with the Directive.
- Penalties for non-compliance can be severe - up to 4% of annual EU turnover (revenue).
- Non-EU hotels (including U.S. hotels) are implicated because the Directive purports to apply to any claim that an EU traveler can view or book regardless of the hotels' location.
- Hotels have a few options: (1) Replace broad environmental or sustainability claims with specific, factual statements (no more use of "eco-friendly"), (2) Obtain a recognized third-party certification (broader claims are permitted if backed with a recognized certification) and/or (3) Say nothing about environmental or sustainability efforts, features, etc.

Airbnb Names New Chief Business Officer. Airbnb's seeming push to become a more traditional OTA took a major step last week with the announced hiring of former TripAdvisor and Booking.com executive, Pepijn Rijvers, as the platform's new Chief Business Officer effective September 1. Rijvers' addition makes official the Booking.com reunion occurring at the platform as Rijvers is the third Booking.com hotel alum to join the platform in the past 6 months. Does Rijvers' arrival mean that the platform is now planning to add large branded or managed hotel portfolios, only time will tell.

Expedia vs. Booking Holdings. Let the B2B business bragging rights battle begin. As suppliers to the well-known Expedia B2B program tire of the program's many shortcomings (e.g., lack of transparency, high cost of entrance and cannibalistic channel practices), Booking Holdings' (or any alternative B2B program seeking to solve these shortcomings) market position may only become stronger.

Google's AI Mode Travel Solution Is Here. By now, most everyone has read the many announcements detailing Google's latest foray into online travel - its agentic travel booking solution. So what is this solution and what does it mean to the online travel industry? A series of questions and author's opinions for your consideration. (1) True agentic travel as first envisioned a year or two ago? Definitely not yet. (2) Industry game changer? Not likely. Until contribution levels from these AI tools begin to exceed the (very) low single digits, my opinion will remain the same. (3) Critical component of participants' messaging to constituents to demonstrate AI savviness? Most likely. Shareholders and owners likely benefit most from these efforts (and are most likely to query a party's absence from the accompanying press releases). (4) Another example of how the DMA and Google's ongoing compliance efforts could ultimately hinder those they are intended to protect (EU hoteliers and guests). Most definitely.

Have a great week.

[Fake 10 Downing Street Listing Exposes 'Unfit' Booking.com, Says Consumer Group](#)

September 2, 2026 via BBC

Consumer group Which? says it was able to create a fake listing for 10 Downing Street on travel giant Booking.com.

[Airbnb Names Tripadvisor Exec Pepijn Rijvers Chief Business Officer](#)

September 1, 2026 via PhocusWire

Airbnb has named Pepijn Rijvers chief business officer, effective Sept. 1. Rijvers was most recently CBO of Tripadvisor Group, having initially joined the company in April 2025 as president of Viator.

[EU Directive on Empowering Consumers for the Green Transition](#)

New EU requirements taking effect September 27, 2026, will impact how hotels, travel companies and online travel platforms present environmental and sustainability claims to consumers. The Commission has also recently published a [Q&A](#) addressing common questions about the new requirements.

[Airbnb is Making Us Rethink What a 'Direct Booking' Really Means](#)

August 30, 2026 via PhocusWire

Airbnb is testing a new "direct booking link" with selected hosts, and it immediately made me question what we even mean by "direct" anymore.

[Booking Holdings vs. Expedia in B2B: Bombshell Estimate Says Booking Leads in Room Nights](#)

August 28, 2026 via Skift

No matter how you parse the numbers, Booking Holdings' B2B business appears to be a lot larger than the travel industry previously understood. Its in-process reorganization could have significant implications for OTA competition.

[Book a Hotel with Expedia and Hotels.com through AI Mode in Google Search](#)

August 28, 2026 via Expedia

Starting today, travelers in the U.S. can book a hotel with Expedia and Hotels.com through AI Mode in Google Search, making it easier to go from trip planning to a confirmed stay in one easy conversation.

[What Hotelbeds' Shrinking Margins Mean for Hotel Distribution](#)

August 28, 2026 via Skift

Hotelbeds became the dominant independent bed bank through scale. Its results now show that scale alone no longer protects the economics.

[Hotel Booking Goes Live in Google's AI Mode, Flights Still Waiting](#)

August 27, 2026 via PhocusWire

When Google previewed agentic travel booking last November, it said the booking flow, payments and other specifics were still being worked out and offered no launch timeline. Most of those answers arrived today.

[Booking.com Targeted by Proposed UK Mass Action Over Commission Rates](#)

August 21, 2026 via MLex

Online travel booking portal Booking.com is being targeted by a proposed UK mass action over alleged anticompetitive commission rates charged to hotel operators, according to a summary of the claim.

Posted in [Online Travel Update](#)

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