

Travel Tech Trends: Perplexity's Booking Leap, Airbnb Incentives & AI-Powered Planning

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Good Sunday morning from Seattle . . . Our weekly Online Travel Update for the week ending Friday, March 28, 2025, is below. This week's Update features stories on a variety of topics including Perplexity's big booking announcement, HotelTonight's introduction of Airbnb's first ever "discounts" and two perspectives on Booking.com's budding partnership with OpenAI. I hope you enjoy.

- **Booking a Hotel Now Possible Through an AI Search Engine.** Clunky, yes, but Perplexity's new booking platform is a big step. Perplexity announced last week that it has partnered with TripAdvisor and [Selfbook](#) to launch the first AI search engine booking platform. In response to natural language searches, users of AI search engine will receive a list of hotel properties created from content provided by TripAdvisor. Users selecting one of the roughly 140,000 properties on Selfbook's booking and payment platform will be able to book and pay for their booking without leaving Perplexity. Users selecting properties not on Selfbook's platform will be re-directed to third-party websites like Skyscanner (part of the Trip.com group) to complete the booking. Today, the booking option is only available to website users, though a mobile solution is on its way. The jury is still out on whether these AI search based booking options pose a greater threat to existing intermediaries (OTAs) or suppliers (e.g., who is ultimately providing the bookable inventory). History has shown that the tech savvy intermediaries (armed with billion dollar marketing budgets) are usually the first to leverage these new technologies.
- **HotelTonight Introduces First Airbnb Discount.** Users of Airbnb's hotel booking platform, HotelTonight, will receive a credit (10% of the HotelTonight rate) toward a future Airbnb stay. The credits remain valid for one year following the HotelTonight stay and are automatically applied to users' Airbnb accounts.
- **Two Perspectives on OpenAI's Relationship with Booking.com.** In two separate stories last week, *Skift* presented the views of first OpenAI and then Booking.com on the two companies' budding relationship. Here are the highlights:
 - ■ OpenAI is currently working with several clients, including Booking.com, to build industry specific applications based on the same large language model (LLM) that powers ChatGPT.

- ○ ■ OpenAI has no current plans to specialize in any particular industry (like travel), but it uses travel (like other industries) to improve its general application platform. Travel is one of the primary use cases used to test updates to OpenAI's software.
- ○ ■ OpenAI's agentic products (like Operator) may soon be part of the parties' growing relationship.
- ○ ■ According to Booking.com, users of its booking platform are starting to change their search behavior and including AI generated summaries as part of their booking process.
- ○ ■ Booking.com's current efforts are largely focused on its trip planner, which it launched in 2023, though it also exploring possible uses of agentic platforms (like OpenAI's Operator).

Have a great week everyone.

Perplexity partners with Selfbook, Tripadvisor to offer hotel booking

March 28, 2025 via Travel Weekly

Artificial intelligence-powered answer engine Perplexity has launched a feature in collaboration with Selfbook and Tripadvisor that enables users to book hotels natively on Perplexity.

Perplexity Can Now Book Hotels: What Our Tests Show

March 27, 2025 via Skift Travel News

The announcement is a first among competitors like ChatGPT and Google's Gemini. Share Users can now book hotels directly within the AI search engine Perplexity. The announcement is a first among competitors like ChatGPT and Google's Gemini. These platforms have shared hotel links for a while, but they've ...

Google updates AI capabilities for travel tools

March 27, 2025 via Phocus Wire

Users will soon be able to use a new price tracking feature for hotels via Google Search and turn on a new "screenshots" feature in Google Maps.

How Influencers are Driving the Future of Hotel Bookings: Unpacking the 2025 Influencer Travel Study

March 27, 2025 via Hotel News Resource

The TravelBoom 2025 Influencer Travel Study reveals that 28% of travelers book hotels based on influencer recommendations, signaling a revolutionizing shift in hotel marketing strategies. In the digital age, the traditional ways of influencing travel decisions are being reshaped.

HotelTonight launches new Perk: earn Airbnb credit with every hotel stay

March 26, 2025 via airbnb Citizen

HotelTonight is unveiling a new benefit as part of its HT Perks program for travelers in the U.S. and the U.K. Guests can now earn Airbnb credit when booking through HotelTonight. For each booked stay, users will earn 10% of the booking value in Airbnb credit - delivering even ...

[Exclusive: HotelTonight Launches Airbnb's First Discount Program](#)

March 26, 2025 via *Skift Travel News*

Could this Airbnb-HotelTonight collaboration portend greater integration between the two and even signal the start of an Airbnb loyalty program? Share In a first for Airbnb, U.S. and UK users can now earn a 10% credit toward a stay or experience when they book a hotel on sister ...

[A US federal judge rejects OpenAI's request to dismiss the NYT's lawsuit, allowing the main copyright infringement claims to go forward while narrowing the suit](#)

March 26, 2025 via *Techmeme.com*

A federal judge on Wednesday rejected OpenAI's request to toss out a copyright lawsuit from The New York Times that alleges ... More: Axios and Bloomberg Law Michael Kozlowski / Good e-Reader: A software update for some Amazon Kindle models lets users double-tap the sides ...

[Booking.com and AI, Now vs. 2023: Tech Chief Explains What's Changed, What's Next](#)

March 25, 2025 via *Skift Travel News*

Users may not rely on AI to plan a trip from start to finish, but they're becoming more likely to consult it at some point during the process. Has Booking.com revolutionized travel since releasing its AI trip planner in 2023? No. But, have users changed their behavior? They're ...

[OpenAI Engineer Talks Travel and Working with Booking.com](#)

March 21, 2025 via *Skift Travel News*

Users are becoming more likely to use AI during the trip planning process, but it'll take more time before they're comfortable with AI taking control from start to finish. -Justin Dawes

[Direct Travel Aims to Lead TMC 'Evolution, Revolution'](#)

March 21, 2025 via *Business Travel News*

Direct Travel CEO Christal Bemont is nearing her first anniversary at the helm of Direct Travel, having taken the leadership position when a group of investors led by corporate travel entrepreneur Steve Singh acquired the travel management company.

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