

When Travel Gets Personal: Digital IDs Lift Off and Airbnb Takes on Two Fronts

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Good Sunday morning from Seattle . . . Our weekly Online Travel Update for the week ending Friday, November 14, 2025, is below. This week's Update features a variety of stories, including Apple's recent Digital ID announcement. As promised last week, we've also included a copy of the transcript from last week's Expedia earnings call. Finally, for our readers under the age of 18, you may want to consult with your parents before proceeding. Enjoy (but not too much).

Apple Announces New Digital ID Functionality. On Wednesday, Apple announced Digital ID, a new feature that allows iPhone users the opportunity to use digitally stored passport information to pass through TSA checkpoints without a physical passport of identification. Today, the functionality is limited to U.S. domestic travel (12 states and 250 airports (with more on the way)) and cannot yet be used for international border crossings. With important digital ID changes coming to the EU in the next few years, expect to see more about digital IDs in upcoming Updates.

Airbnb Sues Over Alleged Conspiracy Against Short Term Rentals. This past week, Airbnb sued the City of Biloxi, Mississippi, in federal court alleging that the City illegally conspired with the Mississippi Hotel & Lodging Association to severely limit short term rentals and thereby raise the Association's members' (local hoteliers) profits in violation of state and federal anti-trust law. According to Airbnb's complaint, the Association, through its illegal conspiracy with the City, has prohibited short term rentals in large sections of the City, severely restricted short term rentals in others and inserted itself in unprecedented ways into the review and approval of new short term rentals applications. For those of you interested, a copy of the complaint is linked in the story below.

Airbnb Launches Hotel Pilot. Airbnb is moving ahead with its previously announced plans to re-enter the hotel industry. Airbnb has launched a pilot program in three cities - New York, Los Angeles and Madrid - where restrictive short term rental regulations have severely limited inventory. For now, the pilot is focused on independent and boutique hotels. Recent changes to the Airbnb platform now allow users to view room types and other detailed property information (unlike Airbnb's first foray into hotels) like more traditional hotel booking platforms. According to Airbnb CEO, Brian Chesky, the addition of hotels presents a multi-billion dollar opportunity that won't be dilutive to its existing short term rental business. Chesky further believes that Airbnb won't need to invest the billions of dollars in marketing that its competitors (Expedia and Booking.com) do because of its existing strong brand identity (and resulting direct traffic). Stay tuned.

Want to Get Lucky? Plan a Vacation. Every now and then we encounter a story that creates far more questions than it answers. Last week was one of those moments when we came across a press release on the Booking.com website claiming that for the majority of American women (56%), a partner planning and booking a trip **is just as arousing, if not more, than foreplay**. What? Let the questions begin. I cannot wait to raise this nugget in my next Booking.com negotiation.

Have a great week everyone. I'm booking a trip on Booking.com.

New Apple Feature Stores Passport Info in Digital Wallet

November 12, 2025 via Skift

It's limited to domestic U.S. flights for now - but could still be helpful for the holiday travel season.

Airbnb Accuses Mississippi City of Conspiring with Hotels to Limit Competition

November 12, 2025 via MLex

Airbnb filed a US complaint accusing the city of Biloxi, Mississippi, of conspiring with the Mississippi Hotel & Lodging Association to severely restrict short-term rentals, raising its members' profits but harming consumers and communities in Biloxi.

Booking.com Reveals That Men Booking a Trip is Sexier than Foreplay

November 10, 2025 via Booking.com

The results are in and abs are overrated. According to new research from Booking.com, a global leader in travel, what really makes hearts race is a partner who actually books the trip. Half of American women say their significant other has never ...

Presenting the Hot 25 Travel Startups for 2026

November 10, 2025 via PhocusWire

PhocusWire presents the Hot 25 Travel Startups for 2026-their annual list of new companies in travel, hospitality and tourism.

How Airbnb Is Thinking About Its Third New Business of 2025 - Hotels

November 7, 2025 via Skift

Airbnb has a big opportunity in hotels. But CEO Brian Chesky makes it all sound a little too easy. It's not a big investment, he said, and Airbnb won't have to spend a lot on marketing for it. Signing up hotels? Not a problem - they have phone ...

Expedia Group, Inc. Q3 Earnings Call

November 6, 2025 via Expedia Group

Expedia Group's Q3 2025 earnings call painted a picture of a platform leaning into B2B and AI while keeping its core consumer brands growing. The company beat expectations with bookings up 12% and revenue up 9%, expanding ...

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Authored by

[Greg Duff](#)

[Principal|Seattle](#)

[206.816.1470 greg.duff@foster.com](#)