

GOOGLE TESTING NEW INSTANT HOTEL BOOKING FUNCTION



The rumors have been around for quite a while. Now, the search engine giant Google introduced its Instant Booking Function. Google is beta testing this new feature that allows travelers from the U.S. to book a hotel room without leaving the search page.

Until now, travelers were redirected to the hotel's or travel agency's respective website for booking. **Since July, customers from the US can directly book their hotel rooms with the search engine (Google.com/hotels),** making use of the newly introduced instant booking function, which had been launched by Tripadvisor recently as well.

Instead of simply delivering results for a particular hotel, the search page lists room rates from popular sites such as Hotwire.com, Booking.com and Hotels.com, as well as rates from the hotel itself.

When booking directly with the hotel, however, instead of being redirected to the property's website, users complete the reservation - dates, rates and payment - on the Google page for a more convenient booking experience.

The new feature is launched in partnership with travel technology company Sabre. For travelers, it is touted as more convenient as it eliminates the need to leave the website and navigate different web pages. For hotels, the new service reduces the "abandonment rate" commonly seen when consumers have to switch sites to complete a transaction, says Sabre.

What comes at a great convenience for customers may be not so well-received by the OTAs. This new introduction sees Google placing itself on the online travel market as a direct competition to platforms such as Expedia or Booking.com (Priceline), **even though online travel agencies contribute to approximately 5 percent of the search engine's ad revenue.**

It's still to be determined if Google plans to further increase its grip on the market with this new function, which has led to harsh criticism in the past.

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