

This guidance is intended to assist consumers in understanding the commitments. However, it is not a substitute for reading the commitments themselves and the accompanying commitments decision.

THE COMMITMENTS IN PRACTICE – What it means for consumers

Q. Who can get the new discounts?

A. The commitments mean that any European Economic Area ('EEA') residents, including UK residents will be able to get discounts offered under a discounting scheme envisaged by the commitments on the following basis:

- they are a member of an online travel agent ('OTA') or hotel closed group, for example a membership discounting scheme, and
- they have made a prior full-price booking with that OTA or hotel.

The commitments do not apply to hotel accommodation which is packaged with other travel elements, such as flights or car hire.

Q. Who will be offering the discounts?

A. The commitments have been offered by Booking.com, Expedia and IHG. This means that Booking.com, Expedia and other OTA partners of UK IHG-branded hotels, as well as IHG UK hotels themselves, will in future be able to offer discounts under the commitments. Booking.com and Expedia will also ask (if necessary) their other hotel partners to agree to similar arrangements.

We expect the commitments to promote competition across the hotel online booking sector. As a result it is likely that non-IHG hotels in the UK and OTAs other than Booking.com and Expedia will introduce similar discounting schemes.

Q. What sort of discounts can I expect to get?

A. The level of any such discounts offered by OTAs and hotels will be for each OTA and hotel to decide. Once you have become a member of an OTA or hotel closed group discounting scheme you will be able to see the specific discounts that are being offered.

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Q. What are the benefits of becoming a member of a discounting scheme?

A. By signing up to an OTA or hotel discounting scheme you would be able to view any specific discounts on offer.

In order to receive the discounts on offer you would need to have made one full-price booking with the OTA or hotel in question.

Q. Would I have to pay a joining fee to become a member of a discounting scheme?

A. There is no requirement under the commitments for a customer to pay a joining fee in order to become a member of a discounting scheme. It will be for the OTAs and hotels running the schemes to decide if they wish to add this additional requirement. This means that you should check with each scheme whether there is a joining fee.

Q. How easy will it be to shop around?

A.

- OTAs and hotels may advertise generally that they have discounting schemes (but not necessarily the specific amount of the discounts available), so there would be information available about the availability and features of different discounting schemes.
- Once you are a member of a discounting scheme you should be able to see any discounts available and compare between these and those available under different schemes.
- You can be a member of as many schemes as you want to compare discounts.

Q. Will I have to shop around for the best price - currently I rely on the OTA or hotel's promise that they are offering the best available rate?

A. The commitments are intended to facilitate price competition by allowing OTAs and hotels to offer discounts and allowing members of discounting schemes to shop around for the best prices.

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Q. When will these discounting schemes start?

A. Booking.com, Expedia and IHG-branded UK hotels have agreed to make the necessary changes to their commercial arrangements with each other within one month. They have also committed to ask their other hotel or OTA partners to agree (if necessary) to similar arrangements within three months. Once any necessary changes have been implemented, it will be for each OTA and each hotel to decide if, how and when they wish to take advantage of the discounting freedom they have secured. This means consumers should keep an eye out for new discounting schemes.

Q. I am already a member of a hotel or OTA loyalty scheme – do the commitments affect this?

A. The commitments do not affect existing loyalty or other discounting schemes. This means that you can continue to take advantage of existing schemes and join new ones in the future.