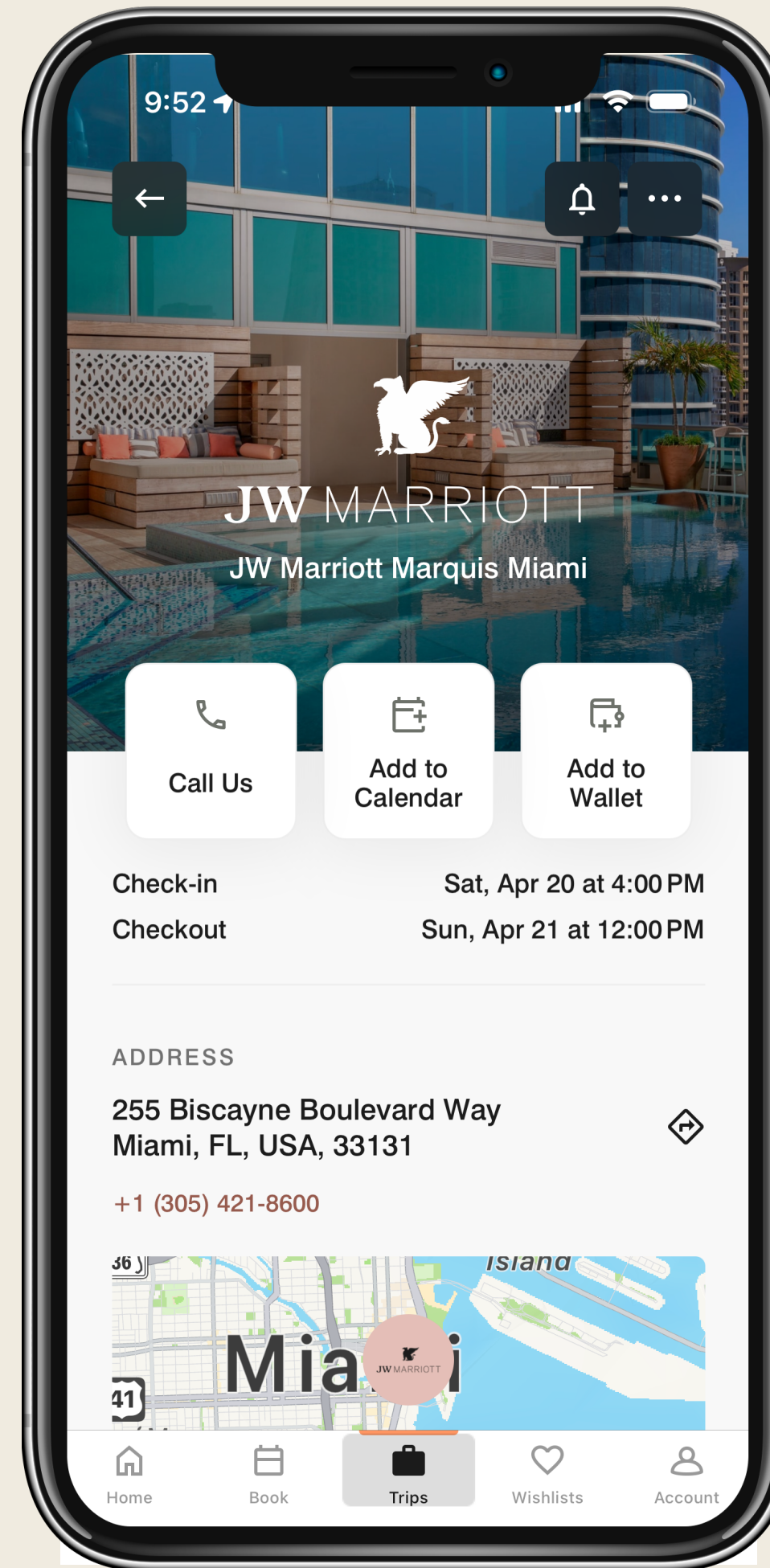


# Cove Apple Club

March 13, 2024



---

# Tonight's Topics

- How to book travel online
- Without getting ripped off

---

# Remember!

- Tonight's presentation – in PDF and Apple Keynote format – will be archived after the meeting
  - Visit **[CoveAppleClubArchives.com](http://CoveAppleClubArchives.com)**
  - Please silence your devices during our short time together – thank you!
-

---

# **How to book travel online, without getting ripped off**

---

---

# Why you should trust me

- I've been planning travel – business and personal – since at least 1986, in the acoustic-coupled modem days of Prodigy and CompuServe
  - I flew at least 2x monthly for business for 25.5 years, plus 3-6 personal trips on vacations
  - ~3,000,000 miles with American Airlines, 1,000,000 miles with United, 559 nights with Marriott
-

# Marriott Bonvoy Lifetime Titanium Elite

## Lifetime Titanium Elite

NIGHTS STAYED

559

YEARS AS PLATINUM ELITE OR HIGHER

20

Plus hundreds more with Hilton, Hyatt,  
independent, boutique, etc.

# American Airlines Lifetime Platinum

Michael Sullivan

*AAdvantage® Aviator™ card member*

2 Million Miler™

AAdvantage Platinum®

#S041512

*AAdvantage® member since: Feb 16, 1985*

**2,987,773 Miles**

---

# So, I've seen some things...

- Stuck at LAX Airport Hilton for five days during 9/11
  - Two engine compressor stall high-speed runway aborts ***on the same day***
  - Last flight in landing & with "bingo fuel" at PBI during a hurricane
  - "Bomb scare" on a United ORD-LAX flight – no bomb!
  - Near wheels-up landing on a United L-1011 at LAX plus a thrilling tail-scrape go-around
  - Broke the speed of sound over ground in a United 767 due to 200-knot Jet Stream tailwind PHX-ORD 1994
-

# Remember these?





---

# They had a good run

- From the late 1800's to about 2000, there was a travel agency (or five) in every downtown in the world
- In 1990, there were 189,000 professional travel agents in the US alone
- That's how you booked your travel: call or visit, and they do it for you – and collect a nice commission
- They were good jobs



# But then...

PRODIGY<sup>SM</sup> SERVICE

HIGHLIGHTS TODAY

NEWS & FEATURES	1	GOP Nominee Bush Gearing Up For Acceptance Speech
	2	Nurses Get Lofty Pay In San Francisco Se
	3	Sports Extra: Leader
	4	Industry News: Fres
SERVICE INFO	5	ADD MEMBER: It's Ea Sign Up Other Famil
GOODS & SERVICES	6	PRODIGY Service Mem Get a 20% Rebate on
	7	A New Way to Do Bus

WHAT'S NEW [NEXT] > NEW MEMBER > I

NEXT | MENU | PATH | JUMP

Main Menu

AMERICA Online

MAIN MENU

TODAY'S NEWS

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Clubs & Interests

COMPUTING

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IN THE SPOTLIGHT

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U.S.: U.S. Paratroopers Seize N. Iraq Airfield

Sports: Wizards Overtake Bucks for 8th in East

Entertainment: Rolling Stones to Press on With Concert

# But then...

- The era of “home computers” and modem connectivity created a new industry of consumer online portals like AOL, CompuServe and Prodigy
- One-stop shopping for nearly everything became available, but *slowly* and *expensively*



# For the first time in history, it was juuuust barely possible to book your own travel



## The Three Most Popular Resorts In The Caribbean



Not all the world's great resorts are on land. There are three at sea. The "Fun Ships" of Carnival Cruise Lines. Here is all the fun of a land-based resort, and more. Plus, it's all available at a price that's frequently much lower than other resorts. Begin your seven day Caribbean Cruise with a fabulous floating hotel. Visit exciting ports-of-call. Virtually everything is included in the price of your fare. Eight meals and snacks a day. Great Service. Movies. Exercise facilities. Swimming pools. Free deck chairs. Live entertainment. Full gambling casinos. Dance bands. Swinging discos. Saunas. Massage. Deck games. Duty-free shopping. Plus, you can take advantage of Fly Aweigh, our sensational money-saving air/sea program that will fly you round-trip to Miami from over 90 cities across the country. That gives you both convenience and value. It's not hard to see why the "Fun Ships" are #1 in the Caribbean. People love us. Call your Travel Agent.

 The "Fun Ships" of Carnival Cruise Lines  
CARNIVALE • FESTIVALE • MARDI GRAS  
Miami, Florida Registered in Panama

## Carnival

THE MOST POPULAR CRUISE LINE IN THE WORLD!  
1990

### LIBERTY TRAVEL

Your VACATION is our BUSINESS®



*the "Fun Ships"*

- 3, 4 & 7 DAY CRUISES
- INTRODUCING THE FANTASY
- NEW ITINERARIES

# But it was not for the faint of heart...

- You were on a dial-up modem at 2,400 Baud (about 20kbps – 1/1,000th of the speed on your phone's data connection)
- You were paying **by the minute** to just be connected!
- It was very janky and wonky and fiddly and sometimes didn't work at all
- And there was **no way to pay online!**



**The Three Most Popular Resorts In The Caribbean**

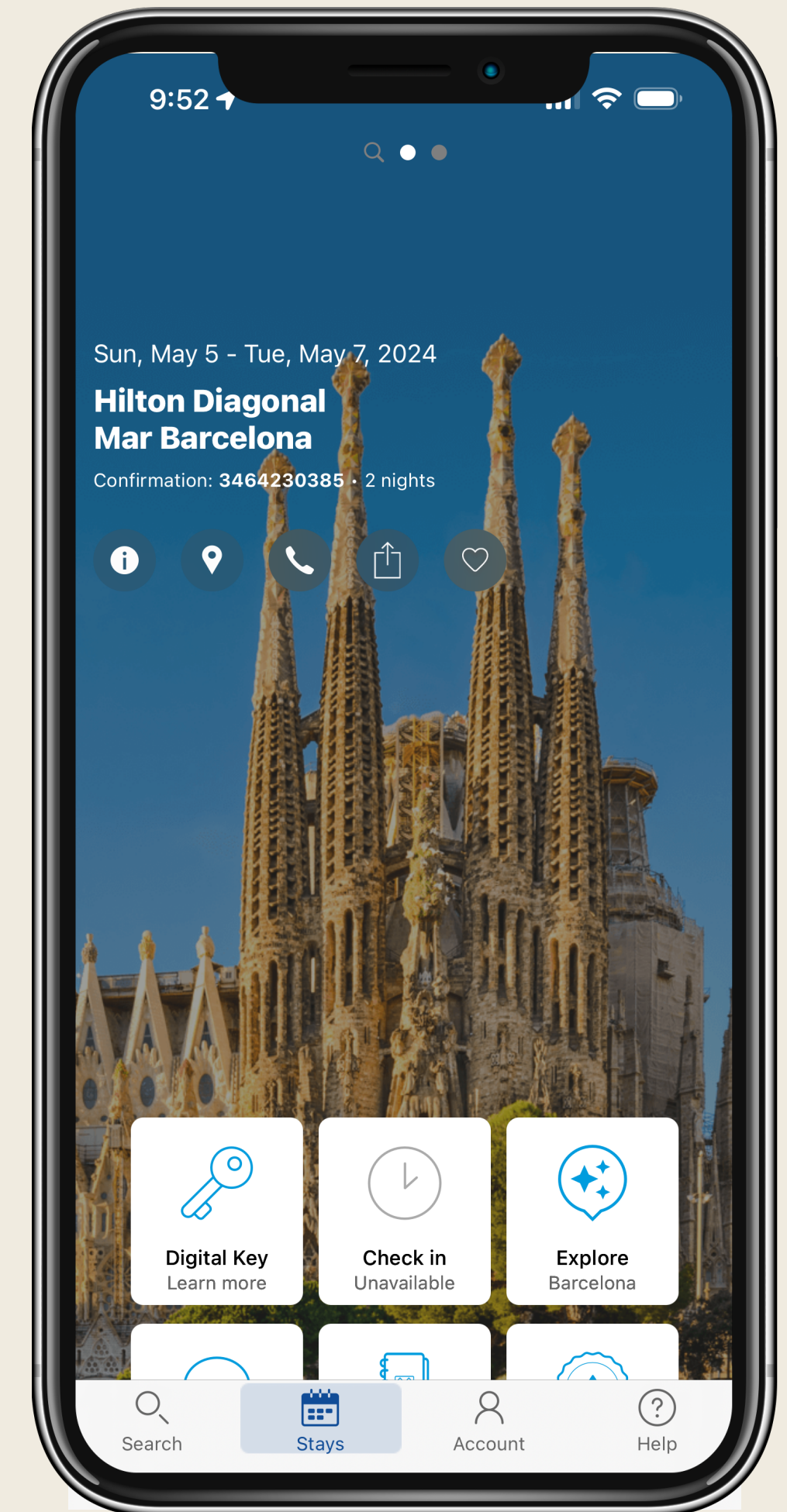
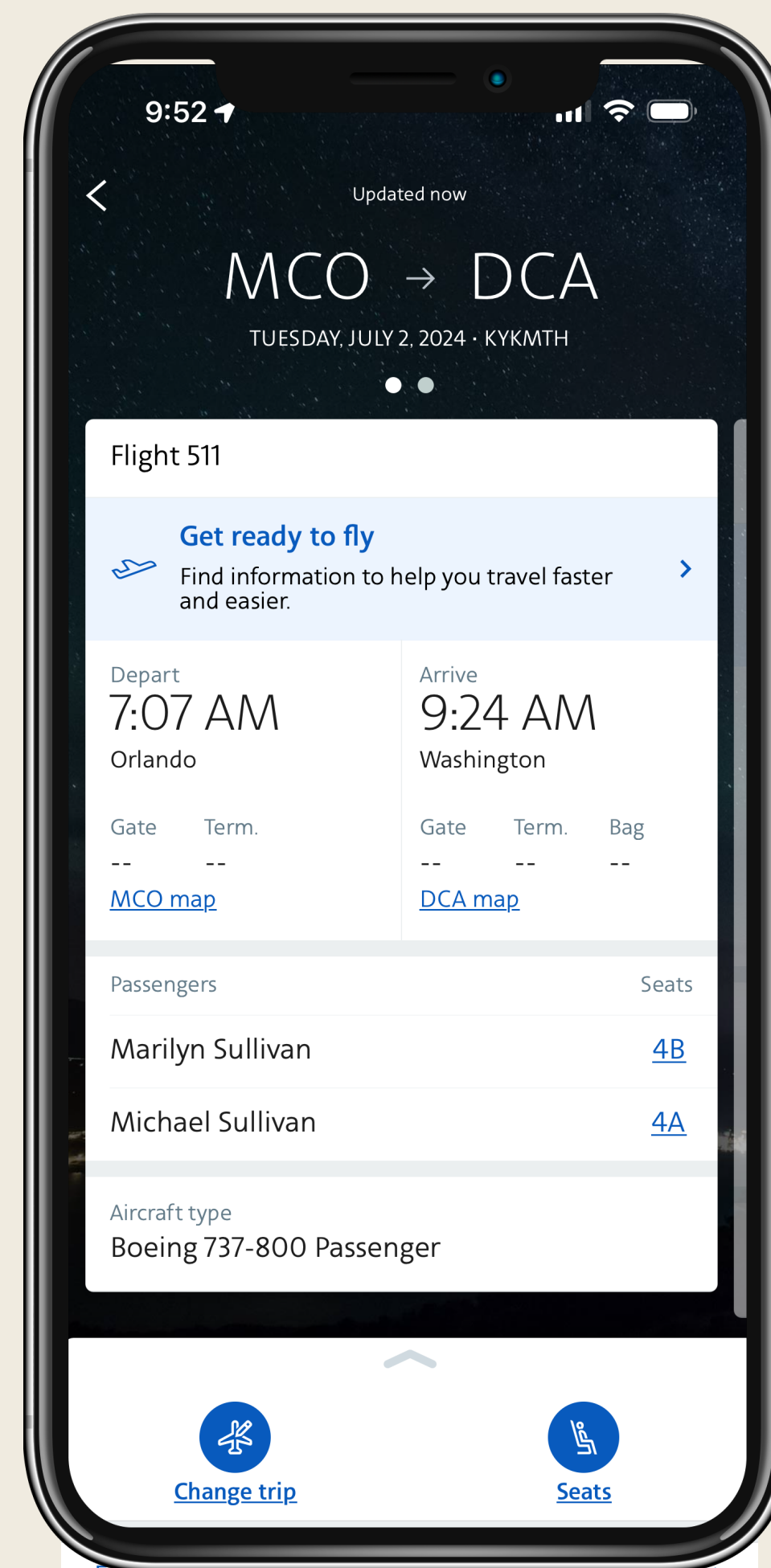
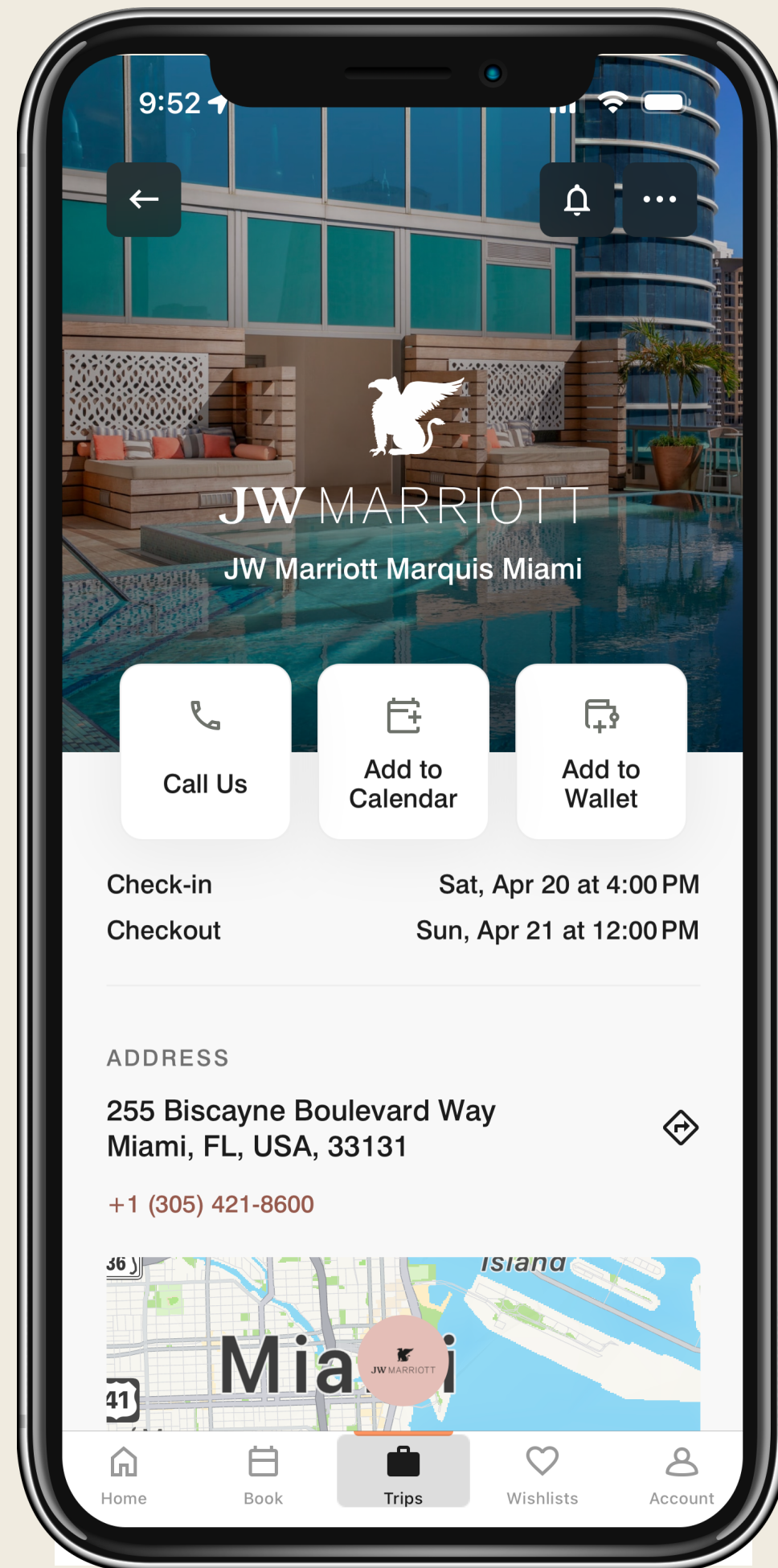
Not all the world's great resorts are on land. There are three at sea. The "Fun Ships" of Carnival Cruise Lines. Here is all the fun of a land-based resort, and more. Plus, it's all available at a price that's frequently much lower than other resorts.

Begin your seven day Caribbean Cruise with a fabulous floating hotel. Visit exciting ports-of-call. Virtually everything is included in the price of your fare. Eight meals and snacks a day. Great Service. Movies. Exercise facilities. Swimming pools. Free deck chairs. Live entertainment. Full gambling casinos. Dance bands. Swinging discos. Saunas. Massage. Deck games. Duty-free shopping. Plus, you can take advantage of Fly Aweigh, our sensational money-saving air/sea program that will fly you round-trip to Miami from over 90 cities across the country. That gives you both convenience and value.

It's not hard to see why the "Fun Ships" are #1 in the Caribbean. People love us. Call your Travel Agent.

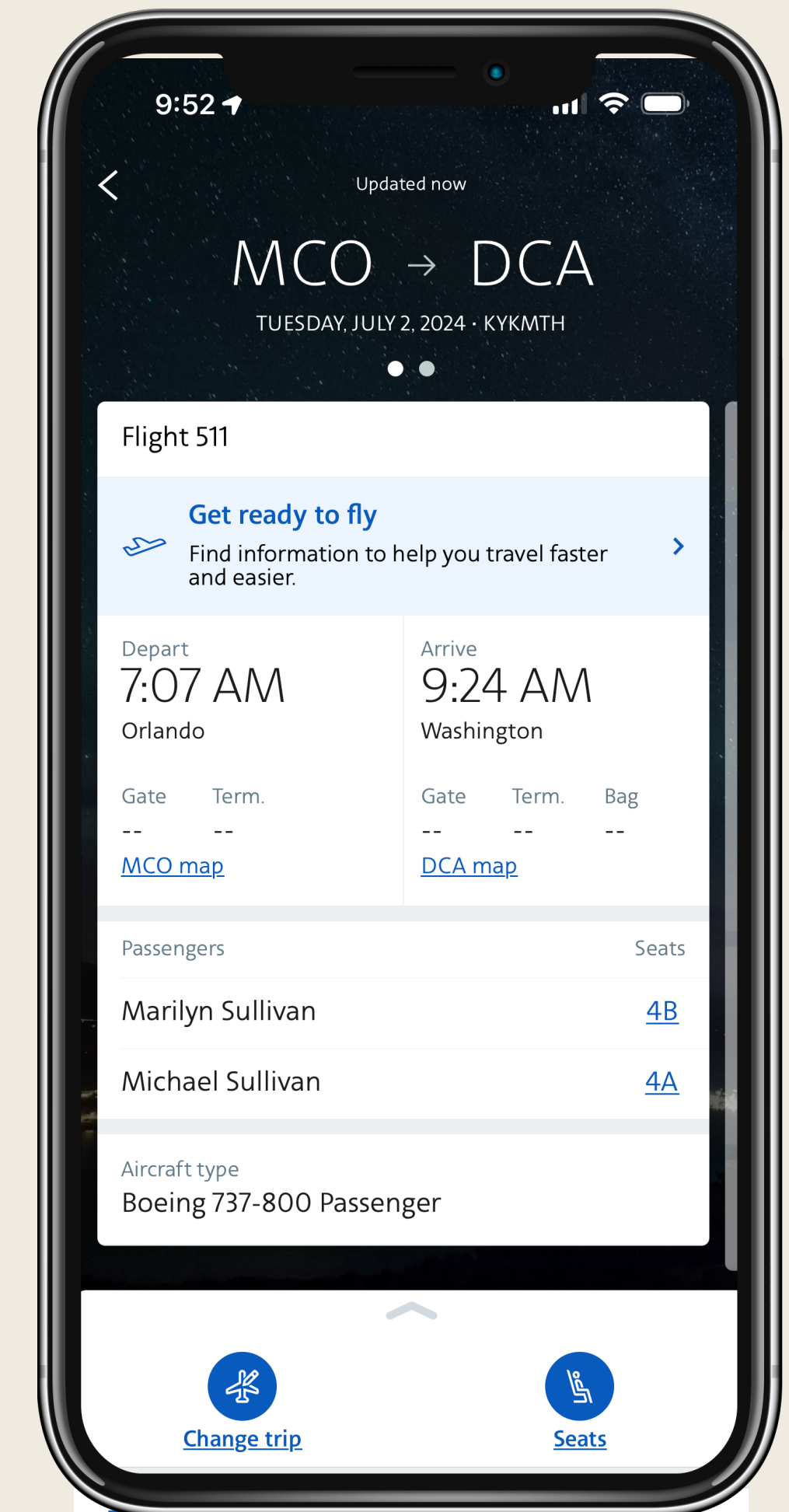
 The "Fun Ships" of  
**Carnival Cruise Lines**  
CARNIVALE • FESTIVALE • MARDI GRAS  
Miami, Florida Registered in Panama

# Fast-forward 20 years



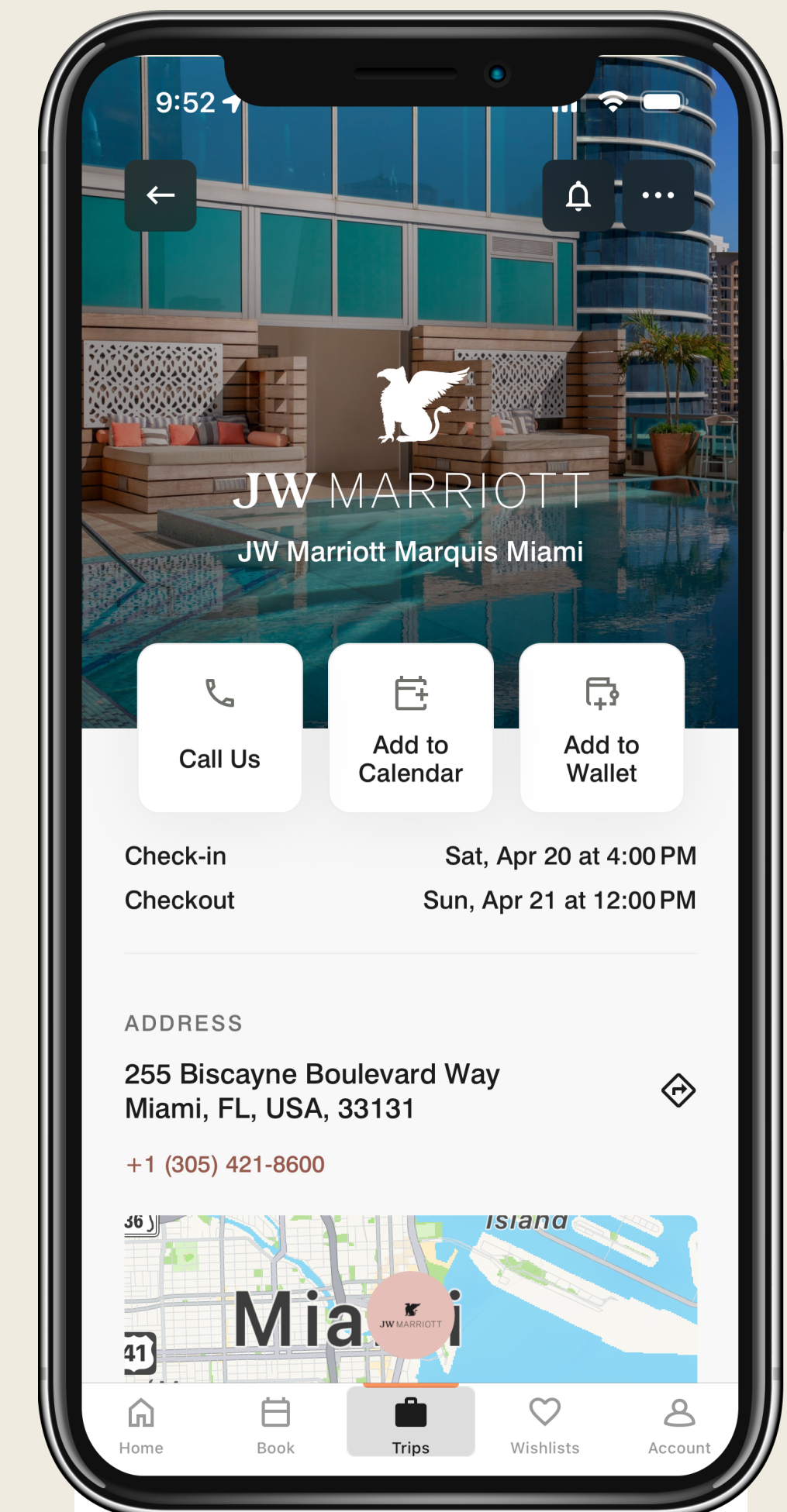
# Fast-forward 20 years

- Airlines were the first to jump on the online booking revolution:
- All their inventory was already computerized
- They only had to layer a consumer-friendly UI on top of their SABRE or WorldPort booking systems and connect it to the internet
- It would greatly reduce call center staffing & eliminate city ticket offices
- They could cut out the travel agency commission and fatten up their very, very slim profit margins
- They could push their loyalty and credit card perks



# Next, hotels

- They went a bit slower, but still wanted to get online:
- They could cut out the 20-30% agency commission paid to travel agents
- It put them in a strong negotiating position with travel networks
- Eased self-booking for corporate accounts
- Reduced call center volumes by > 50%
- Ability to instantly & dynamically adjust pricing
- Ability to offer “last room” inventory to consumers





---

# The dawn of OTAs - Online Travel Agents

- Expedia - owned by Microsoft then, plus Travelocity and Orbitz were the big three first-movers
  - Followed much later by Hotels.com, Booking.com, Kayak, Trivago, Priceline
  - Aggregated pricing and availability from dozens or hundreds of suppliers & presented a sortable, searchable cornucopia of options
  - No fees, secure online payment, instant online confirmation
  - They made it possible for an average consumer to plan and book an entire journey: air, hotel, car rental; later on, cruise, train & STRs
-

---

# But first-party suppliers fought back

- They all wanted to “own” the customer, so they added the ability to book the other legs of your trip through their sites as well, with price-match guarantees
  - So, on aa.com, you can also book your hotel and car rental
  - They offered significant perks and customer service advantages to you if you did
  - Airlines aggressively and ubiquitously marketed their branded credit cards – which today, makes up as much as **100% of their operating profit!**
-

---

# **With so many choices, what to do?**

- What's the easiest and best way to shop for and buy travel online?
  - What's the difference between booking first-party vs. OTA?
  - How to leverage the incentives offered by each sales channel?
  - How to get the best post-purchase customer service?
  - How to maximize points & perks on your trip?
-

---

# Side quest: the secret names 1st-party providers have for OTAs

- booking.com
    - fooking.com
  - Priceline
    - Price-lying
  - Kayak
    - Plastic canoe
  - Expedia
    - Can't be said on a family show like this
-

---

# How to book travel online

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**Tip #1: Shop on OTAs**

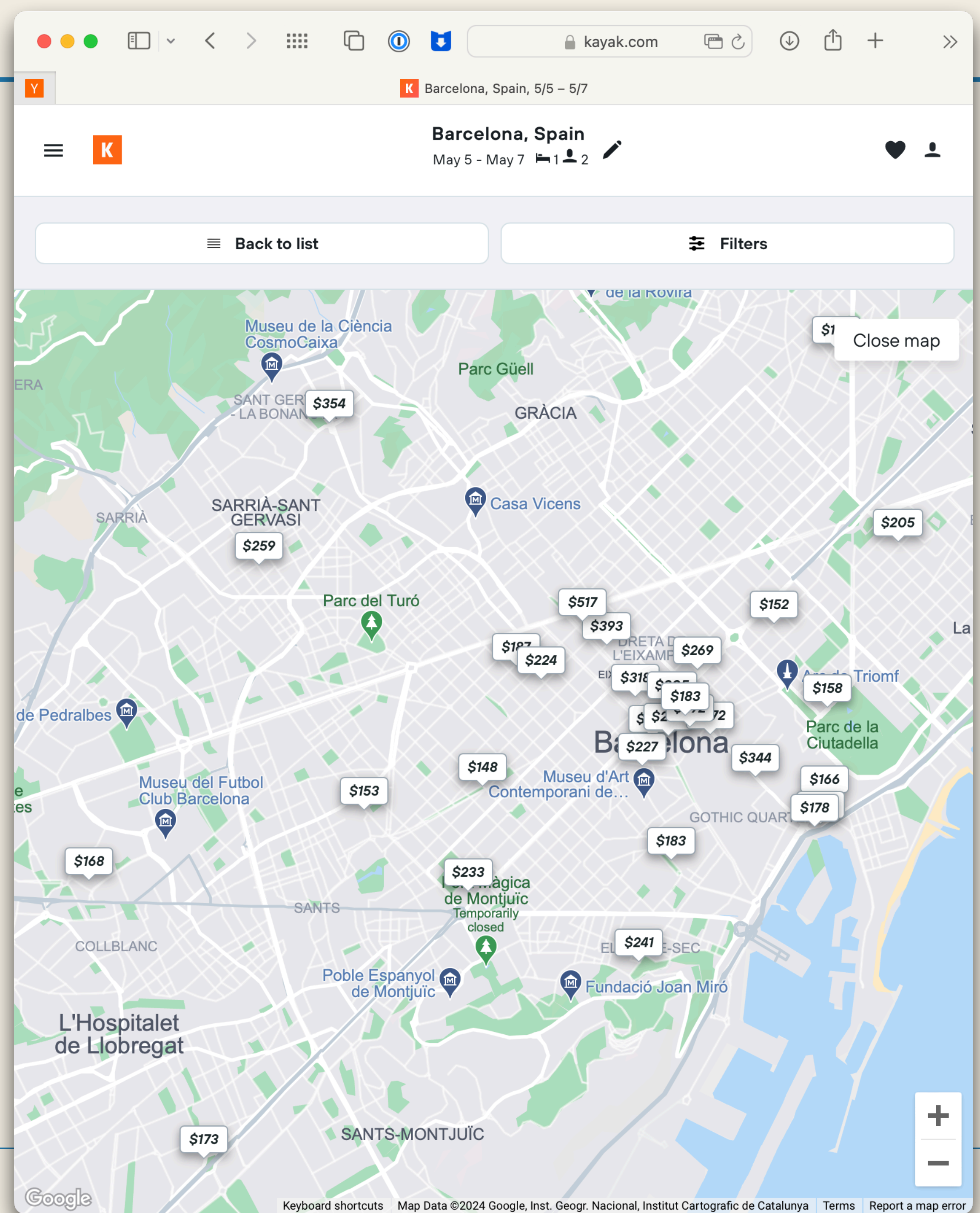
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## **Tip #1: Shop on OTAs**

- OTAs are excellent for getting an overview of prices, rates, routes, suppliers
  - Which hotel brands are in your destination?
  - See a map view of all the hotel properties
  - Rank, filter & sort by price, star rating, brand, review score, distance to your destination
-

# OTA map views





# OTA flights

- Kayak shows you best, cheapest, quickest
- Price tracking
- Shows total price including bag fees
- Over a dozen search filters: duration, takeoff/landing time, airline, airline network, # stops, etc.
- "Hacker fares" - neat for really cheap one-way medium- to long-haul flights

The screenshot shows the Kayak website interface for a flight search from Barcelona (BCN) to Dublin (DUB) on Monday, May 13th, for 2 travelers in Premium Economy. The search results are sorted by 'Best' at \$328 for a 5h 55m flight. The interface includes a search bar, filters, and a list of flight options with prices and airlines.

**Search Results Summary:**

- Track prices:** Off
- Results include flights with mixed cabin classes.** [Hide](#)
- Sort options:** Cheapest (\$328 • 5h 55m), **Best** (\$328 • 5h 55m), Quickest (\$954 • 5h 10m), Other sort
- Expedia Ad:** Book your flight to unlock more savings. Members can save up to 30% when they add a hotel to their flight. **\$328** 1 stop. [View Deal](#)
- Flight 1:** British Airways, 12:55 pm – 5:05 pm, 1 stop (LHR), 5h 10m, BCN-DUB. **\$954 / person**, \$1,907 total. Business British Airways. [View Deal](#)
- Flight 2:** Iberia, British Airways, 12:55 pm – 5:05 pm, 1 stop (LHR), 5h 10m, BCN-DUB. **\$1,245 / person**, \$2,490 total. Business Optima. [View Deal](#)
- Flight 3:** Iberia, British Airways, 10:35 am – 2:50 pm, 1 stop, 5h 15m, BCN-DUB. **\$1,186 / person**, \$2,372 total.

**Filters:**

- Recommended filters:**
  - Layover airports: Hide Paris (CDG)
  - American Airlines only
  - Hide 2+ stops
  - British Airways only
  - Layovers shorter than 3h 45m
  - Take-off BCN after 8:13 am
- Stops:**
  - Nonstop
  - 1 stop \$328
  - 2+ stops \$359
- Fee Assistant:** Baggage per passenger

---

# Research first with OTAs

- Which airlines fly your route non-stop?
  - **FlightsFrom.com** - shows every direct and connecting route for every origin / destination pair in the world, which airlines fly those routes, how often, and when



flightsfrom.com



Direct (non-stop) flights from Green Bay, Austin Straubel (GRB) - FlightsFrom.com

**FlightsFrom.com**



📍 Green Bay GRB

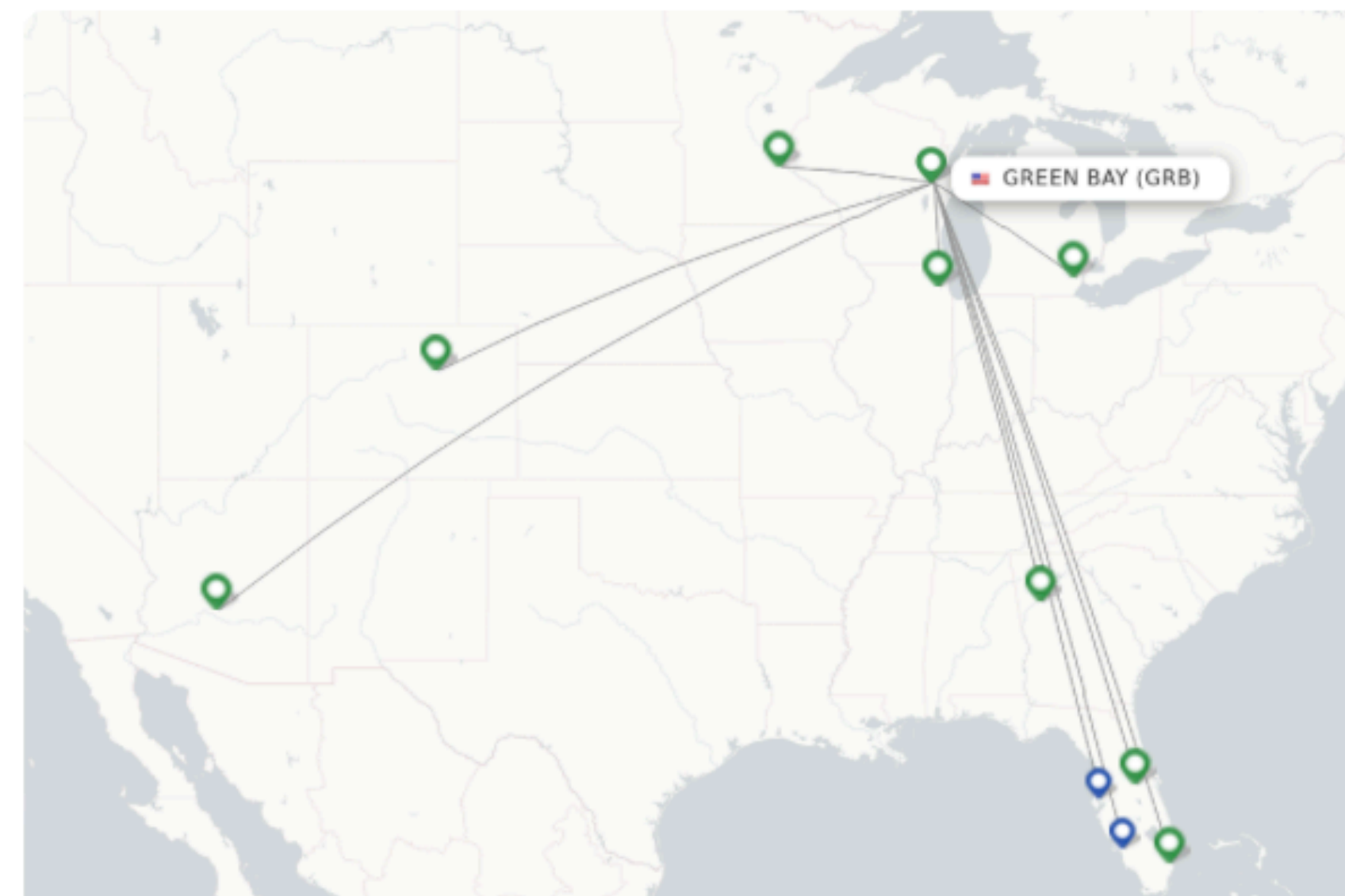


📍 All destinations



# All scheduled direct (non-stop) flights from Green Bay (GRB)

Austin Straubel International (GRB) is a mid-sized airport based in Green Bay, USA. You can fly to 7 destinations with 5 airlines in scheduled passenger traffic.





flightsfrom.com



Direct (non-stop) flights from Dublin to Orlando - schedules - FlightsFrom.com

**FlightsFrom.com**



Dublin DUB



Orlando MCO



# Direct (non-stop) flights from Dublin to Orlando

All flight schedules from **Dublin Airport, Ireland** to **Orlando International, Florida, USA**. This route is operated by 1 airline(s), and the flight time is 9 hours and 30 minutes. The distance is 4088 miles.

**DUB** Dublin Airport

 Dublin, Ireland

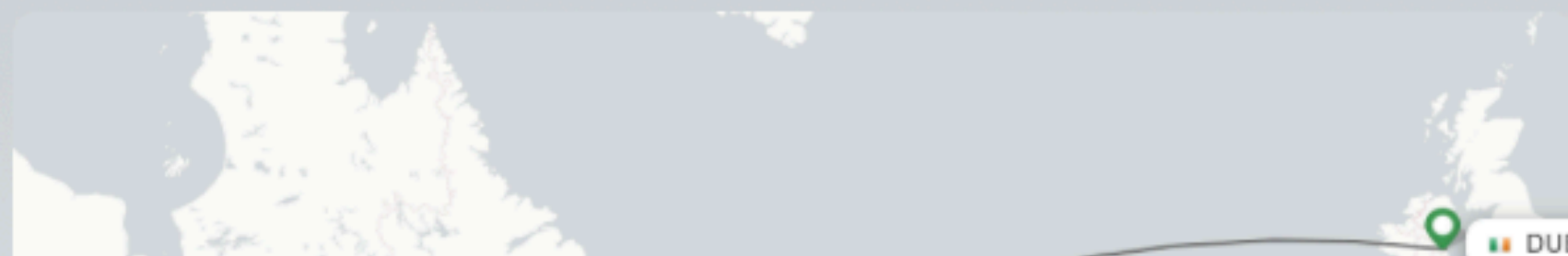


**MCO** Orlando International

 Orlando, FL, USA

 CHANGE DIRECTION

FLIGHT TIME





flightroutes.com



Y

FR Flights from Dublin to Orlando, DUB to MCO - Flight Routes

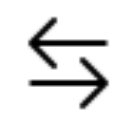


FLIGHTROUTES

Last data update: Mar 2024

Last major update: Dec 2023

Dublin DUB



Orlando MCO

1 stop routes with the same airline:



Via Charlotte CLT

1 stop with American Airlines.

SCHEDULE >

11h 10m



Via Chicago ORD

1 stop with American Airlines.

SCHEDULE >

● 12h 29m

BEGINS IN 6/6



Via Atlanta ATL

1 stop with Delta Air Lines

SCHEDULE >

● 11h 20m

---

# Research with OTAs

- Do all your preliminary research on OTAs
    - Flights: Routes / airlines / schedules / city pairs
    - Hotels: Orientation in the destination, price ranges, brands, amenities (beach, airport, concert hall, stadium, etc.)
    - Rental cars: companies / rates / car classes
-

---

**But!**

---

---

# **With few exceptions, DO NOT BOOK with OTAs!**

- There are a hundred reasons, but here's the big one:



# Review and pay

[« New search](#)

## DEPART

### Orlando, FL to Los Angeles, CA

Tuesday, April 16, 2024

7:00 AM  
MCO

→ 9:33 AM  
LAX

 **2689** American Airlines  

Travel time:	5h 33m
Class:	First
Seats:	5C

Michael Sullivan  
AAdvantage Platinum®

Loyalty Points
4,376

Award miles
4,376

[Show AAdvantage® earnings](#)

[Terms and conditions](#)

Your trip total:

---

# THIS IS YOUR CONTRACT

I agree to the [terms and conditions](#) , [refund policy](#) and [conditions of carriage](#).

---

---

# Tickling that box means you are signing a contract

- **NO ONE** reads those “terms and conditions,” but they are **BINDING** on **YOU** and the **SUPPLIER**
  - Believe me, the **SUPPLIER** knows what’s in the **T’s&C’s**, even if you don’t, and they **WILL** adhere to them!
  - So, who do you want to contract with? The supplier, or a middleman OTA?
-

---

**Tip #2: Book direct**

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## Tip #2: Book direct

- Some OTAs will allow you to book air on their site – **DON'T DO IT!**
  - All OTAs will always let you book hotel and rental car on their site – **DON'T DO IT!**
  - Some OTAs will let you book train and cruise on their site – **DON'T DO IT!**
-

---

# What does it mean to book direct?

- That means you book on the supplier's website or their app – **not** at Expedia, Orbiz, Kayak, Travelocity, TripAdvisor, Hotels.com, Priceline or anywhere else
  - Examples:
    - American Airlines: [aa.com](http://aa.com) or the AA app
    - Marriott brands: [marriott.com](http://marriott.com) or the Marriott app
    - Enterprise rental cars: [enterprise.com](http://enterprise.com) or the Enterprise app
-

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**Be careful! Just look at these scams!**

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marriott harbor beach resort - x +

bing.com

Microsoft Bing


marriott harbor beach resort

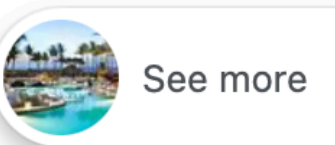
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About 1,710,000 results

 [marriott.com](https://www.marriott.com/marriott-hotels/fort-lauderdale)  
<https://www.marriott.com/marriott-hotels/fort-lauderdale>

 See more

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Ad Book At Marriott.com To Get The Guaranteed Best Prices For Marriott® Hotels. It's The Perfect Time To Plan An Escape. Make The Most Of Spring With Marriott Bonvoy®. Mobile Check-In · Committed to Our Guests · Download the App · Contactless Room Access

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#### Let's Go

Earn and redeem for all your travels worldwide.

#### See more at marriott.com



marriott harbor beach resort at x +

duckduckgo.com

marriott harbor beach resort

All regions Safe search: moderate Any time

marriott.com | Report Ad

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Book At **Marriott.com** To Get The Guaranteed Best Prices For **Marriott®** Hotels. It's The Perfect Time To Plan An Escape. Make The Most Of Spring With **Marriott Bonvoy®**.  
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3030 Holiday Drive. See Insider Deals On All Rooms. Trust Your Getting A Great Price At The **Marriott Harbor Beach Resort**. Confidently Book.  
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**Amenities:** Secure Incredible Value, Expert Advice & Support

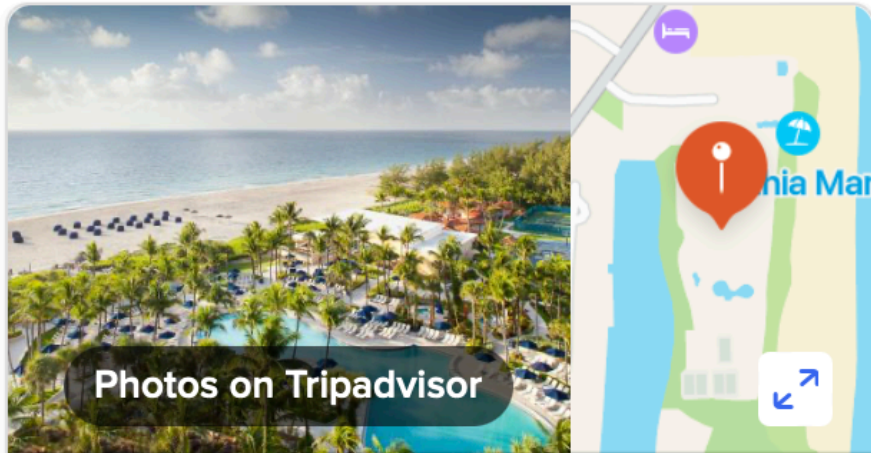
<https://www.marriott.com> > en-us > hotels > flsb-fort-lauderdale-marriott-harbor-beach-resort-an...

### Welcome to Fort Lauderdale Marriott Harbor Beach Resort & Spa

The Spa at Fort Lauderdale **Marriott Harbor Beach Resort**. Rejuvenate, refresh and relax by visiting our 22,000 square foot, full-service day spa for a massage, facial, body scrub or salon treatment. Our resort's spa in Fort Lauderdale also features a private pool, whirlpool and sauna, fitness center and...



<https://www.tripadvisor.com> > Hotel\_Review-g34227-d84476-Reviews-Fort\_Lauderdale\_Marriot...

### Fort Lauderdale Marriott Harbor Beach Resort & Spa - Tripadvisor





### Fort Lauderdale Marriott Harbor Beach Resort & Spa

Hotel in Fort Lauderdale




   
6445 Reviews


[Website](#) [Directions](#) [Call](#) [Map](#)

 3030 Holiday Drive, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33316-2414

 +1 954 525 4000

**View prices for your stay** Ads

Check in  Check out  2 

**What people say**  **Tripadvisor**

Our second time coming back to this perfect spot. Service is impeccable....beach service anywhere you've gone before. Nuno at

[Share Feedback](#)

---

# Here are just a few reasons why you should not book with OTAs

- You are now dealing with a middleman who's incentives are not aligned with ***yours or the supplier's***
  - Show up at the hotel, and you will be their guest, but ***not their customer***
  - Check-in for your flight, and you will be their passenger, ***but not their customer***
  - ...and therein lies a world of difference!
-

---

# Hotels: OTA vs. Direct booking

- You will **not** earn or be able to use loyalty points!
  - You will – for sure – **NOT** be paying the lowest rate
  - You will **not** qualify for upgrades or other perks
  - You will be treated well, but **not** as well as a direct booking
  - ***They have no contract with you for anything***
  - They have **no incentive** to do anything for you beyond what their contract with the OTA ***requires***
-

---

# Hotels: OTA vs. Direct booking II

- Hotels shut off inventory to OTAs when nearing capacity – booking direct **always** shows you **all** availability
  - Hotels **WILL** cut you slack in case of last-minute cancellations when you book direct – they **CANNOT** and **WILL NOT** when you book through OTA
  - If you need to shorten or extend your stay, the hotel **will not deal with you**, as per their contract with the OTA
  - You cannot use mobile apps for online check-in, room selection, etc.
  - ***You have “one neck to wring” in case of problems***
-

---

# Airlines: OTA vs. Direct booking

- When you book OTA, **YOU ARE NOT THEIR CUSTOMER**
  - You cannot book with points/miles with an OTA
  - In case of flight changes / delays / re-routes, first priority for customer service **ALWAYS** goes to direct bookings – now, mostly automated through the airline apps
    - If you booked OTA, good luck to you, my friend
  - ***You have “one neck to wring” in case of problems***
-

---

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-

---

# **And most OTAs are very poorly rated!**

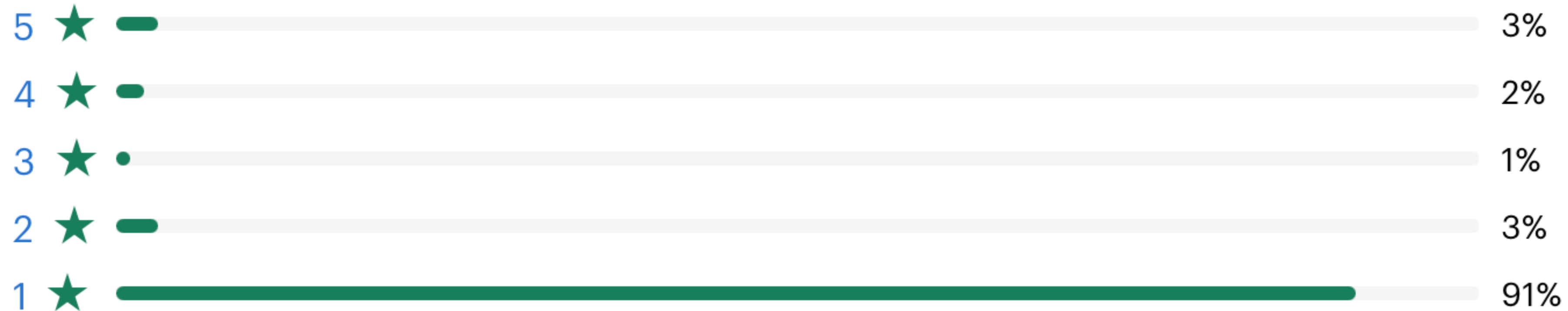
- The reviews are undoubtedly skewed negative, as happy users don't often leave reviews
- But still, check out these consumer ratings of some big OTAs

 > Travel > Travel Sites



# Hotels.com Reviews

**1.2** 



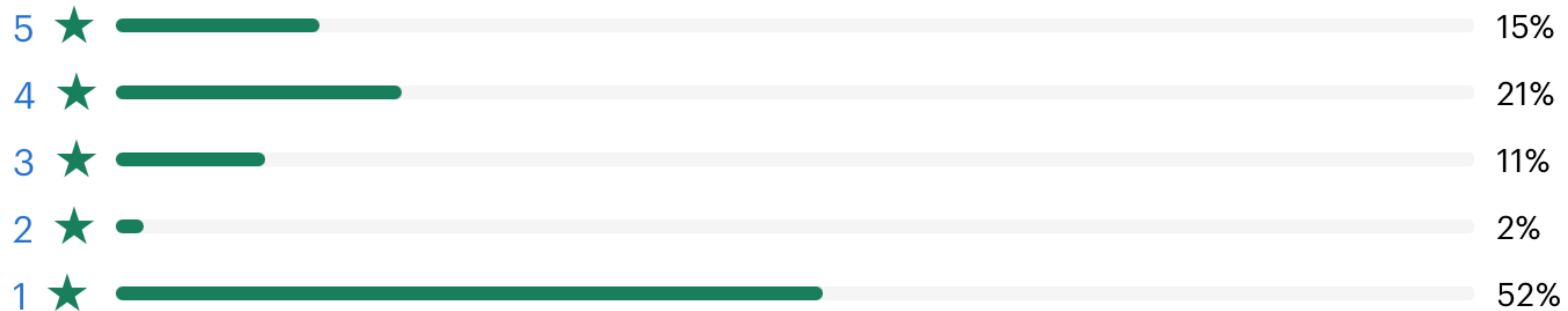
[See all 3,719 reviews & ratings](#)



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# trivago Reviews

**2.4** 



[See all 167 reviews & ratings](#)

 > Travel > Travel Sites



# TripAdvisor Reviews

**2.1** 



[See all 812 reviews & ratings](#)

[Home](#) > [Travel](#) > [Travel Sites](#)

 **Orbitz Reviews**

**1.9** 



[See all 1,366 reviews & ratings](#)

[Home](#) > [Travel](#) > [Travel Sites](#)



# Travelocity Reviews

**1.7** 



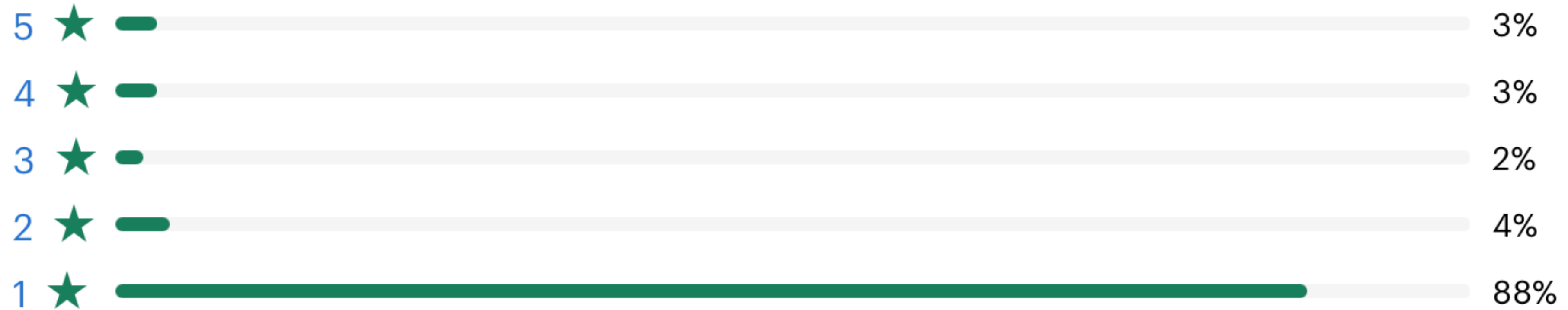
[See all 1,737 reviews & ratings](#)

 > Travel > Travel Sites



# Expedia Reviews

**1.3** 



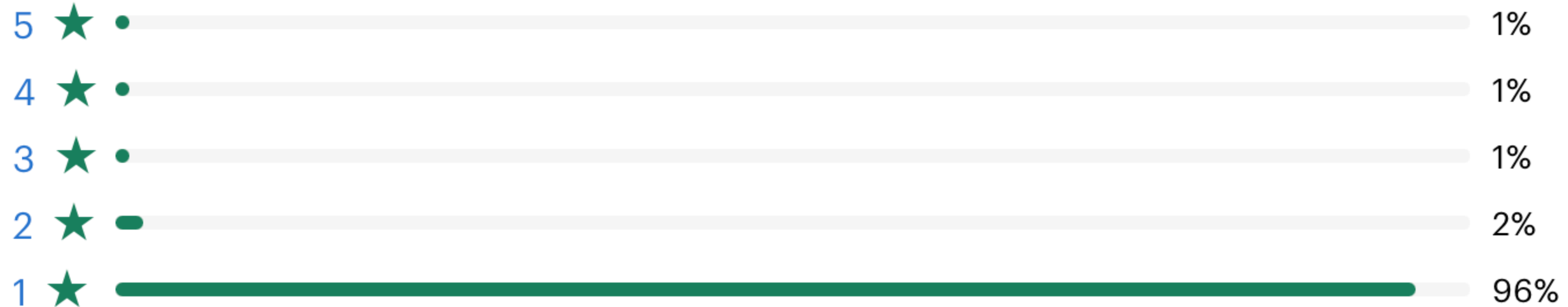
[See all 5,784 reviews & ratings](#)

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[Booking.com](#)

# Booking.com Reviews

**1.1**     

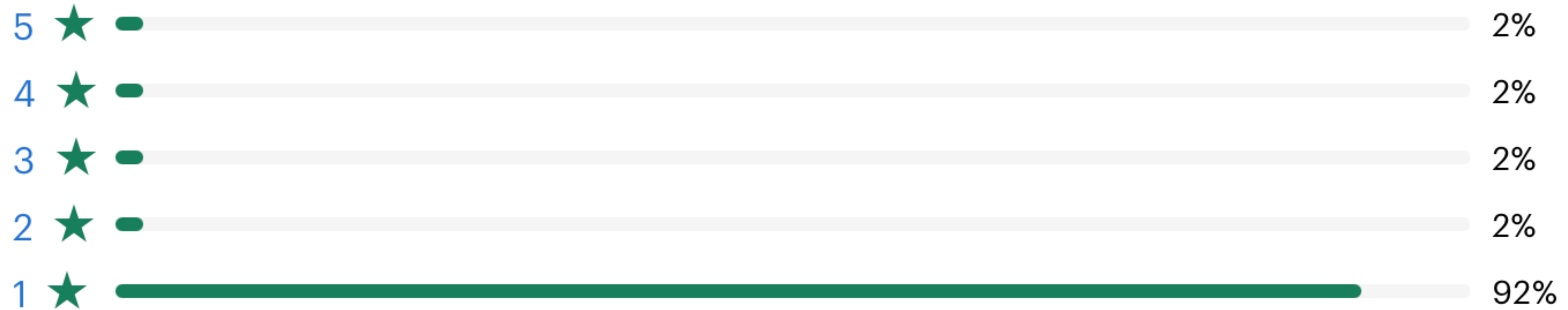


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# VRBO.com Reviews

**1.2** 



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# Airbnb Reviews

**1.2** 



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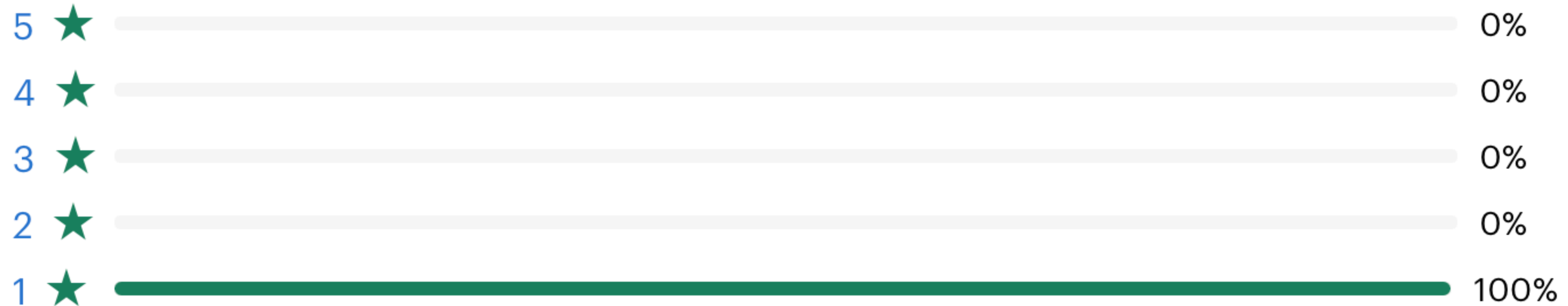


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# KAYAK Reviews

**1.0** 



[See all 207 reviews & ratings](#)

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# **Tip #3: Exceptions to the “Book Direct” rules**

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# Cruise

- If you are a VERY experienced cruiser, and are cruising on a line you are VERY comfortable with and have sailed with many times, go ahead and book direct on their site
  - Otherwise, I highly recommend **[vacationstogo.com](https://www.vacationstogo.com)**
    - World's #1 cruise agency
    - Pricing that beats the cruise line's direct price
    - Often, you will get bonus perks
    - Great customer service
-

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# European Train

- Except for Deutsche Bahn, do not try to book European train journeys direct
  - Just use [thetrainline.com](https://www.thetrainline.com) – no fees, instant ticketing, all trains, routes, schedules - the best train booking site, period
  - For Deutsche Bahn (German national railway), book direct at [bahn.com](https://www.bahn.com) – excellent site and easy to use
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# And for trip insurance...

- **SquareMouth.com** - Based in St. Pete, excellent aggregator / broker for all travel insurance
  - You pay the same price there as booking direct, and their comparison engine is the best you will find
  - No fees, instant confirmation, extremely good customer service 24/7
-

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**Without Getting Ripped Off**

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# Book direct and have “one neck to wring”

- There are a million “travel customer service” scams
  - They all LOOK and SOUND legit
  - But they WILL separate you from your money, and not do a thing to help you
  - When you book direct, you **KNOW** who to call
    - It’s in their app, online chat, phone number, website
-



hotels.com customer service



Telephone number

Web Results

Live person

Email

Chat

Images

Perspectives

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About 878,000,000 results (0.36 seconds)

You can call us at (866) 223-2092.



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# Just don't!

- **NEVER** give your credit card info over the phone to ANY "customer service" rep who calls you
  - **IF** there is a problem with your arrangements, the supplier will *always* **EMAIL YOU** and you can fix it on their app or website, or when at the hotel desk or airline check-in desk
  - If you must contact them, do it through their app, website or the number shown on your **DIRECT** booking confirmation
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# **How to book travel online, without getting ripped off**

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# Upcoming meeting dates

Meetings are usually on the 2nd and 4th Wednesday each month, September-March

- March 27
- April 10 - TBA

# Cove Apple Club

March 13, 2024

