

Will Expedia's Purchase Of Orbitz Mean You'll Pay More For Flights And Hotels?

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Orbitz is the newest addition to Expedia's portfolio of travel sites. Expedia Inc.

Online travel agency Expedia is spending \$1.3 billion to buy rival Orbitz, the company announced Thursday, just weeks after it finalized a deal to acquire Travelocity in January. So what does this consolidation mean for consumers looking for the best flight and hotel deals?

When it comes to prices, probably not a lot at this point, experts say.

"There's still competition" in the online travel search market, said consumer travel expert Christopher Elliott, citing other portals like Priceline, Kayak and Fareportal. "Expedia hasn't cornered the online travel market -- at least not yet."

George Hobica of [Airfarewatchdog](#) agrees. "There are so many ways now to buy travel online -- AirBnB, Google Flights and many more to come -- that there will still be options and competition, and little consumer effect."

That competition is what Expedia is hoping will shield it from antitrust regulation. Expedia CFO Mark Okerstrom [downplayed](#) the possibility of antitrust issues, calling the industry "highly fragmented." RBC Capital Markets analyst Mark Mahaney told Reuters that because Orbitz has been a weak player in the industry, Expedia would not face major regulatory hurdles.

But analyst Keith Moore [told the Wall Street Journal](#) that the deal would garner "a substantial amount of scrutiny" from antitrust regulators. [According to Dennis Schaal](#), news editor at Skift, Priceline would not comment on whether asked whether the company would fight the Expedia-Orbitz deal on antitrust grounds.

Hobica suspects that the deal might actually benefit consumers booking hotels. "It will give Expedia more clout in bargaining with hotels and other vendors, so that might be a good thing, for a while at least," he said.

Still, you might want to search a few sites when booking your next trip.

"Under its former owners, a site like Travelocity would have access to different inventory and, at times, better deals than its competitors. With Expedia owning it, the two are no longer competing, so you'll need to add a few more sites to your shopping list to do your due diligence," [Elliott wrote](#) on his travel blog when Expedia bought Travelocity.

He added that if another company "snatche[d] up Orbitz, then you'll have even fewer choices. Over time, that could make finding the right flight, hotel room or cruise more difficult."

David Tossell, a former Travelocity manager who now is now an executive at travel software company DataArt, told Elliott that consumers should "lean on the 'meta' search sites that find fares from a variety of sources." Sites like Kayak.com, Trivago, Google Flights and Google Hotels all save you from visiting multiple travel sites and combing through them one by one.

Schaal also [cautioned](#) that fewer choices for customers could lead to poorer customer service. For example, Travelocity used to guarantee that it would "make things right" for customers who experienced problems on a trip. But Expedia has not matched this promise so far.