Growthmaster *Travel*

FREE E-BOOK

Free guide
8 chapters
+ CHECKLIST

More *direct bookings*

A practical guide for campsites, glampings, holiday parks, B&Bs and small hotels



YEARS OF MARKETING EXPERIENCE AT

Holidu · Belvilla · Center Parcs

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MORE DIRECT BOOKINGS

Contents

01 What a platform booking costs you

02 What the Digital Markets Act allows

03 Your website as a booking machine

04 A reason to book direct

05 Getting found on Google

06 Answering fast and following up

07 Bringing regular guests back

08 Measuring what works

Checklist: 20 points

Booking platforms bring you new guests. But every booking costs commission, and the guest stays partly the platform's. This guide helps you get more guests to book directly with you, without dropping the platforms altogether.

You'll read what a platform booking really costs, what the EU Digital Markets Act now allows for your prices, and how to win more direct bookings in six steps. At the back you'll find a 20-point checklist.

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About the author. Kelly Kap spent years in marketing at Holidu, Belvilla and Center Parcs. With Growthmaster Travel she helps travel businesses win more direct bookings through smart automation.

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CHAPTER 1

01 What a platform booking costs you

According to SiteMinder, Booking.com usually charges between 10 and 25 percent commission, depending on your location and your agreements, among other things. A worked example:

10–25%

commission per booking on Booking.com, according to SiteMinder



✓ **Every booking you bring to your own site, you keep.**

Booking value	At 10%	At 15%	At 25%
€300	€30	€45	€75
€600	€60	€90	€150
€1,200	€120	€180	€300

Work it out for your own business: platform bookings per year × average booking value × your commission rate. Every booking you bring to your own website saves you that amount. Even more important: with a direct booking, you are in touch with the guest yourself.

CHAPTER 2

02 What the Digital Markets Act allows

For a long time you weren't allowed to be cheaper on your own website than on the platform. Under the EU Digital Markets Act, Booking.com has been designated a gatekeeper. According to the European Commission's factsheet, the platform has had to meet all relevant obligations since 14 November 2024: accommodations in the European Economic Area may set their prices and conditions freely, on and off Booking.com, including on their own website.

WHAT CHANGED

14 Nov 2024
Booking.com must meet the DMA obligations

Sept 2026
External prices no longer count for the Sponsored Benefit programme

Now
You may offer a better price or better conditions direct

In September 2026, Booking.com also committed that external prices no longer play a role in admission to the Booking Sponsored Benefit programme. External price comparisons in the extranet are now for information only.

What does this mean for you? If your business is in the EEA, you may offer a lower price or better conditions for direct bookings. Do read your own contract and the terms of any programmes you take part in. Outside the EEA, for example in the UK, these DMA rules do not apply.

03 CHAPTER 3 Your website as a booking machine

Most direct bookings are lost on the website itself. Check these points on your phone, because that's where most guests book:

Example



1. **Availability and price at a glance**
2. **Total price without surprises**
3. **Booking button always in view**

- Can you see availability and price within a few seconds?
- Can you book in three steps, without creating an account?
- Are the total price and any extra charges clear straight away?
- Is the booking button visible on every page?
- Does the site load quickly, even on a slow mobile connection?
- Are photos, the site map and house rules easy to find?

Don't send guests to an email form to book. Every extra step costs bookings.

CHAPTER 4

04 A reason to book direct

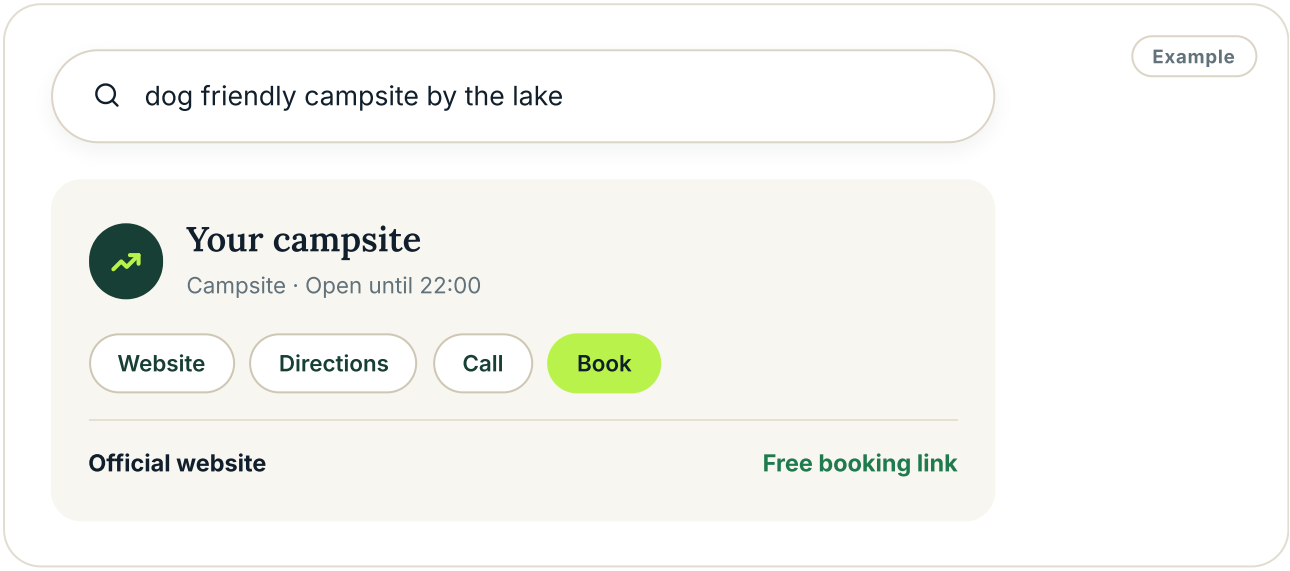
Guests book direct when it gives them something. Choose one or two benefits and show them next to the booking button, on your confirmation page and in your Google profile:

- Choose your own pitch, cabin or room
- Free late check-out or early arrival
- More flexible cancellation
- Breakfast, a bottle of wine or bike hire on arrival
- **A lower price, if you choose to offer one**
- Personal contact before arrival, for example via WhatsApp

Keep it short and concrete: "Booked direct? Then you choose your own pitch and can stay until 1 pm."

05 CHAPTER 5 Getting found on Google

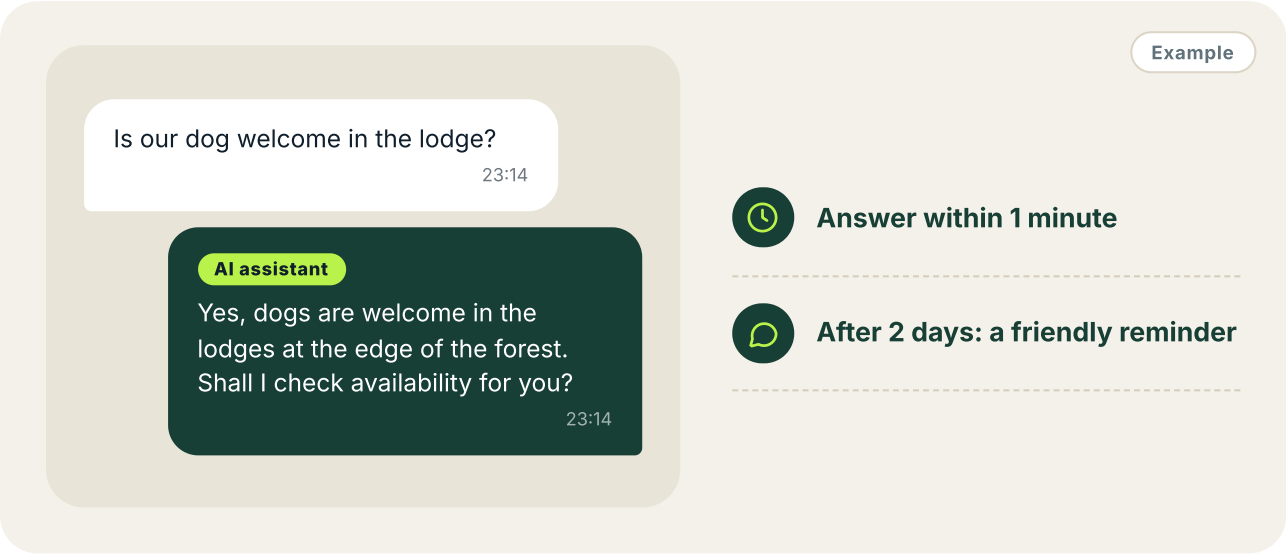
Many guests look you up by name on Google first, even if they found you on a platform. Make sure the direct route wins there:



- Keep your Google Business Profile up to date: photos, opening hours, seasons and a link to your booking page.
- Hotels can get free booking links through Google Hotel Center. These are links next to the ads, with no cost per click. The connection often runs through your booking system or channel manager.
- Create pages for what guests search for, such as "dog-friendly campsite by the lake" or "B&B with breakfast in the Ardennes".
- Lots of guests from abroad? A multilingual website with hreflang helps them find you in their own language.

06 CHAPTER 6 Answering fast and following up

Guests who are unsure ask a question first. If it sits for a day, they often book somewhere else. Three things help:



- **Ready-made answers** to the twenty most frequently asked questions, so you can reply within a minute.
- **Being reachable outside office hours**, for example with a digital assistant that answers common questions. Do tell guests it's AI: in the EU this has been required under the AI Act since 2 August 2026.
- **Following up**: a friendly reminder after two days when an enquiry or quote gets no reply.

07 CHAPTER 7 Bringing regular guests back

A guest who has stayed with you before is your cheapest booking. So build your own list and stay in touch:



- Ask guests who book direct whether they'd like to receive your newsletter.
- Introduce guests to your website during their stay, for example with a QR code at reception.
- Send regular guests your offer for the early season or next year in good time.

The rules: for marketing by email you normally need consent. In the EU there is an exception for existing customers (Article 13 of the ePrivacy Directive): if you got the address through a booking, you offer something similar and the guest can easily unsubscribe in every email. Your national regulator explains how this works in your country. Guests who booked through a platform usually don't fall under this exception.

CHAPTER 8

08 Measuring what works

Once a month, note how your bookings come in. A simple table is enough:



Month	Direct	Via platforms	Direct share	What did you change?
January	18	42	30%	Benefit next to the booking button
February	24	40	38%	Email to regular guests

The figures in this table are an example.

That way you see which step really makes a difference, and what to keep doing.

CHECKLIST

Checklist: 20 points

Tick what you already do

- [ ] 01 I know what platform bookings cost me in commission each year
- [ ] 02 I have reread my contract with booking platforms
- [ ] 03 Availability and price appear within seconds on my website
- [ ] 04 Booking takes three steps, also on a phone
- [ ] 05 The total price is clear straight away
- [ ] 06 There is a booking button on every page
- [ ] 07 My website loads quickly on mobile
- [ ] 08 There is a concrete benefit next to the booking button
- [ ] 09 That benefit is also in my Google profile and confirmation email
- [ ] 10 My Google Business Profile is up to date and links to my booking page
- [ ] 11 I have checked whether free booking links from Google are possible for me
- [ ] 12 I have pages for the search terms my guests use
- [ ] 13 My site is available in the languages of my main guests from abroad
- [ ] 14 I have ready-made answers to the twenty most frequently asked questions
- [ ] 15 Questions are answered within a few hours, also in the evening
- [ ] 16 A digital assistant says that it is AI
- [ ] 17 Enquiries without a reply get a reminder
- [ ] 18 Guests who book direct can sign up for my newsletter
- [ ] 19 Regular guests get my offer for next season in good time
- [ ] 20 I measure my share of direct bookings every month

NEXT STEP

Need help?

Growthmaster Travel helps travel businesses with guest communication, social media, reviews and following up booking enquiries, using AI and always with your approval. In a free 30-minute demo (in English or Dutch) we look at where you can win the most direct bookings.

growthmaster.nl/en/travel →



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