



Welcome to edition 8 of the [Up in the Air | Consultancy](#) monthly newsletter! It includes a round up of the content that I recently shared, plus some additional news and background items.

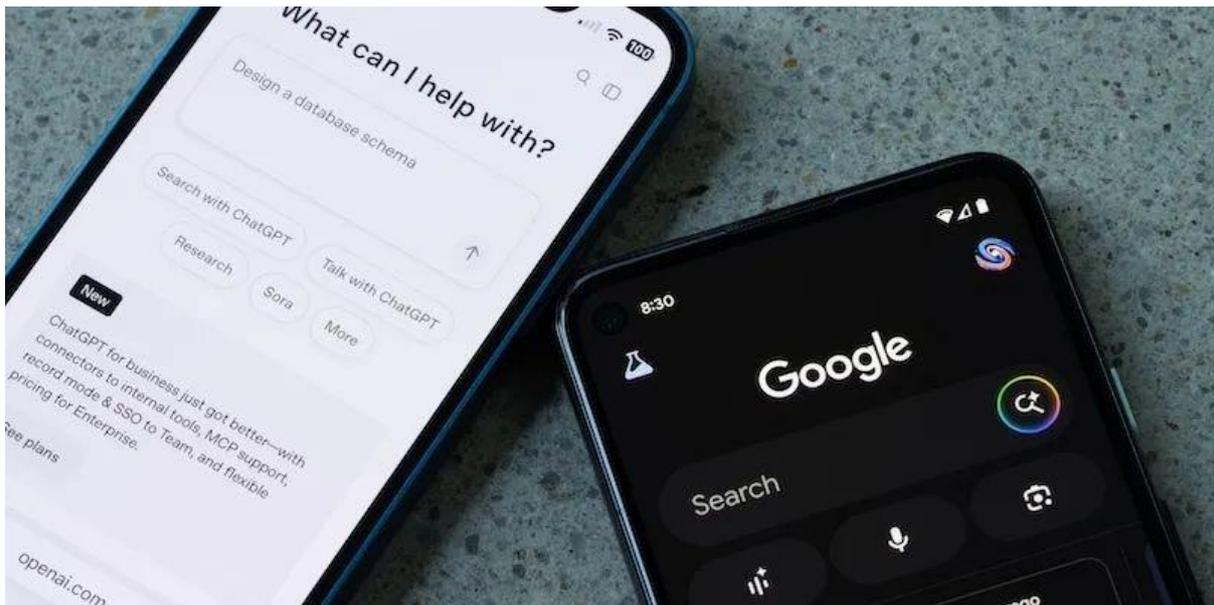
## **i** Travel Fintech News

### ***Google Universal Commerce Protocol (UCP) and travel's race for an agentic commerce standard***

Article by [PhocusWire](#)

UCP will support an upcoming checkout feature on Google product listings in Search's AI Mode and on the Gemini app. The feature will give consumers the ability to "check out" while they are searching on Google through eligible retailers in the U.S.

It will work with Google Pay and eventually with [PayPal](#). The protocol will allow agents and systems to operate in tandem across businesses, payment providers and consumer surfaces, according to Google. Rather than requiring unique connections with individual agents, UCP is built to allow all agents to interact seamlessly.



[Click on image to read article](#)

### ***Understanding MCP and its impact on the travel industry***

This article by [Ira Vouk, MBA](#) in which she explains the MCP protocol, its impact on travel payments, the challenges for hotels, OTAs, and airlines, and the future of AI-driven booking, is part of [The Paypers](#)'s Travel Series.



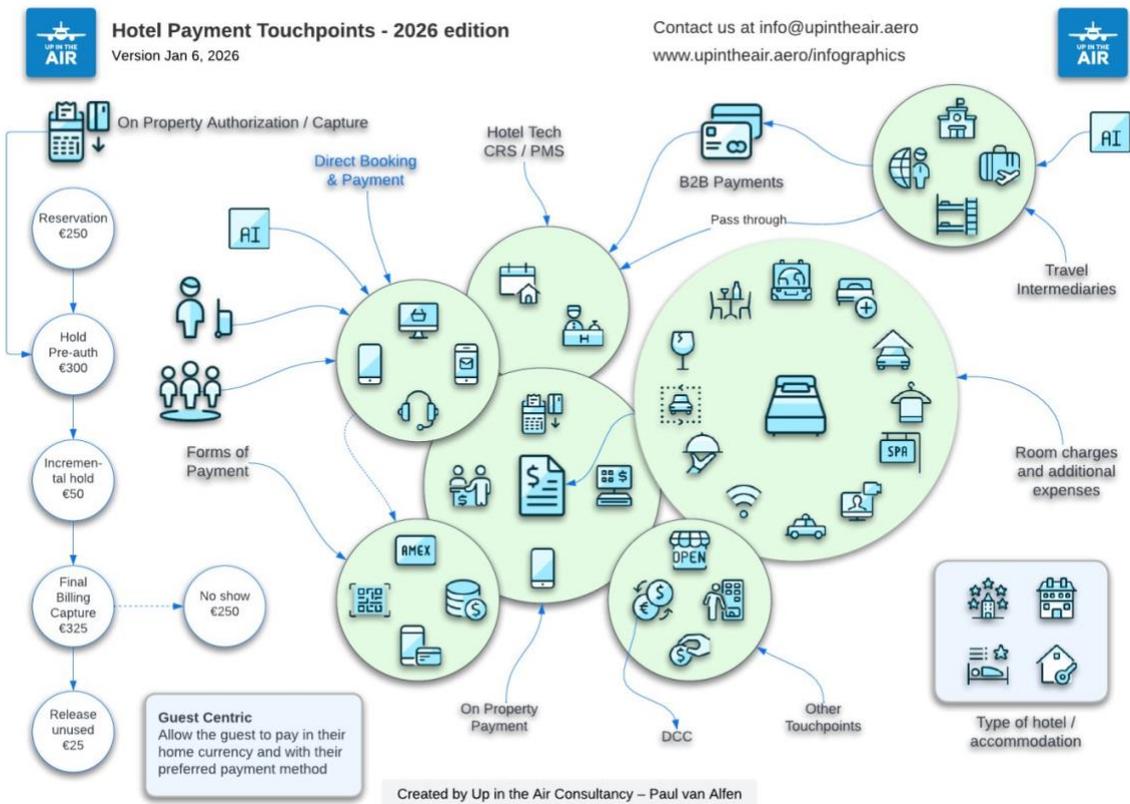
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## Hotel Payments Touchpoints - 2026 edition

Updated version of the [Up in the Air | Consultancy](#) infographic on hotel payments. No process diagram this time, but a visualization of the online, on property and indirect sales channels and accompanying payment touchpoints.

New in this version, agentic commerce:

- LLM's connecting to PMS's (via MCP) for direct bookings
- LLM's with embedded OTA apps (think [Booking.com](#)) for indirect bookings

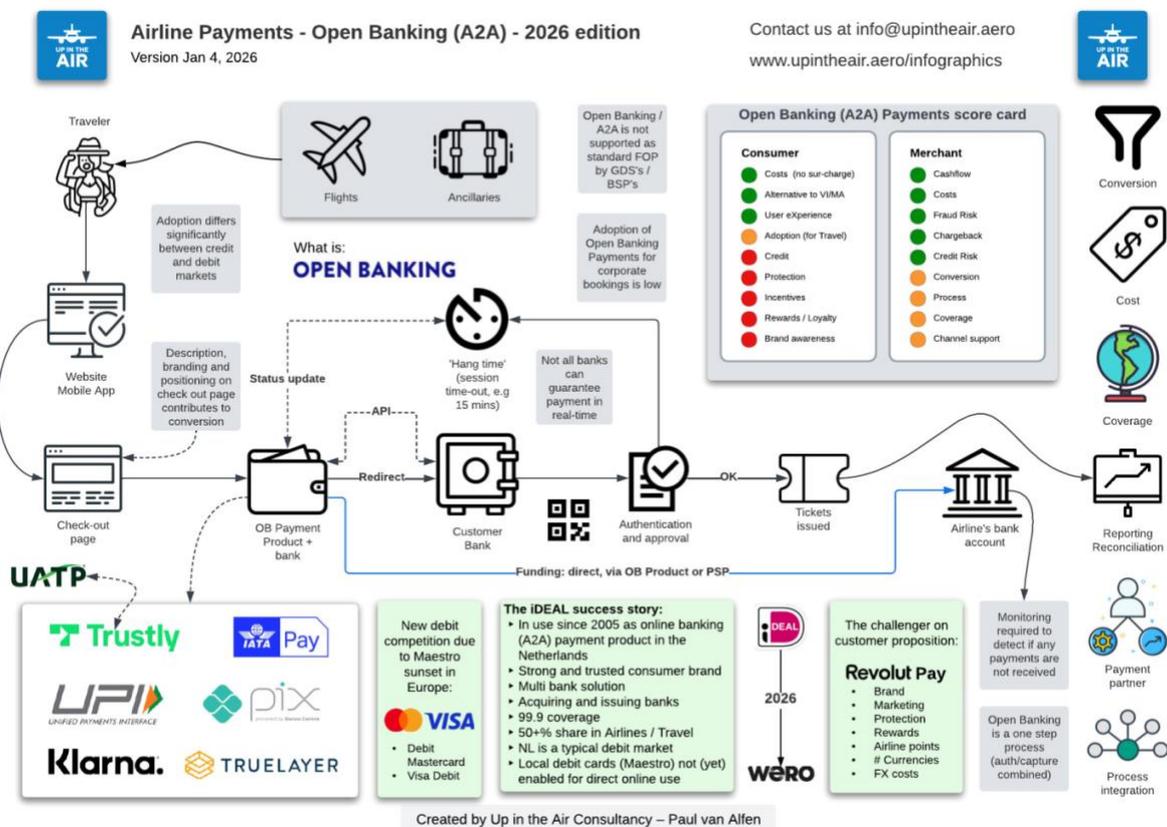


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# Airline Payments - Open Banking (A2A) - 2026 edition

Introducing the 2026 edition of the [Up in the Air | Consultancy](#) infographic on Open Banking / A2A online payments for Airlines. What to watch out for in 2026?

- Customer proposition drives adoption, what will product providers and merchants offer as part of a value exchange to grow share of wallet in the travel sector?
- [EPI Company](#)'s WERO roll out, will it scale in Travel? How will its dispute process work out in practice?
- The sunset of Maestro in Europe, adding [Visa](#) and [Mastercard](#) debit cards to the mix, will it spoil the Open Banking party?



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## i Vendor News

### ***HBX Group and Mastercard roll out virtual payments for travel firms***

[HBX Group](#) and [Mastercard](#) have introduced a new virtual payment program aimed at travel intermediaries operating across multiple markets.

The initiative brings together Mastercard's Wholesale Programme with HBX Group's existing B2B travel technology infrastructure, focusing on streamlining payment processes between intermediaries and suppliers.

The programme enables partners in the EU, UK and US to use virtual cards to settle supplier payments, manage transactions across several currencies and automate reconciliation. According to the companies, the system is intended to reduce reliance on manual processes and legacy payment methods that remain common in the travel sector. Features include transaction-level traceability, automated reporting and tools designed to improve cash-flow visibility while limiting exposure to fraud.



Click on image to read article

### ***DECTA, [actuary.aero](#) optimize risk management in travel***

Payment processing company [DECTA](#) has expanded its long-standing partnership with [actuary.aero](#), aiming to further optimize risk management in the travel industry. To achieve this and support companies operating in the travel sector to grow their business, DECTA and [actuary.aero](#) plan to leverage data intelligence, working on driving smarter risk anagement.



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## 📌 Airline & Travel Payments 101

### **Corporate Travel Payments: What Really Works**

Corporate travel payments are still full of inefficiencies, hidden risks, and outdated processes. In this video, [AltexSoft](#) breaks down why personal cards create major problems, what smarter options exist and how they work. You'll learn which solutions actually simplify reconciliation, speed up reimbursement, reduce fraud, and modernize corporate travel programs.



Click on image to watch video

### **How Travel Agents Get Paid: Revenue Sources and Streams**

In this article, [AltexSoft](#) examines the core revenue streams of travel agencies, identify who actually pays the reseller (the supplier, another intermediary, or the traveler), track how these revenue sources have evolved over time, and explain how new technologies have reshaped the travel distribution landscape.



[Click on image to read article](#)

## **i** Blogs, white papers and other content

### ***Airline Financial Settlement in the Era of Order Accounting***

The airline industry is undergoing one of its most significant transformations in decades: the shift from legacy, ticket/EMD-based processes to Offer and Order-based retailing. In this blog [Travel In Motion's Joachim Zintl](#) explores where the industry currently stands on financial settlement, how solution providers are preparing, and what the shift means for each airline type.

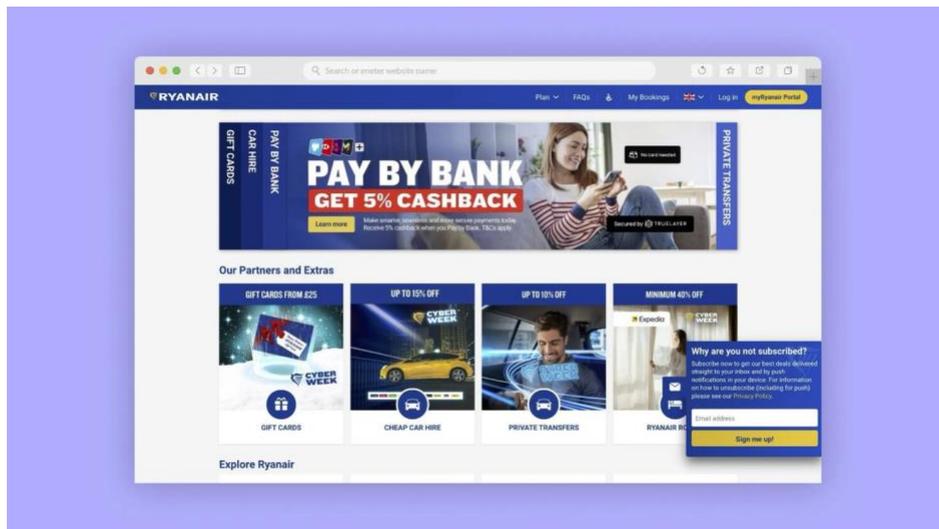
You can read the blog [here](#).

### ***Pay by Bank in action: how to build a high-performing Pay by Bank checkout experience***

One of my observations related to Open Banking struggling to take off for airlines is the lack of adoption in 'credit (card) centric' countries. The main factors playing a role, next to money leaving the customer's account instantly, are the missing

protection against non delivery of services and the lack of incentives to drive adoption.

With regards to the latter, this article by [TrueLayer](#) first of all recognizes the need for incentives and also gives some examples and touches on last year's [Ryanair - Europe's Favourite Airline](#) campaign 'giving away' GBP 200.000 as cashbacks when using Pay by Bank (on a first comes, first served basis).



Click on image to read blog

### ***Agentic Commerce: How Merchants Win in the Age of AI Agents***

AI agents are becoming the new front door to shopping. They search, compare, and buy for your customers. This shift is moving fast, and it's already changing how people find and purchase products. Watch this session with [Yuno's](#) VP of AI [Simon Martinez](#) to learn how to turn AI-driven conversations into revenue.



Click on image to watch video

## i Upcoming and recent events



**Industry Event Schedule 1H-2026**  
Version Jan 7, 2026

Contact us at [info@upintheair.aero](mailto:info@upintheair.aero)  
[www.upintheair.aero/events](http://www.upintheair.aero/events)



Event name	Organizer	Event website for registration (click on link)	Location	Start Date	End Date
HEDNA Global Distribution Conference NA	HEDNA	<a href="https://www.hedna.org/events">https://www.hedna.org/events</a>	Oriando, FL	21/01/2026	23/01/2026
FITUR	IFEMA	<a href="https://www.ifema.es/en/fitur/visitors-b2b-b2c">https://www.ifema.es/en/fitur/visitors-b2b-b2c</a>	Madrid	21/01/2026	25/01/2026
ECTAA Travel Distribution Summit	ECTAA	<a href="https://www.ectaa.org/en/communications/ectaa-travel-distribution-summit-2026">https://www.ectaa.org/en/communications/ectaa-travel-distribution-summit-2026</a>	Brussels	10/02/2026	11/02/2026
Airline & Travel Payments Summit B2B	Airline Information	<a href="https://www.airconnects.us/airline-travel-payments-b2b-summit-2026/">https://www.airconnects.us/airline-travel-payments-b2b-summit-2026/</a>	London	24/02/2026	25/02/2026
ITB	ITB	<a href="http://www.itb-berlin.de/en">www.itb-berlin.de/en</a>	Berlin	03/03/2026	05/03/2026
Airline Distribution	UATP	<a href="https://uatp.com/airline-distribution/">https://uatp.com/airline-distribution/</a>	Barcelona	10/03/2026	12/03/2026
Merchant Payments Ecosystem	Empiria	<a href="https://www.merchantpaymentsecosystem.com">https://www.merchantpaymentsecosystem.com</a>	Berlin	17/03/2026	19/03/2026
Aviation Festival Asia	Terrapinn	<a href="https://www.terrapinn.com/exhibition/aviation-festival-asia/index.stm">https://www.terrapinn.com/exhibition/aviation-festival-asia/index.stm</a>	Singapore	25/03/2026	26/03/2026
Merchant Risk Council Europe	MRC	<a href="https://merchantriskcouncil.org/events">https://merchantriskcouncil.org/events</a>	London	13/04/2026	15/04/2026
Converge by <a href="http://actuary.aero">actuary.aero</a>	<a href="http://actuary.aero">actuary.aero</a>	<a href="https://www.actuary.aero/events/2026/converge-by-actuary/about">https://www.actuary.aero/events/2026/converge-by-actuary/about</a>	Amsterdam	14/04/2026	16/04/2026
ARC Payments Forum	ARC	<a href="https://www2.arccorp.com/support-training/working-groups/arc-payments-forum/">https://www2.arccorp.com/support-training/working-groups/arc-payments-forum/</a>	Austin, TX	20/04/2026	22/04/2026
Arabian Travel Market	RX Events	<a href="https://www.rxevents.com/airline-gb.html">https://www.rxevents.com/airline-gb.html</a>	Dubai	04/05/2026	07/05/2026
Airline & Travel Payments Summit	Airline Information	<a href="https://www.airconnects.us/events">https://www.airconnects.us/events</a>	Dublin	19/05/2026	20/05/2026
Aviation Festival Americas	Terrapinn	<a href="https://www.terrapinn.com/conference/aviation-festival-americas/index.stm">https://www.terrapinn.com/conference/aviation-festival-americas/index.stm</a>	Miami, FL	03/06/2026	04/06/2026
Money20/20 Europe	Ascential	<a href="https://europe.money2020.com">https://europe.money2020.com</a>	Amsterdam	02/06/2026	04/06/2026
PhocusWright Europe	PhocusWright	<a href="https://www.phocuswrighteurope.com">https://www.phocuswrighteurope.com</a>	Barcelona	16/06/2026	17/06/2026
Airline & Travel Payments Summit LATAM	Airline Information	<a href="https://www.airconnects.us/events">https://www.airconnects.us/events</a>	Santiago de Chile	16/06/2026	17/06/2026
Travel Technology Europe	Northstar	<a href="https://traveltech-show.com">https://traveltech-show.com</a>	London	24/06/2026	25/06/2026



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### Converge by [actuary.aero](http://actuary.aero) 2026

Amsterdam will be the location for the 4th edition of the 'Converge by [actuary.aero](http://actuary.aero)' event, the highly rated community gathering of travel / fintech thought leaders, experts and other stakeholders.

**actuary.aero**  
CUSTOMER AND PARTNER CONFERENCE 2026  
**CONVERGE BY ACTUARY.AERO**  
REGISTRATION NOW OPEN

WHEN? **14-16 April**  
WHERE? **Hotel Jakarta, Amsterdam**

[WWW.ACTUARY.AERO](http://WWW.ACTUARY.AERO)    [MARKETING@ACTUARY.AERO](mailto:MARKETING@ACTUARY.AERO)

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## ***Airline Distribution 2026***

This neutral forum, hosted by [UATP](#), allows attendees to contribute ideas with industry leaders who are working to solve the complicated distribution questions facing the airlines today. Airline Distribution® focuses on the many facets of airline distribution, including airline trends, changing distribution needs, payment and technology advancements, and much more.



Click on image for more information

## **i Movers & Shakers**

Announcement to follow shortly!

## i Jobs

### **Manager Payment and Card Systems SA**

[Riyadh Air | طيران الرياض](#) is seeking a strategic and results-driven Payments professional to own and shape their end-to-end payment and card operations. In this pivotal role, you will ensure the stability, resilience, and always-on availability of their payment platforms across every customer touchpoint.



TRAVEL FINTECH JOB ALERT

Manager  
Payment and Card  
Systems

RIYADH AIR  
طيران الرياض

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### **Risk Control Manager NL**

This role at [Trip.com Group](#) owns the relationship between the central Risk Management function and internal business units (e.g., Payments, International Business Unit (IBU), TripLink, Travix operations, finance). He/She takes a leading role in the organization and ensures each business area understands, adopts, and maximizes the value of risk mitigation tools, policies, and processes so that fraud losses, chargebacks, and operational friction are minimized while customer experience and KPIs are protected.

More information can be found [here](#).

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[Think Travel Payments](#) Webinar Series

YouTube:

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*Would you like to suggest content for this newsletter? Contact me at [paul@upintheair.aero](mailto:paul@upintheair.aero)*

