TO HAVE OR TO HOLD?
Innovating to keep traveler options open
Introduction

Want more time to consider that July destination wedding? What about another few days to find a travel companion for your epic summer vacation? Expedia and Options Away have just the answer with a new hold feature powered by TripLock and now available on Expedia.com, Orbitz.com, Travelocity and CheapTickets.
Expedia, Inc. strives to empower travelers to book travel plans with confidence, and allowing those travelers more options when booking helps accomplish this goal. The hold button is the ultimate embodiment of flexibility. If they like a fare, they can hold it and think about it before locking in. If they ultimately decide they don’t like the fare, they can let the hold expire.

TripLock allows travelers to hold a flight from two days up to a week—for a small fee. It allows travelers more time to consider their options and the ability to share potential plans with fellow travelers. It also protects against higher fares upon booking. If a fare decreases between when the traveler first holds a flight and decides to buy it, the traveler pays the lower fare.

How can travelers use this magic tool?

- Type desired travel dates and destination into Expedia.com.
- Once the flight choices display, a hold button appears next to each one.
- Click the hold button on the flight you desire.
- The site then presents the various hold periods and relative prices.

Once you’re ready to book an itinerary you’ve held, simply come back and purchase the ticket. If you decide to go another route (literally and figuratively, of course), the hold expires. No follow-up is necessary.
Ensuring travelers find “The One”

TripLock works because it provides the value of time. With billions of possible flight combinations for each search, finding the right match for your upcoming trip can be tough, and sometimes travelers need a bit more time before deciding. TripLock buys travelers more time. TripLock starts as low as US$5 and increases based upon a combination of the duration of the hold and total estimated fare.

The TripLock feature is worth the investment. Specifically, the new technology provides leisure travelers with:

- Flexibility and more time to buy.
- Price increase protection.
- No change fees or hassles.
- Sharing capability with fellow travelers or across devices.

Travelers certainly appreciate this degree of flexibility; research recently conducted by Options Away and Expedia indicated that most travelers reported they are happy having the option to hold a flight. When would these travelers use the hold? About 40 percent of respondents said they would click the hold button when they weren’t sure of their plans. The very same data indicated that other reasons for holding flights would be waiting on others before booking (26 percent) and concern over increasing air fares (25 percent).
Our internal analysis also showed that while travelers are most likely to purchase TripLock on their desktop (75 percent) instead of a mobile or tablet device, a majority of them (40 percent) seem to be more comfortable booking the flight via mobile or tablet device after holding it. Interestingly, traveling to and from work seems to be a great time to lock in a vacation; approximately one in 10 responding travelers purchase TripLock while commuting. Some travelers don’t want vacation to end, and about 4 percent of respondents put their next vacation on hold while currently on vacation.

Another interesting data point: Travelers putting a flight on hold earlier in the week are more likely to ultimately book the flight. This suggests that travelers who might hold last-minute Las Vegas getaways don’t always book the itineraries they hold. In other words, what doesn’t happen in Vegas usually stays home.
Providing context

True partnerships in the travel industry provide benefits to both traveler and supplier, and the Expedia and Options Away partnership is no different. The biggest advantage for travel suppliers: increased volume, since more people are likely to travel if they’re given the option to hold a flight. According to our research, 74 percent of travelers say they are more likely to travel given the option of putting a flight on hold with 15 percent classifying themselves as indifferent and 11 percent saying they are less likely to travel. From the traveler’s perspective, now that they have the option of holding reservations for a while, approximately 20 percent of travelers buy TripLock within 10 days of departure and not just for a very low fare. The average customer purchases TripLock 42 days prior to departure.

Over the years, Expedia certainly has invested in learning from travelers. In just 2015, Expedia spent US$830 million to create websites that provide travelers choices and measure what they want. One consistent finding, travelers value flexibility. With this in mind, Expedia and Options Away began a partnership almost two years ago with a small test to determine consumers’ interest in holding a flight. Customers loved having the choice. Thus our hold button was born.

Given people increasingly are showing a desire to keep their travel options open, Expedia, Inc. is proud to be the first global online travel company to provide a reservation hold in the form of TripLock to travelers. By starting small and innovating into a scalable solution with a great partner, Options Away, Expedia provides travelers the benefits of flexibility, price protection, and avoiding the hassles of change. Visit Expedia.com, Travelocity, Orbitz.com or CheapTickets and learn how to keep your travel options open.
Reach Out and Contact Someone

While Expedia works to make purchasing a flight online easy, sometimes you may just want to talk to another human about your problems. The good news is that both Expedia and Options Away have real people available to chat when you need them. Expedia handles approximately 45 million calls annually with more than 100,000 agents available globally to take your calls 24x7x365. The Options Away customer service team is also available by phone seven days a week from 7 a.m.-12 a.m. Central Time, and available by email 24x7.

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