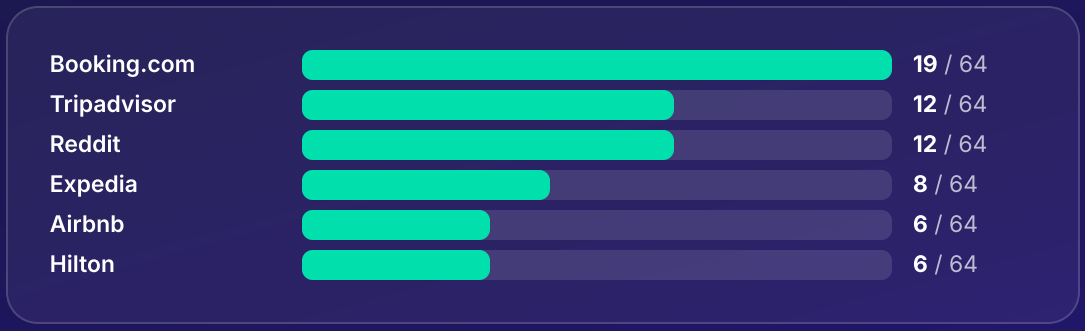
Who AI Recommends for Hotels

A Google AI Mode study of 64 real traveller questions about hotel stays, across 20 cities, 18 traveller types and the full journey from first idea to after check-out.

Research study · November 2026

NAMES MOST OFTEN MENTIONED OR CITED, OUT OF 64 ANSWERS



20 answers named a specific hotel. **26 different hotels**, and only one was named twice.

64
traveller questions

69%
of answers named a company or hotel

1 of 6
before-arrival answers named anyone

Ameneh Saeednia
Senior SEO and Generative Search Strategist

Summary

Key findings

We asked Google AI Mode 64 questions a real traveller might ask about **hotel stays**, from "which area should we stay in?" to "how do we get our deposit back?". Each answer was scored for the booking sites, hotel brands, specific hotels and sources it named or cited.

69%
of answers named a **booking site, hotel brand or specific hotel**

19
answers named or cited **Booking.com**, more than any other name

26
different hotels named across 20 answers

12
answers drew on **Reddit**, as often as Tripadvisor

1

Booking.com is the default shelf

Booking.com appeared in 19 of 64 answers, usually as a cited source. Booking sites or Tripadvisor appeared in **27**. Hotel chains appeared in 12.

2

Independent hotels can get named

Unlike the tours study, where no specialist marketplace appeared, AI Mode named **26 specific hotels**, mostly independents, often for a **specific need**: pets, families, accessibility, a celebration.

3

Comparing and checking is where names peak

14 of 14 answers in the compare and check steps named a company. **Before arrival, only 1 of 6** did. AI Mode just said: contact the hotel.

4

Reddit is the trust layer

Reddit appeared in **12** answers, especially when travellers checked **photos against reality**, had **room problems**, or arrived late.

What it means

For hotels, the AI shelf isn't closed. Booking sites dominate, but **a hotel that publishes specific, checkable facts** about its rooms, policies and neighbourhood can be the one AI Mode names.

Method

How the study worked

Item	Detail
Tool	**Google AI Mode** (google.com, AI Mode tab)
Dates	November 4, 2026
Session	Logged out, new search per question, location Vancouver, Canada, English
Prompts	**64** from the 3,000-prompt hotel library (Wave 1 sample)
Coverage	20 cities · 18 traveller types · 10 journey steps · 32 topics
Wording	Neutral: no prompt names a brand or asks for "the best hotel"
Runs	One run per prompt

What we recorded

Full answer text, including the **source cards** AI Mode shows.
Booking sites (Booking.com, Expedia, Airbnb...), **hotel chains** and loyalty programmes, and **specific hotels** named.
Sources: domains, community sites, official and consumer bodies.
Answer type: names companies, or advice only.

How to read the numbers

Detection was automated, then **checked by hand**: generic phrases like "boutique hotel" were removed and every hotel name was verified in the answer text. Groups of 2 to 7 answers are **directional**, not statistically significant.

Example prompt	Traveller	Step
Which area of Marrakech should we stay in? We are two adults with teenagers. Our dates are flexible.	Family with teens	2 Choose an area
How can we check whether hotel photos in Kyoto match reality? One of us cannot manage stairs. ...	No stairs	5 Compare hotels
After a stay in Lisbon, how should we raise a concern about a deposit that wasn't returned? ...	Celebration	10 After the stay

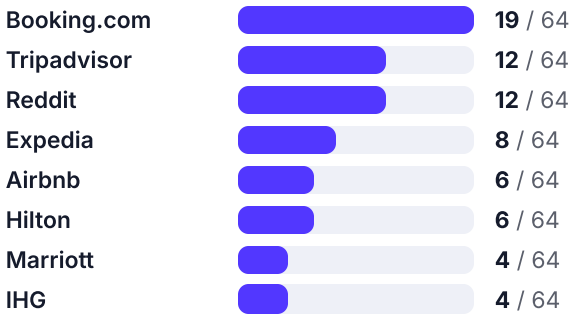
The prompt library, sampling and scoring rules are described in the companion document *The Hotel Prompt Library: AI Visibility Across the Stay Journey*. Prompts shown are shortened.

Finding 1

Booking.com stocks the shelf

Across 64 answers, **27** named or cited a booking site or Tripadvisor. One name dominated.

Answers naming or citing each name (of 64)



What stands out

Booking.com appeared in **19** answers, mostly as a cited source for policies, reviews and accessibility filters.

Expedia (8) and **Airbnb** (6) followed. Agoda, Vrbo, Kayak and Skyscanner appeared once or twice.

Tripadvisor (12) was used for reviews and photos, not booking.

Chains appear on cue

Hilton, Marriott, IHG and Hyatt appeared mainly when the question was about **loyalty, member rates or booking direct**. They rarely appeared otherwise.

Booking direct vs platform

Asked **"should we book a Tokyo hotel directly or through a booking site?"**, AI Mode named **Booking.com, Expedia and Agoda**. The case for booking direct (room requests, service, loyalty perks) was made in **general terms**, with no hotel's own offer named. That's a gap for any hotel with a real direct-booking offer.

Finding 2

Independent hotels can win a mention

20 answers named at least one specific hotel: **26 hotels in total**. Only one, Hotel Dubrovnik Palace, was named twice. The shelf for individual hotels is a **long tail**, not a few winners.

Traveller need	City	Hotels named
Travelling with a pet	Lisbon	Heritage Lisboa Plaza Hotel, Wine & Books Lisboa Hotel
Travelling with a pet	Paris	Hôtel Left Bank Saint Germain, Hôtel Caron de Beaumarchais
Family with teens	Cape Town	The Peninsula All-Suite Hotel, The President Hotel, The Twelve Apostles Hotel
No stairs	Singapore	Hotel Mi Rochor
Wheelchair access	Dubrovnik	Hotel Kompas, Hotel Dubrovnik Palace
Celebration	Dubrovnik	Hotel Dubrovnik Palace
Dietary needs	Naples	Hotel Piazza Bellini, Hotel Il Convento
Solo traveller, working	Vienna	Ruby Marie Hotel
Light sleeper	Vienna	Hotel Josefshof

When hotels get named

12 of the 20 answers came from the **first three steps**: exploring, choosing an area, hotel or alternative.
Most named hotels were matched to a **specific need**, not to "best hotel" lists.
Several answers named the hotel through a **Google place card** with address and rating.

Why this matters

A hotel doesn't need to be a big brand to be named. It needs to be the **clearest documented answer** to a traveller's situation: pet policy, step-free rooms, quiet rooms, cots, dietary options.

Finding 3

Names peak at comparison, then vanish

Booking sites and hotels appear most when travellers **compare and check**. Before arrival, AI Mode gives advice and tells travellers to **contact the hotel**.

Answers that named a booking site, hotel brand or specific hotel, by journey step



Compare and check

Compare hotels: 7 of 7 named someone. **Check the hotel:** 7 of 7.
Answers leaned on **Booking.com, Tripadvisor and Reddit** to verify photos, cleanliness and Wi-Fi.
This is where review profiles do their work.

Before arrival and after

Before arrival: 1 of 6. Late arrival, cots, dietary needs, room requests and accessibility got **checklists only**.
After the stay: 4 of 6, mostly the **booking platform's** dispute process.
Consumer and official bodies (European Consumer Centres, police, gov.gr) appeared in 4 of 6 after-stay answers.

The opportunity

Before-arrival questions are **almost empty of names**. A hotel that publishes clear pages on **late arrival, early check-in, cots, dietary requests and accessibility** fills the exact gap AI Mode leaves.

Finding 4

Who gets generic answers

Some traveller types got name-rich answers every time. Others mostly got advice.

Traveller type	Answers	Named someone	Pattern
Friends sharing costs	4	4	Airbnb, Booking.com, luggage storage services
Celebration	4	4	A named hotel, luxury booking programmes, booking sites
Wheelchair access	3	3	Specific hotels, booking sites, hotel chains
Family with teens	3	3	Specific hotels and booking sites
Business traveller	5	4	Booking sites, Tripadvisor, Reddit
Family with kids	4	**1**	Advice on rooms and cots, few names
Mixed-age family	3	**1**	Advice, a city tourism site
Returning visitors	3	**1**	Advice on areas, few names

Topics with no names at all

Price and taxes (0 of 2): explained city taxes and fees, named no one.
Check-in and check-out times (0 of 2).
Arranging accessibility before arrival (0 of 2).
Each is a **policy question** a hotel's own site could answer.

Caution

Each traveller type had **3 to 5 answers**, each topic **2**. Treat these as **signals to test**, not conclusions.

Finding 5

The sources AI Mode leans on

Beyond booking sites and hotels, answers drew on community, blogs, tourism boards and public bodies.

Source type	Examples seen	Typical use
Booking sites	booking.com (19), Expedia, Airbnb, Agoda, Vrbo, Skyscanner	Policies, reviews, filters, disputes
Review platforms	Tripadvisor (12)	Photos vs reality, cleanliness, noise
Community	Reddit (12), YouTube (2)	Real experiences, room problems, late arrivals
Hotel chains and programmes	Hilton, Marriott, IHG, Hyatt, Accor, Leading Hotels, Amex Fine Hotels + Resorts	Loyalty, member rates, celebrations
Niche sites and blogs	kids-stay.com, toddlertraveldiaries.com, bringfido.ca, comparehotelwifi.com	Families, pets, Wi-Fi
Tourism and public bodies	amsterdamtourism.org, European Consumer Centres, astynomia.gr, gov.gr	Areas, complaints, safety

Pattern

Booking sites win **policy and comparison** questions. Reddit and Tripadvisor win **"is it really like that?"** questions. Public bodies win **rights and safety**. Hotels win **specific-need** questions when their facts are clear.

Compared with tours

In the tours study, **72%** of answers named a company and **no private-guide marketplace** appeared. For hotels, **69%** named someone, and **individual hotels** made it onto the shelf in almost a third of answers.

What it means

Five moves for hotels

1

Document your specific needs

Pet policy, step-free rooms, quiet rooms, cots, dietary options, workspace. **Specific, checkable facts** are how 26 hotels got named.

2

Own the before-arrival questions

Pages on **late arrival, early check-in, luggage, cots and special requests**. AI Mode currently answers with "contact the hotel".

3

Win comparison on the platforms

Accurate photos, complete Booking.com and Tripadvisor profiles, and replies to reviews. That's where **compare and check** answers come from.

4

Make direct booking concrete

State **what booking direct gets you**, in plain facts. AI explained the choice in general terms only.

5

Watch the community

Reddit appeared in 12 answers. Know what's said about your property and **answer the recurring problems** on your own site.

Next in this study	Why
Wave 2: repeat all 64 prompts	Measure how stable the named hotels are
Add ChatGPT, Gemini and Perplexity	Compare tools; logged-out limits blocked them in Wave 1
Run follow-up questions	Hotels may appear deeper in the conversation
Expand before-arrival and policy prompts	Test the clearest gaps with more data

Study design, prompt library and analysis by **Ameneh Saeednia**, seogirl.ca. Answers collected from Google AI Mode on November 4, 2026, logged out, from Vancouver. Hotels named are reported as they appeared in answers, not as endorsements. AI answers change over time and by location; results describe this sample only. Prepared with AI assistance.