

Airbnb further extends refund window to May 31st and sets aside \$250 million for hosts

Airbnb has further extended its full cancellation policy due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic and has set aside \$250 million to help pay hosts for missed or canceled bookings, according to a letter sent to Airbnb hosts on Monday, which the company shared with *The Verge*. *CNBC* was first to report the news earlier today.

Now, guests who had previously booked stays on the platform with a check-in between March 14th and May 31st are now eligible for full refunds under the company's "extenuating circumstances" policy, regardless of the host's cancellation preference so long as the booking was made before March 14th. And Airbnb will now use the funds it set aside to ensure hosts can recoup some of the lost money.

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Prior to this announcement, Airbnb had expanded its "extenuating circumstances" policy to cover bookings between March 14th and April 1st; the company later expanded that coverage again to cover bookings made up to April 14th. Still, it did not have any form of coverage for hosts, some of whom were enraged that Airbnb was overriding their cancellation preferences and not providing any form of financial safety net. That's because the refunds Airbnb promised guests started coming from the hosts, not the company itself.

Now, Airbnb says it will provide its own assistance, and Airbnb CEO Brian Chesky apologized for the sloppy messaging around the policy changes this past month. "I deeply regret

the way we communicated this decision, and I am sorry that we did not consult you – like partners should,” Chesky writes in the letter. “We have heard from you and we know we have let you down. You deserve better from us.”

Airbnb has also donated \$10 million to a fund to help its “superhosts” and those who’ve been offering Airbnb’s tour guide-style Experiences. Hosts can apply for \$5,000 grants from the fund starting next month. “Trust is the foundation of a partnership, and it is built over time. We know that we have some work to do in strengthening yours, but it’s our priority and we are committed to it. When travel comes back – and it will – we look forward to welcoming millions of guests together again,” Chesky adds.

Because its business is entirely dependent on travel and tourism, Airbnb has been one of the hardest hit tech platforms during the coronavirus pandemic. The company has seen mass cancellations due to a mix of strict travel restrictions, countless countries advising or ordering citizens to self-isolate, and the cancellation of virtually every event involving mass gatherings of people in the US and other countries around the world.

The White House on Sunday extended its federal guidelines for social distancing in the US to April 30th, signaling that many cities throughout the country will do the same in short order. According to the most recent data, the US has more than 160,000 confirmed cases and more than 3,000 deaths, making it the new global epicenter of the pandemic.

<https://www.theverge.com/2020/3/30/21200430/airbnb-cancellation-policy-coronavirus-covid-may-31-pay-hosts>