

Airbnb Just Rolled Out Major Changes for Hosts and Guests, Plus New Tools for Groups: 'It's Going to Be a Big Win'

The nuances of group travel can be quite a hassle, and according to Tara Bunch, head of global operations at Airbnb, it's also been a massive pain point for Airbnb users and hosts.

"The vast majority of our travel is group travel," Bunch told *Entrepreneur*, noting that over 80% of all Airbnb bookings are for group travel. "In every launch that we go through, we spend a lot of time looking at customer feedback and host feedback."

Related: Airbnb Goes Viral For 'Insane' and 'Excessive' List of Rules

On Wednesday, Airbnb revealed changes to group travel as a part of its Summer 2024 event in Los Angeles, and how some seemingly small tweaks are set to be game changers for both customers and the people who willingly host them.

Trip invitations

If you've ever stayed in an Airbnb, you're probably familiar with the burden that falls on the point person who books the trip. Historically, they've been the only person who has all of the information about the stay, including check-in and check-out instructions, Wi-Fi passwords, and any other general information.

Now, users who book an Airbnb stay can invite other guests to join the trip and gain access to all of the reservation

details, including the address of the stay once booked. This way, the host will be able to see all of the guests that are coming, too.

“I’m a host, and I like knowing who’s coming,” Bunch said. “That’s a huge help to the host to know how many people are coming and to be able to kind of see who these folks are and what they’re interested in or what questions they have ahead of time.”

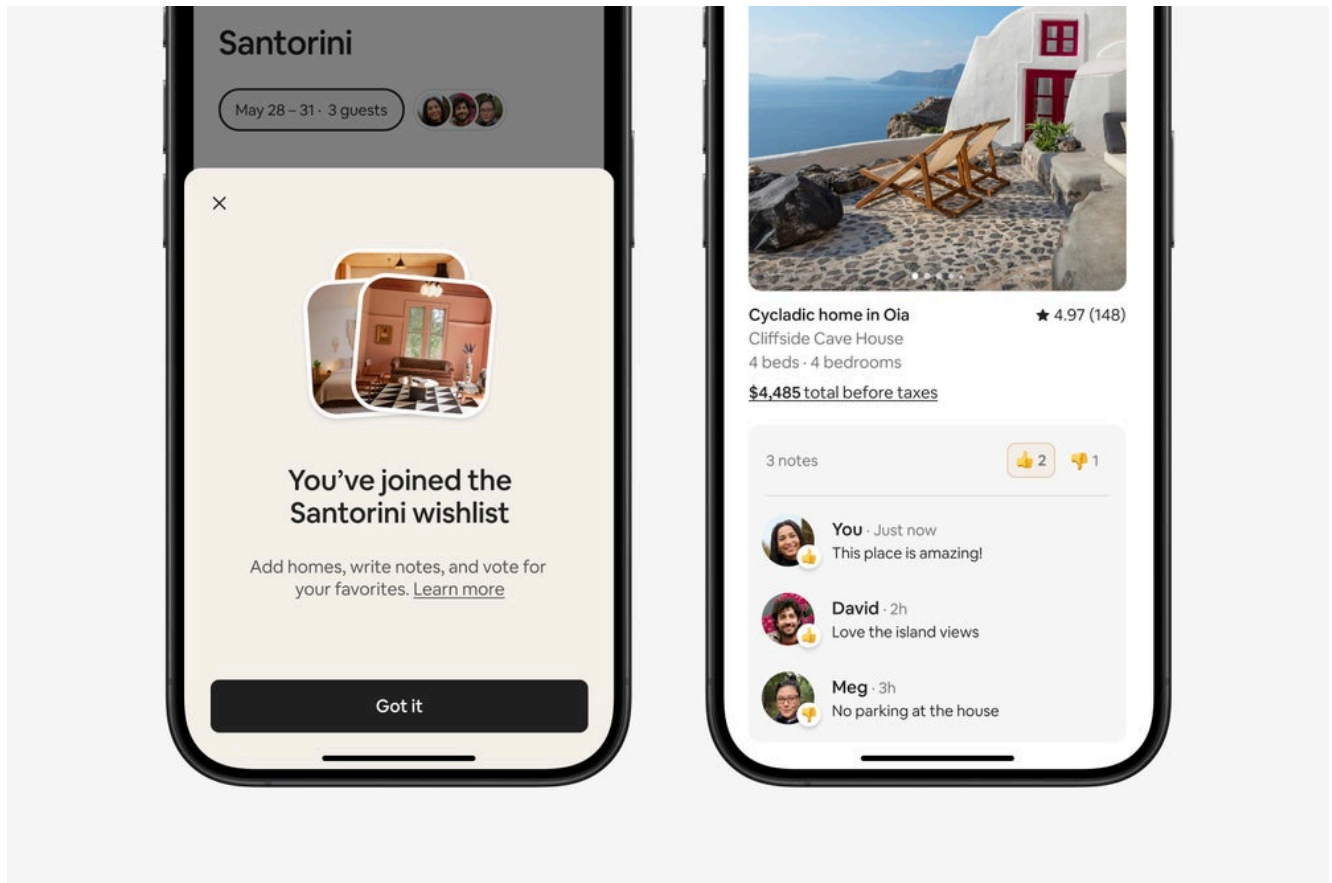
Guests can also only accept a trip invitation if they have an Airbnb account, which will encourage travelers not yet registered on the platform to create an account and help boost user growth for Airbnb.

“I think it’s just a win-win across the board for guests, for hosts, for us,” Bunch said.

Shared wishlists

As a part of creating a shared group for a trip, guests will be able to create a shared wishlist for potential Airbnb spots.

Before the new update, guests would have to send around links to Airbnb listings and create their wishlists of potential properties to book.



via Airbnb

Now, the wishlist feature will be interactive, with anyone invited on the trip having the ability to add a property that they want to suggest to a shared list for all other attendees to see.

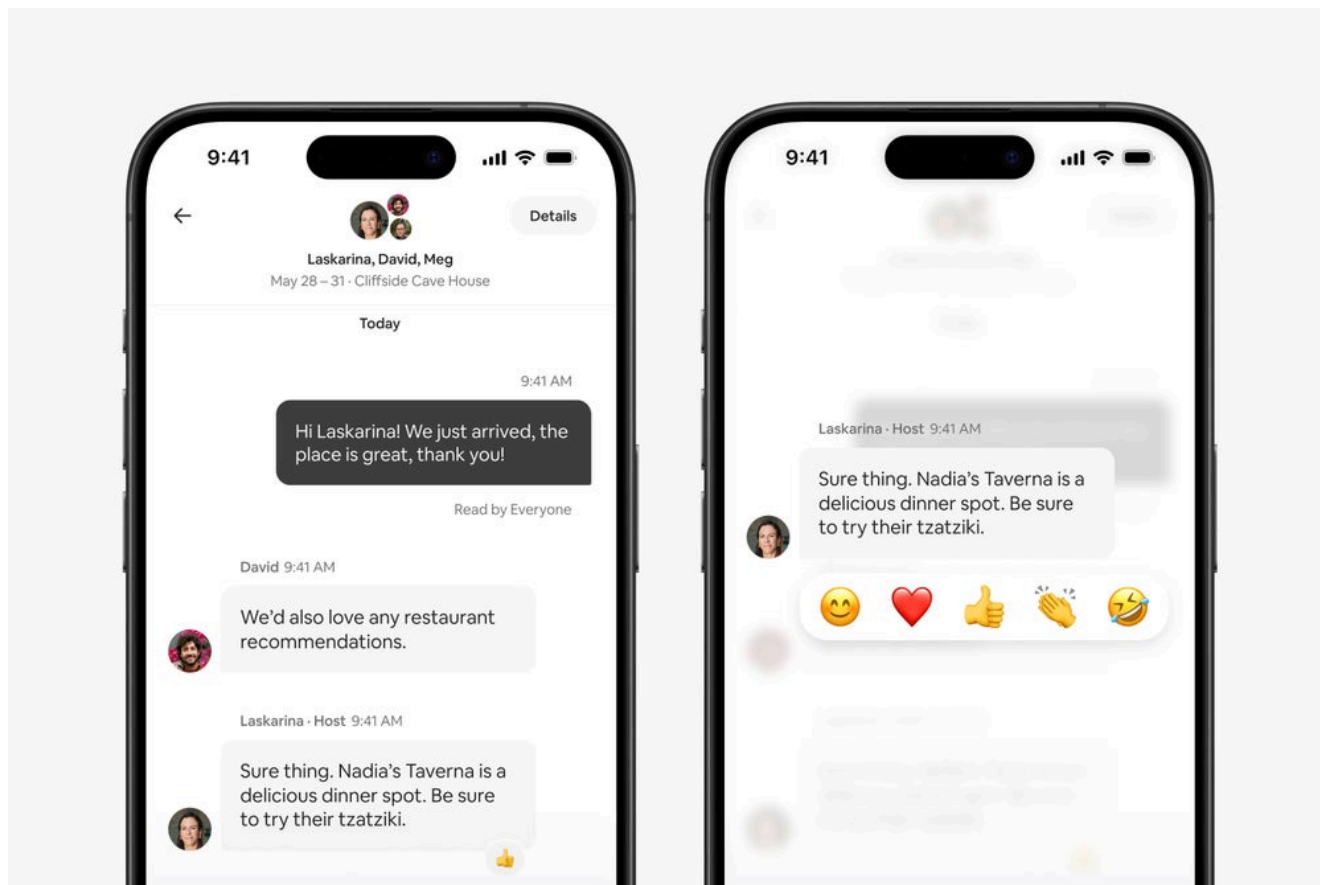
Guests will be able to upvote or downvote their favorite or least favorite properties and add comments underneath potential properties, sparking conversations and adding to making the planning a collaborative effort.

“It opens up the ability for people to have a much more interactive trip that’s more fun,” Bunch said. “The idea of voting up a property is fun, it’s gamified a little bit and it gets people engaged.”

Group messaging

One of the biggest game-changers for hosts is the new group messaging feature.

Historically, only the person who made the Airbnb reservation has had access to the host and has usually been the person who has had to field all of the guests' questions in a one-on-one contact situation with the host.



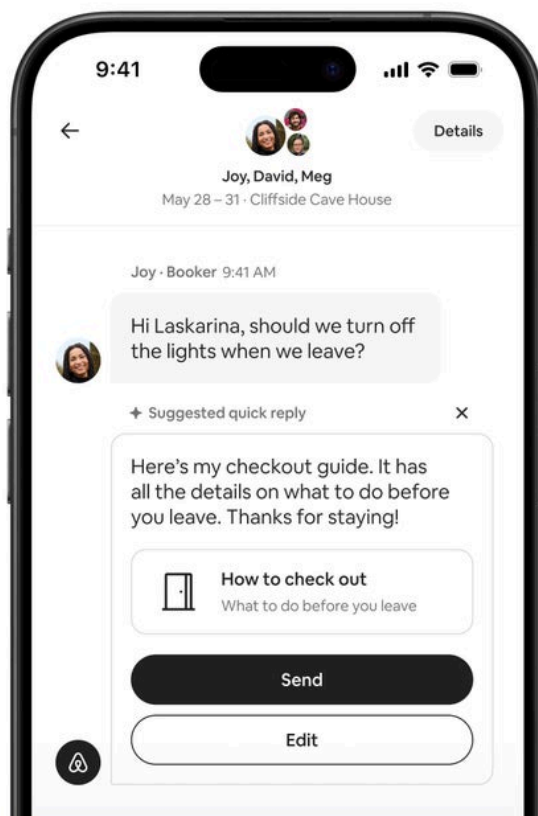
via Airbnb

Now, all users added to the trip will be able to communicate with the host in a group chat setting, down to the ability to react to different messages as one does on iMessage.

“Now that we have group messaging, the host will be able to see who all’s coming and it gives the host a little bit more information about the group,” Bunch said. “If they have maybe specific questions or needs, you’re gonna get more of that kind of interaction before they get there.”

Members will also have the ability to mute the chat if they do not want to be disturbed, but Bunch says the features will actively give travelers “the advantage of increasing the communication with the host” and vice versa.

Another feature of the group message will include several automated AI responses from the host to travelers for frequently asked questions, such as instructions about the Wi-Fi or the door code.



via Airbnb

Instead of having to respond to every individual inquisition or request, simple questions will be answered on the messaging platform without hosts having to type a response.

“It’s going to help you respond quickly and be more productive, it’s going to be a big win for hosts,” Bunch said.

What’s Next for Airbnb?

Though this week’s rollouts should help hosts when it comes to group travel, Bunch says that the platform still has strides to make when it comes to making it a truly host-friendly place to be.

“There’s a lot of focus around perfecting the core service – the product, the app, messaging,” Bunch explains. “We want to make hosting mainstream and give hosts tools so that they feel more confident and are more willing to host.”

Related: Airbnb Launches Series of Money-Saving, Privacy Upgrades

Bunch also says that international expansion is a long-term goal for Airbnb, with hopes of tapping into markets where hosting may be more of a foreign concept.

“Building brand awareness in some markets that maybe didn’t have as much awareness is a big focus we have on growing internationally,” Bunch says. “Markets where maybe people haven’t thought about hosting, but once they kind of see that it’s easy, helping them find a co-host and giving them tools, giving them the financial dashboards, all the stuff we’re working on in the background to just make hosting easier and less scary. That’s a big focus area.”

<https://www.entrepreneur.com/business-news/airbnb-reveals-major-changes-to-platform-for-hosts-guests/473610>