

# Group Travel Planet LLC Launches First-Ever Direct Connect Technology for Group Hotel Distribution

**Four Companies Sign Agreements with Group Travel Planet for Direct Access to Group Rates and Inventory**

PIGEON FORGE, TN (SEND2PRESS NEWSWIRE) – Group Travel Planet LLC ([www.grouptravelplanet.com](http://www.grouptravelplanet.com)), the pioneer and leader of online group travel, marked a major step in hotel distribution by today announcing that it has built first-ever direct connections that pull group hotel rates and inventory from hotel central reservation systems (CRS), property management systems (PMS), providers of distribution management solutions and merchant hotel distributors.



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The new proprietary technology, called GTPDirectConnect, provides hoteliers with a more efficient way to book groups through Group Travel Planet's vast distribution network by eliminating the need to load group rates and inventory manually into an extranet system. Currently, four companies have signed agreements to use GTPDirectConnect, including a hotel chain, a merchant hotel distributor and two distribution management solution providers.

*\*(Photo Caption: Group Travel Planet CEO Scott Harness.)*

Since its start in March 2000, Group Travel Planet has led the way in developing online technology for group travel, building off of its impressive extranet of over 10,000 group-friendly hotel partners. While the company will continue to offer its extranet for those hotels that wish to continue using it, building direct connection technology and streamlining the automation process was the next major step.

“Six years ago we knew the limitations that prevented hotels from selling group rooms online so we built technology that would allow hotels to provide and manage their group rates and inventory through our extranet system,” said Scott Harness, CEO of Group Travel Planet. “Since that time, technology has advanced and group travel has begun to gain the attention of hotel chains and others that were previously focused on individual leisure travel. The timing is ideal for us to launch GTPDirectConnect and build these first-ever connections.”

Group Travel Planet’s new technology comes at a time when hotels are focused on growing their online group travel business and as group travel planners are turning to the Internet for their travel needs.

“2005 was the year that online group travel took off and went mainstream,” said Harness. “Group Travel Planet saw a dramatic increase of 595% in gross bookings due primarily to increased consumer demand and to Group Travel Planet’s vast distribution network of companies like Sidestep and Orbitz.com.”

In addition to providing hoteliers with an easier and more efficient way of providing and managing their group rates and inventory, GTPDirectConnect technology:

- \* Provides hoteliers with better control over their available inventory and group rates;*
- \* Gives group travel planners immediate access to real-time group rates and availability;*
- \* Automates the entire group-booking transaction, including reserving group rooms direct in CRS, processing deposits and final payments, and transferring rooming list names;*
- \* Allows hotels to use their existing yield management tools to manage their rates and inventory more effectively;*
- \* Reduces hotelier’s labor cost and eliminates the*

*potential for human errors that may occur when using non-connected systems*

*\* Provides hotel IT developers with a host of web services to directly connect to Group Travel Planet's network*

Group Travel Planet is not alone in working towards enhancing the automation process of group hotel distribution.

"We're pleased to see that an organization like HEDNA (Hotel Electronic Distribution Network Association) has taken notice of the need to standardize and further enhance the automation of the online group booking process, as announced in their recent press release," said Harness. "This too is an exciting step for group hotel distribution and we're happy to be a part of HEDNA's new group travel subcommittee to share our experience and knowledge of this rapidly growing space."

Online group travel grew rapidly in 2005 due in large part to the growing distribution network that companies, like GTP, have created. GTP currently has partnerships with close to 50 major hotel distribution channels, targeted niche sites, and destination marketing organizations including: Orbitz, SideStep, CheapTickets.com, Amadeus, Lodging.com, OneTravel.com, eTeamz.com, VISIT FLORIDA, and Travel South USA.

#### About Group Travel Planet

Group Travel Planet, LLC, which operated as CoachQuote.com, LLC from March 2000 to September 2004, is the pioneer and first company to fully-automate the group hotel booking process. Started by industry professionals with extensive knowledge of the group travel industry, GTP has led the way in developing online technologies providing leisure group travelers (School Groups, Sports Teams, Family Reunions, Religious Organizations, and more) with easier ways to plan, book and manage all aspects of their group trips online, saving them valuable time and money. In addition to providing online technology for booking group hotel rooms, the company also provides online motorcoach chartering, group attraction and theatre tickets, group cruises, and other trip components for groups.

For more information, visit [www.GroupTravelPlanet.com](http://www.GroupTravelPlanet.com) or call (866) MY PLANET.

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