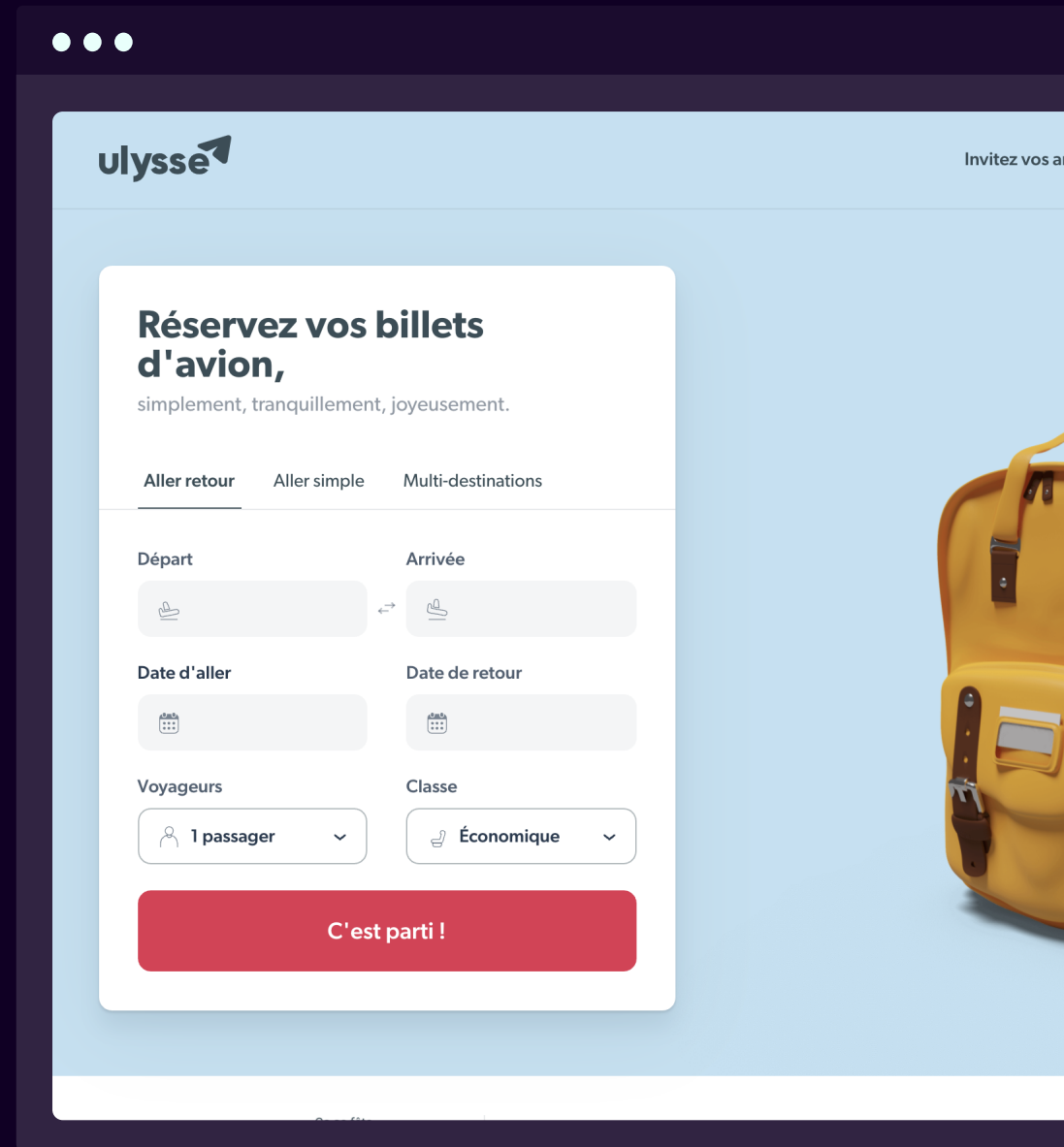


DUFFEL CASE STUDY | CUSTOMERS

Ulysse Uses Duffel to Put Customers First and Scale For the Future



Ulysse's Partnership with Duffel

Ulysse thrives by delivering its loyal customer base what they crave — a simple, sensible travel booking experience. The fast-rising online travel agent (OTA) has its roots in customer empathy and careful engineering. What started as the seed of an idea after a less than stellar travel experience has now bloomed into a company that's rethinking the way OTAs operate, and what tools OTAs use to lay the foundation for their growth.

Ulysse sees technology as a vital part of the customer experience as well as a resource that sets them apart from their competition. Using Duffel's APIs, Ulysse is able to invest in the strong points of their business that have sparked their rapid growth, and plan for the future as they expand into the UK and US in 2021.

In a few short years, the France-based OTA has grown exponentially, booking 7 times the number of trips it logged in 2019 and developing a fervent following of 25- to 35-year-old travellers.

Then, 2020 happened. In the wake of an unfathomable set of global challenges amid the COVID pandemic, the travel industry took a major hit. With lockdowns and travel restrictions, the travel industry spent 2020 grappling with incredibly tough market conditions. Ulysse was no exception. But, now they have their eyes set on expansion in 2021.

The reason Ulysse is so confident about expanding into the UK and the US in early 2021 is because of its success in early 2020, prior to the pandemic, and its rapid growth in 2019.

Axel Guidicelli, founder and CEO of Ulysse, focuses not only on putting customers first, but on pushing the travel industry forward with modern UX experiences and Duffel's powerful API platform.



45% Customer retention rate

600+ Reviews on Trustpilot

4.9/5 Rating on Trustpilot



7x

Ulysse a exhibited strong growth in 2019,
seeing its **travel bookings grow sevenfold.**

Prioritising the Customer

After completing business school, Guidicelli took some time to travel. Several of his flight booking experiences at that time were memorable albeit painful.

"During a major trip I was planning, I had to book about 30 plane tickets with different OTAs. Every one of those experiences was terrible. It felt like they were designed to work against me," recalls Guidicelli. He saw that travel sellers were focusing on the wrong things, and that lack of clarity came at a price. Travel sellers prioritized marketing and a breakneck pace of sales at the expense of customer experience. To Guidicelli, it was clear that they put the sale first and the customer second. He saw that as backwards.

The UX these travel sellers offered solely focused on the sale, not the user's experience of purchasing a ticket. Guidicelli saw consistent disparities between the price of a ticket before he purchased and the price of a ticket as he was completing his purchase. In between those two critical moments, things weren't exactly smooth. At each step, he was met with pop-up ads slowing down his purchase. Once he made his purchase, it seemed like the travel seller checked out.

When he had an issue, the customer service call centres weren't there to do the very thing they're explicitly designed for — serve customers.

Being equal parts inspired and frustrated by these experiences, Guidicelli decided to fill the gap by reinventing airline reservations and founding Ulysse as a travel service that puts customer experience first.

“

“During a major trip I was planning, I had to book about 30 plane tickets with different OTAs. Every one of those experiences was terrible. It felt like they were designed to work against me.”



AXEL GUIDICELLI
Founder and CEO, Ulysse

What Sets Ulysse Apart

Ulysse was founded in 2018, offering a travel booking portal with no advertising pop-ups, and no sleight of hand when it comes to ticket prices. It was designed from the ground up with the user in mind.

As Guidicelli set out to build both the travel experience of tomorrow, and one that was light years ahead of the travel experience OTAs were offering, he kept three main strategies in mind.

That third strategy is how Duffel became a key tool for Ulysse in pursuing its mission of being a forward-thinking, customer-first OTA, complete with a supply strategy unlike any other.

Ulysse's main strategies:

- 1 Build a world-class product by investing in and refining great UX. That means, no pop-ups dancing across your screen while you're trying to make a purchase.
- 2 Build an outstanding customer service experience through empathy and careful engineering.
- 3 Have a differentiated supply strategy, one largely built on a direct-distribution from airlines.

How Duffel Powers Ulysse's Vision

Duffel's travel toolkit of APIs and other services allowed Ulysse to not only get up and running, but scale fast while expanding internationally. Using Duffel, Ulysse connects directly to airlines with developer-friendly tools and modern APIs.

Ulysse prefers to access content from airlines without getting slowed down by outdated APIs or middlemen that prove to be common blockers for innovation and growth in the travel industry. Now, Ulysse can sell airline content on their own OTA portal, largely based on the New Distribution Capability protocol (NDC). Working with modern tools like NDC and powerful APIs on the Duffel platform, Ulysse can design their business the way they want.

Without the common barriers along the way, Ulysse can build relationships with airlines without an intermediary. It's not just the direct access that's different with Duffel, it's the type of content that's available to Ulysse through Duffel.

Ulysse has access to exclusive and rich content that some airlines offer only via NDC, which is a growing trend especially amongst Full Service Carrier (FSC) airlines.

"Supply is at the heart of Ulysse's value proposition with the goal of providing the best possible experience to travellers. The NDC distribution model is the most efficient one. It enables us to put the customer at the core of the travel experience and that's why we've made this bet since the first days at Ulysse.

Despite the coronavirus, we're investing massively in our supply to build, with the airlines and partners such as Duffel, the future of the airline industry," said Guidicelli.

But, before we dive into what's next for Ulysse in the future. Let's take a step back to when they decided to use Duffel, and more importantly — why.

30%

More than 30% of Ulysse's bookings are made via Duffel

Designing with Developer-Friendly Tools

In late 2019, Ulysse was exploring a set of technology providers to connect with airlines and power their online travel inventory. A few things set Duffel apart.

"We chose Duffel because it was a tech company that focused on the developer experience. It has great APIs and schema and is the only company that does that today in the market. We also shared a similar vision of the future of travel," said Lancelot Hardel, co-founder and CTO of Ulysse.

You can't build for the future of travel without top-notch documentation.

Duffel believes in a modern, developer-first experience that gives companies like Ulysse the tools they need to be successful and makes its documentation publicly available, allowing any travel business to understand how the APIs and schema works up front before they even start building on the platform.

```
1 curl -X POST --compressed "https://api.duffel.com/v1/bookings" \
2   -H "Accept-Encoding: gzip" \
3   -H "Accept: application/json" \
4   -H "Content-Type: application/json" \
5   -H "Duffel-Version: beta" \
6   -H "Authorization: Bearer <YOUR ACCESS TOKEN>" \
7   -d '{
8     "data": {
9       "passengers": [
10        {
11          "type": "adult"
12        }
13      ],
14      "slices": [
15        {
16          "origin": "DFW",
17        },
18        {
19          "age": 14
20        }
21      ],
22      "slices": [
23        {
24          "origin": "LHR",
25          "destination": "JFK",
26          "departure_date": "2020-04-24"
27        }
28      ],
29      "cabin_class": "economy"
30    }
  }
```



“We chose Duffel because it was a tech company that **focused on the developer experience**. It has great APIs and schema, really the only one that does that today in the market. We also shared a similar vision of the future of travel.”



LANCELOT HARDEL
CTO, Ulysse

Scaling Up Fast



When Ulysse went live with Duffel in September 2019, they initially connected to four airlines and scaled to 14 airlines within a matter of weeks. Now, Ulysse can connect to over 20 airlines directly using Duffel's APIs.

Today, Duffel powers over 30% of all flight bookings on the Ulysse platform, working closely with its team of engineers to power their direct connection to airlines' content. Duffel's APIs proved to be the key to Ulysse's rapid growth. That's just what they're designed for. With Duffel, OTAs can turn on support for new airlines with no additional engineering burden. It's nearly as simple as flicking a switch to turn on a new airline.

Using more traditional technology providers, OTA developers could be stuck sifting through outdated documentation and building time-consuming integrations with each airline, and likely spending valuable time navigating negotiations with every airline.

Duffel's technology allows Ulysse's customers to handle the small things that count for a large part of the customer experience. Ulysse's customers can purchase baggage allowance at the time of booking on some airlines. This feature is not available for many who buy flight tickets via third-party sites and OTAs.

Doing what others can't puts Ulysse ahead of their competition.

For example, Ulysse was able to complete the first-ever Cathay Pacific NDC booking in France using Duffel's API. Duffel made it possible for an Asian airline like Cathay Pacific to acquire a new European travel seller like Ulysse, while enabling Ulysse to get access to new content constantly so they can offer greater choice to their customers.

Hitting that milestone wouldn't have been possible if Ulysse was spending time worrying about tedious, bureaucratic hurdles that can slow down a fast-growing OTA. One of the most common culprits is accreditation. Duffel is accredited across several markets so Ulysse doesn't have to be. Simply by joining Duffel, they're ready to sell instantly in new markets.

Planning for Growth in a Critical Year

2021 will be a watershed year for many travel businesses as the industry grapples with the recovery from the pandemic. For Ulysse, 2021 will be even more significant as it looks to grow in the English-speaking markets of the UK and the US. Duffel will enable Ulysse to enter these markets on the supply side with the flick of a switch, or a swift API command.

Working with Duffel allows Ulysse to fast-track its ambitions. By making it easy for Ulysse to execute on their direct connect-led supply strategy, Ulysse can focus its engineering resources on the parts of their business that have helped them develop a loyal customer base — customer-first UX and servicing, and perks from seat selection to online gift cards for travel.

Duffel's suite of products and services help young travel businesses like Ulysse get going in an industry that's sometimes bogged down by more traditional, but less than efficient, ways of working. Where it might take some new travel businesses up to a year to get access to airline content, it takes Duffel a matter of weeks.

Today, any travel business can sign up for a Duffel account and start working with the web-based Duffel Dashboard, Developer Sandbox, API documentation and more within minutes.

When you're ready, simply select your plan, the airlines you want access to within the Duffel Dashboard, and your travel service is ready for business, just like Ulysse.

We invite you to sign up on duffel.com and give our platform a try.

Together, let's make travel effortless.

START BUILDING TODAY

Take travel further with Duffel.

Search, book, and sell flights on a developer-friendly platform complete with the extras you need — from seat selection to checked bags.

To learn more about Duffel, visit duffel.com.

Sign Up

Get in touch

