EQUITY RESEARCH | COVERAGE REVIEW

Airbnb, Inc.

NASDAQ: ABNB | August 31, 2026 | Price levels reviewed against the August 8 report

RECOMMENDATION	Last Price (Aug 28)	Fair Value	Fwd P/E	Investment Score
WATCHLIST	**$189.43**	**$165–180**	**38.7x**	**70.5 / 100**
Reaffirmed. Gap to fair value wider	+6.4% since Aug 8 report	Weighted ~$173	From 36.3x three weeks ago	Prior 70.0

Where the Levels Stand

The August 8 report set fair value at $165–180, rated the shares Watchlist, and named one price condition that would upgrade them: a retracement into the $148–158 gap zone, which would have put Airbnb near thirty times forward earnings with the improved post-Q2 growth profile intact. Three weeks later the stock has done the opposite. It closed at $189.43 on August 28, 6.4% above the level at which the report declined to buy it, and 5.2% above the top of the fair value range rather than at it. The published condition has not been met and is now further away, not closer.

Nothing in the interval has changed the earnings base. Airbnb has not reported since Q2 and has not revised guidance; the next scheduled appearance is the Goldman Sachs Communacopia + Technology Conference in September. What has changed is the price, the sell-side distribution around it, and the calendar — the United States service-fee migration now carries a hard September 15 deadline. Those three developments pull in different directions and are worth separating.

What Actually Moved Since August 8

Item	August 8 report	August 31	Read
Share price	$178.07 (Aug 7 close)	$189.43 (Aug 28 close)	+6.4%; consolidated, did not retrace
Position vs fair value	At the top of $165–180	5.2% above the top	Gap widened
Forward P/E on ~$4.90 FY26E	36.3x	38.7x	Dearer still
RSI(14)	79.1	67.8	Overbought condition worked off sideways
Distance above 20-day	+19.4%	+6.3%	Extension largely unwound by time
MACD histogram	Strongly positive	–0.33, first negative cross	Momentum flattening
Highest published target	RBC $195	Argus $220, Bernstein $217	Bull tail extended sharply
Consensus average target	Materially below spot	$176.76, still 6.3% below spot	Mean unchanged in character
Insider Form 144 / sales	~$144M filed Aug 7	A further ~$202M through Aug 28	Selling accelerated
US fee simplification	Guided to be take-rate neutral in FY26	Hard September 15 migration date	2027 catalyst now dated

Price and technical figures computed from Alpha Vantage daily OHLCV through August 28 2026. Consensus average target and forward multiple cross-checked against StockAnalysis.com as of late August 2026. Forward P/E uses this report's FY26E diluted EPS of approximately $4.90, derived in the August 8 report from company guidance; it is not a company figure.

Does the Thesis Still Hold?

It does, and for the same reason as three weeks ago. The August case was never that Q2 was weak — it plainly was not. Nights and seats booked grew 10.3% with the mature core accelerating, Adjusted EBITDA margin expanded 130 basis points, and management raised the full-year revenue and margin floors while beating every line of the guidance it had set. The case was that a 17.4% single-session re-rating had more than paid for that quarter, lifting forward earnings from roughly twenty-eight times to the mid-thirties against a guidance raise worth two to three points of growth. Six weeks on, the multiple is higher again and the guidance is identical. The arithmetic that produced the Watchlist rating has become slightly more, not less, adverse.

Two things could have invalidated it and neither has. The first was a take-rate inflection: management guided the FY26 implied take rate to be flat rather than rising, deferring the monetisation leg of the bull case, and there has been no update. The second was the AI search rollout graduating from an opt-in toggle to a default with a disclosed conversion uplift; that has also not happened, and management has said nothing further about the AI host-pricing tool it described as the single biggest growth lever. Both upgrade triggers remain open. On the evidence available, this is a reaffirmation rather than a fresh conclusion, and it should be read as one.

The One Genuinely New Development

The United States service-fee migration has moved from a described intention to a dated event. Airbnb is consolidating the old split structure — roughly 3% charged to the host on the booking subtotal plus a separate 14.1–16.5% charged to the guest at checkout — into a single host-paid fee of 15.5%, with no guest-facing service fee. Hosts outside the European Economic Area must adjust their nightly pricing by September 15 or accept a lower payout; the EEA and Swiss deadline is October 13. Press coverage in late August was notably unsympathetic, characterising the change as a fee increase for hosts.

This matters to the take-rate question that the Watchlist rating turns on, and the direction is not obvious. Combining a 3% host fee and a mid-teens guest fee into a single 15.5% charge is close to neutral on total commission per booking, so the mechanical effect on the implied take rate is small. The second-order effect is where the value sits: displayed nightly rates rise for hosts who pass the fee through, which lifts Gross Booking Value and therefore revenue, while the all-in price a guest sees at checkout falls relative to the displayed price. Airbnb's own disclosure from the earlier migration cohort is that roughly 30% of hosts raised prices enough to fully offset the higher fee and another 30% offset it partially. That is useful evidence that the change does not collapse supply. It is not evidence that it lifts monetisation, and management has explicitly declined to guide the FY26 take rate higher on the back of it.

What to watch, and when. *The migration completes on September 15 for the United States, four to six weeks before the third-quarter release. That timing means Q3 will contain only a partial-quarter effect, while Q4 will be the first clean read on whether host pricing behaviour and guest conversion hold up under a single consolidated fee. Any 2027 take-rate guidance issued alongside Q3 or Q4 is the specific disclosure that would move this rating.*

Valuation at $189.43

At $189.43 against 597 million weighted diluted shares, market capitalisation is approximately $113.1 billion. Netting $12.07 billion of cash and short-term investments against $2.5 billion of senior notes from the June balance sheet gives an enterprise value of roughly $103.5 billion, before allowing for third-quarter buybacks that will have reduced both cash and the share count. Every multiple below is therefore modestly conservative on the equity side and modestly generous on the enterprise side, and each has moved against the buyer since the August report.

Method	Input	Now	Aug 8	Read
Trailing P/E	$113.1B / $2.69B TTM net income	42.0x	39.5x	Still flattered by discrete tax items
Forward P/E	$189.43 / ~$4.90 FY26E EPS	38.7x	36.3x	The binding constraint
EV / Adj. EBITDA	$103.5B EV / $4.62B TTM	22.4x	21.0x	Full for a mid-teens grower
EV / FCF	$103.5B EV / $4.83B TTM	21.4x	20.0x	4.7% yield; part is booking float

Method	Input	Now	Aug 8	Read
EV / Sales	$103.5B EV / $13.16B TTM	7.87x	7.35x	Premium to both listed peers
PEG (forward)	38.7x vs ~20% EPS growth	1.93	1.80	Booking near 1.1
Scenario-weighted	Section below	$172.65	$169.50	Now 8.9% below spot, was 4.8%

Market capitalisation, enterprise value and all multiples are this report's calculations from the Q2 2026 Form 10-Q and prior quarterly disclosures, using the August 28 2026 closing price of $189.43 from Alpha Vantage. Balance-sheet items are as of June 30 2026 and do not reflect third-quarter buyback activity. FY26E EPS is derived from company guidance and is not a company-reported measure.

The comparison that framed the August report is unchanged in substance and worse in degree. Booking Holdings, growing revenue at nine to eleven percent with a comparable margin structure and a heavier buyback, trades near eighteen times forward earnings. Airbnb now trades at more than twice that on roughly one and a half times the growth rate. The premium is not indefensible — Airbnb is the faster grower, carries net cash, and has optionality in hotels, services and AI that Booking does not — but that optionality is still immaterial to 2026 revenue, and paying more than double the peer multiple for it before any of it is quantified is the definition of paying twice for the same proof.

Sentiment: A Widening Split, Not a Consensus Shift

The most conspicuous change since August 8 is in the shape of the sell-side distribution rather than its centre. The bulls have moved a long way: Bernstein raised its target to $217 from $168 on the argument that the quarter marked a clear inflection point, Argus went to $220 from $165, Jefferies to $215 from $175, Evercore ISI to $200 from $190 and Mizuho reiterated Buy at $200. Yet the published consensus average target sits at roughly $176.76, about 6.3% below the last close, and the current rating mix runs 14 Buy against 25 Hold and 6 Sell. The average has barely moved because the median analyst has not moved. What has widened is the dispersion.

That is a meaningfully different picture from the one in the August report, which observed that the stock had outrun its own upgrade cycle within a single session. The upgrade cycle has since produced a cluster of targets well above spot. The honest reading is that a subset of the street has capitulated to the multiple while the majority has not, and a stock trading above the consensus of the analysts who cover it is not a stock with a sentiment tailwind — it is one already discounting the optimistic half of their range.

Signal	Reading	Interpretation
Bull-tail targets	Argus $220, Bernstein $217, Jefferies $215	Bulls re-rated hard through August
Mid-range targets	Evercore $200, Mizuho $200	Modest premium to spot
Consensus average	~$176.76, 6.3% below the last close	Mean still below the market price
Rating mix	14 Buy / 25 Hold / 6 Sell	Majority not recommending purchase here
Insider activity	~$92.6M (Aug 12), $2.5M CSO (Aug 20), $67.3M 10% holder (Aug 26), Form 144 for $28.8M and $10.9M	Roughly $202M of further selling into strength
Retail participation	~40% of the register	Amplifies both extension and retracement
Upcoming catalyst	Goldman Sachs Communacopia + Technology, September	Venue for any AI or hotel disclosure

Analyst actions and Form 144 filings sourced from moomoo news aggregation, TipRanks and Investing.com, August 12–28 2026. Consensus average target and rating mix from StockAnalysis.com, late August 2026.

The insider record deserves its own sentence because it has not improved. The August report flagged roughly $144 million of Form 144 notices filed on the day of the 17% advance and described that as not a vote of confidence in the price. In the three weeks since, a further $92.6 million sale was disclosed on August 12, the Chief Strategy Officer sold $2.5 million on August 20, a 10% shareholder sold $67.3 million on August 26, and two more Form 144 notices covering roughly $39.7 million were filed on August 24 and 28. Founder and officer sales at a company of this vintage are frequently programmatic and should not be read as a directional call. Roughly $200 million of them in three weeks, at prices between $180 and

$190, is still the only cohort with a genuine information advantage transacting in one direction.

Technical Position

The technical picture has improved and is the one component of this review that argues for a better score than in August. Rather than filling the gap, Airbnb consolidated: it has traded a $179–193 range for fifteen sessions since August 10, working off the post-print extension through time rather than price. RSI(14) has cooled from 79.1 to 67.8 without a drawdown, and the distance above the twenty-day average has compressed from 19.4% to 6.3% as the average itself climbed to $178.28. That is textbook healthy digestion of a gap move.

Two cautions sit against it. The MACD histogram has just turned negative at −0.33, the first bearish cross since the August 7 advance, and the August 27 session closed at $184.40 before recovering to $189.43 on August 28 — the range is holding but the upward impulse has stopped. And the unfilled gap between $153.79 and $163.45 is still open, now roughly 16% below spot rather than 12%. Unfilled gaps are not obligations, but this one coincides with the rising fifty-day average at $158.77, which makes that zone the natural first support if the consolidation resolves downward.

Indicator	Value	Read	Indicator	Value	Read
Price (Aug 28)	$189.43	Near range high	RSI(14)	67.8	Cooled from 79
SMA 20	$178.28	+6.3%	MACD	+9.56	Above zero
SMA 50	$158.77	+19.3%	Signal	+9.88	Bearish cross
SMA 100	$147.51	+28.4%	ATR(14)	$5.52 (2.9%)	Narrowing
EMA 20 / 50	$178.48 / $163.71	Above both	Vol 20d avg	5.6M vs 4.4M 50d	Elevated
SMA 200	Not computed	Series limited to 100 sessions	Unfilled gap	$153.79–163.45	Still open

Indicators computed from 100 sessions of daily OHLCV through August 28 2026 (Alpha Vantage). The 200-day average is not computed because the series is shorter than the window; no estimate is substituted.

Risk Assessment

Risk	Type	Probability	Severity	Comment
Multiple compression from ~39x forward	Valuation	High	High	The dominant risk, and larger than in August
Fee migration disrupts host pricing or supply	Company	Medium	Medium	New. September 15 US deadline; press reception poor
Take rate stays flat into 2027	Company	Medium	High	Removes the monetisation leg of the premium
Tougher H2 comparisons management flagged	Company	High	Medium	Q3 Adj. EBITDA margin already guided down Y/Y
Discretionary travel demand softens	Macro	Medium	High	Bookings are among the first items cut
Short-term-rental regulation constrains supply	Regulatory	High	Medium	EU data rules, NYC, Barcelona 2028
AI travel agents disintermediate discovery	Competitive	Medium	High	Management's own stated existential risk
Earnings quality — discrete tax and investment items	Financial	High	Low-Med	Recurring; headline figures need adjusting each quarter
Concentrated insider selling	Governance	High	Low	~$202M of further sales and notices since Aug 8

Against that list sits a balance sheet that removes financial risk almost entirely: roughly $9.6 billion of net cash, inaugural investment-grade ratings from S&P and Moody's, and $3.4 billion remaining on a $6.0 billion buyback authorisation. Airbnb is not a company that can be forced into a bad decision by its creditors. The risks that matter here are the price paid and the durability of discretionary demand, which is why the Risk score sits mid-scale rather than at either end.

Scorecard

Component	Score	vs prior	Comment
Business Quality	8/10	—	Asset-light marketplace, elite cash conversion, cyclical demand
Financial Strength	9/10	—	~$9.6B net cash, investment-grade, $3.4B authorisation remaining
Competitive Advantage	8/10	—	Hotel crossover and core-market re-acceleration intact; nothing new
Management	8/10	—	Guidance accuracy still the strongest evidence; insider selling accelerated
Growth Potential	8/10	—	FY guide unchanged since Q2; fee migration is a 2027 question
Valuation	3/10	—	38.7x forward, above the entire fair value range rather than at its top
Risk (10 = lowest risk)	6/10	—	Balance sheet cushions; valuation and demand risk dominate
Technical Setup	5/10	+1	RSI cooled to 68 and extension unwound sideways; MACD just crossed down

Scored 1–10, where 10 is always best, including Risk. Weights: Business Quality 15, Financial Strength 15, Competitive Advantage 15, Management 10, Growth Potential 15, Valuation 15, Risk 10, Technical Setup 5. Prior column is the August 8 report, which used this same scale, so no restatement was required. Weighted total computed in code: 70.5 / 100, against 70.0 previously.

One component moved. Technical Setup improves from 4 to 5 because the post-earnings extension has been worked off through fifteen sessions of sideways trade rather than a drawdown, taking RSI from 79 to 68 and the premium to the twenty-day average from 19% to 6%. Valuation is held at 3 rather than cut: the shares are dearer than in August, but a 6% price move over three weeks does not warrant moving a score that already reads as expensive, and reacting to it would make the scale twitchy rather than informative. Everything else is unchanged because nothing in the fundamentals has changed — which is the correct outcome for a company that has not reported since the last review.

Recommendation: Watchlist (reaffirmed)

The rating is unchanged and the reasoning is unchanged, which is worth stating plainly rather than dressing up. Airbnb is a high-quality, cash-generative, net-cash marketplace that demonstrated in Q2 it can re-accelerate volume in its most mature markets while expanding margin. None of that is in dispute. The objection is entirely about price, and the price has gone up 6.4% while the earnings base has not moved at all.

One published level does need resetting. The August report put the upgrade trigger at $148–158, anchored on the unfilled gap and the then-rising twenty-day average. That twenty-day average is now $178.28 and the fifty-day has climbed to $158.77, so the old zone sits below the rising fifty-day rather than on it and no longer describes the structure it was drawn from. The trigger moves up to $155–168, which spans the unfilled gap and the fifty-day average and corresponds to roughly 32–34 times FY26E earnings. That is an 11–18% drawdown from the last close, wider than the 12–17% it implied in August, and the trigger is deliberately not being loosened to make it easier to reach.

What would change the view	Trigger	Status
Upgrade to BUY on price	Retracement into $155–168 — the unfilled gap and the rising fifty-day — putting the shares near 32–34x FY26E with the improved growth profile intact	Reset upward from $148–158
Upgrade to BUY on fundamentals	2027 implied take rate guided up as Reserve Now, Pay Later timing and new-business incentives lap, or the completed fee migration disclosed with a quantified revenue effect	Open; first read at Q3, clean read at Q4
Upgrade on execution	AI search graduating from opt-in toggle to default with a disclosed conversion uplift, or the AI host-pricing rollout quantified	Open; no update since Q2
Upgrade on disclosure	Hotels reported with a stated share of nights and a revenue contribution rather than a relative growth rate	Open; Communacopia in September is the venue
Downgrade to AVOID	Nights growth falling back to high single digits, a Q3 miss against the already-lowered margin bar, or evidence the take rate is declining rather than merely flat	Not triggered

No entry, cut-loss or take-profit levels are published because the rating is not Buy. For position-sizing purposes, an existing holder has no reason to act on this review; the case against remains about the marginal dollar, not the invested one.

Scenario Analysis

Scenario	Prob.	Revenue outlook	Earnings / margin	Fair value
Bull	27%	FY26 at the top of mid-teens; FY27 revenue ~$16.8B (+17%) as AI search converts, hotels reach mid-single-digit share of nights, and the completed fee migration lifts GBV through host pass-through	FY27 EPS ~$6.40; Adj. EBITDA margin ~37%; 33x	$210–225
Base	50%	FY26 ~$14.1B (+15%) as guided; FY27 ~$16.0B (+13–14%) with nights in the high single digits to 10% and a flat-to-slightly-up take rate	FY27 EPS ~$5.75; margin ~36%; 30x	$165–180
Bear	23%	Second-half comparisons bite as management flagged; discretionary travel softens; host churn around the fee migration dents supply growth and the take rate stays flat into 2027	FY27 EPS ~$5.10; margin ~34%; de-rates toward peers at 23x	$115–130

Probability-weighted fair value: 0.27 × $217 + 0.50 × $172 + 0.23 × $122 = $172.65, roughly 8.9% below the $189.43 close, against 4.8% below in the August report. Probabilities sum to 100%. Two adjustments were made to the August distribution and both are stated rather than buried: the bull fair value rises from $205–220 to $210–225 and its probability from 25% to 27%, because the fee migration now has a hard date and Airbnb's own pilot-cohort data shows roughly 60% of hosts passing the fee through in whole or part, which is direct evidence the change does not break supply; the bear probability falls correspondingly from 25% to 23%. The base case is untouched, because nothing has revised the FY27 earnings estimate it rests on.

The distribution remains skewed to the downside in magnitude: the bear case sits $67 below spot while the bull case is $36 above it. That asymmetry is what a high-thirties multiple does to a risk profile, and it has widened since August purely because the price moved without the estimates moving with it.

Final Verdict

Would this be worth committing personal capital to at $189.43? No, and for a reason that has become simpler rather than more complicated since the last review. Airbnb has not reported, has not revised guidance, and has not disclosed anything that changes what the business is worth. The shares have nonetheless appreciated 6.4% and now trade above the top of a fair value range that was itself raised three weeks ago to reflect the strongest quarter the company has delivered in four years. The entire move is multiple expansion on unchanged fundamentals, which is precisely the condition the August report described and declined to pay for.

There is a version of the bull case that deserves respect. The fee migration completes in the United States on September 15, and if hosts pass the charge through at the rate the pilot cohort did, displayed rates rise, Gross Booking Value rises with them, and the 2027 take-rate conversation starts from a better place than the flat FY26 guide implies. Hotels are compounding at roughly three times the rate of homes, AI search is in live test, and the AI host-pricing tool that management called its single biggest growth lever remains entirely unpriced because it remains entirely unquantified. If two of those three land, the mid-to-high-teens growth rate persists for longer than the base case assumes and $210–225 is reachable. That is a real possibility and it is why the bull weighting went up rather than down.

It is still not what the current price is treating as the default. At 38.7 times forward earnings the stock already embeds most of that outcome, against a peer growing nine to eleven percent at eighteen times, and against a consensus price target of roughly $177 that sits below the market. The single biggest concern is unchanged: a high-thirties multiple leaves no cushion for the tougher second-half comparisons management itself flagged, in a quarter where Adjusted EBITDA margin is already guided down year over year and a fee migration is landing mid-quarter. The level that would change this remains specific and is now $155–168, or 2027 guidance that finally shows the take rate rising. Until one arrives, the right action is what it was in August: keep watching a company that is demonstrably executing, and decline to pay for that execution twice.

Sources. *Airbnb Q2 2026 Shareholder Letter and Form 10-Q (SEC EDGAR, August 6 2026); Airbnb Q2 2026 earnings call transcript via MarketBeat, reviewed for the August 8 report and re-read for this review; Alpha Vantage daily OHLCV through August 28 2026; moomoo news aggregation for analyst actions and Form 144 filings, August 12–28 2026; CNBC, August 22 2026, on the United States service-fee migration; Airbnb Resource Center guidance on simplified service fees; StockAnalysis.com for consensus targets, rating mix and cross-checked multiples; TipRanks and Investing.com for individual analyst actions. No new earnings call has taken place since the last report; no transcript was outstanding for this review.*