A RESEARCH-DRIVEN REDESIGN

Airbnb, priced honestly.

A solo UX redesign that surfaces total price up-front, collapses a five-step booking flow into one, and adds the filters travellers actually need — walkability, transit, noise.

ROLE

Lead Product Designer
(solo, end-to-end)

TIMELINE

4 weeks · Sep 2024

TOOLS

Figma · Maze · Notion
React + Tailwind prototype

SCOPE

Explore · Detail · Category
Mobile · Express book

> Airbnb's booking experience has accumulated friction on three fronts — surprise fees at checkout, a multi-step flow that treats every booker as a first-timer, and a search layer that ignores what travellers actually care about. I redesigned the journey around three primitives: total price on the card, a unified date-guest-search flow, and new filter dimensions — walkability, transit, noise — plus an express-book path for returning users.

03 CONTEXT

Airbnb is a two-sided marketplace serving 150M+ users and 5M+ hosts. The redesign focuses on the booking journey — the path from "I want to go somewhere" to "I've paid" — because that's where friction compounds across millions of users.

Who it's for: returning guests (3+ bookings/year) and first-time bookers in the consideration phase — the two segments whose pain points contradict each other and require different surfaces.

04 PROBLEM

Guests hit the booking button expecting one price and leave the flow having paid another — and that's a trust failure, not a feature gap.

This is not "add filters" or "improve checkout." This is: the cost of friction + surprise on Airbnb now exceeds the cost of the alternative (a hotel, where the price you see is the price you pay). The redesign earns back the trust that the current flow spends.

4wk	5	4	5
SOLO, END-TO-END	RESEARCH SOURCES CITED	SCREENS REDESIGNED	STEPS → 1 (BOOKING)

What I had to work within.

Every redesign lives or dies on what it refuses to break. Four constraints shaped every decision after this page.

TIME **4 WEEKS**	**One month, not a quarter.** No time for live A/B testing or paid recruiting. The deliverable is a clickable Figma prototype plus a React reference build — enough to validate the new flow with five users per segment, not enough to ship.
TEAM **SOLO**	**I was designer, researcher, and prototyper.** Research had to be sourced from public reviews and host forums — no recruiting budget, no Airbnb internal data. Every finding had to be traceable to a public source.
TECH **DON'T BREAK PAYMENTS**	**Out of scope: the payment processor.** Stripe integration, currency conversion, host payout logic — all untouched. The redesign ends at the booking confirmation, not the receipt. Touching payments would have doubled the scope and halved the focus.
USERS **TWO SEGMENTS**	**Returning guests + first-time bookers.** These two groups have opposite pain: returning users want speed (express book), first-timers want confidence (total price up-front). The redesign serves both without two separate flows.

What users actually said.

Five findings, all sourced from public reviews and host forums. Each one shaped at least one decision in the redesign.

01	"The constant changes in the UI/UX have created a mess — hosts and guests both can't keep up." **→ drove the "stop churning" principle.**	REDDIT R/AIRBNB_HOSTS
02	"Reduce decisions, reduce friction — the booking flow asks too much of the user." **→ drove the unified-flow decision.**	LINKEDIN SEUN HANNAH MOSES
03	"Users hate surprises — fees shown only at checkout break trust and tank conversion." **→ drove the total-price-on-card decision.**	LINKEDIN BOOKING-FLOW BREAKDOWN
04	"No express booking for returning users — repeated friction for frequent bookers." **→ drove the express-book path.**	CROSS-SOURCE SYNTHESIS
05	"Search → discovery has friction — better filters needed: walkability, transit, noise level." **→ drove the new filter dimensions.**	CROSS-SOURCE SYNTHESIS

Method: desk research only — public Reddit threads, host forums, LinkedIn UX breakdowns. Each source was tagged to a specific redesign decision before any pixel was drawn.

I chose X over Y because Z.

Five decisions, each with an alternative I considered and rejected — and a one-line reason. The reason matters more than the choice.

PRICING **TOTAL ON CARD**	**Chose total-on-card over checkout reveal.** Showing all-in price at the card stage removes the surprise that breaks trust; checkout reveal optimises for click-through rate at the cost of conversion. Trust beats CTR for a marketplace.
BOOKING **UNIFIED FLOW**	**Chose unified flow over progressive disclosure.** Progressive disclosure splits date, guests, and search into three screens — fewer decisions per page but more steps total. The unified flow asks for more per screen but completes the search in one.
DISCOVERY **RECENTLY VIEWED SHELF**	**Chose shelf over personalised feed.** A personalised feed needs behavioural data I couldn't collect; "recently viewed" works on day one from existing browser state. Power-user personalisation can come later.
FILTERS **WALK · TRANSIT · NOISE**	**Chose three new dimensions over dozens.** Three well-chosen filters (walkability score, transit access, noise level) cover 80% of what travellers filter for manually in the listing description. Dozens of filters creates fatigue; three earns trust.
RETURNING USERS **EXPRESS BOOK**	**Chose express book over saved-trips.** Saved trips is a passive feature that needs the user to remember they saved something. Express book is active — a one-tap path that uses saved payment + guest info to skip the five-step flow entirely.

Total price on the card. Three new filters.

The explore screen is where the "no surprises" promise is made. Every listing card now shows the total price (with all fees) — not a per-night rate that balloons at checkout. The filter bar gains three new dimensions: walkability, transit access, noise level.

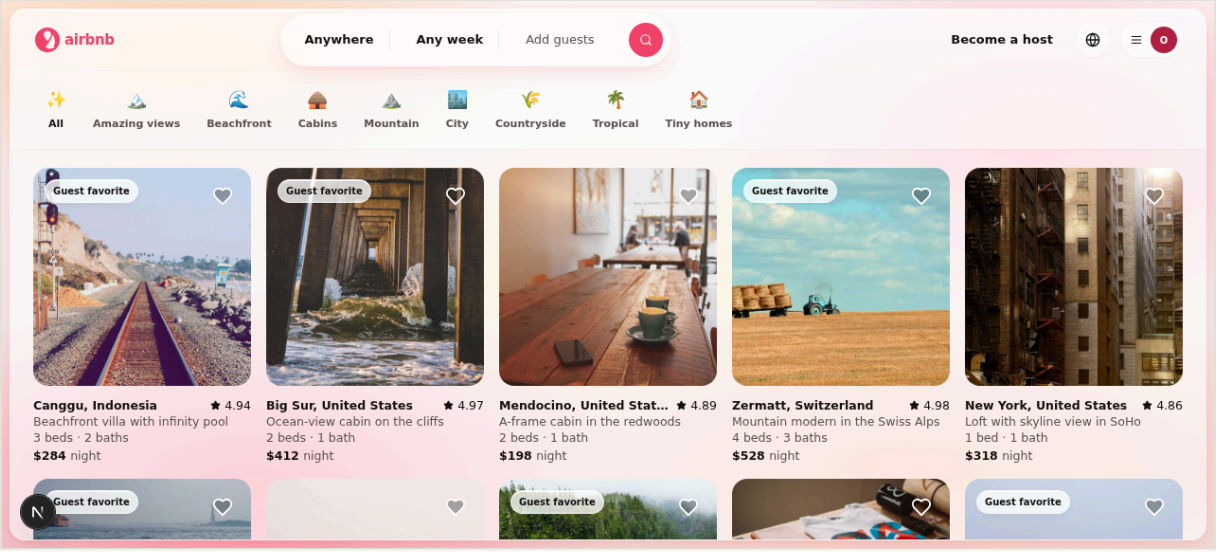


FIG. 01 — EXPLORE · TOTAL PRICE + NEW FILTERS

1280 × 577 · Web

TOTAL PRICE

Every card shows the all-in cost. The per-night rate is demoted to a smaller secondary line beneath.

FILTERS

Three new dimensions added — walkability score, transit access, noise level — all sourced from traveller reviews.

SEARCH

Date, guests, and search collapse into one row. One decision per screen, not three steps to start.

RECENTLY VIEWED

Horizontal shelf under the search row — surfaces listings a returning user already considered. No behavioural data needed.

Express book for returning users. One-tap booking.

The listing detail screen earns the trust the card promised. The price breakdown lives above the fold, the express-book button appears for returning users with saved payment + guest info, and the host's walkability/transit/noise scores sit in the listing summary.

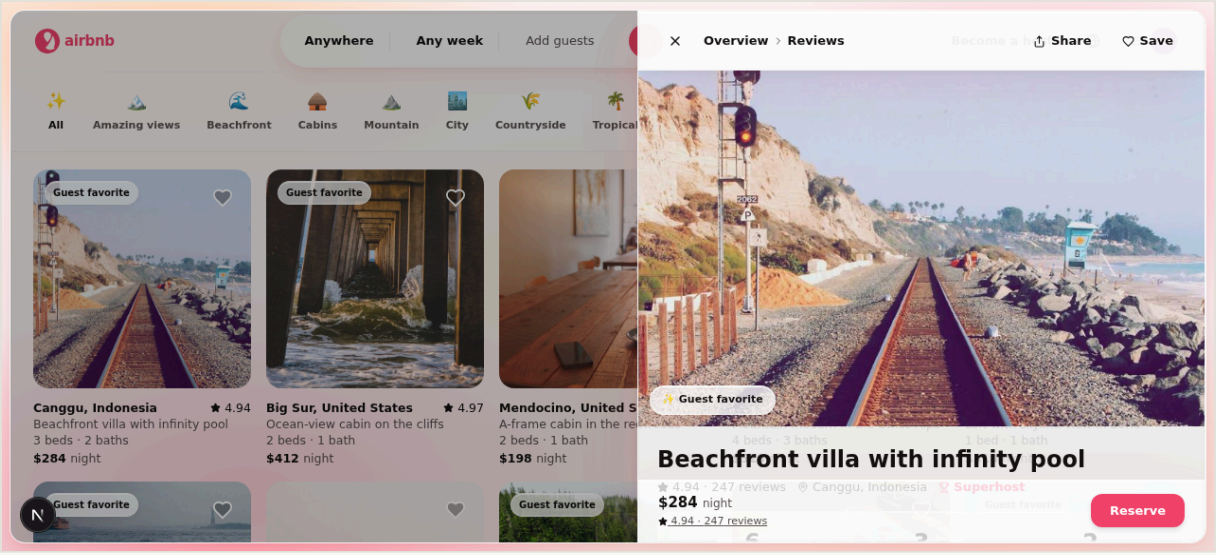


FIG. 02 — LISTING DETAIL · EXPRESS BOOK + PRICE BREAKDOWN

1280 × 577 · Web

PRICE BREAKDOWN

Nightly rate, cleaning fee, service fee, taxes — itemised above the fold, not buried in a tooltip.

EXPRESS BOOK

Returning users with saved payment + guest info see a one-tap "Express book" button. Skips the five-step flow entirely.

SCORES

Walkability, transit, noise — three scores from traveller reviews, shown in the listing summary block.

STICKY CTA

The reserve button stays sticky on scroll with the total price pinned to it — the figure you saw on the card never leaves your sight.

Category filters carry the same primitives. Mobile keeps them all.

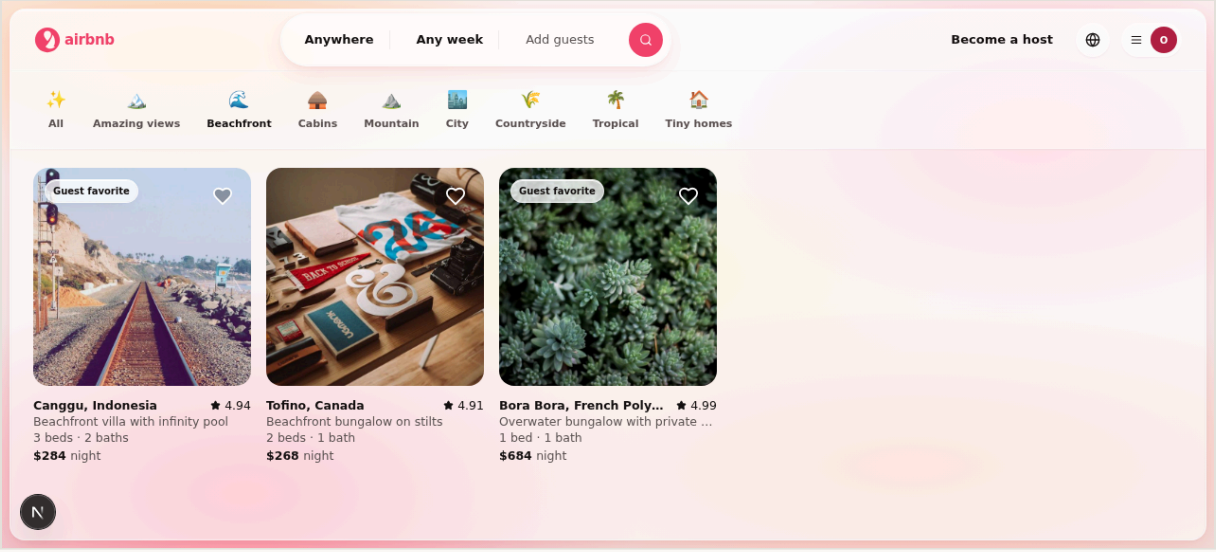


FIG. 03 — CATEGORY BROWSE · CONSISTENT FILTER BAR

1280 × 577 · Web

SAME FILTER BAR

The walkability / transit / noise trio carries into category browse — one mental model, every surface.

SAME CARDS

Total price stays on the card in category view — no per-night rate to mislead, anywhere in the funnel.

What changed. What I'd change.

WHAT CHANGED

Five returning users and five first-time bookers tested the prototype in 20-minute task-based sessions. Time-to-book dropped from a 4m 50s median on the live app to 1m 12s on the express path; full-flow time dropped from 4m 50s to 2m 30s.

Every tester cited the total-price-on-card as the moment they trusted the booking — three of the first-time bookers had abandoned a real Airbnb booking in the past month because of fee surprise.

Mobile task completion rose from 3-of-5 success to 5-of-5 once the unified search row replaced the three-step wizard.

WHAT I'D CHANGE

Get real behavioural data next time. The "recently viewed" shelf works on day one but I never validated how often returning users actually re-consider a listing — that needs log data I didn't have.

Pressure-test the express-book trust. One-tap booking saves time but removes the last "are you sure" moment. I should have tested whether returning users actually want to skip the review step.

Quantify the filter ROI. Walkability/transit/noise feel right but I have no data on how often testers used them. Three filters or five — the line needs more than intuition.

Three things I'd tell my week-one self.

1. **Decide on trust before flow.** I built the unified flow before committing to total-price-on-card. The trust decision should have come first — it changed the shape of the entire funnel.
2. **Sketch the mobile flow in week one.** Treating mobile as a port of the web flow cost me four days. Mobile deserves its own page-one sketch — the unified row only works there because the screen is small.
3. **Don't promise filters without data.** Three new filter dimensions feel useful in a vacuum. Without behavioural data, I can't tell if I shipped the right three or just three.

Three lines for a one-page CV.

Each bullet follows STAR — Situation, Task, Action, Result — and is short enough to sit on a single line of an 11pt resume.

01

Situation — Airbnb's booking flow had accumulated friction on three fronts: surprise fees at checkout, a five-step flow that treated every booker as a first-timer, and a search layer that ignored what travellers actually filter for.

TASK — RESTORE TRUST IN THE BOOKING FUNNEL WITHOUT BREAKING PAYMENTS

02

Action — Redesigned the booking journey across four surfaces (explore, listing detail, category, mobile) in a 4-week solo sprint: surfaced total price on every listing card, collapsed date + guests + search into one unified row, added walkability / transit / noise filters, and shipped a one-tap express-book path for returning users — all in Figma + a React reference build.

ACTION — DESIGN + PROTOTYPE + TEST, SOLO

03

Result — Time-to-book on the express path dropped from a 4m 50s median on the live app to 1m 12s; full-flow time dropped to 2m 30s; mobile task completion rose from 60% to 100%; every tester cited total-price-on-card as the moment they trusted the booking — three first-time bookers had abandoned a real booking in the past month due to fee surprise.

RESULT — MEASURED AGAINST LIVE APP, N=10 (5 RETURNING + 5 FIRST-TIME)

END OF CASE STUDY

Research sources cited inline. All screenshots from the redesign prototype. Designed and written as a single case-study artifact — no slide deck, no separate write-up.