

Reimagining Long-Term Stays on Airbnb

Making Extended Travel Seamless for Digital Nomads and Relocating Professionals

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Project Overview

Context

I'm based in India and relocating to the UK in May 2026 for work. Like many professionals moving abroad, I turned to Airbnb to find accommodation for the first few months while I settle in. I've used Airbnb before as a tourist – visited the UK twice, actually – so I'm familiar with how it works for short stays. But searching for a 3–4-month rental? That's when things got frustrating.

The app is brilliant for booking weekend getaways or week-long holidays. But when you're looking at living somewhere for months, your needs are completely different. You're not just looking for a nice bed and good photos – you need to know about utilities, WiFi speeds for remote work, lease flexibility, and actual monthly costs. The current Airbnb experience treats a 4-month stay the same as a 2-night trip, and that's the problem I wanted to solve.

Role & Timeline

Role: Product Designer (Solo project)

Timeline: 3 weeks (February 2026)

Platform: Mobile app (Android)

Important Note

This is an unsolicited redesign concept, not affiliated with Airbnb. It's based on my real experience using the app and reflects problems I genuinely encountered while searching for long-term accommodation.

Understanding the Problem

What I Was Trying to Do

I needed to find accommodation in London for 3-4 months starting May 2026. As someone relocating for work, I needed:

- Clear monthly pricing without hidden costs
- Fast, reliable WiFi for remote work
- A proper workspace (desk and chair)
- Understanding what's included (utilities, cleaning, bills)
- Flexible cancellation since relocation plans can change

What Actually Happened

I searched for "London" with dates from February 21 to June 21 (4 months). Right away, I hit problems:

Problem 1: Confusing Pricing

The results showed "₹153,342 monthly" with a crossed-out "₹168,579". But is this the final price? Are there cleaning fees on top? Service fees? Utilities? I had no idea. To figure out the actual monthly cost, I'd have to open each listing individually and do the math myself.

Problem 2: Missing Critical Information

When I opened a listing, I found:

- "WiFi" was listed, but no mention of speed. Is it fast enough for video calls?
- "Kitchen" was listed, but no idea about workspace
- Had to click "Show all 38 amenities" to see more – extra work
- Nothing about what's included in the monthly price vs. what costs extra

Problem 3: Harsh Cancellation Policies

Deep in the listing details, I found: "The first 30 nights are non-refundable." That's a huge risk when you're relocating and your plans might change. For a £3,000+ booking, that's terrifying.

Problem 4: Slow, Unresponsive Hosts

The host profile showed "Response rate: 20%" and "Responds within a few days or more". When you're trying to coordinate a 4-month lease from another country, waiting days for a response isn't practical. Plus, there's no template or easy way to ask long-term-specific questions – I'd have to write everything from scratch.

Problem 5: No Long-Term Filters

The filter button had standard options (price, property type, amenities), but nothing specific to long-term stays:

- No "long-term friendly" host filter
- No "utilities included" option
- No "workspace available" filter
- No way to sort by "best for long stays"

Problem Statement

Professionals and digital nomads traveling abroad for work or relocation use Airbnb for long-term stays (2-6 months), but the app is designed for short vacations. This creates confusion around pricing, lack of critical work-from-home information, harsh lease terms, and difficulty communicating long-term needs to hosts – making what should be a straightforward housing search into a stressful, time-consuming process.

Research & Validation

My Approach

Since this was a 3-week project and I had real firsthand experience with the problem, I kept my research lightweight but focused. I didn't want to spend weeks on elaborate research when I already knew the pain points from using the app myself. Instead, I focused on:

- Documenting my own journey searching for a 4-month stay
- Analyzing the current Airbnb flow with screenshots
- Reading user reviews on app stores about long-term stay issues
- Quick competitive look at how other platforms handle extended stays

What I Found in User Reviews

I went through App Store and Google Play reviews filtering for "long-term" and "monthly". Here's what people were saying:

"Booked a place for 3 months, got hit with massive service fees I didn't see until checkout. The 'monthly price' wasn't the actual price at all." – Google Play review, 2 stars

"Needed WiFi for work but the listing just said 'WiFi available'. Arrived to find it was too slow for video calls. Had to upgrade myself." – App Store review, 3 stars

"Lost £2,000 because I had to cancel my 4-month booking due to visa delay. The cancellation policy made no sense for long stays." – Google Play review, 1 star

Competitive Analysis

I looked at how other platforms handle this:

Booking.com – Has a dedicated "Monthly stays" section with clear pricing and flexible cancellation, but limited to hotels/serviced apartments.

Furnished Finder – Built specifically for 1-12 month rentals. Shows utilities included/excluded upfront and has filters for "work-friendly" spaces. But limited inventory and clunky UI.

Spotahome – Focuses on mid-term rentals with video tours and detailed descriptions. Good at showing workspace setups, but only available in select cities.

Key Insight

Airbnb has the best inventory and brand trust, but it's treating long-term stays as just "more nights" of a vacation rental. The competitors who focus on long-term stays understand that it's a different use case requiring different information architecture, but they can't compete with Airbnb's scale. There's a clear opportunity to bring long-term-specific features into Airbnb while keeping the familiar experience people trust.

Current Experience Audit

I documented my actual journey through the app when searching for accommodation in London from February to June 2026 (4 months). Here's what I found:

Search Results Page

Issues:

- Monthly pricing shown with strikethrough, but unclear if final or if there are additional fees
- Generic descriptions like "Location, Location, Location!" – not helpful
- No visual indicator which listings are good for long-term stays
- Can't tell at a glance which places have workspace or fast WiFi

Listing Detail Page

Issues:

- "What this place offers" section buries important details – have to click "Show all 38 amenities"
- WiFi listed but no speed mentioned
- No dedicated workspace information
- Cancellation policy hidden far down the page – "First 30 nights non-refundable"
- Nothing about utilities, bills, or what's included vs. extra costs
- Host response rate (20%) not prominently displayed – critical for long-term coordination

User Flow Issues

To actually understand if a place works for a 4-month stay, I had to:

1. Open the listing
2. Scroll through all the photos hoping to spot a desk
3. Click "Show all amenities" and scan 38 items
4. Scroll way down to find cancellation policy
5. Calculate actual monthly cost (price + fees)
6. Message host to ask about utilities, WiFi speed, and long-term flexibility
7. Wait days for response (if they respond at all)
8. Go back and repeat for every single listing

This is exhausting. And unnecessary.

Defining the Solution

Design Principles

Before jumping into designs, I set some principles to guide my decisions:

- 1. Don't reinvent Airbnb** – People know and trust the current experience. Add long-term features without breaking what works.
- 2. Surface critical info early** – Pricing, workspace, WiFi, cancellation terms shouldn't be buried 5 scrolls deep.
- 3. Reduce cognitive load** – Comparing 10 listings for 4-month stays shouldn't require opening tabs and making spreadsheets.
- 4. Mobile-first** – Most people (including me) browse for accommodation on their phones, especially when traveling.

Key Features I Designed

Feature 1: Long-Term Search Mode

What it does:

When you search for stays longer than 28 days, the app automatically switches to "Long-Term Mode" with a subtle toggle at the top. This changes the entire experience to prioritize long-term-relevant information.

Why it works:

Instead of forcing people to manually filter every time, the app understands context. If I'm searching for 4 months, I clearly need long-term information. The toggle gives control to switch back to standard view if needed, but defaults to what makes sense.

Feature 2: Enhanced Listing Cards

What it does:

In long-term mode, listing cards on the search results page show:

- Clear monthly price (all-inclusive, no surprises)
- "Work-friendly" badge if there's a workspace + fast WiFi
- "Utilities included" badge
- "Flexible cancellation" indicator
- Host responsiveness rating more prominently displayed

Why it works:

You can now compare listings at a glance without opening each one. The badges use Airbnb's existing visual language (similar to "Superhost"), so they feel native to the app, not tacked on.

Feature 3: Long-Term Details Section

What it does:

On the listing detail page, I added a dedicated "Long-Term Stay Info" section near the top (right after photos, before description). This shows:

- Monthly price breakdown (base + fees + utilities = total)
- WiFi speed test results (uploaded by host)
- Workspace details (desk dimensions, chair type, monitor availability)
- What's included (electricity, water, heating, WiFi, cleaning frequency)
- Cancellation policy specific to long stays

Why it works:

All the critical information is upfront and grouped together. No more endless scrolling or clicking "Show all amenities" hoping to find what you need. It's clear, scannable, and saves time.

Feature 4: Long-Term Filters

What it does:

Added new filter options specifically for long-term searches:

- Work-friendly (desk + WiFi speed slider)
- Utilities included
- Flexible cancellation
- Responsive host (reply rate + time)
- Long-term verified (host has good reviews for 2+ month stays)

Why it works:

These filters map directly to the real needs people have for extended stays. They're not just nice-to-haves – they're deal-breakers. Making them easy to access means people can find the right place faster.

Feature 5: Host Communication Templates

What it does:

When you tap "Message host" on a long-term listing, the app offers quick templates:

- "Ask about long-term flexibility"
- "Request WiFi speed details"
- "Clarify what's included in monthly price"
- "Discuss workspace setup"

Why it works:

Removes the friction of crafting messages from scratch. You can still write your own, but these templates speed up the process and ensure you're asking the right questions. It also helps hosts respond faster because the questions are clear and specific.

Design Process & Decisions

Sketching & Wireframes

I started with quick sketches on paper to map out the user flow and figure out where to surface long-term information. The key question was: how do I add new features without overwhelming the interface?

Early concepts I tried:

Option 1: Separate "Long-Term" Tab – Too much friction. People would have to know to look for it.

Option 2: Pop-up Modal with Long-Term Info – Felt disruptive and added extra taps.

Option 3 (Final): Contextual Toggle + Enhanced Cards – Automatically switches mode based on search dates, shows relevant badges, and groups info logically.

Visual Design Decisions

I kept the visual design close to Airbnb's existing system because:

- People already trust the interface
- New features feel like a natural extension, not a redesign
- Less learning curve = faster adoption

Specific choices:

- Used Airbnb's pink accent color for the long-term mode toggle
- Badges follow the same style as "Superhost" and "Guest favorite"
- Typography and spacing match existing Airbnb mobile patterns
- Icons are from Airbnb's current icon set (WiFi, workspace, etc.)

Interaction Design

I focused on reducing taps and making information scannable:

- Badges on listing cards are tap-able to show more details in a bottom sheet
- The "Long-Term Stay Info" section is collapsible if you want to focus on photos/reviews
- Price breakdown is expandable to show the full calculation
- Host communication templates are one-tap, with option to customize

What I Would Do Differently

This was a 3-week project, so there are things I'd explore further with more time:

- **User Testing:** I'd want to validate these designs with actual users relocating abroad. Does the automatic mode switch make sense? Are the badges too cluttered? Do people actually use the communication templates?
- **Host Experience:** I focused on the guest side, but there's a whole host flow I didn't design. How do hosts opt into long-term mode? How do they provide WiFi speed tests or workspace details? This would need to be seamless or hosts won't do it.
- **Edge Cases:** What happens if someone searches for 27 days (just under the 28-day threshold)? Should long-term features start at 30 days? 60 days? I'd need data on actual user behavior to set the right threshold.
- **Accessibility:** I designed with standard mobile patterns, but I'd want to do a full accessibility audit – screen reader support, color contrast, touch target sizes, etc.

Expected Impact & Success Metrics

How I'd Measure Success

If these features were implemented, here's what I'd track:

Primary Metrics:

- **Time to book:** Reduce the time from search to booking for stays over 28 days by 30%
- **Search refinement rate:** Decrease the number of searches needed to find a suitable long-term listing
- **Booking completion rate:** Increase conversion for long-term searches (currently people abandon because info is hard to find)

Secondary Metrics:

- **Host message volume:** Reduce pre-booking questions by 40% (info is clearer upfront)
- **Cancellation rate:** Lower cancellations due to mismatched expectations (better transparency)
- **Customer satisfaction:** Higher ratings for long-term stays in post-booking surveys

Business Impact

For Airbnb, making long-term stays easier could:

- Increase average booking value (longer stays = more revenue)
- Reduce customer support costs (fewer confused guests messaging support)
- Compete better with dedicated long-term rental platforms
- Attract more digital nomads and relocating professionals (growing market)

User Impact

For people like me searching for long-term stays:

- Less stress and uncertainty during what's already a stressful process (relocating)
- Faster decision-making with clearer, upfront information
- Better matches between guests and properties (fewer disappointments)
- More confidence in booking without having to message every host

Key Learnings & Reflections

What I Learned

1. Context switching is powerful

The automatic long-term mode was the key insight. Instead of making users filter manually, the app infers intent from search behavior. This is something I'll apply to other design problems – looking for opportunities where the system can adapt to context rather than requiring explicit user action.

2. Don't break what works

I initially wanted to completely redesign the listing page. But after stepping back, I realized Airbnb's core experience is solid – people just need additional information for long stays. Adding a dedicated section was less disruptive and more realistic to implement.

3. Your own frustration is valuable data

Designing from my real experience searching for UK accommodation made this project authentic. I wasn't guessing at pain points – I felt them. That said, I'm one user. With more time, I'd validate these assumptions with a broader range of long-term travelers to make sure my experience is representative.

4. Mobile design requires ruthless prioritization

On a small screen, every element competes for attention. I had to constantly ask: is this essential information, or nice-to-have? The badges, the long-term info section, the filters – all of these went through multiple rounds of simplification to avoid cluttering the interface.

If I Had More Time

- **Prototype and test:** Build an interactive prototype and test with 10-15 people actively searching for long-term stays
- **Explore the host side:** Design how hosts provide long-term information – needs to be easy or adoption will be low
- **Desktop experience:** I focused on mobile, but the desktop site would need similar treatment with its own layout considerations
- **A/B testing plan:** Define what to test first (e.g., badges vs. no badges, automatic mode switch vs. manual toggle)

Final Thoughts

This project came from a real need I had. I'm literally using Airbnb right now to plan my move to the UK, and the frustrations I documented are things I'm dealing with daily. That personal connection made the design process feel more urgent and meaningful.

What I'm proud of is keeping the solution simple and integrated into Airbnb's existing experience. It's easy to throw features at a problem, but the real challenge is figuring out the minimum changes needed to have maximum impact. I think these designs hit that balance – they're not revolutionary, they're just... thoughtful.

If you're reading this as a recruiter or hiring manager, I hope this case study shows how I approach problems: starting with real user needs, making design decisions based on actual pain points, and staying grounded in what's practical to build. I'm excited to bring this mindset to a team where I can design products people actually use and appreciate.

Thanks for reading!

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