AIRBNB · CONCEPT REDESIGN · 2021, REVISITED 2026

Building back the trust

Covid-19 made travelling a distant dream. This is a redesign of the Airbnb product built to make people feel safe enough to go again — and a look back, five years later, at what it got right.

Role	Timeline	Scope	Revisited
Product Designer — sole designer	June 2021 · 3 weeks	Research, IA, UI, prototype	August 2026

“This world of quite easy travel and relatively free movement has evaporated overnight.”

The travel industry saw an all-time low, with business declining close to more than 90% in 2020 compared to the previous year. Borders shut. Cancellation policies became the most-read page on every travel site.

Airbnb was not selling rooms any more. It was selling the willingness to leave your house.

A lot of steps had to be taken to build back the trust of people. Not marketing steps — product steps. Things a guest could see, verify and act on before they committed money to a trip.

That is the problem this project set out to solve.

THE ASK

Redesign the Airbnb product to build back the trust of people in travelling — and make travelling a pleasure again by giving them a secure and reliable way to do it.

DESIGN APPROACH

Time was the constraint, so the process had to be honest about it

Research was non-negotiable — identifying the real problem is the step everything else depends on. The rest was compressed to fit three weeks.

01

Research

Literature study, expert interviews, a closed-ended survey of 30+ people.

02

Ideation

Assumptions tested against findings, then opened out into solution territories.

03

Execution

IA, flows and high-fidelity screens for five interlocking features.

04

Iteration

Pressure-tested against the personas and the compromises they would accept.

RESEARCH

The study of target users adds realistic context to everything downstream

Research created the foundation for the design strategy, and was split into three parts: a literature study, conversations with experts, and a closed-ended user survey.

Literature study

10%

of the world's GDP comes from the tourism industry

87%

fall in tourism compared to previous years

$4.7T

lost across the tourism industry in 2020

> **"More than 50% of business travel will disappear in the post-coronavirus world."**
>
> Bill Gates

AIRBNB COVID TRAVEL INSIGHTS

What Airbnb's own data was already saying

32%

31%

25%

prioritise travel close to home

prioritise a new destination

prioritise returning to a favourite place

41%
say such travel has become "much more" important

45%
are able to work or study from home

32%
prefer a domestic or local destination

30%
want testing available at the destination

29%
want urgent care available

24%
book longer stays

65%
want to get travel insurance

56%
want most people at a destination vaccinated

100M+
searched for alternate flexible dates

TALKING TO THE EXPERTS

Three conversations that changed the brief

Based on my assumptions, I had open-ended conversations with people from the travel and health industries to understand how travel would actually change post-Covid.

Jamshed Ahmad

Assistant Manager, TBO Holidays UAE

People are travelling to places that are open — islands and port cities. Operators expect the vaccine to lift occupancy sharply. Domestic tourism has seen an unprecedented increase, and guests are checking whether a property carries an Assured stamp certifying its sanitisation protocol.

WHAT I TOOK FROM IT

Verification beats reassurance. Guests want a stamp they can check, not a promise.

Aman

Traveller and Zostel franchise owner, Dehradun

People are exploring the neighbourhood — what is less explored and less crowded. Travellers give preference to stays that work hard on sanitation and either hold a sanitation certificate or describe themselves as minimal-touch. Post-Covid, the desire to travel is higher than it was before.

WHAT I TOOK FROM IT

Demand had not fallen. It had been redirected to nearby and less crowded.

Dr. Mohd. Azfar

Doctor and real-estate enthusiast, Aligarh

People should check the burden on the local healthcare system. Avoid public transport. Keep quick access to a medical check-up kit. And do not feel hesitant to cancel if cases rise at the location you are travelling to.

WHAT I TOOK FROM IT

Cancellation is a health behaviour, not a customer-service edge case.

ASSUMPTIONS → VALIDATION

Six assumptions, put to 30+ people

After the literature study I wrote down what I believed to be true, discussed it with the experts, then ran a closed-ended survey to test each one against the general public's perception of travel post-Covid.

People are looking to travel domestically, at nearby locations	78%
People want flexible dates and location	72%
People are putting hygiene and health at the utmost importance	85%
People are ready to pay extra for a safer experience	65%
Vaccination is a confidence booster	80%
People are looking for a work-friendly space	100%

USER PERSONAS

Two people the product had to convince

Ankit Sati

Software developer · Singapore

Age	Status	Occupation	Location
25 years	Single	Software developer	Singapore

GOALS

- Travel for some well-being time
- Safe and comfortable travel
- Receive booking information
- Explore a new destination

INFLUENCES

- Friends
- Online and social media
- News

FRUSTRATIONS

- Travelling is not safe due to Covid-19
- Plans can change at any time
- No proper refund options
- No proper health safety protocols

Nazia Baig

Professor · New Delhi

Age	Status	Occupation	Location
32 years	Married	Professor	New Delhi

GOALS

- Travel with family
- Hygiene is a must
- Travel not too far
- Availability of good internet

INFLUENCES

- Kids
- Colleagues
- Online and social media

FRUSTRATIONS

- Kids' health in the current scenario
- Public transport is not safe
- No proper refund options
- No proper health safety protocols

KEY PROBLEMS IDENTIFIED

Two problems worth designing for

01

Health assurance is missing

While travelling, people are looking for a kind of health assurance that the current Airbnb product simply does not carry. There is nothing a guest can verify before they pay.

02

No curated list for how people travel now

There is no surfacing of the categories that are actually in demand: domestic destinations, Naturescape, RV trips, less-known places, work-from-anywhere.

Building back the trust

Five features, designed to be verifiable rather than reassuring.

DESIGN PROPOSALS

Health safety assurance, made checkable

85% of people said they would only travel if they were confident about the overall health protocol. Confidence is not built by copy — it is built by things a guest can verify before they pay. These are the five I designed.

Travel insurance

Gives the guest the option to cancel at any point with no penalty. Covers

Vaccination badge

Claimed by scanning the QR code on a vaccination certificate. The aim is to

Sanitation certificate

About 65% of people want a visible demonstration of cleanliness.

medical emergencies, trip interruption, delays, medical evacuation, and lost, damaged or stolen luggage.

build trust between guest and host, and to promote a safe travel protocol.

Collaborate with home services providers like Urban Company to sanitise the listing and issue the guest a certificate before check-in.

Superguest membership

An annual paid membership. Travel insurance included, free cancellation, a guaranteed discount, best offers, priority in booking during high demand, and merchandise.

Personal vehicle option

78% of people do not want to use public transport and about 80% prefer a personal vehicle. This adds the option to take one for the course of your stay at a listing.

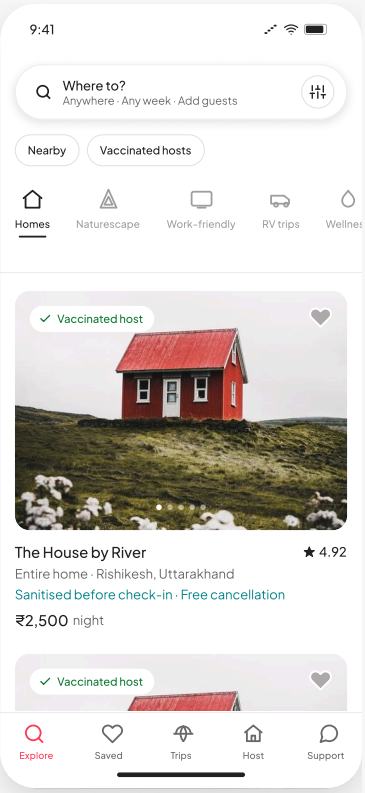
Hygienic restaurants

Quick access to a curated list of nearby restaurants following strict Covid guidelines — food cooked at 70°C, masks, and temperature checks at entry.

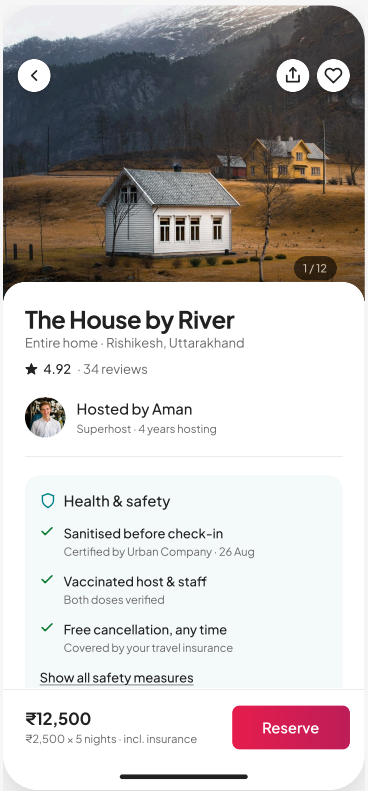
FINAL DESIGN · FLOW 01

Booking a listing with travel insurance

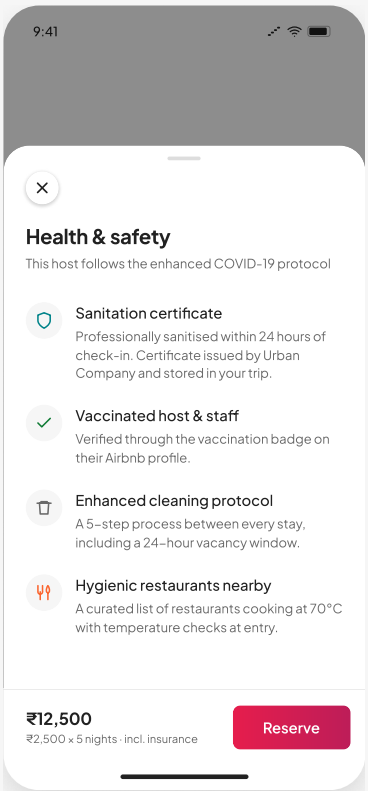
Health assurance is surfaced at three moments: on the card in the feed, on the listing itself, and as a priced, checkable line item at checkout. The guest never has to leave the flow to understand what they are covered for.



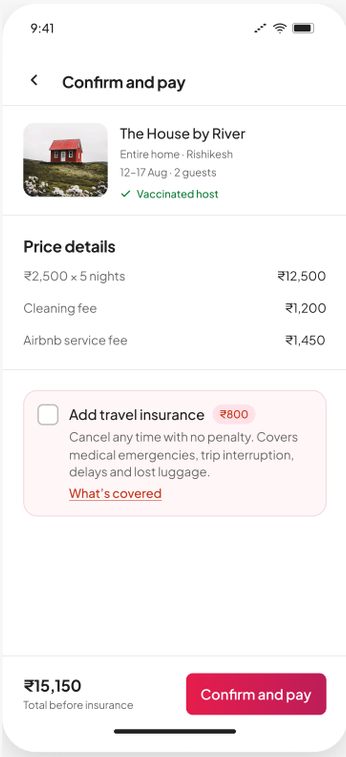
Explore — vaccinated-host and sanitised signals sit on the card itself



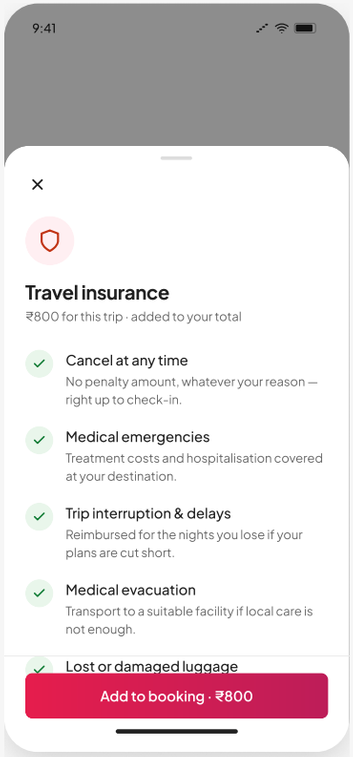
Listing detail — health & safety block above the fold



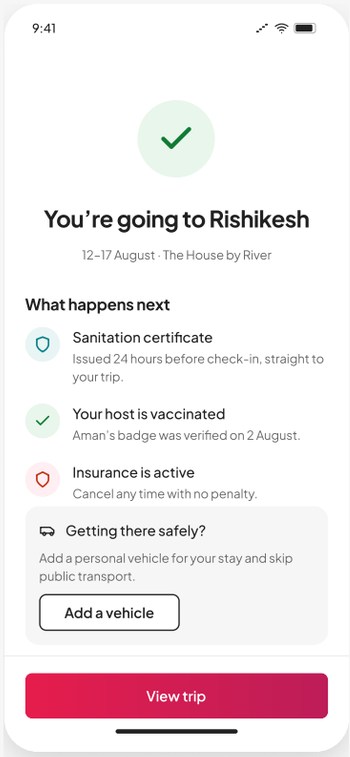
Full safety measures, each one traceable to a source



Price details — insurance offered as an opt-in, not a default



What's covered, in the guest's language

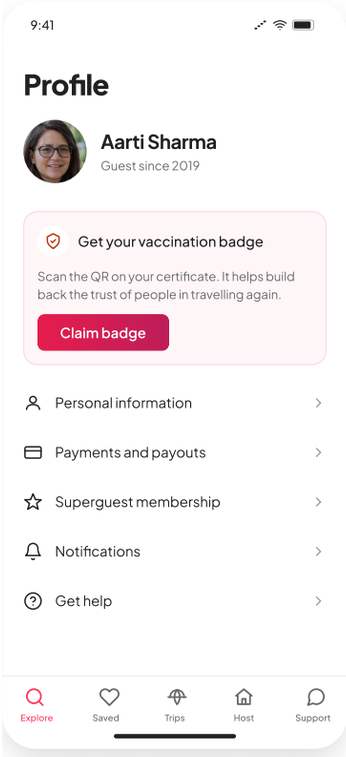


Confirmation states what happens next, and when

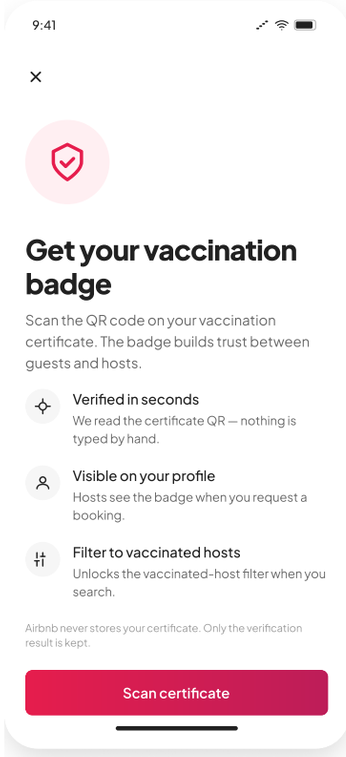
FINAL DESIGN · FLOW 02

Claiming the vaccination badge

The whole point of a badge is that it is verified, not self-declared. Nothing here is typed by hand — the certificate QR is read, the details are shown back for confirmation, and the guest explicitly opts in to displaying it.

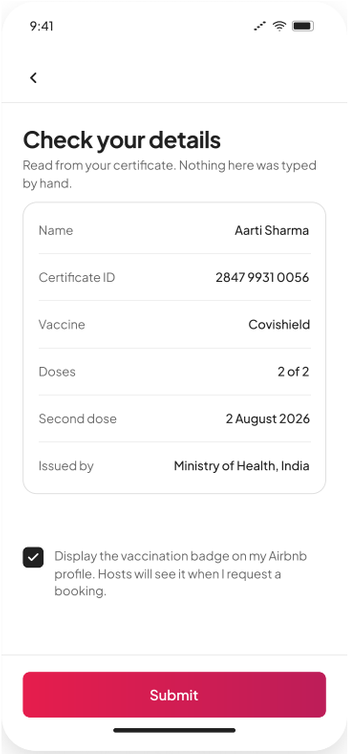


Profile — the prompt, with the reason stated plainly

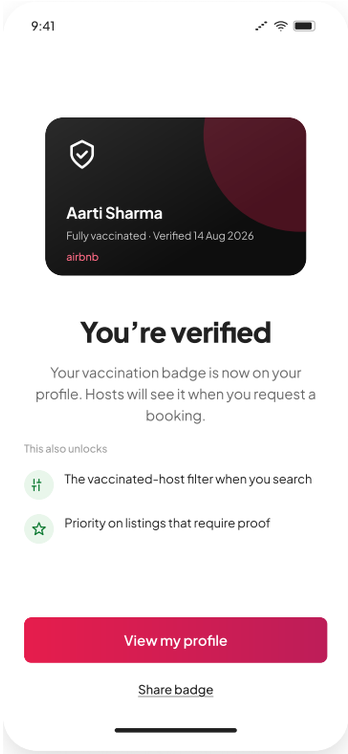


Intro — what it unlocks, and what Airbnb does not store

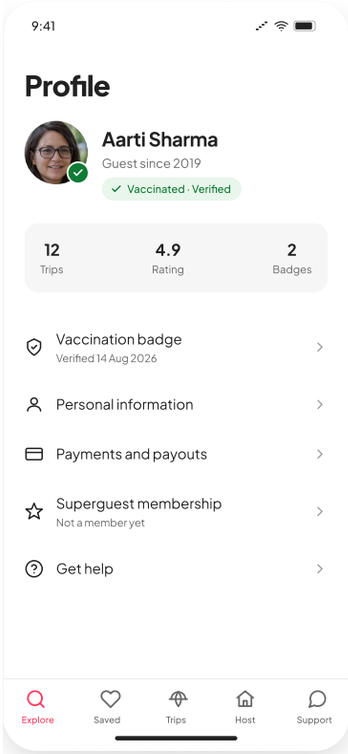
Scanning the certificate QR



Details read from the certificate, shown back for confirmation



Verified — presented as a credential, not a toast

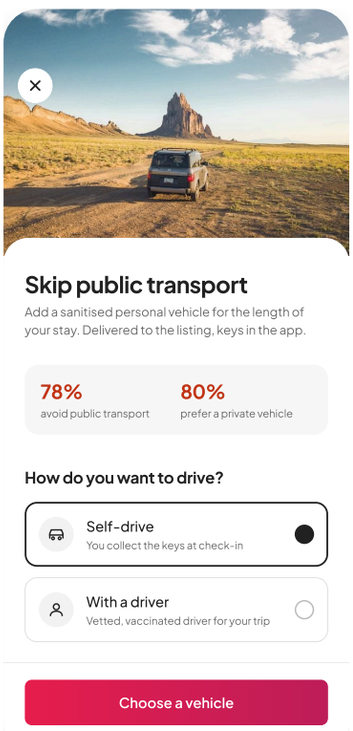


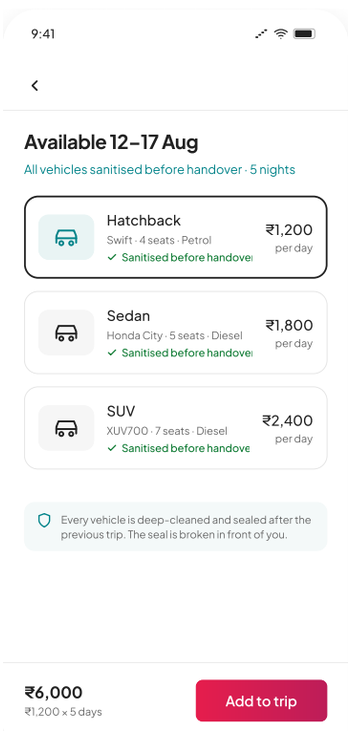
The badge on the profile a host actually sees

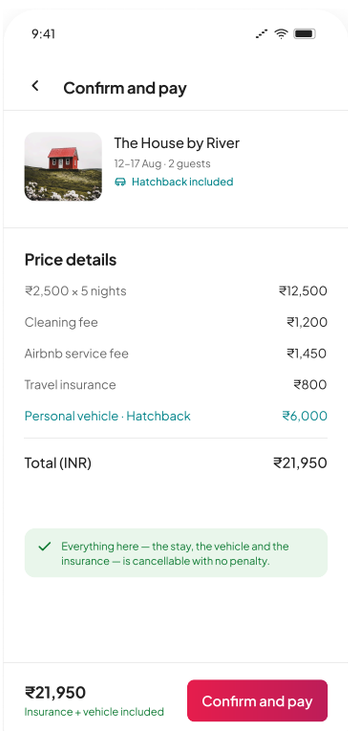
FINAL DESIGN · FLOW 03

The personal vehicle option

78% of people did not want to use public transport and around 80% preferred a personal vehicle. Rather than send the guest to a rental site, the vehicle is offered inside the booking — priced per day, added to the same total, covered by the same cancellation policy.







The case for it, made with the guest's own reasoning

Vehicles priced per day, sanitation stated up front

One total covering the stay, the insurance and the car

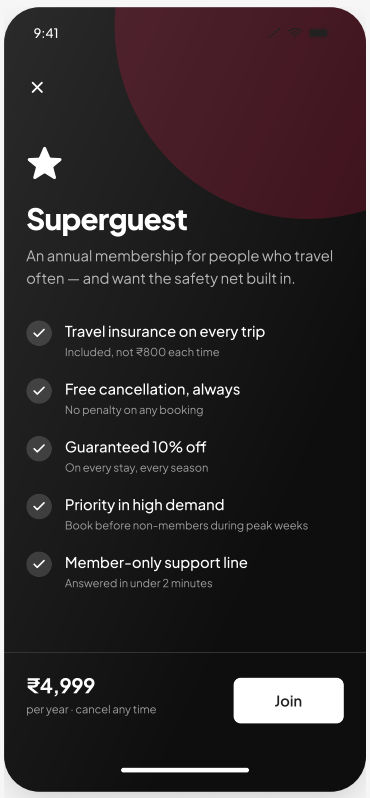
POSTSCRIPT — MARCH 2026

Airbnb launched private car services in partnership with Welcome Pickups, across 125+ cities. Their version is chauffeured and supplied by an operator rather than the host — the correct call, and the part I got wrong. But the placement is identical: offered against the reservation, and living in the Trips tab.

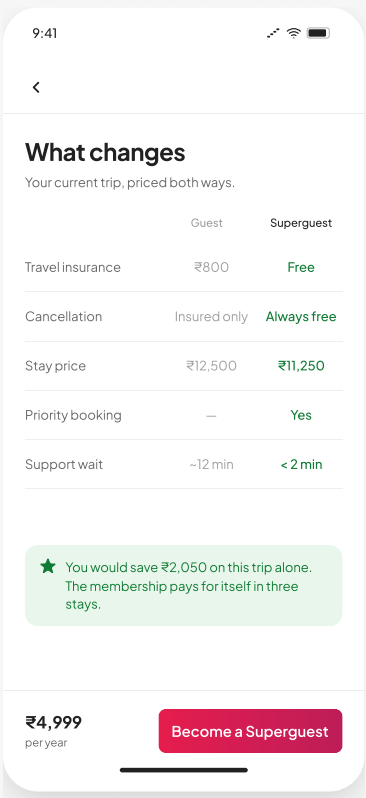
FINAL DESIGN · FLOW 04

Superguest membership

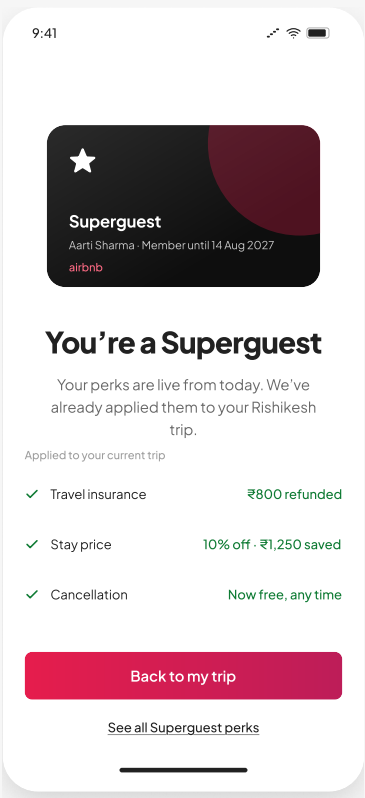
The safety features cost money at every booking. For someone travelling often, that adds up into a reason not to use them. The membership folds insurance and free cancellation into a flat annual fee — and is argued against the guest's own trip rather than a feature list.



The offer, priced against how often you actually travel



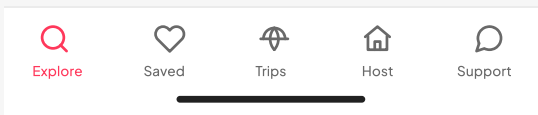
The same trip, priced both ways



Perks applied retroactively to the booking in progress

INFORMATION ARCHITECTURE

Two tabs that were not there before



Support

Providing immediate access to customer support is valuable precisely because the moments people need it are moments of panic. Hunting for it inside a settings menu during a cancellation is a bad experience to design.

Host

A separate hosting tab makes people aware they can list a house or host experiences to earn. It also keeps an easy record of bookings, guest queries, available dates, and makes adding photos and changes far simpler.