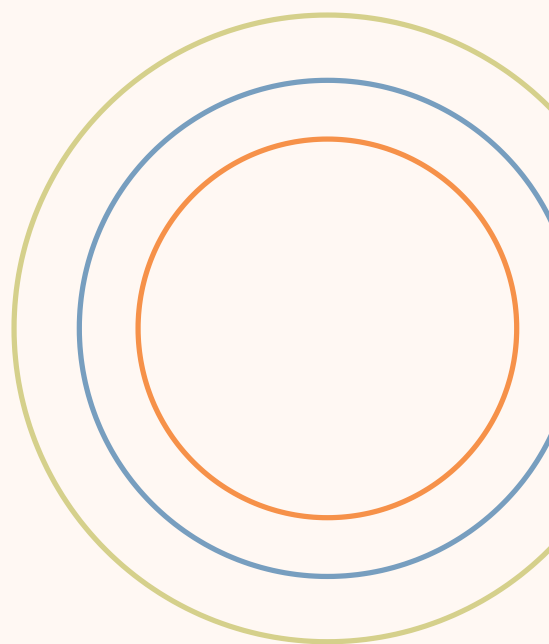


A SELF-CHECK WORKBOOK FOR INDEPENDENT BOUTIQUE HOTELS UNDER 40 ROOMS

WILL AI RECOMMEND YOUR HOTEL?

How ChatGPT, Google, Claude, Perplexity, Meta and the travel sites choose which hotels to suggest, and 20 simple checks to see where you stand. No tech talk.



THIS WORKBOOK BELONGS TO

Hotel _____

Date of check _____ Rooms _____

Janna Overend

jannaoverend.com · October 2026 edition



HOW TO USE THIS WORKBOOK

Your guests are asking AI to find them a place to stay. This workbook helps you see your hotel the way an AI sees it, and find the gaps that keep you off the short list.

What you need

- About two hours. You can split it over a few days.
- A laptop or phone, and logins for your Google Business Profile and the travel sites you list on.
- A pen. This is meant to be written in.
- Optional: a teammate. A second person often spots things you no longer see.

How the scoring works

There are 20 checks in five areas. Score each one honestly:

SCORE	MEANS
0 Not yet	We haven't done this, or I don't know.
1 Partly	Some of it is in place, or it's out of date.
2 Yes	Done, current, and I could show you right now.

The highest possible score is 40. Your total on page 12 shows where to focus first.

One honest note. No one can promise you a top spot in AI answers. The tools change their suggestions almost every time someone asks. What you can do is make your hotel easy to understand, easy to trust and easy to book. That is what this workbook is about.

The five areas

#	AREA	CHECKS	PAGE
1	Your one sentence	1 to 4	6
2	Ask the AI tools yourself	5 to 9	7
3	Same story everywhere	10 to 14	8 and 9
4	Reviews that say something	15 to 17	10
5	Easy to read and seamless to book	18 to 20	11

WHAT CHANGED IN 2025 AND 2026

Travelers used to search, open ten tabs and compare. Now many simply ask an AI and look at the three or four hotels it suggests. Here is where the main tools stand as of October 2026.

TOOL	WHAT IT CAN DO FOR TRAVELERS NOW	WHAT TO KNOW
ChatGPT	Expedia and Booking.com apps work right inside the chat, with live prices (since October 2025).	Leans heavily on Google business listings for hotel details. Since early 2026 it also uses Yelp (mostly US cities) and Tripadvisor.
Google AI Mode and AI Overviews	AI answers at the top of Google. Since August 2026, people in the US can compare and book hotels inside AI Mode.	Booking partners at launch were large travel sites and chains. No independents yet.
Gemini and Ask Maps	Ask Maps lets people chat with Google Maps to compare hotels nearby, then book elsewhere.	Your Google Business Profile and reviews are front and centre.
Claude	Connects to Booking.com and Tripadvisor (April 2026) and Expedia (May 2026, US).	Looks up places and reviews, then narrows them down.
Perplexity	Hotel search and booking inside the answer, using Tripadvisor reviews.	Your Tripadvisor listing matters here.
Meta Muse	An AI agent launched September 2026 that shops travel websites for you, like a person would. Expedia booking is coming to Muse in the US.	It reads real web pages, including your booking engine.
The travel sites	Expedia, Booking.com, Kayak and Airbnb all now have AI search or trip planners built in.	Your listing text there is part of your story.

The pattern: the AI does the searching, the comparing and the shortlisting. Your future guest may only ever see the short list. For a hotel under 40 rooms, the short list is the new front door.

READ. COMPARE. TRUST.

Every AI tool works a little differently, but they all do some version of these three things.

STEP 1

READ

It gathers what it can find about hotels in the area: your website, your Google Maps listing, Tripadvisor, Yelp, the travel sites and your guest reviews.

STEP 2

COMPARE

It holds the traveler's request (quiet, romantic, near the coast, great breakfast) up against what it read about each hotel. It is looking for a match.

STEP 3

TRUST

If your website, listings and reviews all tell the same story, it feels confident suggesting you. If they disagree, or say nothing specific, it picks someone else.

There is no number one spot

In early 2026, researchers at SparkToro had volunteers ask ChatGPT, Claude and Google's AI the same recommendation questions thousands of times. Fewer than 1 in 100 answers came back with the same list. So forget ranking first. The goal is to **show up often, for the right guests.**

Easy to find is step one. Seamless to book is step two.

An AI can recommend your hotel and then send the booking to a big travel site, because that is where it can complete the booking easily. Being easy to find and being seamless to book are two separate things. This workbook checks both.

JOT IT DOWN

Which tools do your guests mention using to plan trips? Ask a few at check-in this week.

BRAND CLARITY IS HOW AI DECIDES

For years, a clear brand felt like a nice extra. Now it is how the machines decide. **AI recommends the hotels it can describe.** If you can't say clearly who you're for and what you're known for, the AI can't either.

COULD BE ANY HOTEL

A charming boutique hotel with stunning views and warm hospitality.

An AI can't match this to anyone's request. Thousands of hotels say the same thing.

AN AI CAN MATCH THIS

A 22-room, adults-only inn for couples who want real quiet. A fireplace in every room, and breakfast from the farm down the road.

This answers a real traveler's request almost word for word.

Why small hotels have the advantage

Chains are built to be the same everywhere. You are not. The owner who knows every trail, the room with the clawfoot tub, the breakfast people talk about: those specific details are exactly what AI can match to a guest's request.

Exercise: swap the fuzzy words

Circle any of these words you use to describe your hotel. Then write what you actually mean, in a way a guest could check.

FUZZY WORD	WHAT WE ACTUALLY MEAN (SPECIFIC AND TRUE)
Charming / unique	
Luxury	
Stunning views	
Perfect location	
Warm hospitality	
Something for everyone	

EXAMPLES

"Stunning views" becomes "every room faces the lake, and the dock is 40 steps from the front door."

"Perfect location" becomes "a five-minute walk to the farmers market, and two blocks from the beach."

"Warm hospitality" becomes "the owners greet every guest by name and leave a hand-drawn map of their favourite trails in each room."

YOUR ONE SENTENCE

Before you look at any website or AI tool, get clear on the story you want everyone to tell. Fill this in, in plain words:

We're the place for _____
 who want _____
 and we're known for _____.

Example: We're the place for *couples from the city* who want *two quiet nights away from screens and crowds*, and we're known for *a fireplace in every room and breakfast from the farm down the road*.

Tips: name your ideal guest (not "everyone"). Name something a guest would mention in a review. If it takes a paragraph, keep cutting.

Your three proof points

Three specific, true things that back up your sentence. These are the details you want AI to repeat.

Example: 1. A wood-burning fireplace in all 22 rooms. 2. Breakfast made with eggs and produce from Hillside Farm, 2 km away. 3. Adults only, with quiet hours from 9 pm.

Score yourself

- | | | | | |
|---|---|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1 | I can say who we're for and what we're known for in one plain sentence.
You just tried it above. Be honest about how easy it was. | ☐
0 Not yet | ☐
1 Partly | ☐
2 Yes |
| 2 | That sentence, or something close, is near the top of our homepage, in words.
Not only in a photo, video or logo. Words an AI can read. | ☐
0 Not yet | ☐
1 Partly | ☐
2 Yes |
| 3 | Our descriptions use specific details, not fuzzy words.
Look at your homepage and room pages. Use the exercise on page 5. | ☐
0 Not yet | ☐
1 Partly | ☐
2 Yes |
| 4 | My team would describe the hotel the same way.
Ask two staff members: what are we known for? Compare answers. | ☐
0 Not yet | ☐
1 Partly | ☐
2 Yes |

Area 1 subtotal (out of 8)

ASK THE AI TOOLS YOURSELF

Use a private or incognito window if you can, so your own history doesn't skew the answers. Ask each question **three times** (in fresh chats), because the answers change.

QUESTION A: ABOUT YOU

"What is **[hotel name]** in **[town]** known for?
Who is it best for?"

QUESTION B: WITHOUT YOUR NAME

"What's the best small hotel in **[town]** for
[your ideal guest and what they want]?"

TOOL	QUESTION A: DOES IT SOUND LIKE US? ANYTHING WRONG?	QUESTION B: DID WE APPEAR? (OF 3)
ChatGPT		
Google AI Mode or Gemini		
Claude		
Perplexity		
Meta AI		

If other hotels come up in Question B, note what the AI says they're known for. That tells you what it values.

5	ChatGPT describes us accurately and in a way that sounds like us. Compare its answer with your one sentence.	☐	☐	☐
		0 Not yet	1 Partly	2 Yes
6	Google (AI Mode or Gemini) describes us accurately.	☐	☐	☐
		0 Not yet	1 Partly	2 Yes
7	At least two of Claude, Perplexity and Meta AI describe us accurately.	☐	☐	☐
		0 Not yet	1 Partly	2 Yes
8	Without our name, we appear at least once in three tries, in at least one tool. Score 2 if you appear in two or more tools.	☐	☐	☐
		0 Not yet	1 Partly	2 Yes
9	No AI tool states wrong facts about us. Wrong prices, closed, pets, missing amenities. Note where the error might come from.	☐	☐	☐
		0 Not yet	1 Partly	2 Yes

Area 2 subtotal (out of 10)

SAME STORY EVERYWHERE

AI reads many sources about you. Every mismatch makes it a little less sure. Open each site side by side and mark each box: ✓ matches, ✗ doesn't match, ? missing or unsure.

FACT	WEBSITE	GOOGLE	TRIPADVISOR	YELP	BOOKING.COM	EXPEDIA
Hotel name (exact spelling)						
Street address						
Phone number						
Website link						
Short description / story						
Room names and types						
Pet policy						
Parking and fees						
Check-in and check-out times						
Accessibility details						
Photos from the last 12 months						

Where AI gets its facts. One 2026 study of about 100,000 hotels in ChatGPT answers found most hotel details came from Google business listings. Since early 2026, ChatGPT also pulls from Yelp, mainly for US cities, and from Tripadvisor. Your Google Business Profile is likely the single most-read page about your hotel. Treat it like a second homepage.

Fix list

Write every mismatch here, with who will fix it and by when.

SCORE YOUR CONSISTENCY

10	Name, address and phone are identical everywhere. Website, Google, Tripadvisor, Yelp, Booking.com, Expedia and any other site you're on.	☐	☐	☐
		0 Not yet	1 Partly	2 Yes
11	Our Google Business Profile is complete and current. Right category (hotel or inn), description using your one sentence, amenities ticked, photos from the last 12 months, Q&A answered.	☐	☐	☐
		0 Not yet	1 Partly	2 Yes
12	Room names and types match across our website and the travel sites. "Garden King" on your site should not be "Deluxe Double" on Expedia.	☐	☐	☐
		0 Not yet	1 Partly	2 Yes
13	Policies match everywhere. Pets, parking, fees, check-in and check-out, cancellation.	☐	☐	☐
		0 Not yet	1 Partly	2 Yes
14	Our travel site descriptions were updated in the last year and tell the same story. Most owners write these once and forget them. AI keeps reading them.	☐	☐	☐
		0 Not yet	1 Partly	2 Yes

Area 3 subtotal (out of 10)

ALSO WORTH CHECKING

- Listed in Apple Maps (Apple Business Connect) and Bing Places with the same details.
- Local tourism board, chamber of commerce and any "best of" lists you appear on say the same thing about you.
- Your social media bios use the same one sentence.

Why this matters so much: research on AI recommendations suggests that when several independent sources say the same thing about a business, the AI is far more likely to include it. One clear story, repeated everywhere, is how you build that.

REVIEWS THAT SAY SOMETHING

AI tools read your reviews closely, and some quote them word for word. Reviews that mention specific things (the breakfast, the quiet, the owner's trail tips) help AI match you to the right guest. "Great stay!" doesn't.

Quick review audit

Read your last 20 reviews on Google and Tripadvisor. Tally how often guests mention your proof points from page 6.

PROOF POINT	TIMES MENTIONED
1.	
2.	
3.	

Ask for the specific thing

Instead of "please leave us a review," try one of these at checkout or in your follow-up email:

"If you have a minute, we'd love to hear what you thought of [the breakfast / the quiet / the trail map]."

"Was there one thing that made your stay? We'd love it if you mentioned it in a review."

Always ask every guest, not just the happy ones, and never offer anything in return for a review. Google and Tripadvisor both prohibit incentivized or selective requests.

15	We get a steady flow of new reviews on Google and Tripadvisor. Score 2 if you have reviews from the last 30 days on both.	0 Not yet 1 Partly 2 Yes
16	Recent reviews mention the things we want to be known for. Two or more of your proof points show up regularly.	0 Not yet 1 Partly 2 Yes
17	We reply to reviews, using our own specific language. A reply is another place to repeat your story: "So glad you loved the farm breakfast."	0 Not yet 1 Partly 2 Yes

Area 4 subtotal (out of 6)

EASY TO READ AND SEAMLESS TO BOOK

AI agents like Meta Muse now visit websites and booking pages the way a person would. If facts are hidden in a photo, a PDF or a pop-up, or the booking takes ten taps, they may move on to a travel site that is easier.

The phone test

Pick a date next month. On your phone, start from your homepage and book a room. Time it.

QUESTION	YOUR ANSWER
How long did it take, from homepage to the payment page? Was it quick?	
Was it frictionless? No pop-ups, forced account sign-up, dead ends or surprise steps?	
Did your price match what Booking.com and Expedia show for the same night?	
Were fees (resort, parking, cleaning) shown before the final step?	
Could you find check-in time, parking and pet policy without calling?	

The words test

Are these written as plain text somewhere on your website? Tick each one.

- Check-in and check-out times ☐

● Parking (where, cost) ☐

● Pet policy ☐
- Accessibility (step-free entry, accessible rooms, what exactly) ☐

● All fees and taxes ☐

● Room-by-room details: bed type, size, view, how many guests ☐

18	Key facts are written in words on our website, not just in photos or PDFs. Every box above ticked = 2.	☐	☐	☐
		0 Not yet	1 Partly	2 Yes
19	Booking direct on a phone is quick, frictionless, and our rates match the travel sites. Under two minutes to the payment page, with no snags = 2.	☐	☐	☐
		0 Not yet	1 Partly	2 Yes
20	We have a questions and answers page in plain words, and our web person has the checklists on pages 14 and 15. Use the real questions guests ask you by phone and email.	☐	☐	☐
		0 Not yet	1 Partly	2 Yes

Area 5 subtotal (out of 6)

YOUR RESULTS

ADD UP YOUR SCORE

AREA	YOUR SCORE	OUT OF
1. Your one sentence		8
2. Ask the AI tools yourself		10
3. Same story everywhere		10
4. Reviews that say something		6
5. Easy to read and seamless to book		6
Total		40

What your score means

32 TO 40

AI can tell your story. You're in good shape. Keep things current, re-run the AI questions every few months and keep asking guests for specific reviews.

[Find where your Flywheel is losing momentum.](#)

20 TO 31

Clear in places, fuzzy in others. AI knows you exist but isn't sure what to say about you. Your lowest area is where you'll see the quickest gains.

0 TO 19

AI is guessing about you. Start with Area 1. Until your story is clear, fixes elsewhere won't land. This is very fixable, and it usually starts with one good conversation.

Look at Area 1 first, whatever your total. A low score there tends to pull every other area down, because there's no clear story for the AI, your listings or your guests to repeat.

My top three fixes

FIX	WHO	BY WHEN
1.		
2.		
3.		

MYTHS AND WHAT'S ACTUALLY TRUE

YOU MAY HEAR	WHAT'S TRUE (OCTOBER 2026)
"You need special AI code or files to show up in AI answers."	Google says plainly there are no special files, AI text files or markup needed to appear in AI Overviews or AI Mode. Clear, visible, specific content matters more.
"Add an llms.txt file and AI will find you."	Large studies in 2026 found almost no AI answer tools read these files, and Google says it ignores them. Harmless, but not a lever.
"FAQ code gets you those drop-downs in Google."	Google stopped showing FAQ drop-downs in search results on May 7, 2026. Questions and answers on your page still help, because AI reads the words.
"Put star ratings code on your site and Google will show stars."	Google won't show review stars for reviews a business shows about itself on its own site. That rule has been in place since 2019.
"We can get you to number one in ChatGPT."	There is no fixed ranking. AI suggestions change almost every time. Be wary of anyone who promises a position.
"AI only cares about big brands."	AI rewards specific, consistent, well-reviewed information. Small hotels with a clear story have a real edge here.
"Our booking engine handles all this."	Your booking engine handles the booking. The story, the listings and the reviews are still yours to manage.

The short version: it's the clarity, not the code. Technical setup helps machines read your facts correctly, and your web person should check it (next page). But no amount of code fixes a hotel that can't say what it's known for.

APPENDIX

FOR YOUR WEB PERSON

A short technical checklist, verified against Google's and schema.org's documentation on October 1 and 2, 2026. Names in **this style** are the technical terms your web person will recognize.

STATUS	ITEM	NOTES
KEEP	Hotel structured data on the homepage	One Hotel block for the property (not the booking engine): name , url , address , geo , telephone , image , checkinTime , checkoutTime , priceRange , numberOfRooms . Must match the visible page and the Google Business Profile.
KEEP	Amenities, policies, languages	amenityFeature , petsAllowed , smokingAllowed , paymentAccepted , availableLanguage . Wording must match what guests see.
KEEP	Rooms and offers	containsPlace with a Room per room type; offers only with real public rates. Helps machines understand rooms. No special search feature attached.
KEEP	Links to official profiles	sameAs pointing to Google, Tripadvisor, Instagram and the other official listings; hasMap for the map link.
KEEP	Breadcrumbs	BreadcrumbList is still fully supported by Google.
CHECK	Ratings markup	aggregateRating is valid, but Google will not show stars for reviews the hotel displays about itself. Never promise stars.
CHECK	FAQ markup	FAQPage rich results ended May 7, 2026. Leave existing markup (Google says it causes no harm). Keep the questions and answers visible on the page.
CHECK	AI search crawlers are not blocked	Check robots.txt and any firewall or CDN bot settings (some block AI bots by default). Allow Googlebot , Bingbot , OAI-SearchBot , ChatGPT-User , Claude-SearchBot , Claude-User and PerplexityBot if you want to appear in those tools' answers.
CHECK	Key facts are text, not images	Policies, fees, accessibility and room details as real text. No info locked in PDFs, sliders or pop-ups. Pages load fast on mobile.
CHECK	Booking engine works for automated browsers	Ask your booking engine provider whether AI agents (which browse like a person) can reach rates and availability, and whether rates match OTAs.
CHECK	Validate after any change	Use the schema.org validator for full coverage and Google's Rich Results Test for Google features (it now covers fewer types).
OPTIONAL	lms.txt file	Cheap to add, but 2026 studies found AI answer tools rarely read it and Google ignores it. Housekeeping, not a visibility lever.

Remember: Google states that no special structured data is required to appear in AI Overviews or AI Mode. This list helps machines read your facts correctly. It does not guarantee rankings or AI mentions.

MAKE YOUR PRICES EASY TO CHECK

Google and AI tools can only confidently show a price they can check. Google compares the price your hotel sends it with what a guest actually sees at checkout, and it hides prices that don't match, often without a clear warning. When your direct price is missing or unclear, the guest is likely to be sent to a travel site where the price is clear. Hand this page to whoever manages your booking engine.

STEP 1 · GET YOUR RATES TO GOOGLE

Ask your booking engine provider one question: **"Do you send our rates and availability to Google Hotel Center, and is it turned on for us?"** For most modern booking engines and channel managers the answer is yes, and it's a switch. If not, open a free Hotel Center account and connect through one of Google's integration partners.

- The same connection gives you Google's **free booking links**: commission-free links to your own site in Google's hotel results. Make sure they're on.
- Hotel Center itself is free. If someone quotes you for it, you're paying for their setup work, not Google.
- Since September 30, 2026, Google no longer fills in rates for hotels on its own. No feed means no direct price on Google.

STEP 2 · PASS THE PRICE ACCURACY CHECK

- **Taxes and fees are the number one tripwire.** Make your feed and your booking engine show them the same way, following Google's rules for your country.
- **Test-book your own hotel.** Search it on Google, click your price, go all the way to checkout and compare the number at every step. Do it for two or three room types.
- **Check the price accuracy score in Hotel Center** after launch, then monthly. Google tightened its accuracy rules in 2025, and accuracy also affects where your free booking link appears.
- **Silent problems:** wrong currency, room names that don't match the booking engine, and yesterday's rates still showing.

STEP 3 · IF YOU ADVERTISE ON GOOGLE, REBUILD YOUR HOTEL CAMPAIGNS

- Campaigns built on Google-supplied rates can't be converted. Link Hotel Center to Google Ads and start fresh.
- Google retired pay-per-stay commission bidding. Start with manual cost-per-click, then move to target return on ad spend once you have enough bookings.
- Spend in your busy periods rather than evenly all month, and bid on your own hotel name. Travel sites bid on it, and losing that click can cost a 15 to 25% commission.

EVERY MONTH (ABOUT TEN MINUTES)	DONE
Compare your direct price with Booking.com and Expedia for three dates	☐
Glance at feed health and price accuracy in Hotel Center	☐
Book a test room on your phone: is checkout still quick and frictionless?	☐

YOUR NEXT STEP

LET'S TALK ABOUT YOUR HOTEL

You've done the hard part: you now know where you stand. If you'd like a second pair of eyes, book a free 30-minute conversation with me.

In 30 minutes, we'll look at

- How AI describes your hotel today, live, in two or three tools.
- Whether your one sentence is doing its job, and how to sharpen it.
- The one or two changes that would make the biggest difference for you.

Bring this workbook, even half-finished. No pitch deck, no pressure.



Scan to book a call with Janna

calendly.com/janna-jannaoverend/30min

ABOUT JANNA

I help independent boutique hotels become easier to discover, harder to compare, and seamless to book direct. My work follows the steps in my proprietary Hospitality Flywheel, where each turn sharpens clarity, strengthens guest relationships, grows direct demand, and builds value that carries forward.

Sources

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