

Competitive benchmarking

Hotel booking websites

Tim Thompson

15 June 2023

Objective

To gain insights of good and bad UX practice from four competitor websites.

Focus is on the **booking process**, looking at the following broad user journey:

Search

Results

Hotel information

Room rates

Checkout

Websites reviewed:

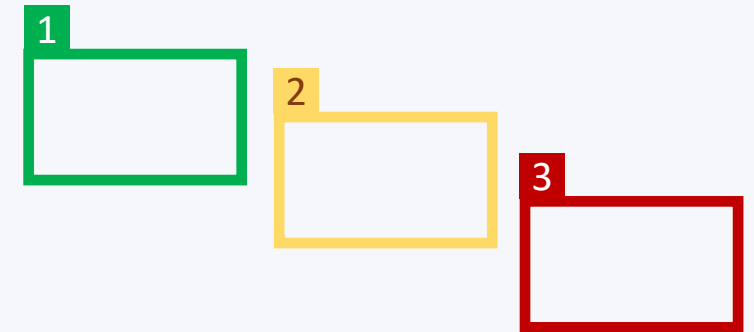


NOVOTEL

Booking.com



Key



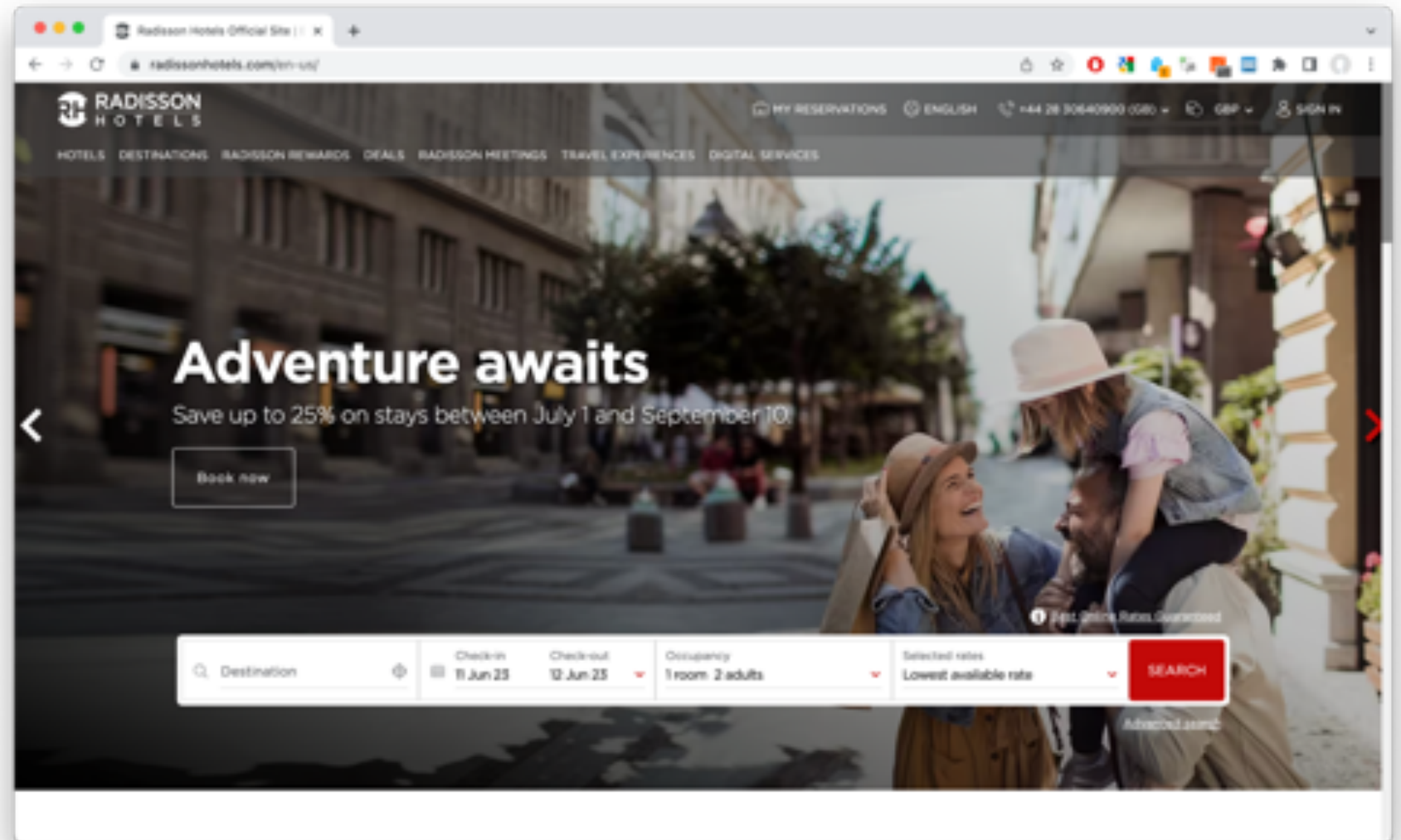
1 [Green] Good idea

2 [Yellow/brown] Convention

3 [Red] Pitfall

Radisson Hotels is a luxury brand and operates a number of sub brands internationally.

The homepage is an umbrella to all of the sub brands, which vary according to location.



Homepage



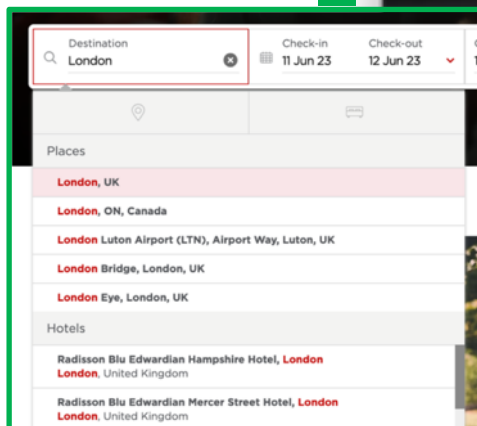
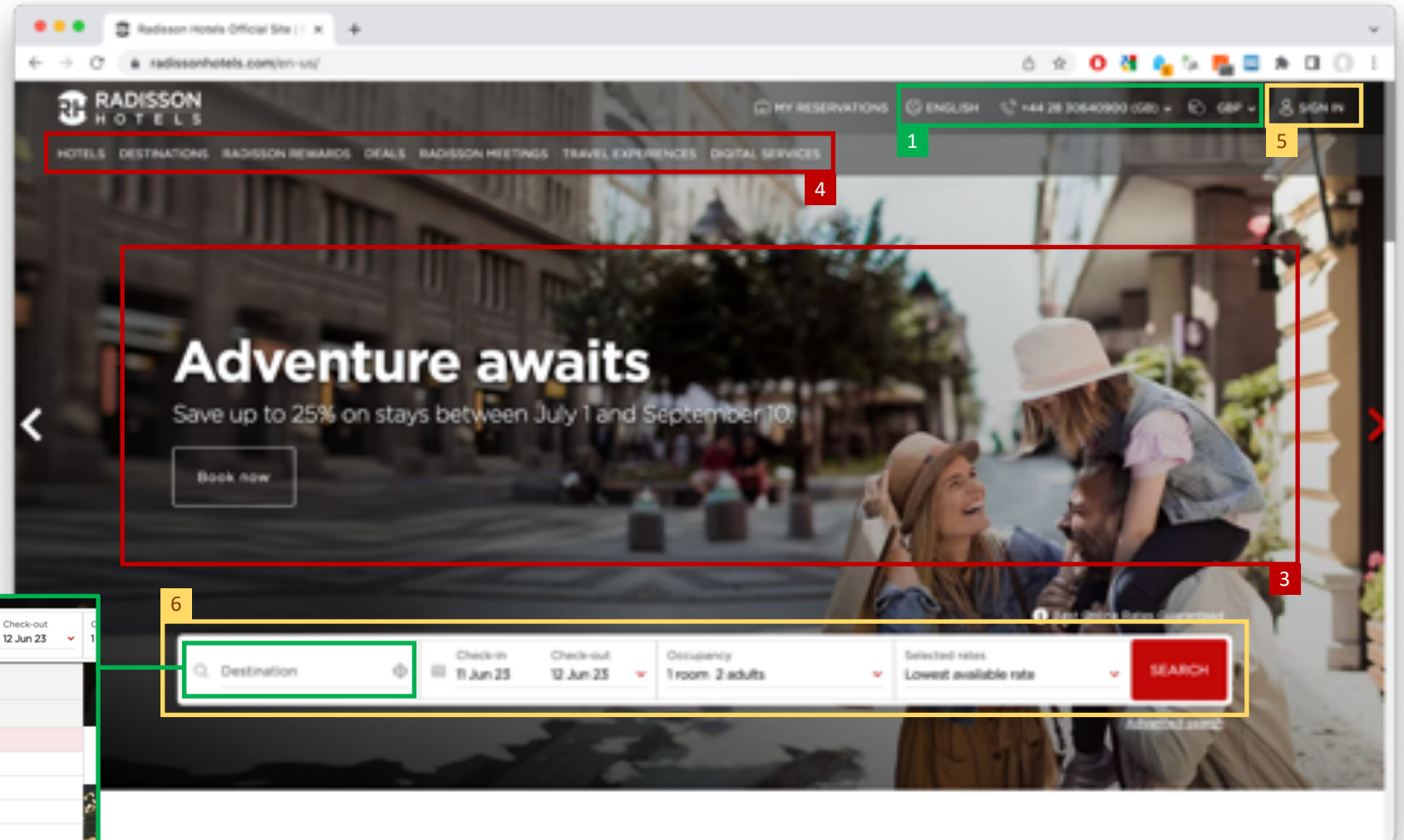
1. Options to localize with sensible defaults to the user's region: language, contact number, currency
2. Autocomplete search results grouped by place name / hotel name to help avoid confusion



3. Background slider – visually distracting when completing search bar, adds questionable value
4. Uppercase menu labels may be harder to read, especially against photo background



5. Login for existing customers
6. Search bar with destination, check-in/out, occupancy and special rates. This carries through to subsequent pages



Search results page



1. Show map option prominent
2. Judicious and deliberate use of colour to highlight key UI elements (eg show map, see rooms button)
3. Popular filters listed at top, given long list
4. Display of independent (TripAdvisor) rating with each result
5. Option to view more photos for each result (see Photo browser on next slide)



6. Sort options not sufficiently close to results list, not sure meaning of default option 'Recommended'
7. Too many filter options in linear list pushing popular options too far down
8. Use of red to denote selection – given convention this may be misunderstood as an exclusion
9. No clear link to hotel information (the title is the link, but this is not obvious)

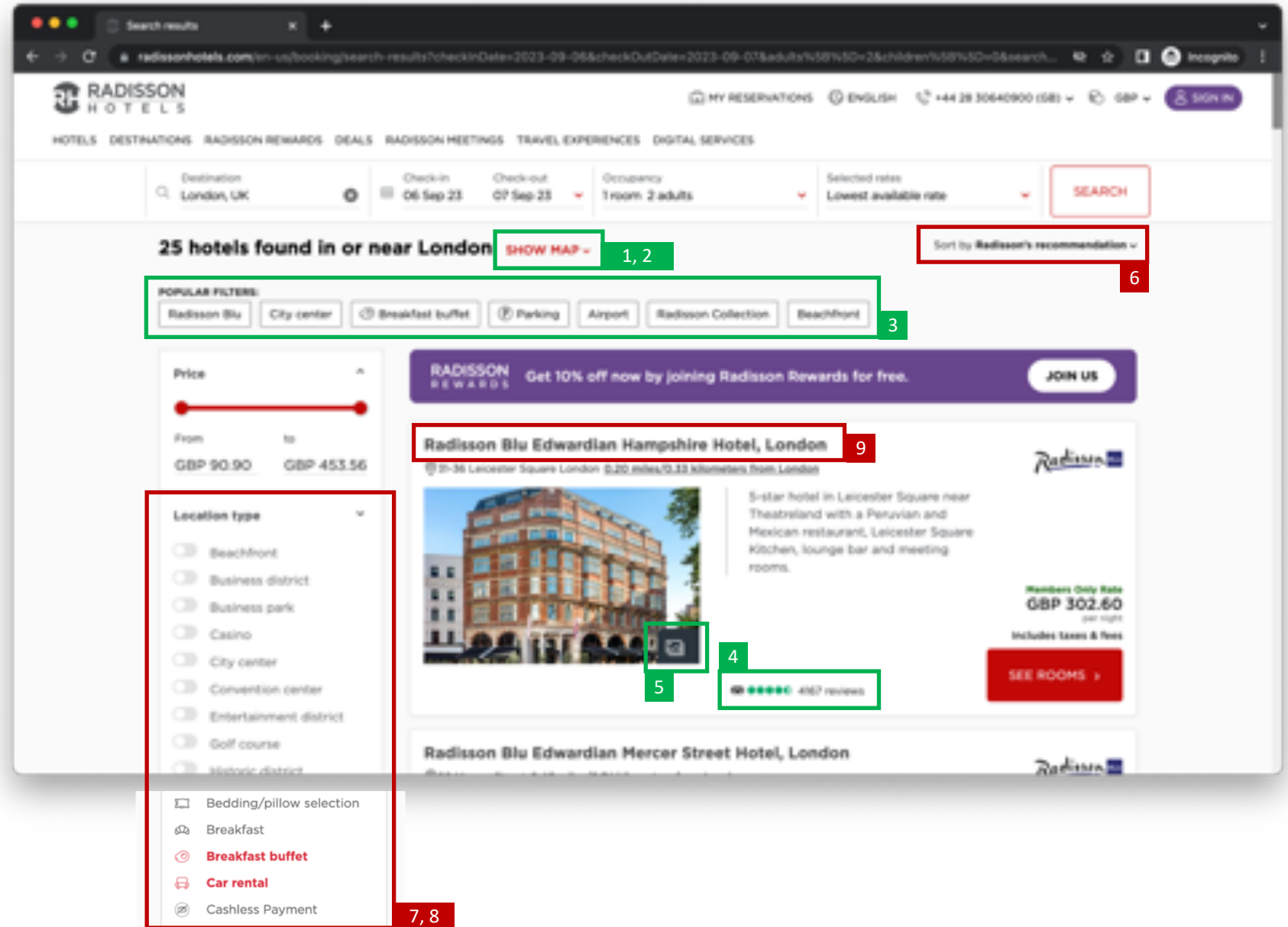


Photo browser



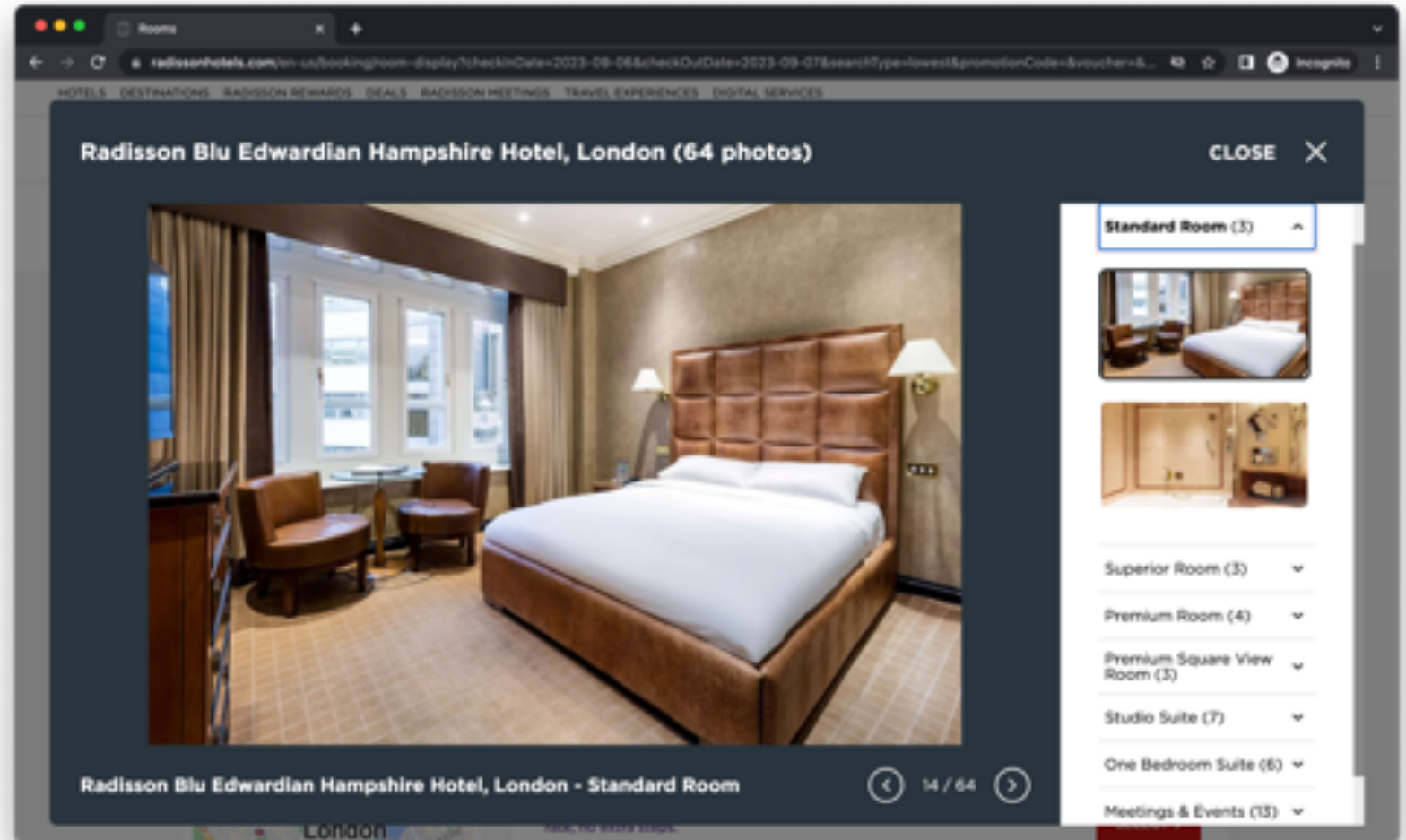
The photo browser is a component linked to from point 5 in the previous slide.

It appears in a modal window in front of the current screen.

The browser shows high quality photos from the property, grouped by location with good navigation controls.

The same component is also accessible from other contexts such as the hotel information page or each room option.

When accessed from room options, only the images from the given room are shown.



Room selection



1. Quick filter buttons to reduce list of room options (eg select by free cancellation, breakfast included etc)
2. Good summary of hotel on left, including contact info, map and link to page
3. Clearly presented feature list, with icons



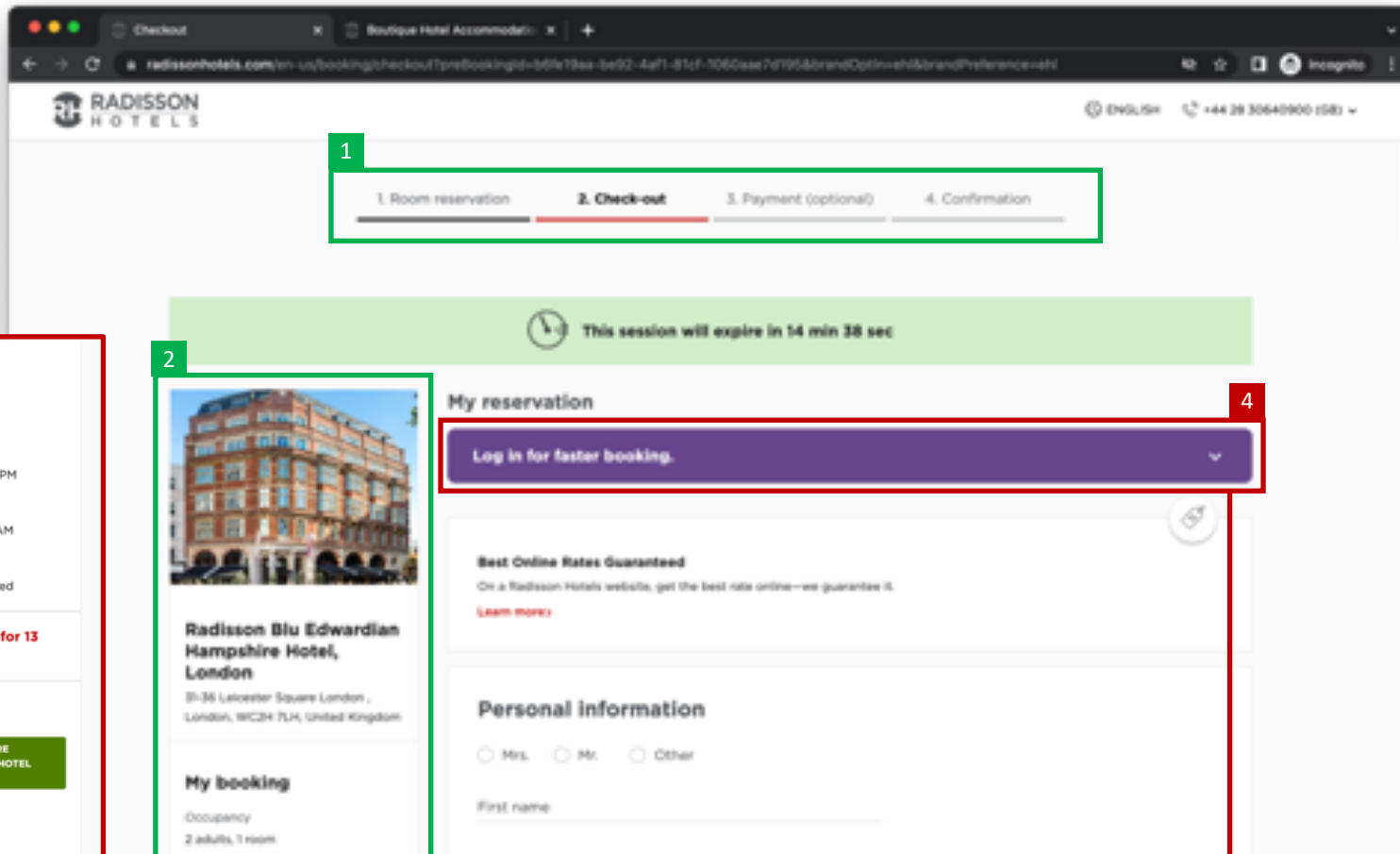
4. 32% savings label is ambiguous
5. Pay on arrival button misleading as this is a room rate level feature
6. Too many room options leads to long scrolling. Additionally, to view standard room rates, you need to expand 'See more rates' button
7. No twin room option. This is described in the free text description, rather than as a selectable option and may be overlooked. It is only presented as an option later at checkout (see Checkout 2/2)

The screenshot shows the Radisson Blu Edwardian Hampshire Hotel booking page. The search bar at the top shows the destination as 'Radisson Blu Edwardian H...', check-in as '06 Sep 23', check-out as '07 Sep 23', and occupancy as '1 room 2 adults'. The 'Filter rates' section includes buttons for 'Members Only Rates (30)', 'Free cancellation (30)', 'Breakfast (30)', and 'Accessible Rooms (0)'. The hotel summary on the left includes a photo of the hotel, a '32% savings' label, a 'Pay on arrival' button, and a map of the location in London. The room selection area on the right shows a 'Superior Room' with a price of '£15.00'. Below this, there are three room options: 'Prepaid - Members Room Only' (GBP 320.96), 'Prepaid - Room Only' (GBP 343.20), and 'Seasonal Sale' (GBP 377.60). A 'See more rates' button is at the bottom right.

Annotations on the screenshot:

- 1. Filter rates buttons (Members Only Rates, Free cancellation, Breakfast, Accessible Rooms)
- 2. Hotel summary (photo, address, contact info, map)
- 3. Room features list (Free Wi-Fi, Free bottled water, Individual room climate control, Iron and ironing board, etc.)
- 4. 32% savings label
- 5. Pay on arrival button
- 6. See more rates button
- 7. Room selection area (Prepaid - Members Room Only, Prepaid - Room Only, Seasonal Sale)

Checkout (1 of 2)



1. Provision of clear progress bar throughout checkout
2. Summary of booking and price information shown in left column



3. A lot of scrolling is required in order to view the full booking summary
4. Given brevity of login form, the requirement for it to be hidden by default is questionable

My reservation

Log in for faster booking.

Email/Radisson Rewards number Password

☐ Show password [Forgot your password?](#) **SIGN IN**

1

Preferences

Room 1

Room type



1 king bed
Non-smoking
[Room details>](#)



2 twin beds
Non-smoking
[Room details>](#)

[+ Add an additional guest](#)
[Add a comment v](#)

Payment options

2



A card number will be requested.
You will be redirected to a third party web page to complete the payment procedure.



A card number guarantees your room for the arrival date.

Payment types displayed below are merely informative:



3a

Review my booking

Check-in

Wed, 06 Sep 2023 - 3:00 PM

Check-out

Thu, 07 Sep 2023 - 11:00 AM

Add a Voucher code

[Add a Voucher code +](#)

3b

Price summary

FREE CANCELLATION BEFORE
SEPTEMBER 06, 2023, 4PM (HOTEL TIME)

Average nightly rate* GBP 393.34 per night

Room 1 cost

GBP 393.34

Subtotal

GBP 393.34

This slide highlights checkout options as the user scrolls the page.

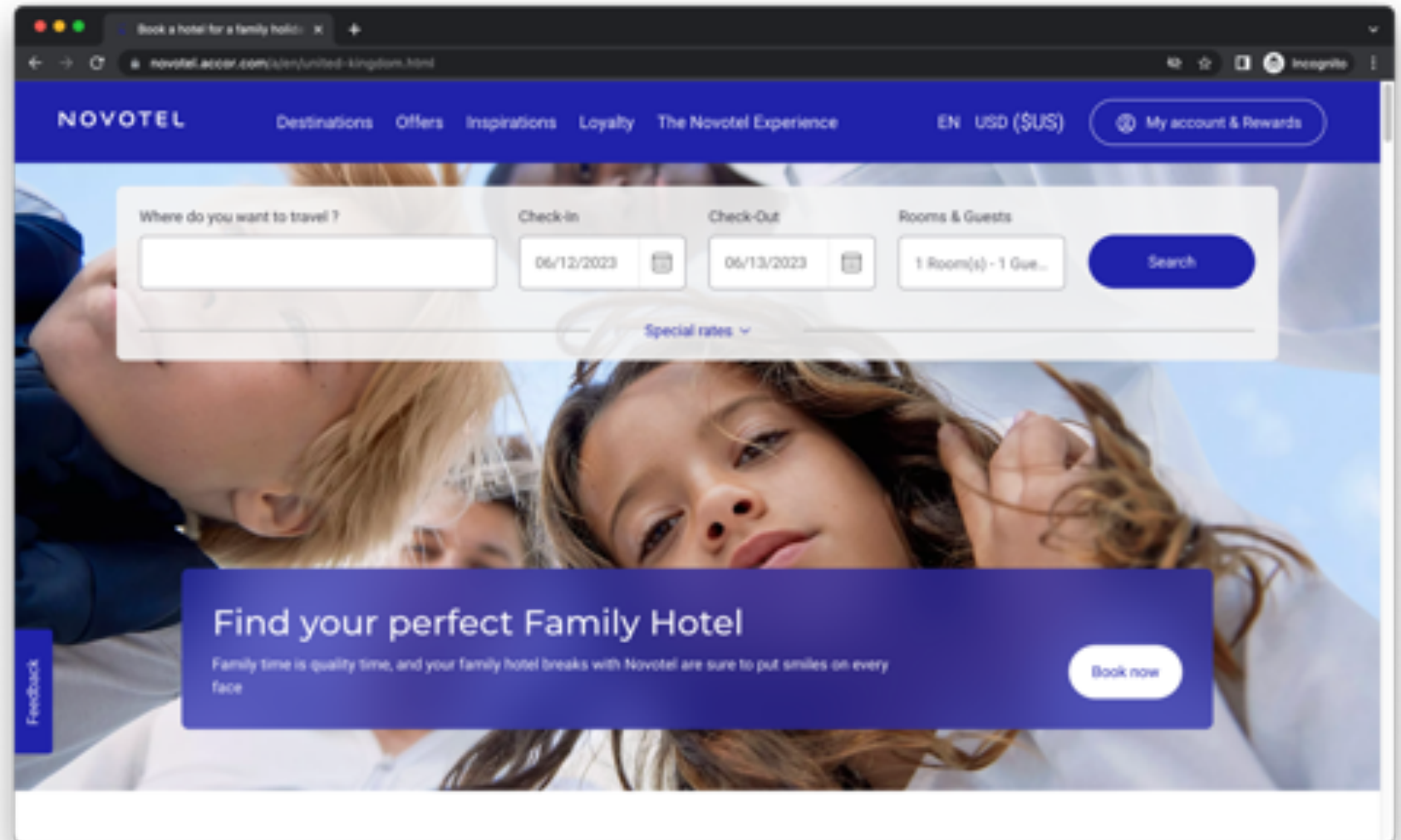
1. This is a clip from the room preferences panel that appears just above payment options. Only at this point is it possible to request a twin bed option
2. Payment for this room option is not required at this stage. Whilst this text implies that, it could be clearer
3. Review booking and price summary repeat the information in the left columns (previous slide). This seems redundant and competes for authority.

Novotel (Accor group)

NOVOTEL

Novotel is a mid-tier sub brand of the Accor group, which operate a number of hotel chains, from luxury brands such as Sofitel, to budget accommodation such as Ibis.

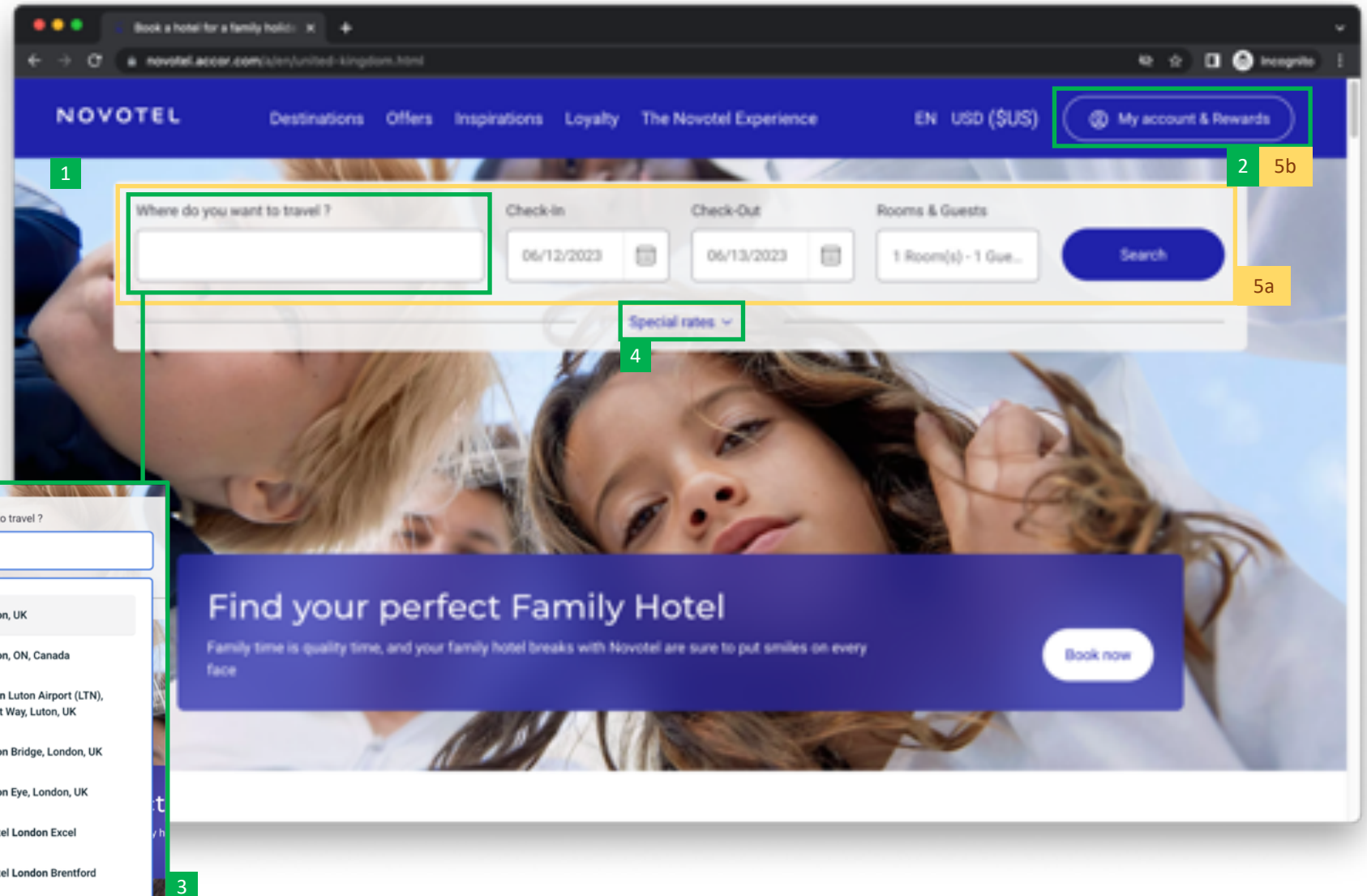
Each brand has their own homepage, but share the same web application, so the booking experience is identical from the Search results page onwards.



View observations on the next slide ➤

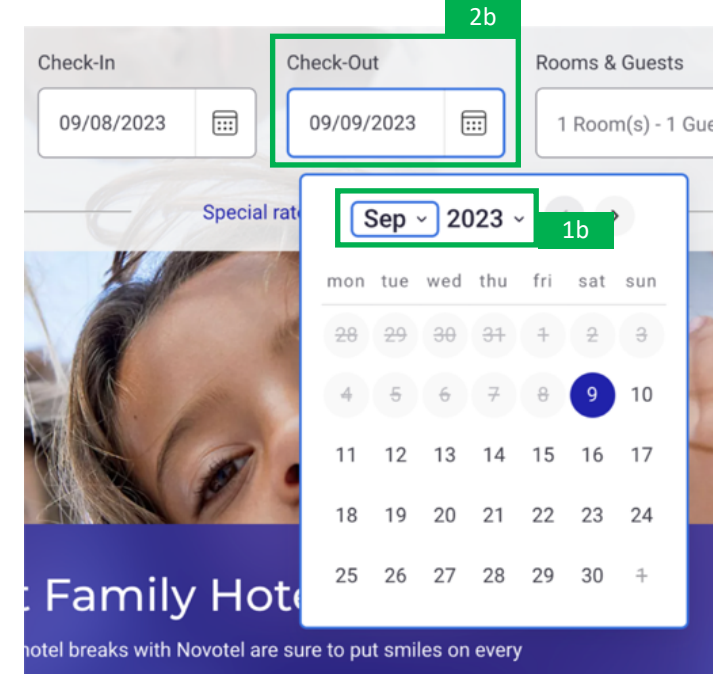
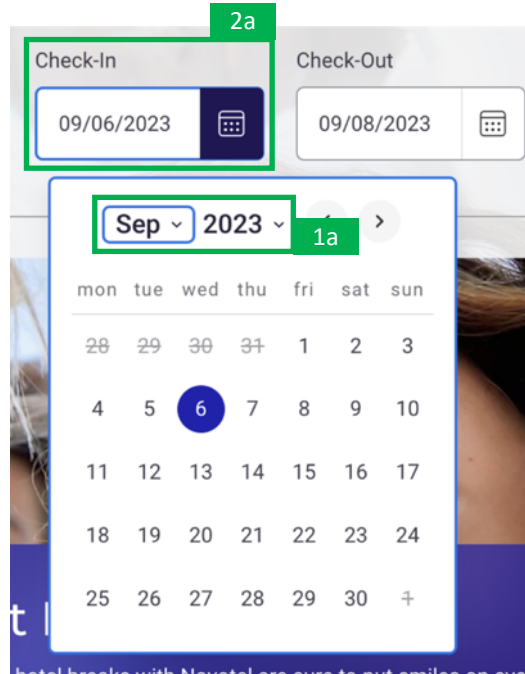


1. Clear contrasting colours, static background image, minimal text, use of good screen font, make it easy on the eye
2. Login button combined with Rewards – this may add incentive for user to log in at this point
3. Icons to help distinguish search results by place name, hotel name or airport
4. Easily viewable special rates without interrupting flow of search form
5. Clearly accessible search bar and login button that follows convention





1. Ability to navigate check-in/out calendars by month or year for easy selection of dates when booking in the future
2. Many sites use a single calendar to select both dates, but this can lead to confusion or frustration when attempting to change dates. Here separate calendars for each date are provided. Each calendar is visually linked to Check-in or Check-out controls respectively, thus making it clear to understand which date is being set, and making it easy to amend



Search results

NOVOTEL



1. Editable search bar remains in fixed position (always visible) at top. This component carries through all subsequent pages until room selection
2. Feedback button – a little in the way, but a nice touch
3. Filter options well presented in scrollable panel on the left
4. See photos button is prominent with both icon and text
5. Provision of rate calendar (see next slide)
6. Hotel information link clearly displayed as button



7. Requirement to press filter button to update results may lead to confusion
8. Price guarantee and free cancellation notices are shown inline with the results further down page, which means they could be missed



9. Clear see map button, though maybe takes too much space away from filters

The screenshot displays the All.com website interface for hotel searches. At the top, a navigation bar includes the All logo, links for Stay, Loyalty programme, Deals, Our partners, Book a ride, Activities, and More. The currency is set to USD (\$US), and there is a link to 'My account & Rewards'. Below this is a search bar with the text 'YOUR SEARCH' and filters for 'London, UK', 'September 9, 2023 - Se...', '1 Room - 1 adult', and 'Special rates'. A green box labeled '1' highlights the search bar area.

On the left side, there is a scrollable filter panel. It includes a 'See map' button (labeled '9'), a 'Filters' section with a 'Price range (USD)' slider (labeled '2'), and a 'Feedback' button (labeled '2'). At the bottom of the filter panel is a 'Filter' button (labeled '7'). A green box labeled '3' highlights the entire filter panel area.

The main content area shows '54 PROPERTIES CLOSE TO YOUR SEARCH'. The first listing is for 'Novotel London Waterloo ****', which is 1.5 km from the search location. It has a 4.3/5 star rating and shows a 'Public' rate of US\$438 and a 'Member' rate of US\$394 for 1 night for 1 adult. A green box labeled '5' highlights the 'Open rate calendar' button, and a green box labeled '6' highlights the 'See the hotel' button. A green box labeled '4' highlights the 'See photos' button. The second listing is for 'Novotel London Blackfriars ****', which is 1.6 km from the search location. It has a 4.4/5 star rating and shows a 'Public' rate of US\$477.

At the bottom of the page, there are two notices: 'Best price guaranteed!' and 'Free cancellation'. A red box labeled '8' highlights these notices.



1. Booking summary 'Your Stay' shown in fixed (always visible) position on right. This component carries through all subsequent pages to the checkout, and becomes the sole information source for the booking once a room rate is selected
2. Provision of filter for popular options such as free cancellation, breakfast and accessibility
3. Payment terms and breakfast inclusion clearly listed, with text and icons, against each rate



4. Very little room information is given, despite available space

The screenshot shows the 'Choose your room' page for a Novotel booking. The page includes a search bar at the top with filters for location, dates, and room type. A 'Filter' section allows users to select options like 'Free cancellation', 'Breakfast included', and 'Accessible room'. A room card for the 'Superior Double Room' is displayed, showing a photo and basic details. A 'Your Stay' summary box on the right provides a fixed overview of the booking. At the bottom, a 'STAY LONGER AND SAVE' section lists options like 'Non refundable' and 'Online payment'. The page is annotated with green and red boxes and numbers 1 through 4, corresponding to the points in the list.

YOUR SEARCH: London, UK | September 6, 2023 - September 10, 2023 | 1 Room - 1 adult | Special rates

Choose your room

Prices for 1 person and 4 nights

7 ROOMS FOR YOUR SEARCH

Filter: ☐ Free cancellation ☐ Breakfast included ☐ Accessible room

Superior Double Room

2 people - 21m² / 225ft²

1 Double bed(s)

See the room details

1/4

Feedback

CHOOSE YOUR ROOM RATE

STAY LONGER AND SAVE

☐ Non refundable

☐ Online payment

Save 10%. Become a member at the Contact details step. It's free.

Average per night

Public £218.00

Member £196.20

Pricing conditions

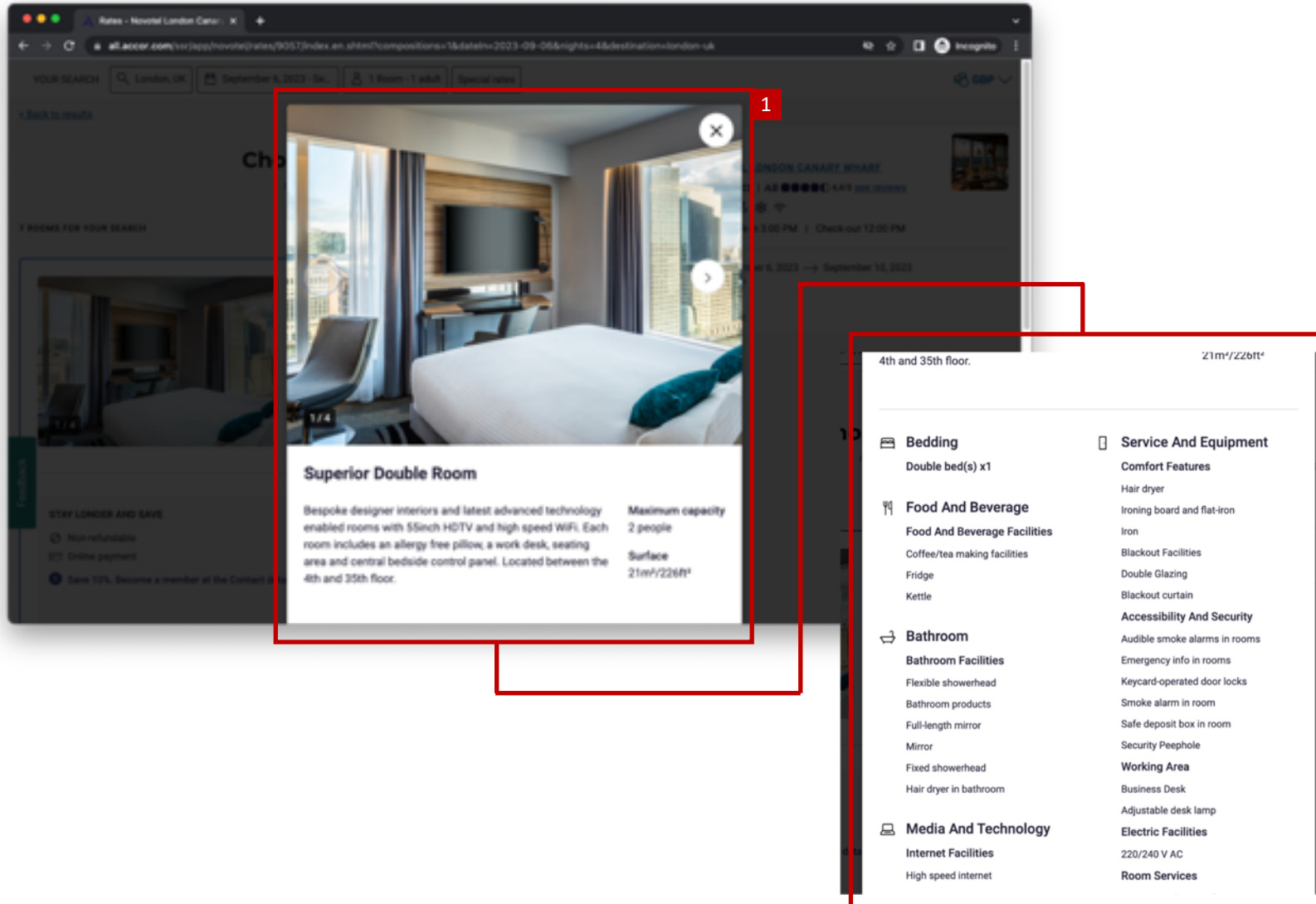
Your Stay

NOVOTEL LONDON CANARY WHARF

September 6, 2023 → September 10, 2023

4 nights

1 adult



1. On selecting 'See the room details' link on previous screen, a modal window is displayed. This feel like an awkward component to show full room details.

It contains far more information than can easily fit on the screen, forcing the user to scroll.

Its width is set unnecessarily narrow, preventing it from making better use of the desktop screen.

The navigation controls do not appear optimised for purpose compared to other sites. The whole component echoes of laziness in design and implementation.

Room options

NOVOTEL



1. Button to 'Skip this step' clearly visible, without need for scrolling



2. Provision of room upgrade options a may be a nice touch, though this appears to be predominantly a sales-led feature, as the user has already seen these options

The screenshot displays the 'Choose options' page for a Novotel booking. The page is divided into two main sections. The top section, 'Choose options', features a 'Pets allowed' card with a photo of a dog and a price of £100.00. To the right, a 'Your Stay' summary box shows the hotel name, dates, and a total price of £1,033.00. A green box highlights the 'Skip this step' button in the bottom right corner of the 'Choose options' section, with a green '1' next to it. The bottom section, 'Upgrade your room & enjoy more benefits', is enclosed in a red border and contains two upgrade options: 'Executive Room' for +£50.75 and 'Studio Suite' for +£89.50, both for a maximum of 2 adults. A green '2' is next to the bottom right corner of this section.

Options - Novotel London Can...

all accor.com

Stay Loyalty programme Deals Our partners Book a ride Activities More

GBP (£) My account & Rewards

Back to rates Skip this step

Choose options

For your room



Pets allowed
Per room/night
[See details](#)

£100.00 ☐ Add

Feedback

Your Stay

NOVOTEL LONDON CANARY WHARF

September 6, 2023 → September 10, 2023

4 nights
1 adult

ROOM £1,033.00

[See cart details](#)

TOTAL (fees and taxes included) £1,033.00

[Skip this step](#)

1

Upgrade your room & enjoy more benefits



Executive Room
maximum : 2 adults
[See details](#)

+£50.75
avg/night

☐ ADD



Studio Suite
maximum : 2 adults
[See details](#)

+£89.50
avg/night

☐ ADD

Feedback

2

Checkout

NOVOTEL

- 1. Clean layout, reflective of whole site
- 2. Clear prompt for existing members to login without interrupting flow
- 3. Despite having region set, Country and phone codes defaults to the United States

The screenshot shows the 'Complete your booking' page on the All website. The page is clean and modern, with a clear layout. The main heading is 'Complete your booking' with a subtext 'Fields marked with an asterisk (*) are required'. The page is divided into two main sections: 'Your details' and a summary on the right.

1 points to the 'Back' button in the top left corner.

2 points to the 'Already have an account? Sign in' link, which is highlighted with a green box.

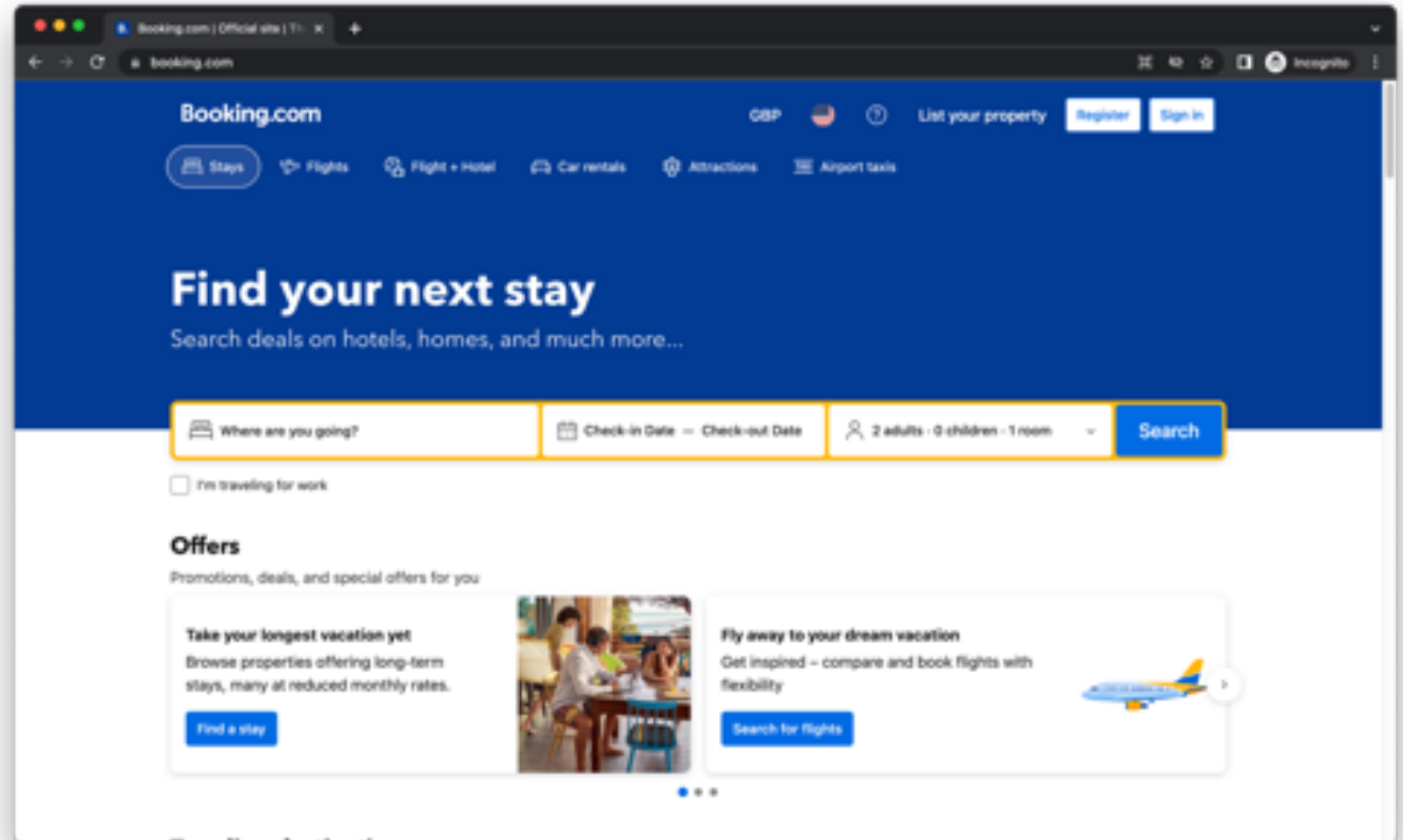
3 points to the 'Country or region' dropdown menu, which is highlighted with a red box. The dropdown shows 'United States' selected. Below it, the 'State' dropdown shows a hyphen '-' selected. The 'Phone number' section shows the 'Country code' dropdown with '+1' selected.

The summary on the right includes the hotel name 'NOVOTEL LONDON CANARY WHARF', the number of hotels 'Hotels 4', the check-in and check-out times 'Check-in 3:00 PM | Check-out 12:00 PM', the dates 'September 6, 2023 → September 10, 2023', the number of nights '4 nights', the number of adults '1 adult', the room price 'ROOM £994.00', and the total price 'TOTAL (fees and taxes included) £994.00'.

Booking.com is a popular international travel agency.

This review focuses on their hotel side, which is used popularly in the United Kingdom.

The site provides a booking platform for a wide variety of independent and smaller hotel chains.



Homepage

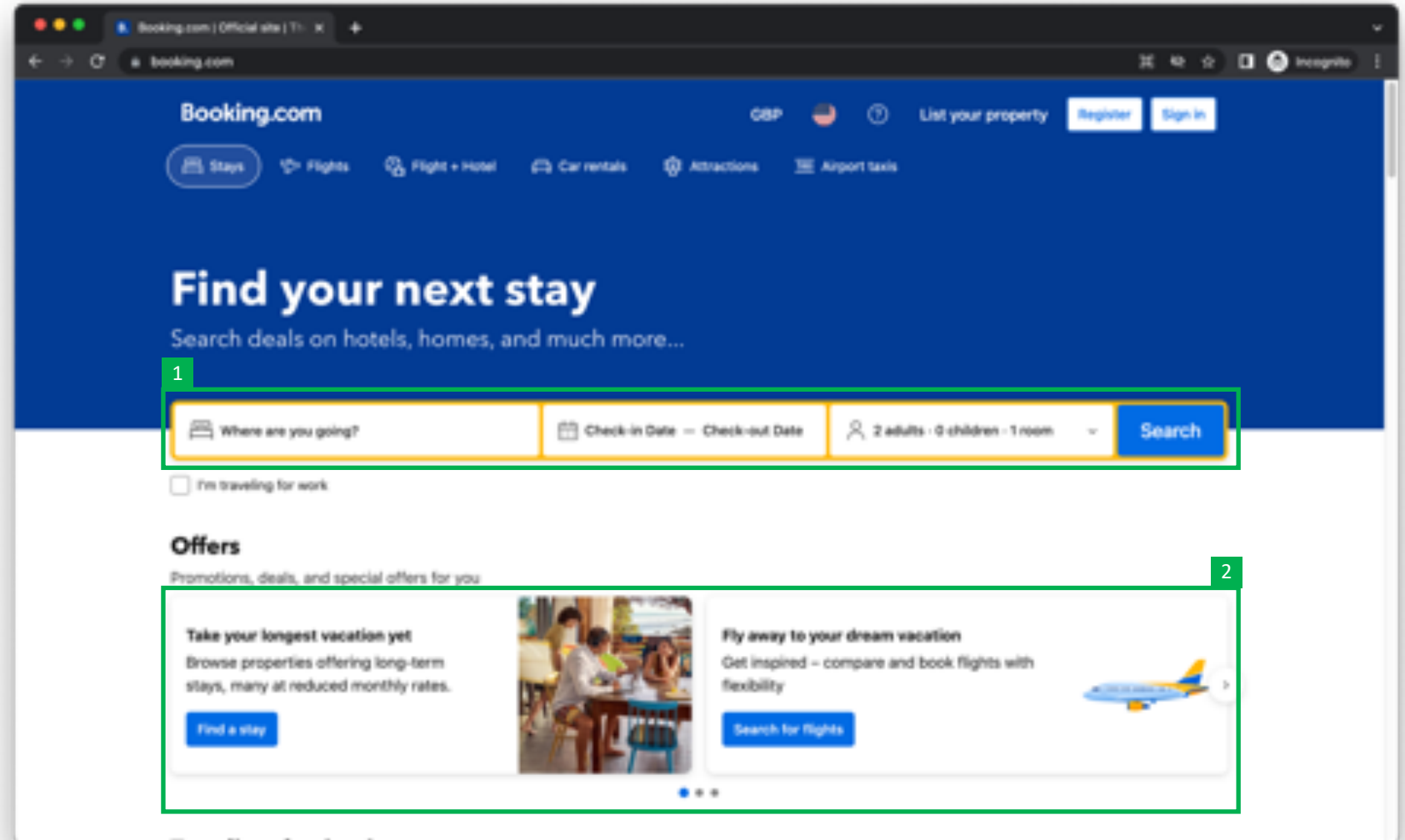
Booking.com



1. Clean layout, prominently displayed search component with disciplined use of accent colour
2. Static promotional components make for easier reading (option to swipe promotions instead of auto-slide)
3. Handy date flexibility control (though unsure how well it might be understood by users)



4. Fiddly and unclear check-in/out control: calendar widget only revealed on tabbing to control; unclear which date is in focus; range selection highlight not sufficiently visible



Results

Booking.com



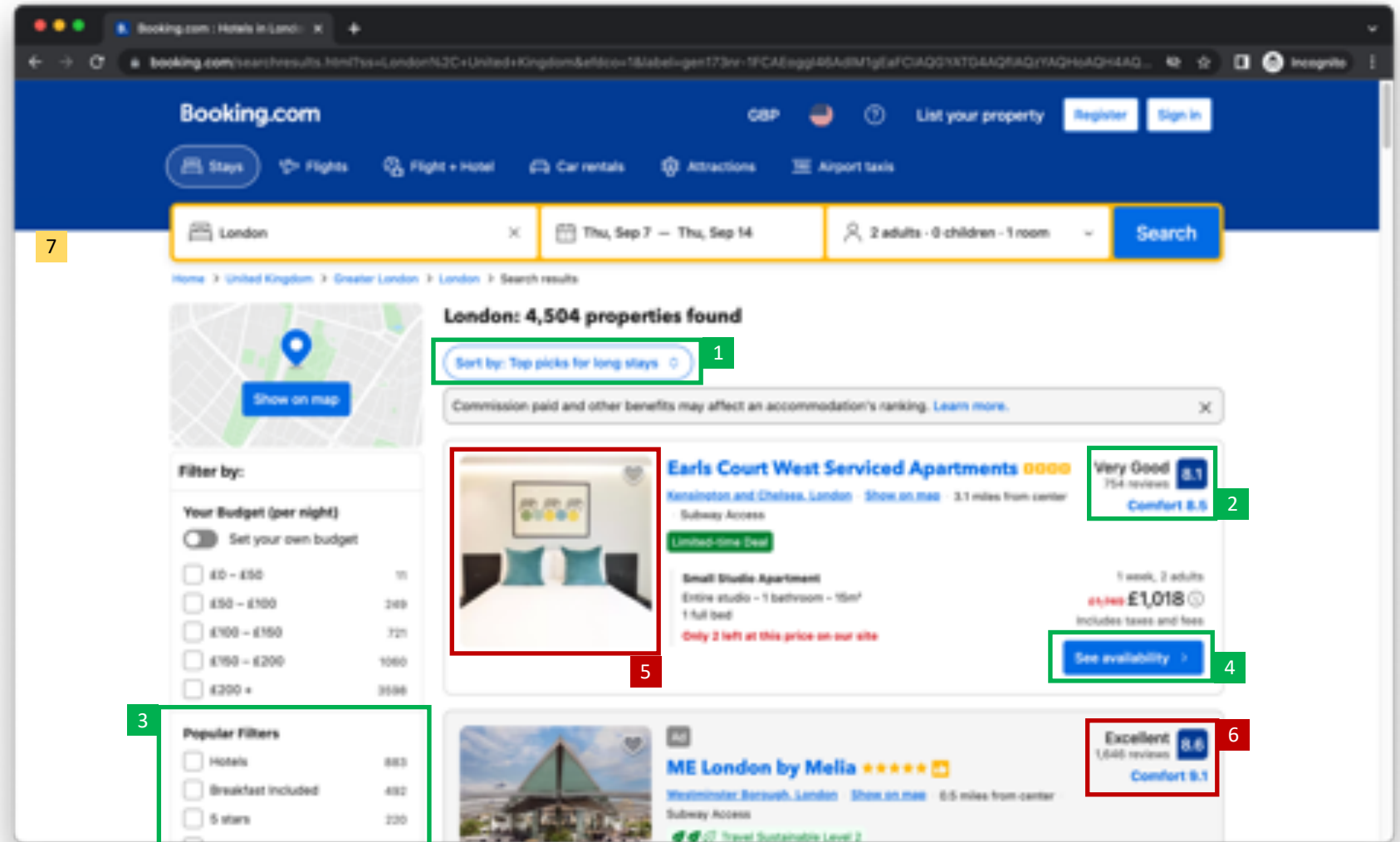
1. Sort order control clearly highlighted, with clear description of sort
2. Customer ratings clearly designed via inverted colour label
3. Popular filters (eg breakfast, cancellation policy etc) shown near top
4. Selected hotel link opens hotel page in new window. Disciplined use of this behaviour may work well, such as here where the source page is used for comparison with the target page



5. Unable to see more photos of hotel from this page
6. No independent reviews



7. Clear layout consistent with convention: search bar on top, map near top, filters on left, results on right



Hotel information / Room selection (1 of 2)

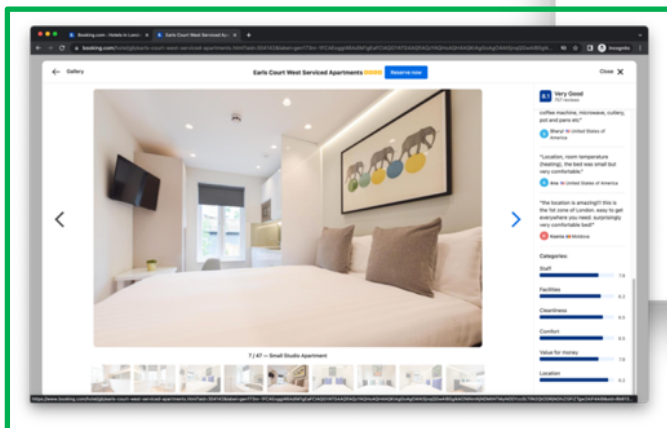
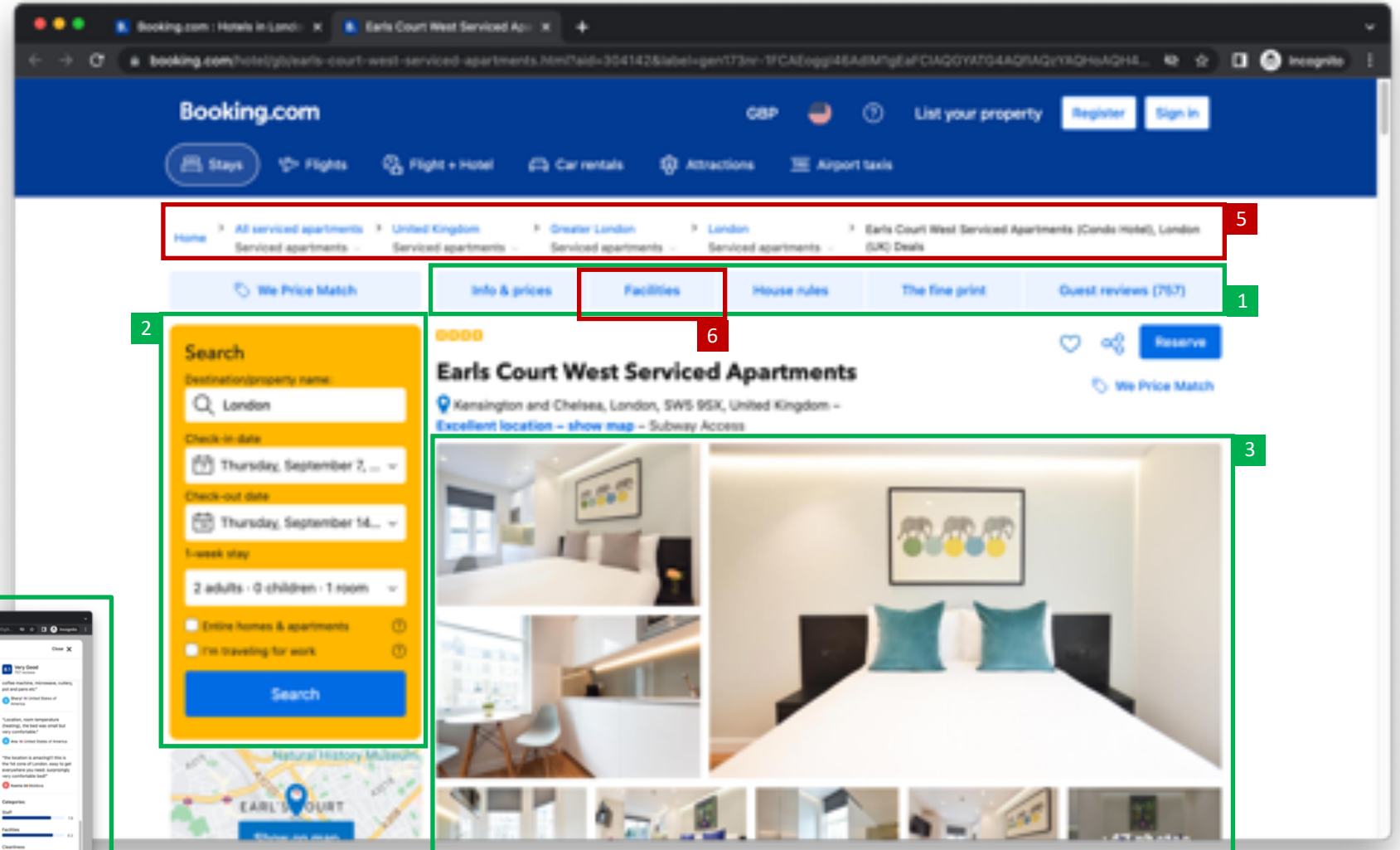
Booking.com



1. Hotel information groups under tabs near top for easy navigation
2. Good use of colour and space to help break down information (eg good use of accent colour for the search panel)
3. Creative layout for photo grid.
4. Photo browser includes reviews and categorized ratings.



5. Location breadcrumb adds questionable value on information heavy page
6. Tabbed information is displayed vertically down page, rather than using paging, creating long scrolling. 'See availability' button needlessly repeated throughout





1. Concise table showing all rooms – minimal scrolling required compared other sites
2. Clearly labelled payment and cancellation policies



3. Search bar repeated in addition to search panel adding unnecessary complexity
4. Too much detailed information, confusing promotions in tabular format makes for text heavy reading (same information is shown in room details modal)

Availability

Thu, Sep 7 - Thu, Sep 14 2 adults - 0 children - 1 room Change search

Filter by: Studios Apartments Rooms

Accommodation Type	Number of guests	Price for 1 week	Your Choices	Select amount	I'll reserve
Small Lower Ground Floor Studio Only 1 left on our site 1 full bed Entire studio 104 feet² Private kitchenette Private Bathroom Flat-screen TV	2	£1,104 Includes taxes and fees 30% off Getaway Deal	Flexible to reschedule if plans change Non-refundable Pay in advance Genius discount available	0	Confirmation is immediate No booking or credit card fees!
Large Lower Ground Floor Studio Only 1 left on our site	2	£1,116 Includes taxes and fees 30% off Getaway Deal	Free cancellation before August 31, 2023 Pay nothing until August 28, 2023 Genius discount available	0	

Room details modal

Small Lower Ground Floor Studio

Entire studio 104 feet²
Private kitchenette
Private Bathroom
Flat-screen TV
Coffee machine

Size 104 ft²
1 full bed

Comfy beds, 72" - Based on 219 reviews

This studio is an open-plan studio with a private kitchenette and a private bathroom with a shower. The studio has underfloor heating, an electric kettle, a ceramic two-plate hob, standard cutlery and crockery, and a microwave. The bed size is a UK Standard double bed. Measurements are 53 in by 75 in. No air conditioning.

In your private kitchenette:

- Refrigerator
- Microwave
- Electric kettle
- Dining table
- Coffee machine
- Stovetop

In your private bathroom:

- Free toiletries
- Towel
- Bathing or shower
- Hairdryer
- Toilet paper

Facilities:

- Kitchenette
- Refrigerator
- Coffee machine
- Microwave
- Kitchenware
- Electric kettle
- Stovetop
- Flat-screen TV
- Kitchenware
- Kitchenette
- Iron



1. Visual steps for booking process
2. Brief summary of hotel, including photo, ratings and key features – an encouragement for user to proceed to completion



3. Whilst booking summary is clear there is no consistency across pages in its presentation

The screenshot shows the Booking.com checkout page for a stay at Earls Court West Serviced Apartments. The page is divided into several sections:

- Top Navigation:** Includes the Booking.com logo, currency (GBP), and links for 'List your property', 'Register', and 'Sign in'.
- Progress Bar:** Shows three steps: 'Your Selection' (completed), 'Your Details' (current step), and 'Final Step'.
- Your booking details:** Displays check-in (Thu, Sep 7, 2023, 3:00 PM - 12:00 AM), check-out (Thu, Sep 14, 2023, 12:00 AM - 11:00 AM), total length of stay (1 week), and room selection (1 room for 2 adults).
- Your price summary:** Shows the original price (£1,716.10), a getaway deal (-£515.43), and a total of £1,202.66 (including taxes and fees).
- Hotel Information:** Features a photo of the hotel, name (Earls Court West Serviced Apartments), location (Kensington and Chelsea, London, SW5 9SX, United Kingdom), and a 'Very Good' rating (8.2) based on 160 reviews.
- Good to know:** A section with a green checkmark indicating 'You'll get the entire studio to yourself!'.
- Enter your details:** A form section with a green banner saying 'Almost done! Just fill in the *required info'. It includes fields for 'Are you traveling for work?' (Yes/No), 'First Name', 'Last Name', 'Email Address', and a 'Who are you booking for?' field.

Annotations on the image highlight specific areas:

- 1:** Points to the progress bar and top navigation area.
- 2:** Points to the hotel information card.
- 3:** Points to the price summary section.

Small Studio Apartment

☐ Non-refundable [?](#)
☒ Flexible to reschedule if plans change

16 No smoking

Entire studio

161 feet²

Private Bathroom

Flat-screen TV

Coffee machine

Guests:

Full Guest Name

Add to your stay

☐ I'm interested in booking a flight
Skip the stress of searching – we'll add flight options (provided by Booking.com) to your destination in your booking confirmation.

☐ Want to book a taxi or shuttle ride in advance?
Avoid surprises – get from the airport to your accommodations without any hassle. We'll add taxi options to your booking confirmation.

☐ I'm interested in renting a car
Make the most of your trip – check out car rental options in your booking confirmation.

Special requests

Special requests can't be guaranteed, but the property will do its best to meet your needs. You can always make a special request after your booking is complete.

Please write your requests in English. (optional)

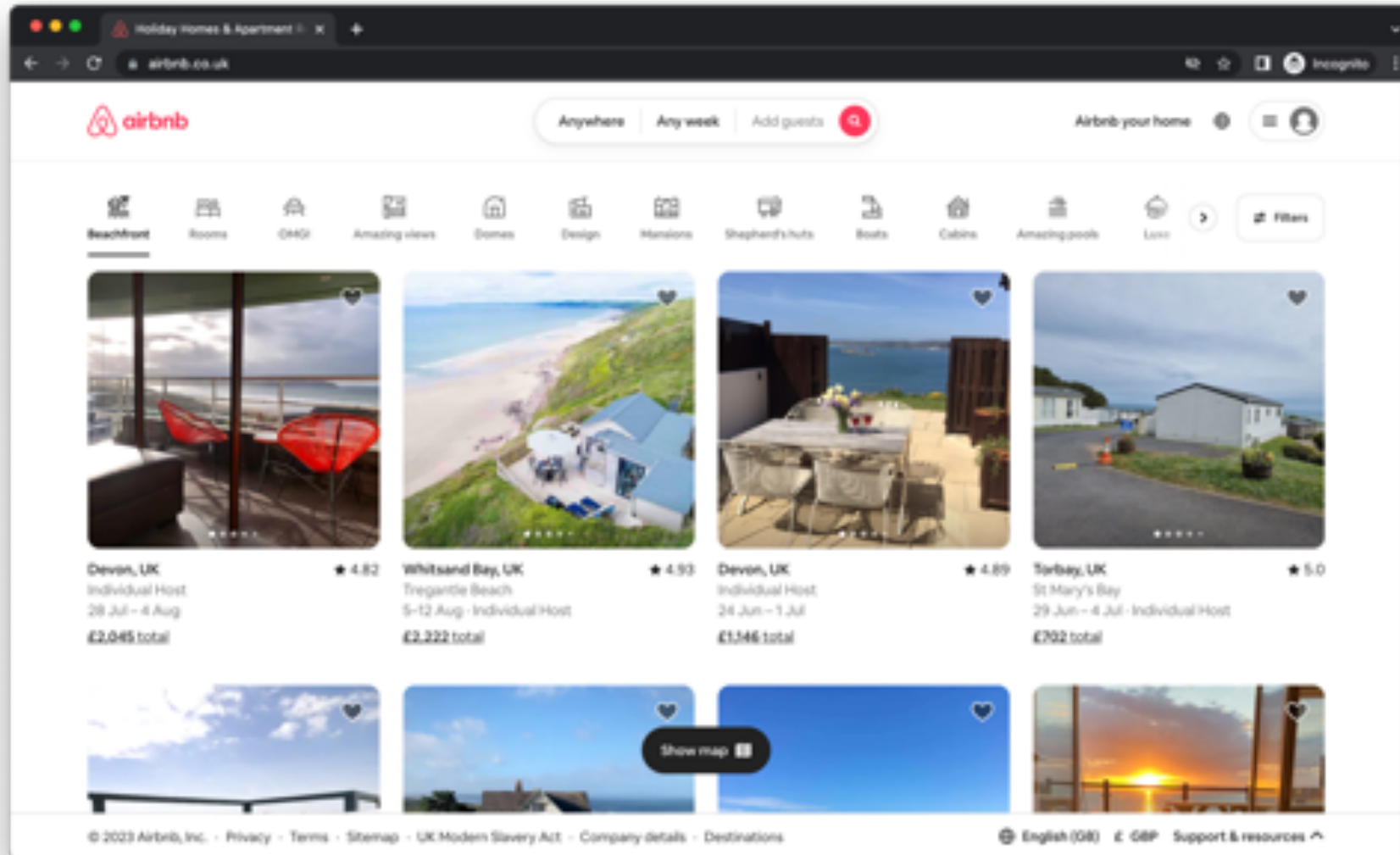
Your arrival time



1. Additional options such as airport shuttle, car rental etc offered for review by email later, but do not interrupt the flow
2. Free text field for special requests, allow capture of any request



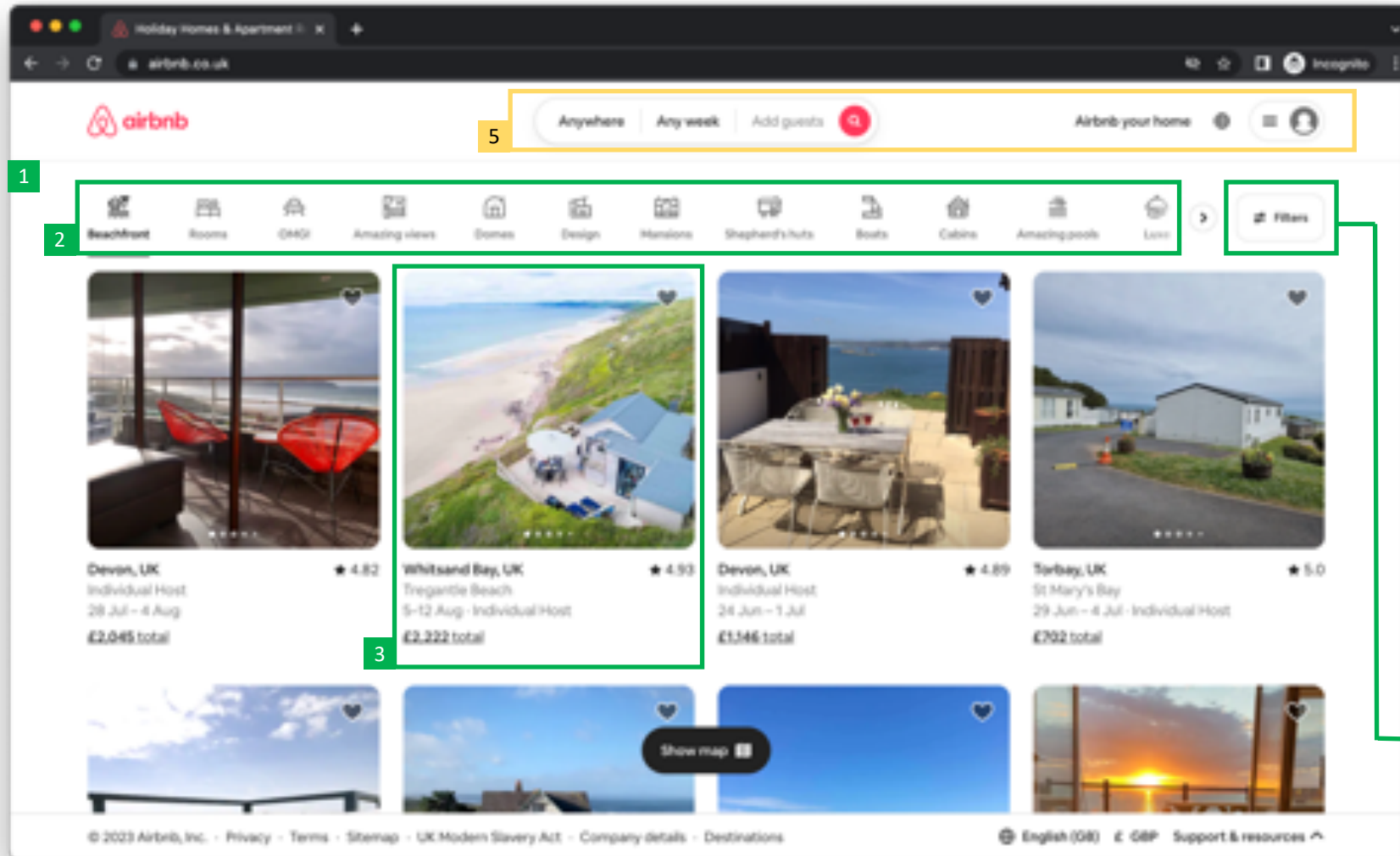
3. Unnecessarily repeated information. As with other pages, a strong handed approach to sales makes for a busy page



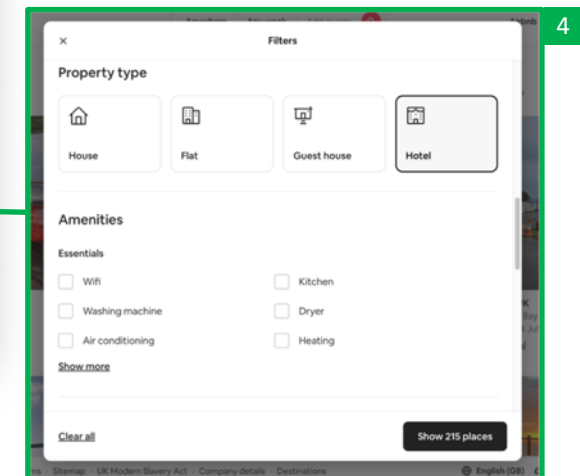
Airbnb is a wildcard addition to this benchmarking.

It is not a traditional hotel booking website, but rather a marketplace for smaller independent holiday and short term letting.

Rather than a traditional travel agency or hotel chain, Airbnb is a technology-led start-up, and is regarded as a disruptor.



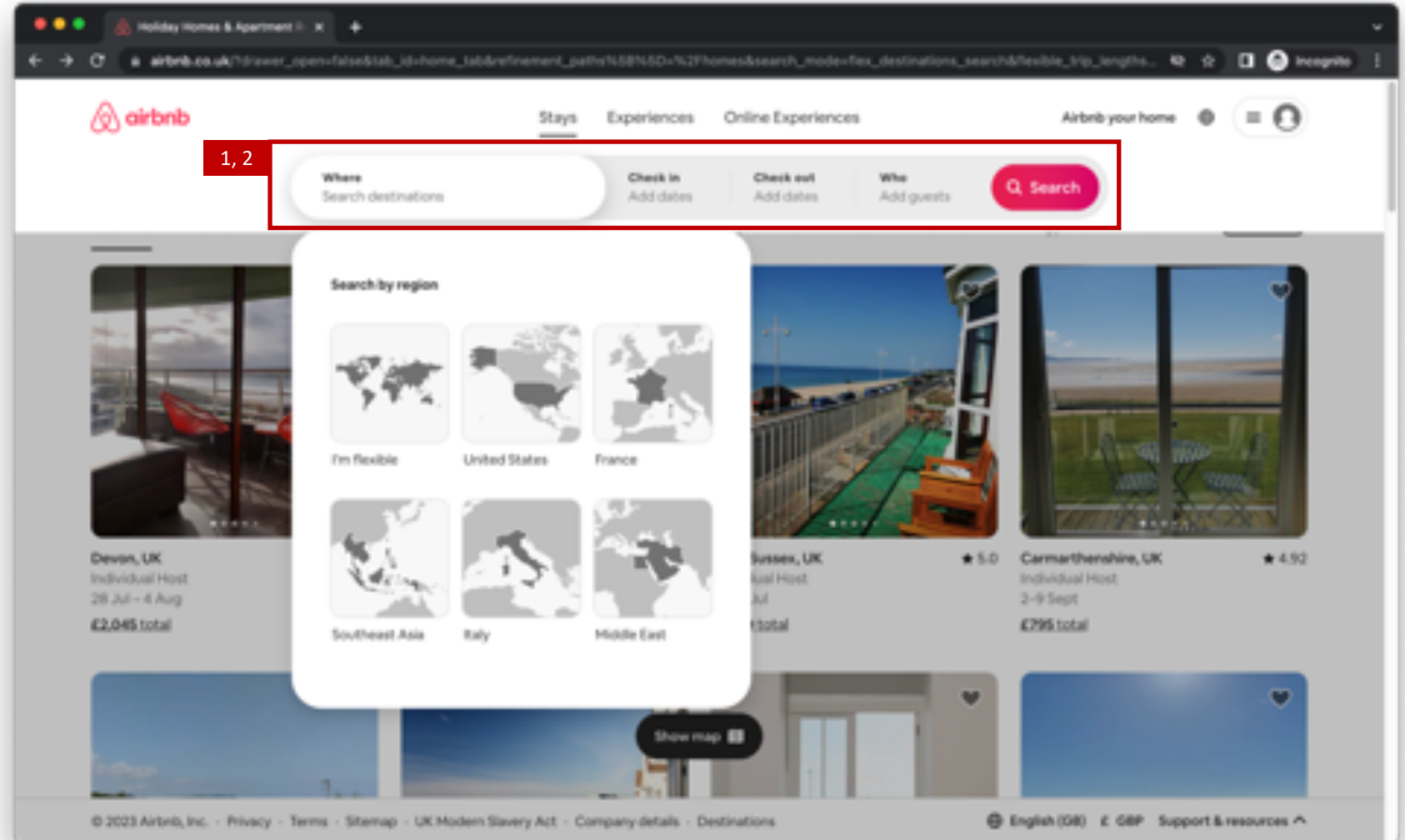
- 1. Clean, minimalist (removal of all but essential links), app-style layout (fixed header, footer)
- 2. Quirky icon bar to tag different tastes and experiences
- 3. Card style approach to promoting properties, not distracting but immersing, elegant thumbnail image browser
- 4. Dedicated modal window for filters, with clean bold layout, and disciplined options
- 5. At top, search bar, localisation and user login, common with convention



Homepage (2 of 3)



1. On selection, the search bar jumps location on screen, changes size and adds form fields
2. No search bar defaults, state is not remembered when clicking back to home screen



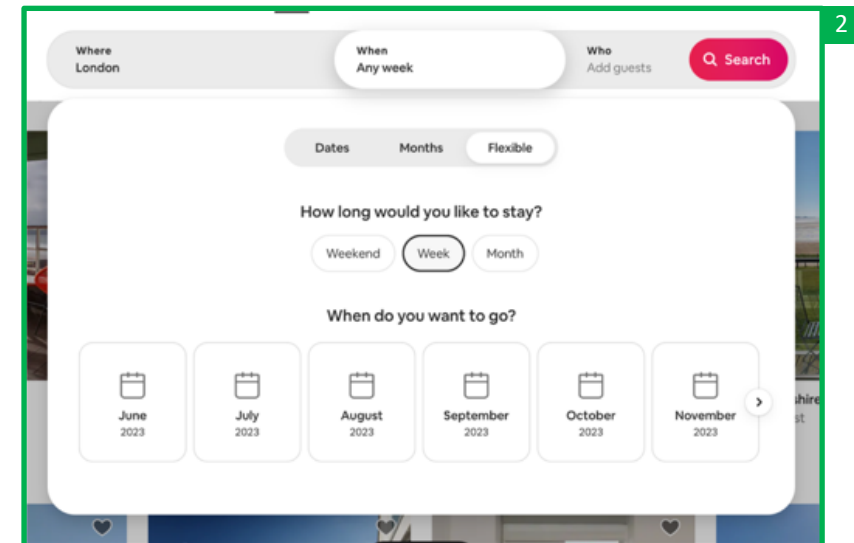
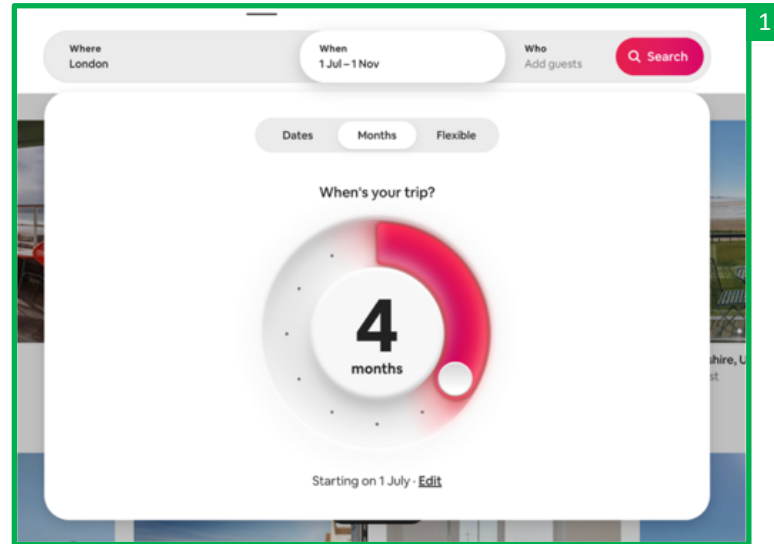


1. Provision of longer-term stay control with visual selector

2. Flexible date control easy to use



3. Meaning of control misleading – title asks 'When's your trip?' but control adjusts length of stay



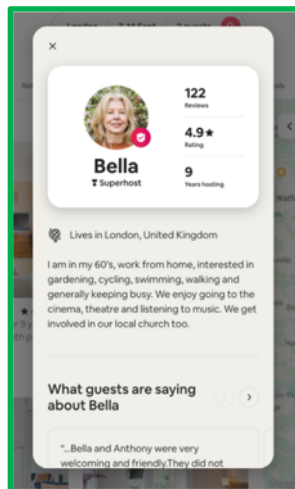
Results



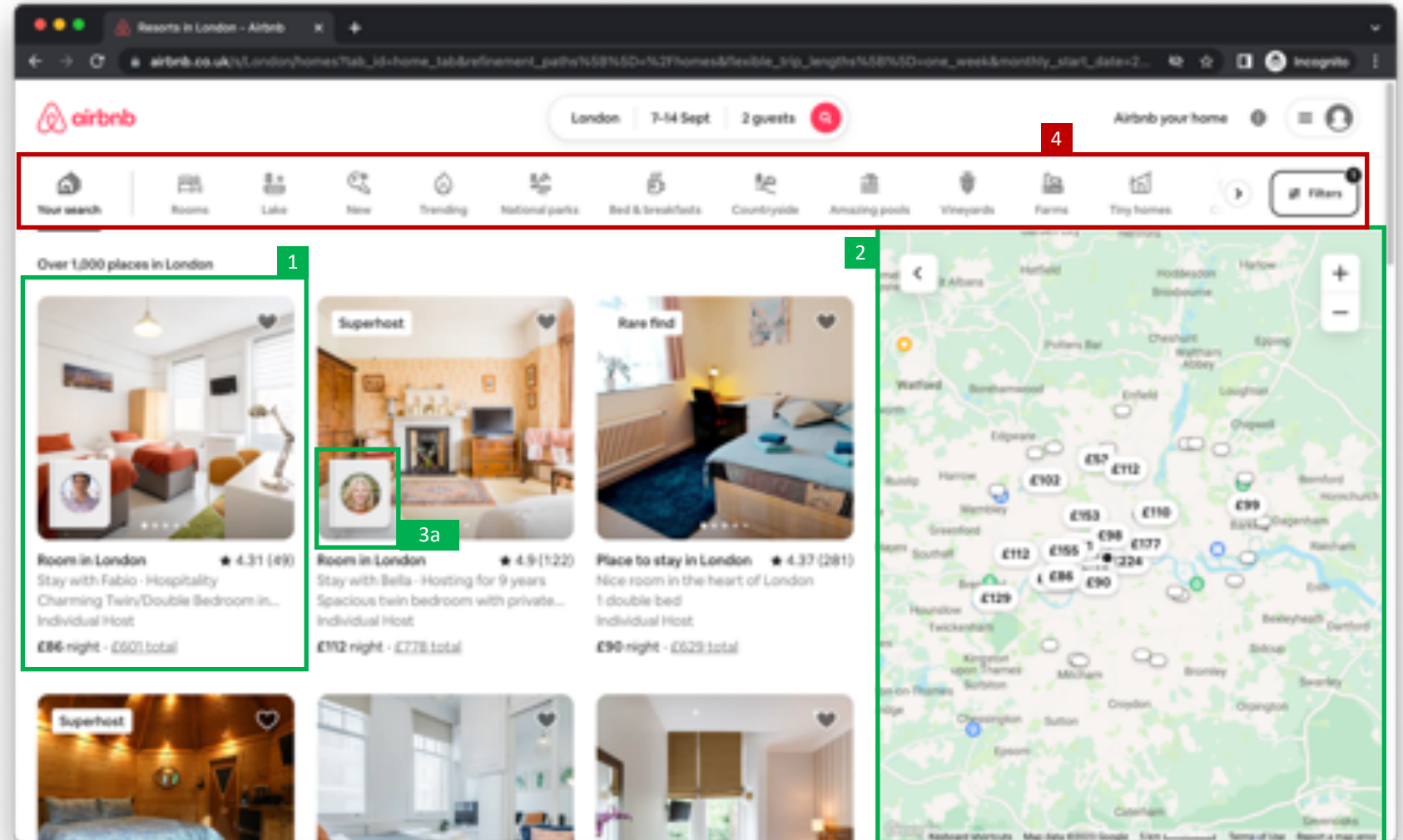
1. Consistency carried through to results – same card layout from homepage used to display results
2. Full map view included next to search results
3. Pleasing guestbook style customer reviews for top rated hosts



4. Confusing relationship between filters and icon bar, its not obvious the difference between 'Your search', if any tags are applied, or that filters are applied

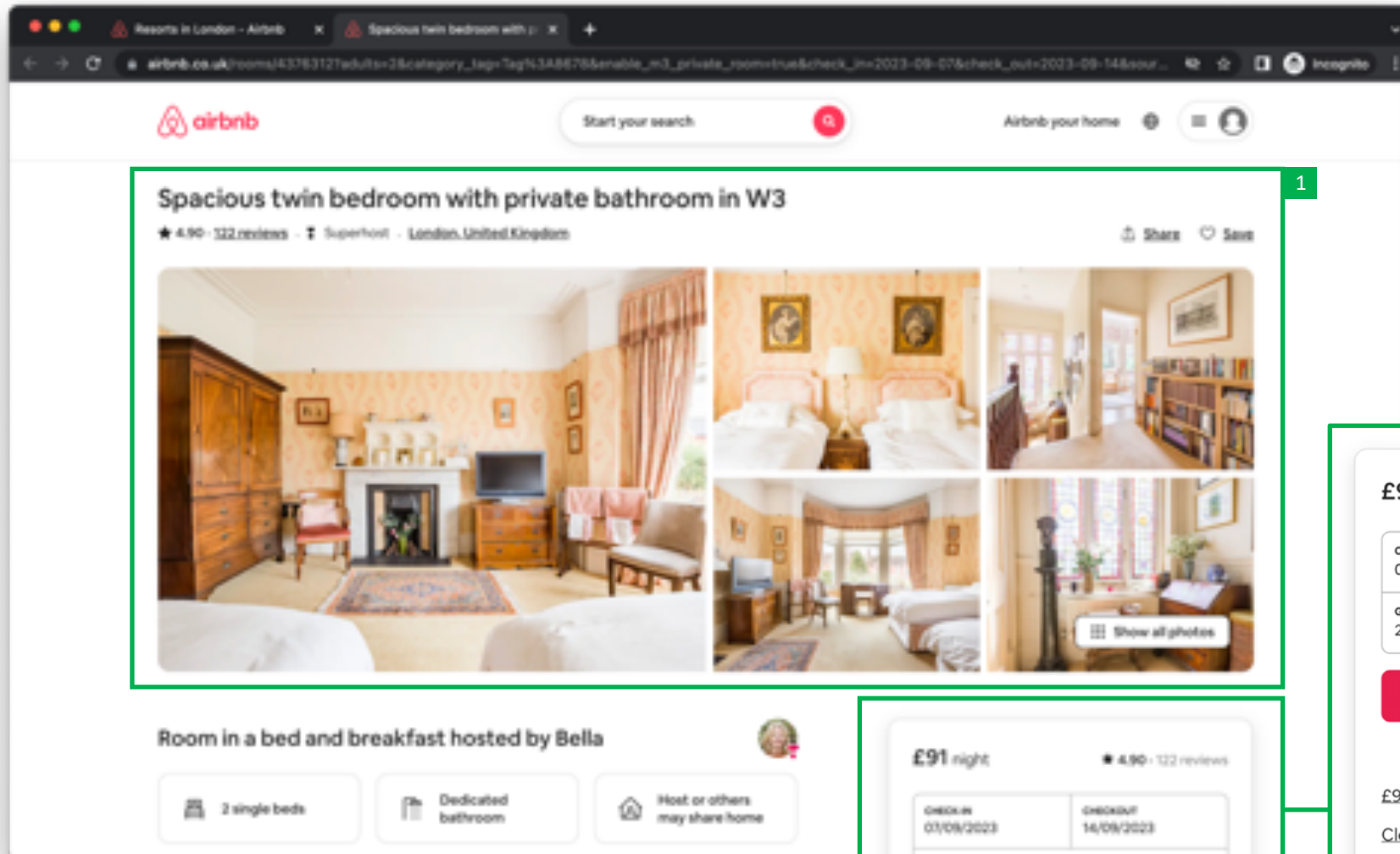


3b



3a

Hotel information / Room details



Note: Airbnb has a one-to-one relationship between property and room, so there are no room options. This is designed to appeal to properties which offer individual rooms and deter hotel chains, so may not be a suitable model for a typical hotel website.



1. Minimalist page layout, very little text and initial focus on high quality photos
2. Fixed scroll position booking form, always visible

£91 night

★ 4.90 · 122 reviews

CHECK-IN

07/09/2023

CHECKOUT

14/09/2023

GUESTS

2 guests

▼

Reserve

You won't be charged yet

£91 x 7 nights

£640

Cleaning fee

£25

Airbnb service fee

£113

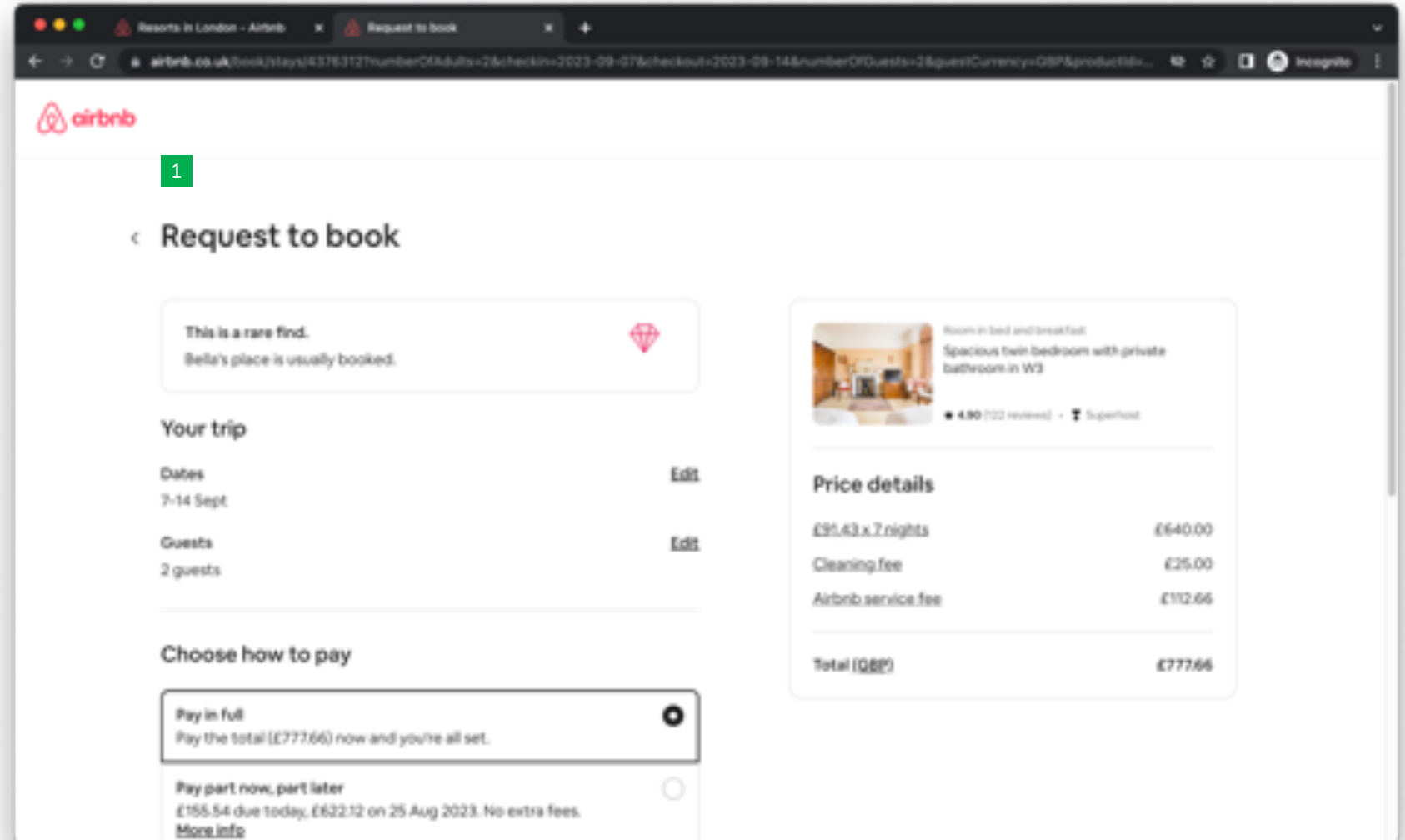
Total

£778

Checkout



1. As with other pages, a light minimalistic feel, showing only relevant information



Highlights

A summary of some of the most salient observations to help benchmark any future design

Distinctive good ideas

Minimalist design (Airbnb, Novotel)

Card / grid layout of hotel ideas to complement primary search feature (AirBnb)

Map view of results shown inline by default (Airbnb)

Clearly presented filter options, limiting choice if linear list, with most popular at top (Novotel)

Good quality photo browser in hotel / room information

Limit use of colour, using accent colour to highlight key components (Radisson, Booking.com)

Provision of progress bar / steps in booking process

Consistent use of components across screen, single source of information

Notable conventions

Use of a prominent search bar on homepage, allowing selection of:
destination, check-in/out, occupancy

For consistency, the UI component carries through later steps.

Results page journey: some sites sideline the hotel information page in favour of direct links to room booking. This seems to follow the business model. For example, hotel chains with similar features across all hotels may prefer to link results directly to rooms (Radisson). Others (Booking.com) where each hotel offers a unique experience, links to the hotel first.

Pitfalls to be aware of

Moving images (eg carousels) especially when near to areas of focus for the user, such as the Search bar.

Fiddly or confusing check-in/out date selection component (eg use of same calendar for selecting both)

Multiple sources of truth shown on same page (eg booking summary shown in two separate components)

Long scrolling hotel information page where navigation scrolls out of view (Booking.com) or choosing room options (Novotel)

Information overload, unnecessary repetition of form elements or messages (Booking.com)