

The 8 Essentials Of High-Performing Hotel & Resort Websites

A Digital Guide for Independent Hoteliers
Seeking to Drive Direct Bookings



Your Website Should Be Your Hardest-Working Team Member

Let's start with this: your website should be doing more than just existing. It should be working around the clock to bring guests in the door. Before anyone ever picks up the phone or walks through your lobby, they're sizing you up online. And in that moment, your digital presence needs to reflect the warmth, uniqueness, and professionalism of your property.

This guide shares the eight critical best practices the expert team at Altos has honed over years of designing websites for independent hotels and resorts. These insights are rooted in a blend of user behavior analysis, conversion science, and storytelling that reflects each property's unique sense of place.

01

Design That Converts,
Not Just Charms

01: Design That Converts, Not Just Charms

Yes, your site should look beautiful. But if it doesn't guide people to book, it's not doing its job.

According to a study by Stanford, 75% of users judge a company's credibility by its website's design. Every layout decision should be made with your guest's experience in mind: Are they getting the information they need quickly? Do they understand what makes your property special? Is the booking path obvious and easy?

Every click should bring the guest closer to their stay.

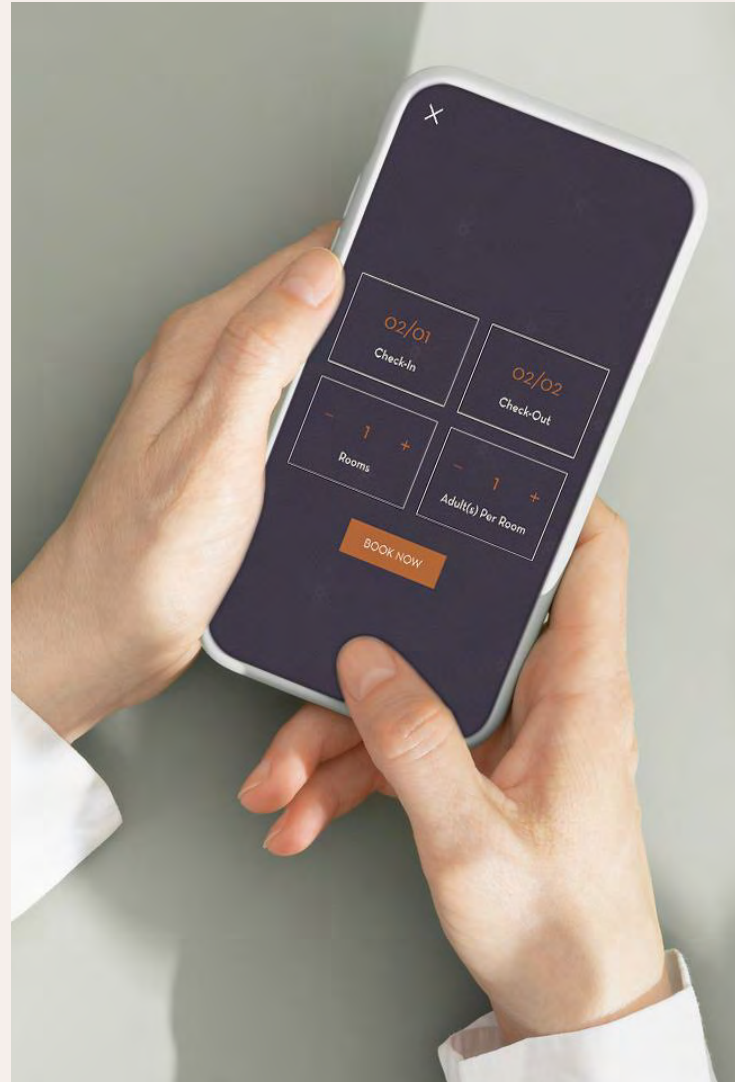
A large, stylized green graphic of the number 75 followed by a percentage sign, positioned on the left side of the bottom section of the page.

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01: Design That Converts, Not Just Charms

Some websites have jaw-dropping photography that leaves guests confused about how to reserve a room. That's a missed opportunity. Make sure your booking engine is front and center, your navigation is crystal clear, and your copy reflects your voice, not generic hospitality lingo.

Equally important is mobile responsiveness. A majority of travelers begin their search on a smartphone. Your site must be touch-friendly, easy to navigate with one hand, and optimized to load quickly even on mobile networks.



A clunky or confusing mobile experience can instantly kill conversions.

02

Booking Engines That Blend,
Not Break, The Experience

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The transition from browsing to booking should feel effortless. Unfortunately, many third-party booking engines disrupt the visual continuity and create user friction. Your booking system should allow you to match your website's branding, maintain the same font and color palette, and allow real-time availability and price views.

We advise hoteliers to evaluate booking engines that allow customization and seamless UX handoff. A disjointed booking flow creates hesitation and hesitation costs revenue. According to industry benchmarks, that can be as much as 30% in lost bookings.

Disjointed booking flow can cost as much as 30% in lost bookings. Booking should feel like a natural transaction.

Additionally, consider supporting features like promo codes, upsell opportunities, and room comparisons. These subtle additions can increase revenue and reduce abandonment.

03

Authentic Visual Storytelling
That Sells The Stay

03: Authentic Visual Storytelling That Sells the Stay

Photos matter. A lot. But not just any photos. Real, honest, authentic imagery helps a potential guest feel what it's like to stay with you and **drives 94% more engagement.**

This doesn't mean you need a huge production team. It means capturing your property in its best light: sun streaming through the window, steam rising from a cup of coffee, guests enjoying the fire pit at dusk. We always tell clients not to over-style. **Show your personality. Be inviting, not intimidating.**

Video adds an even deeper layer. Consider brief, ambient-style video loops or virtual walk-throughs that bring the space to life. And remember, all visuals should be optimized for web without sacrificing quality because load time matters as much as impact.



04

Content That Works For
Humans And AI

04: Content That Works for Humans and AI

The way to write content for hotel websites is both art and strategy. Users skim before they read. Smart content strategy means structuring your site with digestible blocks, strategic headings, and meaningful subtext. At the same time, your copy must be optimized for discoverability. You have to speak to real people and you have to answer the questions they most frequently ask. That means structuring your content clearly and using smart, descriptive language.

Think about how your guests search. They're not typing "lodging." They're searching "family-friendly hotels near Camden with ocean views." So, your page shouldn't just say "Rooms." It should say something like "Spacious king suites with private balconies and ocean views."

Smart content strategy is more than keywords. Voice search now makes up 20% of all mobile queries according to Google, so speaking your guest's language matters.

Add value beyond your walls. Share your favorite hikes, local eateries, and seasonal tips. Guests love this, and so does AI. It keeps people on your site longer and positions your property as part of the larger travel experience.

A large, stylized green graphic of the number '20%' is positioned on the left side of the page. The '2' and '0' are connected, and the percentage sign is to the right. The graphic is set against a white background and partially overlaps a solid green horizontal bar at the bottom of the page.

of all mobile queries are voice search

05

Speed Isn't Optional.
It's Expected.

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Site speed is a silent dealbreaker. According to Google, **each second of delay can reduce conversions by up to 20%**. That's a cost most independent hotels can't afford.

That's why websites need to be built with performance in mind. Images need to be optimized, code must be streamlined, and everything needs to play nicely together. Tools like Google Page Speed Insights give you a score, but real-world usability matters just as much. Your guests need to be able to find what they're looking for quickly, from any device, without friction.

06

Leverage Local Discovery
As The Differentiator

06: Leverage Local Discovery as the Differentiator

Your property isn't just a place to sleep. It's a hub for exploration. Today's traveler wants to experience a destination like a local. Embrace this by curating content that reflects the surrounding area.



Build out local guides that showcase your favorite neighborhood gems. Include Google Maps integrations, walkability scores, and proximity to landmarks. These features aid in your AI visibility and they position your hotel as a trusted insider.

Hotels that act as local hosts win hearts and minds. Guests aren't just booking a room. They're booking an experience.

And with 'near me' searches up 500%, your website must be their trip-planning hub.

07

Show Me You're Worth It:
Guests Need To Trust You

07: Show Me You're Worth It: Guests Need to Trust You

We all do it: scan for reviews, awards, badges, and ratings before we hit "Book Now." Don't make your guests go hunting. Bring that validation right to them. **93% of travelers read reviews before booking and showing them can boost bookings by as much as 25%.***

Weave in guest testimonials, TripAdvisor ratings, press mentions, and "Book Direct" perks right into the decision-making pages. It builds confidence and reduces uncertainty.

And don't underestimate the power of featuring real guest photos. When people see someone like them enjoying your property, it makes the experience feel more relatable and more attainable.

*Source: TrustYou, Trustpilot

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08

Get Compliant: Security,
Cookies, & Accessibility

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This isn't the sexy part of your website, but it's just as important. If your site doesn't meet today's standards for privacy, accessibility, and security, it could cost you (literally).

Start with security: your site should be HTTPS across every page. No guest should ever see "Not Secure" in their browser bar. That alone can create doubt and mistrust.

Cookie policies are a must now, and it doesn't matter if you're in the EU, CA or 20 other states that now have laws. What matters is where your visitors are coming from. Make sure you have a transparent cookie management system in place that lets users opt in or out, and that integrates cleanly with your tracking tools.



<https://www>

08: Get Compliant: Security, Cookies, and Accessibility



Equally critical is website accessibility. Guests of all abilities should be able to explore your offerings and make a reservation without barriers. **Over 15% of the world's populations lives with a disability that can impact website navigation.** Ignoring compliance is increasingly risky as lawsuits have risen over 300% between 2018 and 2023.*

Follow WCAG (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines) standards to ensure your site includes alt text, keyboard navigation, color contrast, and screen reader compatibility. Not only does this expand your potential audience, it demonstrates a commitment to inclusion and hospitality in its truest form.

Compliance isn't a checkbox. It's a reflection of your values. A secure, accessible, and privacy-conscious website fosters trust—and trust converts.

*Source: WHO, WebAIM

Your Website Should Earn Its Keep.

Your website is never "done." It is a dynamic platform that must evolve with traveler behavior, search trends, and seasonal needs. By embracing these 8 essential practices, you transform your site from a digital brochure into a booking engine that reflects your hotel's character and brand promise.

When it does, it becomes your most valuable marketing tool. Not just pretty to look at, but profitable. Strategic. Story-driven. A tool that attracts the right guest, tells them what they need to know, and leads them to book.

Altos is a digital agency specializing in branding, custom websites, EO+, and marketing strategy for boutique hotels, inns, and resorts throughout New England and beyond. To discuss your online presence or your upcoming website project, visit altosagency.com