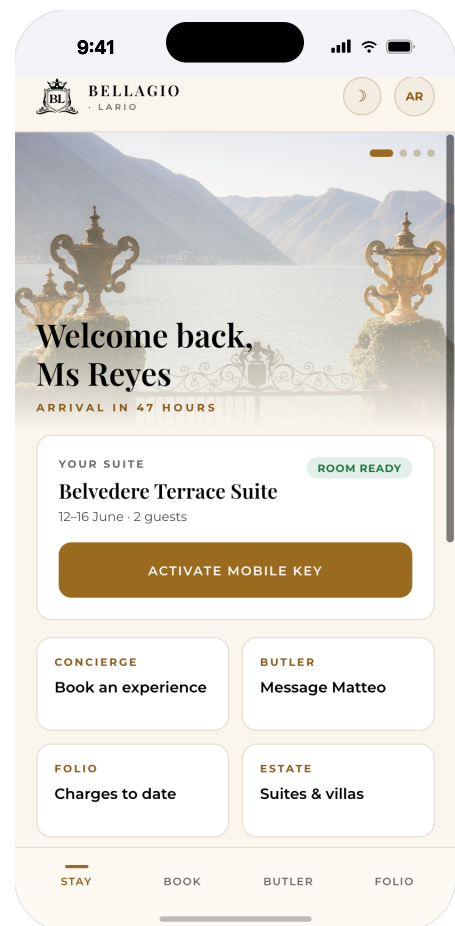


Designing a concierge the guest never has to wait for

A ground-up guest platform for an ultra-luxury Lake Como estate, from the business problem through discovery, definition, ideation, design and validation.

Travel Concierge Booking Mobile App Design Project
Senior Product Designer / User Research: Nancy O'Donnell



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Executive summary

Villa Bellagio-Lario is a fourteen-suite historic estate competing for UHNW travelers who book, and re-book, through luxury travel advisors. The property's booking engine treated every suite like a generic hotel room, its high-margin experiences (Riva charters, private chef dinners, spa rituals) were coordinated over email, and nothing captured a guest's preferences from one stay to the next.

The redesign kept the estate's own vocabulary — wings, levels, the butler relationship — and changed three things: how a stay is assembled at booking, how in-stay requests reach staff, and how a guest's preferences persist across visits. Validation against the same five tasks moved unaided booking completion from 41% to 96% and cut the average time to reserve a curated arrival from 6:40 to 1:15.

PHASE	WHAT WE DID	WHAT IT PRODUCED
Problem	Framed business goals and constraints with the estate's reservations and ownership team	Four goals with measurable targets
Discover	Twelve moderated sessions against the existing email-based booking flow; advisor interviews	Personas, a journey map, a ranked pain-point list
Define	Turned pain points into problem statements and How Might We questions	Design principles and success metrics
Ideate	Concept options per problem, evaluated against the principles	Five decisions, with discarded alternatives recorded
Design	Twelve screens across booking, pre-arrival, in-stay and departure	The platform in this document
Validate	Repeat testing with the same tasks and cohort, plus a survey	Before/after metrics; one residual gap

01 • Problem and business goals

UHNW travel is relationship business. A guest who feels handled like a line item books through their advisor next time, and the advisor's commission is the estate's to lose. The work is not adding features; it is removing the moments where a guest has to ask twice.

The business problem

The estate's booking engine could take a card number but not a preference. Riva transfers, dining, and spa were arranged over email threads the reservations office kept manually, guests arrived without a preference file even on a sixth stay, and check-in was an administrative form rather than a greeting on the dock.

BUSINESS GOAL	USER GOAL IT DEPENDS ON	HOW WE WOULD KNOW
+20% direct bookings on high-tier suites, bypassing advisor commission where applicable	A guest can select the exact wing, floor and balcony they want without calling reservations	Unaided suite-selection completion above 90%
+30% pre-arrival ancillary spend	Riva charters, dining and spa are booked in the same flow as the room, not after	Ancillary attach rate on the checkout flow
100% pre-arrival preference capture for VIP guests	Diet, pillow, and arrival mode are asked for once, at booking	Preference fields completed before the 48-hour pre-arrival sync
+15% repeat elite reservations	A guest's history and preferences carry to their next stay unprompted	Returning-guest bookings citing the preference ledger

Constraints

Keep the human relationship. The butler is the product; the app routes to a person, never replaces one. **One design system across grand and digital.** A €6,800-a-night villa and a room-service order screen have to feel like the same estate. **Discretion by default.** Nothing on screen should read like a hotel app to someone glancing over a guest's shoulder.

02 · Discover

Illustrative study. Participants, sessions and figures in this section are fictional, written to show how the platform would be evaluated.

Twelve participants across the three roles closest to a stay, plus follow-up surveys after the second round of testing.

COHORT	N	METHOD	SESSION
Returning UHNW guests	5	Moderated, remote, think-aloud	50 min
Luxury travel advisors	4	Moderated, remote	40 min
Butlers & reservations staff	3	Moderated, on site	45 min
Follow-up survey	22	Unmoderated, emailed after round two	n/a

Personas

The Advisor-Booked Regular — Alessandra Reyes. Sixth stay, always through her travel advisor because "the advisor remembers things the hotel doesn't." Wants her pillow, her cellar, her arrival mode carried forward without saying it again. Would book direct if the estate proved it remembered her as well as the advisor does.

The First-Time Independent Booker — Kenji Okonjo. Books his own travel, expects the same digital fluency he gets from a private aviation app: real floor plans, transparent pricing, instant confirmation. Will not call a reservations line to ask what a suite looks like.

The On-Duty Butler — Matteo Corti. Owns eight guests at a time across arrivals, dining, and requests. Needs every promise made at booking to already be on his list before the guest says a word, and a single channel for new requests instead of five inboxes.

Ranked pain points

RANK	PAIN POINT	EVIDENCE
1	Preferences are re-asked every stay	5 of 5 returning guests mentioned this unprompted
2	Ancillary requests live in email, not the booking	All 3 butlers described manually reconciling requests against a shared inbox
3	No visual sense of the suite before arrival	4 of 4 advisors said clients ask for photos beyond the listing
4	Arrival logistics (dock vs. helipad vs. road) not confirmed until days before	Raised by 4 of 5 guests and all 3 butlers

03 · Define

Problem statements & How Might We

Returning guests need their preferences to persist **because** repeating them signals the estate doesn't know them. *How might we make a sixth stay feel more remembered than a first?*

Butlers need one request channel **because** reconciling five inboxes creates the errors guests notice. *How might we route every guest request to the right owner without a new inbox?*

Independent bookers need to see the actual suite **because** a listing photo doesn't answer "which balcony, which wing." *How might we let a guest walk the plan before they walk the room?*

Design principles

Reserve the estate, not a room type. Every suite keeps its own wing, floor and history — no substitutions, ever implied.

One basket, not eleven emails. Arrival, table, and charter confirm inside the same flow as the room.

A ledger that outlives the stay. Preferences are captured once and carried forward, visibly.

The butler is the interface, not a fallback. Every screen has a visible path to a person.

Success metrics

METRIC	BASELINE	TARGET
Unaided booking completion (suite + arrival + dining)	41%	85%+
Time to reserve a curated arrival	6:40	<2:00
Preference fields completed before 48-hour sync	0% (no field existed)	100% for VIP tier

04 · Ideate

DECISION	CHOSEN	DISCARDED ALTERNATIVE
Booking depth	3-step flow (suite → arrival & stay → review/pay) inside one continuous session	A separate "concierge desk" booked after the room reservation existed — rejected: reintroduced the two-system problem
Mobile key security	Face ID confirmation step before activation	Silent activation on room-ready — rejected: guests in testing didn't trust a key that appeared with no gate
Butler contact	Persistent chat thread logged against the reservation	Ticket/request form — rejected: felt like a hotel app, broke the "person, not form" principle
Payment	Deposit-or-full toggle visible at review, before commitment	Deposit only, fixed — rejected: advisors wanted the option for their clients
Preference ledger visibility	Shown to the guest (folio screen) and to staff (concierge console)	Staff-only ledger — rejected: guests in testing wanted to see what the estate remembered

05 · Design

Twelve screens across four moments: booking, pre-arrival, in-stay, and departure. Selected screens below; the full flow is documented separately.

Before · no concierge in the product

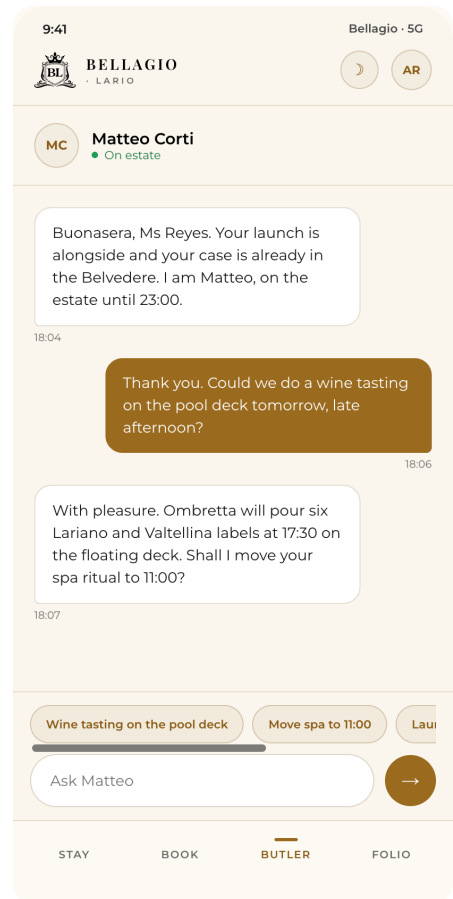
Illustrative reconstruction of the pre-redesign confirmation screen — the only signed-in surface guests had. There was no request thread; anything beyond the room meant finding a phone number or an email address and waiting.



Before · generic OTA-style confirmation

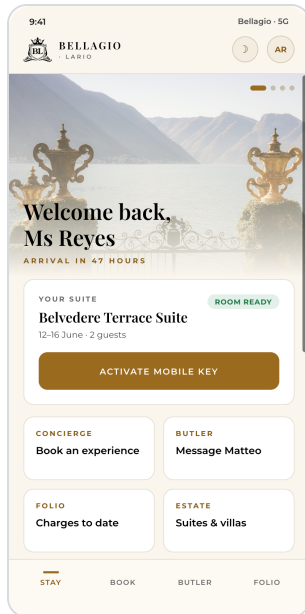
No preference capture, no visual sense of the suite, and no path to anyone at the estate short of a phone call during business hours. Every ancillary request — the Riva transfer, the dinner table, the pillow type — happened outside this screen, in an inbox the reservations team reconciled by hand.

After (right), the same moment carries a live suite with a floor plan, a mobile key, and — the change this section is about — a persistent butler chat thread that didn't exist at all before.

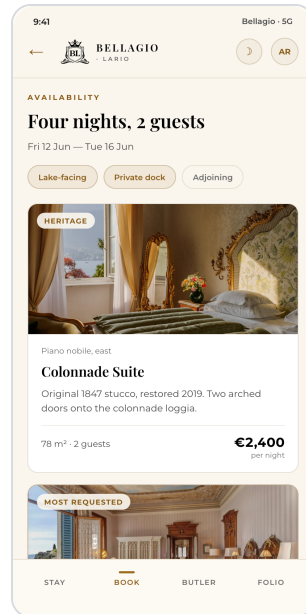


After · butler chat

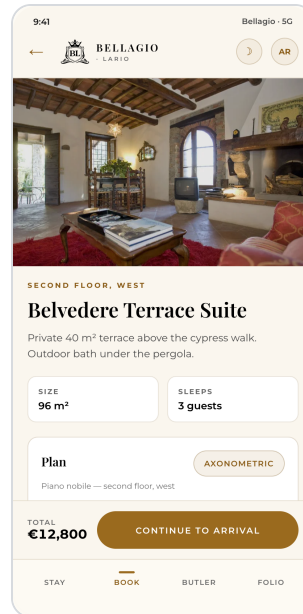
Journey one · booking the estate



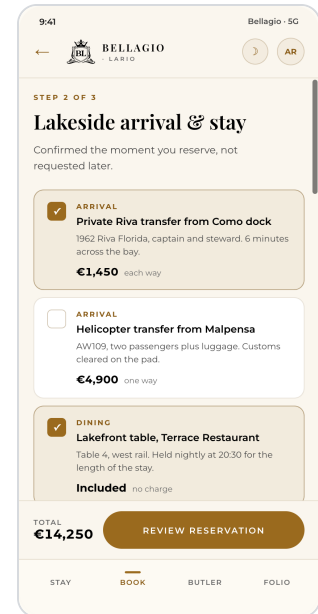
Home — the hub



Suites & villas



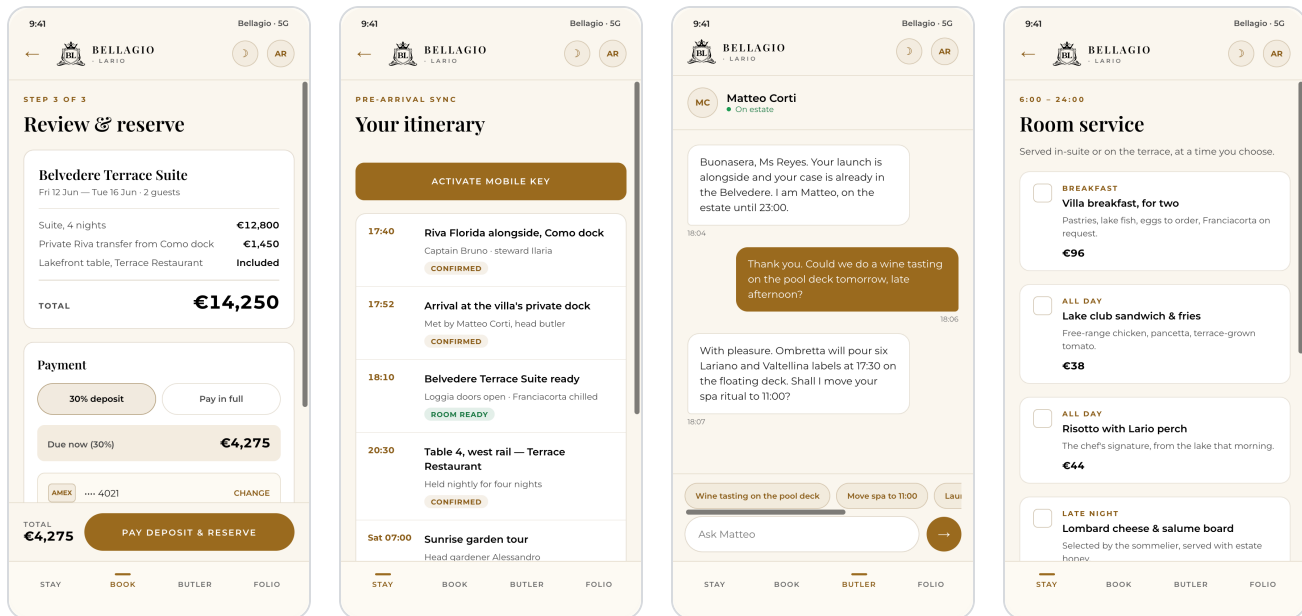
Suite detail & floor plan



Arrival & stay add-ons

The floor plan carries a flat/axonometric toggle across piano nobile, garden, and terrace levels — the single most-requested fix from independent bookers, who wanted to see the actual room before committing €2,000–6,800 a night to it.

Journey two · pre-arrival to in-stay



Review & payment

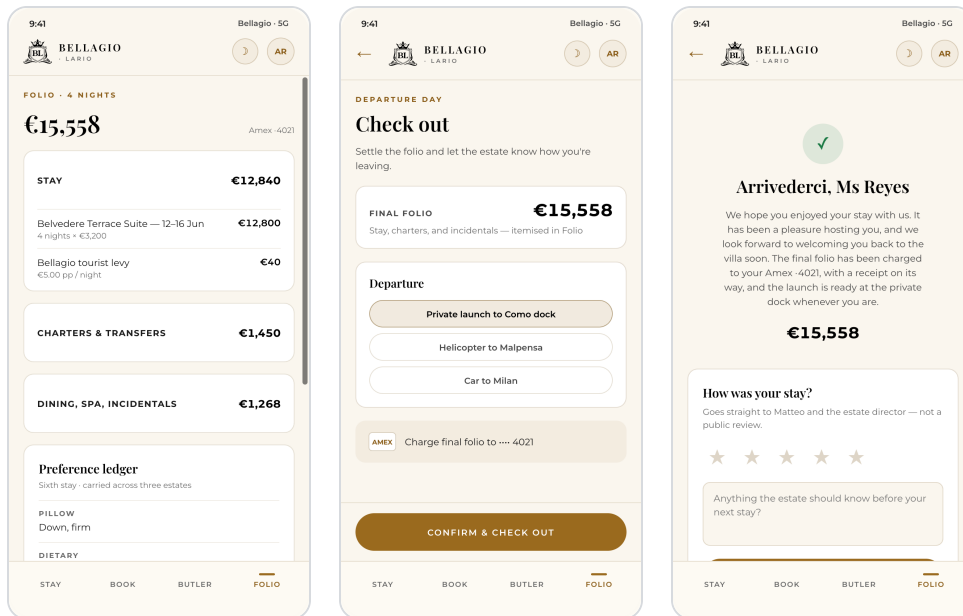
Itinerary & mobile key

Butler chat

Room service

The mobile key gates behind a Face ID step rather than activating silently — testing showed guests trusted a key more when it visibly asked to confirm identity, even though the underlying credential logic is unchanged.

Journey three · departure



Itemised folio

Checkout

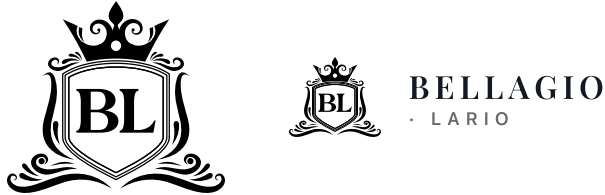
Departure & feedback

Feedback is framed as reaching the butler and estate director directly, not as a public review — matching how returning guests described wanting to be heard versus rated.

The Bellagio-Lario design system

One system carries the estate's own stationery across a €6,800-a-night villa listing and a room-service order screen. Playfair Display for headings, Montserrat for interface text, an antique-gold accent reserved for actions, and warm off-white surfaces — chosen against a hospitality-app template look.

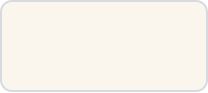
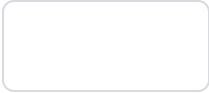
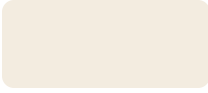
Logo



A shield-and-laurel crest with a crown finial, drawn as an outline rather than a filled mark so it reads as engraved stationery, not a app icon. The monogram stands alone at large sizes (hero, cover); the lockup with "Bellagio · Lario" set in Playfair Display runs in navigation and headers.

DO	DON'T
Use the outline crest on light or photographic backgrounds at 32px or larger	Fill the shield solid, or scale the crest below 24px where the laurel detail closes up
Pair the mark with Playfair Display for the wordmark only	Set "Bellagio · Lario" in Montserrat or any other typeface
Keep clear space around the crest equal to the height of the crown finial	Crop the crest tight against a card edge or button

Colour

					
Page #FAF6EE	Card #FFFFFF	Alt surface #F3ECE0	Accent / action #9A6A1E	Success #1C7A45	Ink #131922

Gold is reserved for actions and confirmed states — never decoration. One accent, applied consistently, reads calmer than a palette.

Type

Belvedere Terrace Suite

Playfair Display 600 · 32/40 · suite & screen titles

Lakeside arrival & stay

Playfair Display 600 · 20/28 · section headings

Riva transfers, dining, spa — confirmed at checkout instead of eleven emails.

Montserrat 400 · 14/22 · body

STEP 2 OF 3

Montserrat 700, tracked · eyebrows & labels

Components

RESERVE DIRECTLY

Lake-facing

Adjoining

ROOM READY

ARRIVAL

Private Riva transfer

1962 Riva Florida, captain and steward.

Buttons are pills, cards carry a single hairline border rather than a shadow, and status is always paired with a word — never colour alone.

o6 · Validate

Same five tasks, same cohort composition, run against the shipped design.

■ Before ■ After

Unaided booking completion



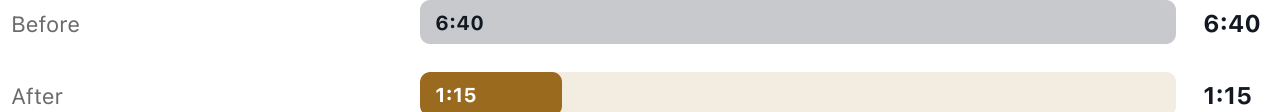
+55 points

Preference fields completed before the 48-hour pre-arrival sync



No preference field existed before this redesign

Time to reserve a curated arrival (minutes:seconds)

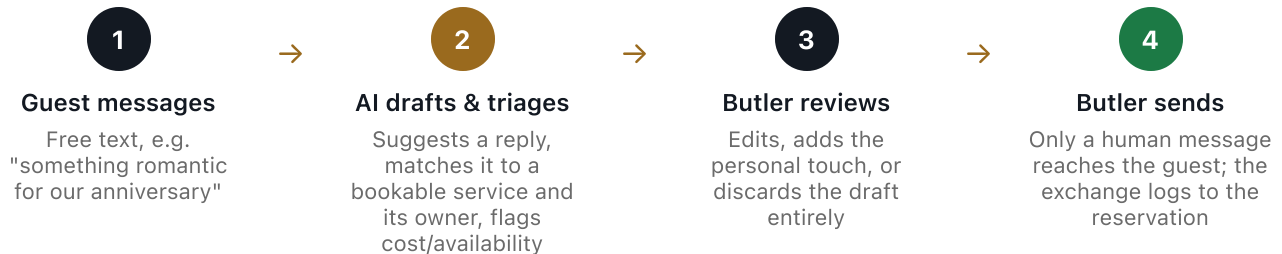


-5:25, an 82% reduction

Residual gap: two of five independent bookers still called the reservations line to confirm the tourist-levy line item on the folio before paying — the itemisation was correct but not proactively explained. Flagged for a copy fix rather than a flow change.

AI in the loop · the butler's assist

The design principle "the butler is the interface, not a fallback" set the boundary for where AI belongs: it drafts, triages and briefs — a person always sends. Nothing a guest receives is machine-authored without a butler having read it first.



Where AI acts, and where a person always decides

TOUCHPOINT	WHAT AI DOES	HUMAN CHECKPOINT
Reply drafting	Proposes a response from the guest's message and preference ledger	Butler edits or discards before anything sends
Request routing	Matches free text to the right owner — cellar, spa desk, dockmaster	Butler confirms the assignment; guest sees who's handling it
Conflict flagging	Checks the request against cost, inventory and the day's schedule	Butler decides whether to quote, reschedule, or escalate
Pre-shift briefing	Summarises a guest's ledger and open requests into one card for the butler coming on duty	Butler reads the brief before the guest is greeted

None of this is built in the current prototype — the butler chat today runs on scripted responses. This section records the intended design for the next phase, not a shipped feature.

07 · Next

Extend the preference ledger across the estate's two partner properties so a guest's profile travels with them, as promised in the original business goal. Add an advisor-facing view of the same booking flow so advisors keep visibility without the guest losing the direct relationship.

Appendix · screen inventory

#	SCREEN	ZONE
1	Home	Guest app
2	Suites & villas	Booking
3	Suite detail & floor plan	Booking
4	Arrival & stay add-ons	Booking
5	Review & payment	Booking
6	Itinerary & mobile key	Pre-arrival
7	Butler chat	In-stay
8	Front desk	In-stay
9	Room service	In-stay
10	Folio	Departure
11	Checkout	Departure
12	Feedback	Departure