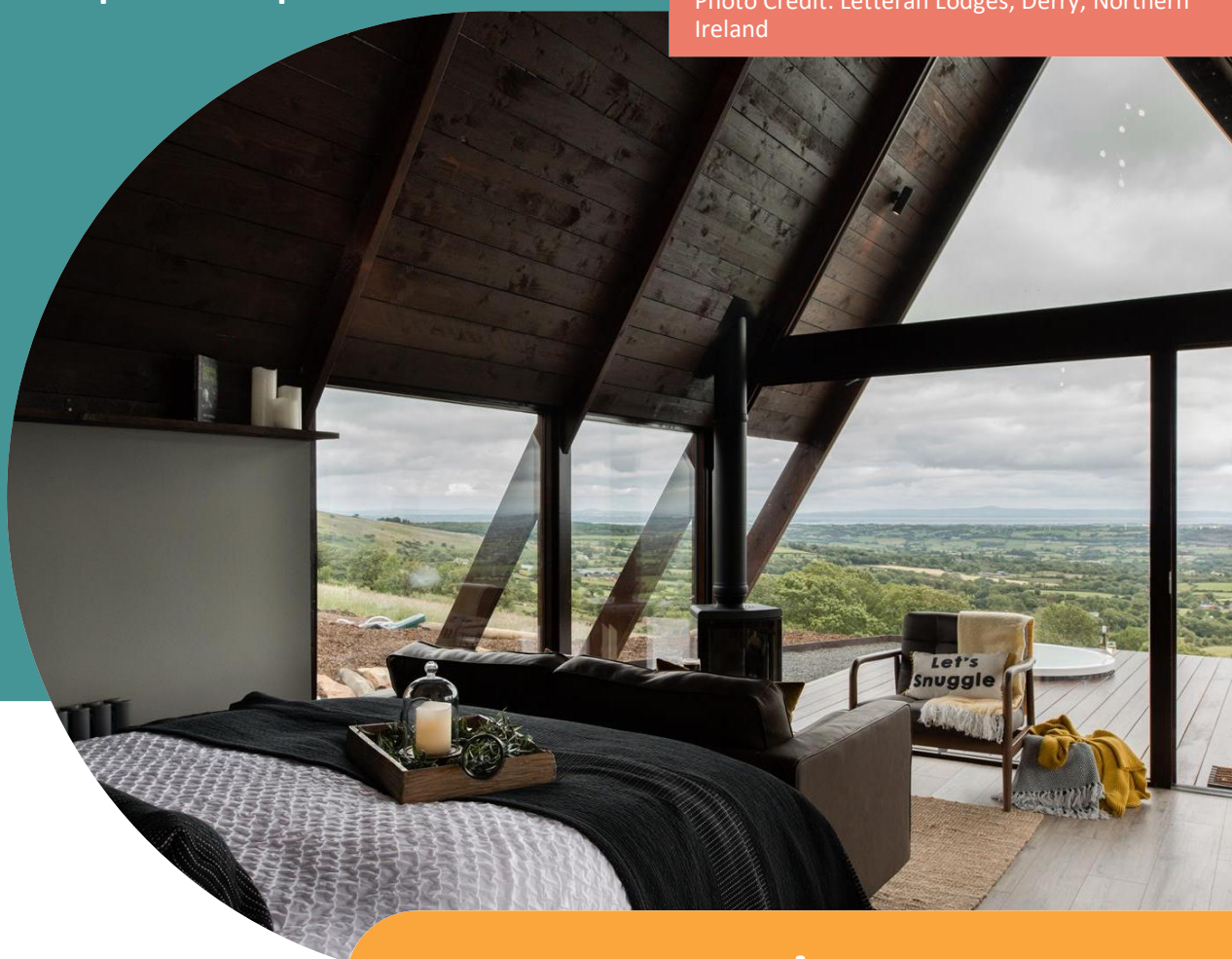**Epic Stays**
Designing Innovative Tourism Stays

Ready to Use
Delivery Guide for Mentors

How to Run Your Own EPIC STAYS Mentoring Clinics

Based on proven partner experiences

Photo Credit: Letteran Lodges, Derry, Northern Ireland

www.**epicstays**.eu

CONTENTS

* Please be mindful of ink and paper usage by printing only what you need to print, print in greyscale or black and white rather than in colour. Print on both sides of the paper (duplex) and if you can print multiple slides or pages on one page.

EPIC STAYS Mentoring Clinics Toolkit (4 Sessions)

How to Run Your Own Mentoring Clinic and Reuse Our Content

This toolkit shows you exactly how the EPIC STAYS Mentoring Clinics were delivered — and how you can run them yourself. It is designed so that any:

- Tourism network or support bofy
- VET provider
- Rural development organisation
- Mentor or consultant

can reuse the structure, materials and approach to deliver a practical four-session mentoring programme for alternative and rural tourism businesses.

This is not a report. It is a ready-to-use delivery guide.

How to Use This Toolkit

The Mentors Pack is designed to demonstrate how a mentor can conduct four sessions using the Epic Stays resources. The Mentors Pack includes;

1. Overview Summary *(this document)*

This document serves as a *ready-to-use overview and delivery guide* for the EPIC STAYS Mentoring Clinics (the 4-session series delivered online). The intention is simple: **any organiser, mentor, enterprise office, tourism network, or training provider can lift this structure and run the clinics again**—either exactly as delivered in EPIC STAYS Ireland , which can be adapted to another county/region or audience.

2. Mentoring Pack 1) Guide & Blank Templates

Downloadable templates you can use to run your own sessions.

- Session Format (Used Across All 4 Clinics)
- What You'll Find in Every Session
- Clinic Structure: **Resources → Learning → Mentor Discussion → Actions**
- The 4-Part Session Pack (Repeatable Each Week)

3. Completed Example of 4 Mentoring Sessions

The full experience of delivering four mentoring sessions in Ireland, replicated in Iceland, Italy and Slovenia. Each session is designed to be presented in a practical "use-it-now" format so you can:

- **Run a live mentoring call** (facilitator/mentor-led)
- **Use it as a self-guided learning pathway** (participants work through content independently)
- **Blend it into a workshop, programme, or incubator** (pick the parts you need)

What's included in the Example

Each session is packaged the same way, so it's easy to follow and repeat:

- **Part 1: Main Learning Material**
  The core content for that week (what you teach/cover). This is the "input" that sets up the discussion and the actions.

- **Part 2: Mentor Discussion**
  The heart of the clinics: real-world, straight-talking mentor guidance, prompts, and Q&A angles—focused on what actually works for small alternative accommodation businesses in Ireland.

- **Part 3: Key Takeaways & Exercises**
  A practical close-out section designed to convert the session into action—reflection prompts, mini tasks, and "one concrete step forward" commitments for the week ahead.

- **Additional Support Resources**
  A curated set of links, examples, templates, and optional reading to deepen learning or support follow-on actions.

The golden rule (the whole point)

This guide is not meant to be read like a report. It's meant to be *used*.

The structure is deliberately built so that **every participant leaves each session with at least one practical next step**—a decision made, a message drafted, a call booked, a cost clarified, a pricing tweak tested, or a guest experience improvement planned.

Irish Mentoring Clinics (4 Sessions) – Case Study Example

Introduction & Overview

The Ireland EPIC STAYS mentoring clinics, delivered by Momentum and our experienced mentors, demonstrated the power of targeted, experience-driven support for rural tourism entrepreneurs. Over four sessions, participants gained clarity on their business concepts, learned to navigate practical hurdles, discovered how to create memorable guest experiences, and became savvy in marketing and operations – all while building a network of like-minded peers.

The **benefit-led, hands-on approach** meant that everyone made real progress on their projects, from an aspiring farm-stay host mapping out her first steps, to an established eco-cabin owner finding new ways to wow guests. As one participant summed it up:

> *"In one month I went from feeling lost with an idea to feeling like I can actually do this – I have a plan, I have the tools, and I have people to turn to. It's been absolutely epic."*

The Ireland mentoring series helped individual businesses take off, and planted the seeds for a more vibrant, innovative rural tourism community attuned to what today's travelers seek – authentic, sustainable, truly epic stays.

How the Irish Clinics Worked

Ireland's EPIC STAYS mentoring clinics ran as a free four-week series of 1-hour+ online sessions in November 2025. Aimed at rural and alternative tourism businesses – from those **planning a new eco-cabin or farm stay** to **hosts looking to enhance an existing heritage B&B** – the clinics offered informal, straight-talking guidance grounded in real Irish experiences.

Each week, expert mentor **Lorcan Kearns** (creator of *Crusader Cabins* in Leitrim) shared his hands-on lessons and answered questions, so that **every participant made at least one concrete step forward** – whether gaining pricing clarity, mapping out a planning path, sharpening a guest experience, or refining their marketing message. The tone was conversational and honest, focusing on what *actually works* for small tourism ventures in the Irish countryside. Below is a summary of the four mentoring sessions and what they delivered for participants:

Meet the Irish Mentors

Lorcan Kearns, Crusader Cabins, Ireland

He shared real lessons — including mistakes — grounded in practical rural tourism delivery.

Lorcan Kearns, was the mentor leading all four clinics. Lorcan is a **rural tourism accommodation innovator and sustainable cabin designer** who founded *Crusader Cabins* – an award-winning micro-accommodation enterprise in Ireland's northwest. He literally hand-builds bespoke timber cabins and restores historic cottages to create immersive off-grid guest experiences rooted in local heritage and landscape. In other words, he's *done* what many participants aspire to do.

As a mentor, Lorcan is known as a *straight-talker* and a "leading voice" in Ireland's alternative stays scene. He shared his real-world insights into building character-rich small stays from the ground up – blending craftsmanship with hospitality – giving participants both inspiration *and* practical cautionary tales. His credibility and approachable style immediately put the group at ease: they knew advice was coming from someone who's weathered the same journey.

More information on Lorcan Kearns, Cabin Crusaders

Laura Magan Momentum [educate + innovate], Ireland

Together with Lorcan, their combined experience + mentoring expertise made the clinics effective.

The EPIC STAYS Ireland clinics were facilitated by **Laura Magan** *(Epic Stays Irish Partner)*, who delivered the EPIC STAYS Modules and structured the sessions around the project's core content — alternative accommodation models, guest motivations, smart planning, pricing, marketing, and implementation pathways.

With a background in all aspects of Tourism, EU tourism innovation projects, rural SME development, and education programme design, Laura brought a **strategic and systems-focused lens** to the clinics.

While Lorcan shared lived, build-it-from-the-ground-up experience, Laura translated the EPIC STAYS curriculum into **clear frameworks, practical tools, and step-by-step application**, ensuring participants could connect big-picture concepts to their own business stage. Her role was to bridge **theory and implementation** — guiding discussion, extracting key insights, and helping each participant leave with structured actions aligned to the modules. She ensured the clinics were not just inspirational, but grounded in viable planning, financial awareness, and long-term business sustainability.

More information on Laura Magan

01 Mentoring Session

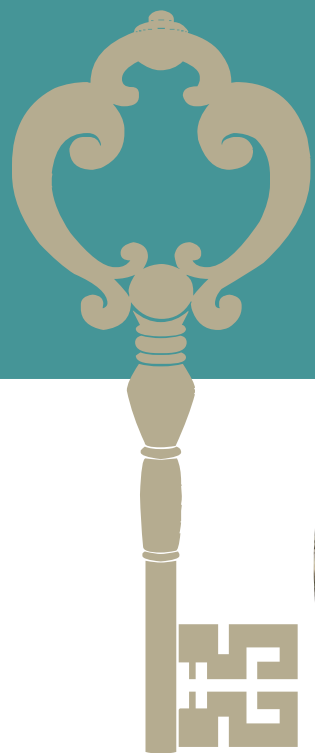## "Where You're At & What You're Actually Selling"

Session 1: "Where You're At & What You're Actually Selling"

Overview - Session One

> Participants clarified who their guest is, what they truly value, and what is being sold beyond accommodation — experience, story and identity.

The first session got everyone to step back and **clarify the real foundation of their business** – essentially,

- *who their guest is,*
- *what those guests value, and*
- *what the entrepreneurs are truly offering beyond just a physical place to stay*.

It set the scene by exploring each participant's region, motivations, and vision for their project, ensuring their concept aligns with genuine guest demand as well as their personal goals. This included a brief debrief of the EPIC STAYS conference (which happened the day before), which sparked discussion of inspiring case studies and ideas relevant to Ireland.

Note: See the Epic Stays Conference here https://epicstays.eu/en_gb/european-conference/

Objective

> To transform vague ideas into a clear concept statement and defined target guest.

The goal was to help participants **define "what they're actually selling" in terms of experience and uniqueness**, not just accommodation. By the end of the session, everyone had a clearer sense of their target **market niche, their guests' motivations, and which alternative accommodation business model best fits their idea**. In short, this kickoff session aimed to turn vague ideas into a sharper concept statement for each business.

Who It Was For

> Early-stage entrepreneurs or existing hosts refining their positioning.

This session was especially valuable for **early-stage entrepreneurs and anyone feeling "stuck" defining their idea**. Whether someone was contemplating converting an old barn into lodgings or launching a craft workshop with overnight stays, Session 1 helped them zero in on *who* they want to attract and *what experience* they must deliver. Even established hosts found it useful to revisit these fundamentals – one B&B owner noted it made her rethink her offering to focus on the heritage storytelling aspect she'd been

undervaluing. In short, if you were **at the idea stage or refining your concept**, Session 1 was designed for you.

Timeframe & Format

Session 1 took place in the evening of November 11, 2025, as a live online group call, so busy owners could easily join after their workday. It followed a structured yet informal format: *5 min* of welcome/check-in, *20 min* of module-based learning **("Where You're At & What You're Actually Selling"),** then *30 min* of mentoring Q&A with Lorcan sharing his own startup story, and finally *5 min* wrap-up of key takeaways and a quick feedback poll. Despite being online (via Zoom), the session was highly interactive – participants joined in quickly with questions and chatted about each other's ideas, setting a friendly tone for the series.

Topics Covered

- Alternative Tourism Accommodation models
- Changing guest motivations
- Identifying niche opportunities
- Aligning concept with local strengths

Participants were introduced to the booming world of **Alternative Tourism Accommodation (ATA)** – what it means and *why now is the time* to get involved. Key content from the EPIC STAYS curriculum (Modules 1 and 2) was covered, including: an **Introduction to Alternative Accommodation and changing guest motivations**, and a **comparison of different business models** (eco-glamping, farm stays, heritage home conversions, etc.) with examples of how entrepreneurs can spot the right opportunity in their locale. Real European case studies were spotlighted to show how others have carved out unique niches. Throughout, Lorcan interwove stories from his own start – emphasising how he identified an experience-centric offering for his cabins rather than "just lodging."

Challenges Addressed

- "Am I targeting the right guests?"
- "Should I just copy a standard B&B?"
- "Will my community support this?"

The discussion brought up common early questions like

"How do I choose the right model for my situation – glamping pod or guesthouse?

"Am I targeting the right guests?"

Participants often weren't sure if they should imitate standard B&Bs or do something different. Lorcan and the facilitators addressed these head-on, underscoring that **alternative tourism isn't one-size-fits-all** and you must tailor your model to your passion, location and market gap. Other early hurdles aired included **confidence issues and community buy-in** – e.g.

> *"How will my rural neighbors react to a new tourism business?"*

– as well as technical barriers like figuring out permitting. By surfacing these worries in a supportive group, Session 1 helped everyone realise these hurdles are normal and *solvable*.

The takeaway: With a clear concept and understanding of your guest, you've already conquered one of the biggest challenges.

Key Insights & Highlights

- Participants realised they were selling a story, not a bed.
- Authenticity and sense of place are competitive advantages.

A lightbulb moment for many was realising that *they're not just selling a bed, but a story and experience*. As one participant put it,

> *"I need to sell the sense of place and what's special about my area, not just my accommodation itself."*

The group learned that today's travelers seek out authenticity, nature, and meaningful local connection – and that alternative stays thrive by meeting those desires. A highlight was hearing how Lorcan initially misjudged his offering and had to pivot: he candidly explained what went wrong in his early days and what ultimately clicked, giving the group permission to acknowledge and learn from potential missteps. By the end of Session 1, many felt a new clarity on their USP (unique selling proposition) – for example, one aspiring host discovered her **"coastal wellness retreat"** idea was really about **stress-free digital detox by the sea**, which completely reframed how she would develop her cabins and guest activities.

Benefits to Participants

- Clearer USP
- Defined target market
- Increased confidence
- Stronger concept clarity

After Session 1, participants reported feeling **energised and focused**. Many finally nailed down a concise description of their concept and target guest – a huge step that would guide all their other decisions. For instance, one early-stage entrepreneur said,

> *"Now I can articulate exactly who I'm building my lakeside cabins for and why it's special – before, it was just a vague idea."*

This clarity helped folks avoid the common trap of trying to appeal to "everyone" and ending up with a generic offering. Instead, they each began honing a concept that *stands out*. Perhaps most importantly, attendees came away with a sense of **community and confidence** – realising others are tackling similar challenges. They understood that with each session, they would keep building momentum, one concrete step at a time.

In summary, Session 1 set a strong foundation: participants left with a defined vision and the motivation to start making it real.

02 Mentoring Session

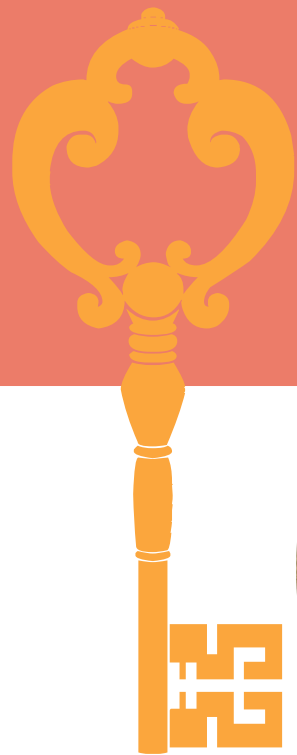## Setting Up & Launching Smart & Planning and the "Wow" Factor

Session 2: Setting Up & Launching Smart & Planning and the "Wow" Factor

Overview

Focused on planning, permissions, budgeting and creating a memorable guest experience.

Session 2 shifted gears from "big picture" vision to **nuts-and-bolts planning**.

- Session 1 answered *"What am I offering and to whom?"*,
- Session 2 was about *"How do I actually make this happen on the ground?"*

The clinic focused on the practical steps of setting up an alternative accommodation – covering everything from **site selection and permissions** to **designing that special "wow factor" that guests will talk about**.

It was a reality check on the *operational and regulatory side* of launching a tourism stay, combined with creative brainstorming on making your place memorable. By the end, participants had a clearer roadmap of the tasks (and potential hurdles) between their idea and opening day.

Objective

Help participants avoid costly mistakes and design an experience-led launch plan.

The aim of Session 2 was to ensure participants **start smart and avoid costly mistakes** when developing their project. It helped everyone identify the key planning tasks for their situation – such as securing land or converting an existing building, navigating zoning and planning permission, budgeting for infrastructure – and to do so with an eye on delivering a **"WOW" guest experience from day one**.

In short, the objective was to help these entrepreneurs **move forward in their development phase with eyes wide open**: understanding the compliance and cost realities, while also pinpointing a unique feature or story that will set their property apart. Each participant was encouraged to commit to one concrete action for the week, like calling the local planning office, sketching a site layout, or drafting a list of potential wow-factor ideas.

Who It Was For

Entrepreneurs actively planning, building or renovating.

This session was **tailored for people in the thick of planning or building their alternative stay**. If you were

an entrepreneur who had moved from dreaming to *doing* – like **securing land, drawing up plans, or figuring out finances** – Session 2 was speaking your language. Typical attendees included farmers diversifying into tourism (converting a barn or field into guest accommodation), individuals renovating a historic family cottage to rent out, or early-stage glamping startups working out infrastructure needs. Even those still at concept stage benefited, as they got a preview of what's ahead (some said it was a "reality check" that saved them from potential pitfalls).

Conversely, existing small tourism businesses looking to **upgrade their experience** (say, adding a wow feature or new unit) also found value, since operational improvement often circles back to planning and design. In essence, Session 2 was for anyone ready to *roll up their sleeves*: it answered the burning questions that arise once you start trying to turn a cool idea into a brick-and-mortar (or canvas-and-timber!) reality.

Timeframe & Format

Session 2 was held on November 17, 2025 (week 2 of the series) via a live Zoom call. The format remained a **mix of structured content, open discussion, and feedback**. The session started with a follow-up on homework from Week 1 – a quick round where a few participants shared the step they took after Session 1 (e.g. "I called two past Airbnb guests to ask what they loved about this area"). Then for about 20 minutes, the facilitator introduced the *"Setting Up & Launching Smart"* module, using slides and examples.

This flowed into a 30-minute **mentoring discussion led by Lorcan**, where participants could ask anything and delve deeper into topics. This part was very interactive: one person's question about wastewater solutions for off-grid cabins led to others chiming in with tips and experiences. **Lorcan's discussion style** in this session was described as

> *"..like having a pint with a wise neighbor who's already built what you're building"*

– candid, humorous, but extremely informative.

Finally, the session ended with 5 minutes of **key takeaways** (the facilitator highlighted a few gems on-screen, like the quote about WOW needing to connect to place) and a quick poll on what topics people wanted to explore more next time. Participants appreciated that the webinar-style lecture was kept short, and most of the hour was conversation and Q&A – it felt *personal* despite being online.

Topics Covered

- Land & zoning
- Start-up cost mapping
- Budget realism
- Designing authentic "WOW" elements

This session packed in **core practical topics**. On the planning side, Lorcan (with input from the EPIC STAYS module content) walked through **"Setting Up & Launching Smart"**: covering *Location & Land*

Considerations, *Start-Up & Capital Costs*, and *Logistics*. Participants learned, for example, how **zoning and land-use rules** can make or break a project – you can't assume an eco-glampsite is treated as just casual camping when in fact authorities see it as a commercial development.

The session stressed due diligence: check if the land is zoned or needs change, and investigate any local restrictions (rural conservation areas, protected structures, etc.) **before** spending money. The budgeting segment was an eye-opener: attendees were prompted to list out *every cost* (buying land or refurbishing a building, installing utilities for off-grid sites, access roads, waste systems, insurance, etc.). As Lorcan bluntly put it,

> *"Financial planning is pointless without a real budget – capture every cost to see if your plan is viable".*

On the creative side, Session 2 delved into **designing a "WOW factor"**. This meant thinking about what unique element of the stay will surprise and delight guests – something authentic to the place and host. The group looked at European case studies of standout accommodations (for instance, an Icelandic glass lodge under the Northern Lights) to spark ideas. They discussed how *"WOW" is not about luxury for luxury's sake*, but rather creating a memorable experience tied to local culture or nature. One slide memorably noted what *doesn't* count as wow: *"Bottled water and mints on pillows – meaningless. People didn't care."*

The lesson: **a true WOW must connect to the place's purpose and the guest's identity**. This resonated strongly – participants began identifying what special touch **their** property could offer (be it an outdoor stargazing tub on a dark sky farm, a welcome ritual with homemade bread from the farmhouse, or a medieval-themed cabin tour at a heritage site).

Challenges Addressed

- Planning permission confusion
- Hidden costs
- Fear of not standing out

Session 2 directly addressed some of the most common headaches in launching an alternative stay. **Regulatory uncertainty** was a big one – many participants were unsure about planning permission, building codes, or permits for things like installing glamping pods or compost toilets. The clinic provided guidance here, demystifying the process (e.g. advising early conversations with local authorities and sharing tips on navigating bureaucracy).

Budget overruns and financing questions were another challenge discussed; participants worried about hidden costs. By sharing comprehensive cost checklists and his own budgeting missteps, Lorcan helped the group anticipate expenses and consider funding options (such as applying for rural development grants or partnering with investors). Another issue addressed was **analysis paralysis** around designing the site: people had so many ideas (treehouses! hobbit pods! caravans!) that they felt overwhelmed. The session's structured approach – start with what fits your land, local demand, and budget, then add creativity – gave a clear path forward. Finally, **fear of not standing out** came up:

> *"What if I build this and no one cares?"*

Session 2 tackled this by emphasising the *story* and differentiation (that "wow factor") as essential parts of planning, not an afterthought. The group brainstormed freely here, turning a source of anxiety into an exciting creative exercise. By the end, attendees had practical answers or next steps for issues that had been holding them back, from planning delays to design dilemmas. In fact, several participants noted that they felt *much* more confident about dealing with councils and contractors after hearing others' questions and Lorcan's advice on these topics.

Key Insights & Highlights

- WOW must connect to story and place — not luxury gimmicks.
- Financial planning requires full cost visibility.

A key insight from Session 2 was the importance of **laying a solid groundwork early**. Participants were sometimes surprised by the emphasis on red-tape topics, but they came to appreciate it.

For example, they learned that **buying a cheap plot of agricultural land could backfire** if it isn't zoned for tourism – it could delay or block development entirely. This prompted at least one attendee to rethink location:

> *"I was about to buy a field down the road; now I'll consult the county plan first!"*

On the inspirational side, the **"Wow factor" discussion really lit up the group**. They realised that creating an extraordinary guest experience doesn't always require a huge investment, but it does require thoughtfulness and originality. One farmer in the group had planned fairly basic cottages; after this session he decided to incorporate his farm's old stone granary as a communal storytelling space – turning a quirk of his property into a talking point for guests.

Another highlight was Lorcan sharing a **personal anecdote about a design choice gone wrong** at his Crusader Cabins, which got a laugh: he once spent money on fancy welcome amenities (like those pillow mints), only to find guests were indifferent. That story underscored the idea that *authentic experiences beat generic "hospitality" gestures.*

Participants also gained insight into **phasing their projects**: it's okay to start small (maybe one cabin or a couple of rooms) and expand later, as long as you nail an excellent guest experience at the start. This relieved pressure for those who felt they had to "go big" immediately. Overall, Session 2 equipped everyone with practical know-how *and* a creative spark – a rare but powerful combo.

The Value of a Mentor: Lorcan Kearns, Cabin Crusaders

Lorcan Kearns was the linchpin, sharing relevant parts of his journey. In Session 2 we heard more about how he physically developed Crusader Cabins: for instance, he recounted the **planning permission saga** for his lakeside cabin, which took months of back-and-forth with the council due to environmental concerns. This was hugely instructive – it taught everyone patience and the importance of presenting a strong case (he eventually succeeded by highlighting how his cabins supported eco-tourism and local jobs).

Lorcan also discussed how he approached designing his cabins' wow factor: being a craftsman, he leveraged his skills to build a medieval-style timber frame and even incorporated local folklore into the decor. His credibility shone through as he wasn't shy about mistakes (like overspending on unneeded frills) and victories (like achieving an 80% year-round occupancy by focusing on a niche market).

Participants really connected with Lorcan's dual perspective: he's both an artisan/builder *and* a business operator. So he could advise on things like where to splurge or save during construction *and* how that ties into what guests will pay for. This holistic expertise – from laying a foundation to laying out a guest welcome basket – made his mentoring incredibly valuable in Session 2's context.

Benefits to Participants

- Clear next planning steps
- Budget awareness
- Defined WOW element
- Increased confidence dealing with councils

After Session 2, participants reported making tangible progress in their projects. Many described feeling "grounded" – in the sense that their *dream* was now backed by a clearer plan.

For example, one woman who intended to open a wellness yurt retreat admitted she had been ignoring the lack of proper road access to her site. Post-session, she committed to consulting an engineer about installing a lane, saving her from future guest complaints.

Another participant decided to **pause and gather permits** rather than rushing to build – likely avoiding a legal headache. On the flip side, the creative output was equally important: everyone left with at least one idea for their signature *wow factor* or unique selling point.

They also gained efficiency tips (like Lorcan's advice on outsourcing laundry or using modular builds to keep costs down). A few even expressed that the session potentially **saved them money** –

> *"I was about to buy expensive solar hot tubs, but now I realize a simple wood-fired tub fits my story and budget better,"* said one attendee.

The peer support continued to grow too; participants were swapping contacts for local planners and sharing recommendations (one had a great architect who understood glamping, and passed along that

info).

In summary, Session 2 gave participants both the **knowledge to navigate the "boring" stuff (planning, budgeting)** and the **inspiration to amp up the "fun" stuff (guest wow moments)**. The result was a balanced confidence: they could move forward knowing they weren't overlooking critical steps, and they were even more excited to create something truly special.

03 Mentoring Session

Marketing & Digital Tools for Guest Experience

Session 3: Marketing & Digital Tools for Guest Experience

Overview

Focused on attracting guests and streamlining operations using practical digital tools.

By Session 3, many participants were either nearing their launch or already hosting a few guests – so the focus turned to **marketing and delivering a great guest experience, especially using digital tools**. This clinic honed in on how small tourism businesses can **attract the right guests and manage operations smartly without burning out**. It addressed the next big question:

"I've got my concept and I'm setting up – now how do I get people to come, and make sure they love it when they do?"

From creating engaging content and leveraging social media, to automating routine tasks like guest messaging and handling remote check-ins, Session 3 was all about working smarter *and* delighting customers. The goal was for participants to walk away with actionable marketing ideas and simple tech tips to elevate their hospitality game (even if they're not tech-savvy).

Objective

Empower SMEs to market effectively and reduce operational overwhelm.

The aim was to empower these tourism entrepreneurs with **practical marketing strategies and tech-driven efficiency**. Many rural businesses have limited time and budget, so Session 3's objective was to show how to *maximize impact with minimal resources*. This meant helping participants develop a clear marketing message (rooted in the unique experience they defined earlier) and choose the right channels to reach their target guests – whether that's Instagram for glamping millennials or local partnerships for heritage stays. Equally, the session aimed to alleviate operational overwhelm by introducing **affordable tools to streamline guest communications and property management**.

In essence, the clinic sought to ensure that once participants start getting bookings, they can handle them smoothly and keep those all-important positive reviews rolling in. A concrete outcome for many was to implement one new tool or process within a week (for example, scheduling their social media posts for the month, or setting up an automated booking reply message).

Who It Was For

Near-launch businesses or active hosts.

Session 3 was ideal for those **nearing launch or already hosting guests** – basically anyone who needed to *get the word out* about their stay and ensure operations run smoothly.

For example, a few participants had completion dates for their cabins in sight and wanted to ramp up marketing before opening bookings – this session gave them the roadmap. It also heavily benefited **current alternative accommodation hosts** who felt overwhelmed juggling tasks. Small business owners who had perhaps been *"doing everything manually"* found this clinic extremely relevant.

One glampsite owner who joined had opened earlier in 2025; she was drawn to the session because she was struggling to respond to inquiries quickly while also cleaning units and doing farm chores. Session 3 was basically made for her scenario, offering solutions to streamline and delegate (digitally).

Additionally, participants who were less tech-confident were pleasantly surprised – the session was **beginner-friendly**, explaining each tool in plain language.

In short, if you had a unique stay *ready to share with the world*, or you were already up and running and needed to improve your guest management and marketing reach, Session 3 spoke to your needs. Even those still building found value, as it prepared them with a marketing plan to execute once they launch (saving them from opening to crickets).

Timeframe & Format

Session 3 took place on November 24, 2025. As with previous clinics, it was a live online session with a mix of presentation and interactive elements. Uniquely, this session featured a brief *show-and-tell*: participants were invited beforehand to share one marketing material or tool they use (if any).

A few folks emailed in examples – one showed her Instagram post that got good engagement, another mentioned a channel manager they tried. This created a peer learning vibe. The format started with about 15 minutes of **marketing strategy discussion** (with slides), then shifted to **tech tool demos**.

The facilitator actually did a screenshare to walk through scheduling a message on Airbnb and showcased the interface of a smart lock app – very practical, click-by-click guidance. Participants could ask questions via chat or jump in with voice; many did, especially asking

"does tool X work if I have multiple listings?"
or
"how do I keep my response rate high without being glued to my phone?".

Lorcan contributed throughout by sharing which marketing channels worked for him (TripAdvisor in the early days, then direct bookings via Facebook later) and how he uses a simple channel manager to sync bookings from Airbnb and Booking.com.

The last 15 minutes were open Q&A – this turned into a lively troubleshooting session, with attendees asking things like

"What hashtag should I use for heritage stays?"
or
"Is it worth getting a drone for photos?"
(the answer: nice if you can, but not essential!).

As always, the session concluded with key takeaways on-screen (e.g. a bullet list of "Top 5 free tools to try") and the quick poll. The **tone** of this session was notably enthusiastic – perhaps because marketing and gadgets can be fun, people were chiming in excitedly. Despite being online, it almost felt like a workshop with everyone swapping tips.

Topics Covered

- Story-based marketing
- Travel journey mapping
- Automation tools
- Remote hosting systems

Session 3 was rich with *hands-on* topics in two main areas:

(1) Marketing & Content Strategy and

(2) Digital Tools for Guest Experience.

On the marketing front, participants learned how to identify what stage of the travel journey their potential guests are in – dreaming, planning, booking, experiencing, or sharing – and tailor their outreach accordingly.

There was a checklist for "Great Marketing Needs Great Content" that reminded everyone to craft a strong brand message reflecting *"travel for good"* principles (sustainability, community, authenticity) and to share that story across multiple platforms (website, social media, travel blogs, etc.).

The facilitator gave examples of compelling content: e.g. before-and-after photos of a barn converted into a guesthouse to highlight sustainability, or short videos of a host introducing the farm animals to show authenticity. The group discussed working with local tourism boards or niche travel influencers to extend their reach. A highlight was reviewing one participant's draft Airbnb listing description live – with group feedback to make it more enticing and clear. On the digital tools side, Session 3 introduced a suite of **low-cost or free tech tools** to simplify operations.

For instance, the concept of a *Property Management System (PMS)* was explained in simple terms, and a tool called **Bentral** was showcased as an example of channel management and automated messaging. The idea of **automation** was emphasized: automate the *repetitive, low-touch tasks* like sending booking confirmations or check-in instructions, but **don't automate the personal touches**.

Participants were walked through setting up **scheduled messages** on Airbnb or using third-party apps (e.g.

Hospitable or Zeevou) to send guests pre-written info at the right times. They also learned how to craft these templates to still feel personal – for example, adding a line that they can quickly customize for each guest, like "Hope you enjoy the farmers' market on Saturday!".

Remote hosting techniques were another big topic: how to manage your property if you can't be on-site 24/7. Solutions like **smart locks or key safes** for self check-in were discussed in detail (including specific brands and how to use temporary codes).

The session even covered creating a "local backup plan" – having a neighbor or friend on call for emergencies and keeping a WhatsApp group with your cleaner for quick updates. Essentially, participants learned that *with the right tech and planning, you don't have to physically hover over your property to provide excellent service*.

Finally, the session touched on maintaining the human touch: using automation to gain **free time to focus on hospitality**. For instance, by automating routine emails and scheduling cleanings with apps, hosts can free up time to bake welcome brownies or plan unique guest experiences. The underlying theme was *efficiency serves experience* – the less bogged down you are with admin, the more you can wow your guests in meaningful ways.

Challenges Addressed

- "I don't have time to market."
- Fear of technology
- Managing remotely

This session tackled some very real pain points. **"How do I market on a shoestring budget?"** was one – participants worried that without big ad spend they couldn't compete. The clinic busted that myth by focusing on organic and partnership tactics (e.g., use your distinctive story in press releases to local media, leverage free social networks, collaborate with other businesses for cross-promotion).

Another challenge: **time management and burnout**. Many rural tourism providers wear all hats (host, cleaner, marketer, bookkeeper). Session 3 addressed this by introducing automation and time-saving tools, as noted, which directly alleviates the syndrome

"I have no time to market or improve, I'm too busy answering emails".

The fear of technology was a challenge for some – a couple of older participants admitted they felt left behind by digital marketing. The mentor and facilitator addressed this gently, showing just one or two simple tools to start with, and emphasizing you don't need to be a tech wizard.

Managing guest expectations and communication was another issue discussed: how to maintain that personal farmstay charm if you're automating messages? The solution was to automate the basics but always add a human touch (we even drafted a few warm, friendly template messages together). Finally, **concerns about not living on-site** came up – e.g.

The session answered this by outlining a remote management plan: trusted local helpers, smart home devices, and clear house rules. By addressing these challenges, Session 3 left participants feeling that marketing and managing their alternative stay is not an overwhelming puzzle but a set of tasks that can be systematised and learned. Many commented that problems which loomed large (like keeping up with guest inquiries or figuring out social media) now felt *manageable* with the step-by-step approach and tool recommendations given.

Key Insights & Highlights

- Automation frees time for better hospitality.
- Marketing is storytelling, not self-promotion.

Session 3 delivered a few standout insights that had participants buzzing. One was that **marketing isn't a dirty word** – it's really about storytelling and connecting with the people who will value your place. When the facilitator framed marketing as

"sharing what makes your stay special with those who are looking for it,"

a lot of skeptics in the group (many of whom felt shy about self-promotion) started to warm up to it.

In fact, a couple of participants who had been relying solely on Airbnb decided then and there to finally create a simple Facebook or Instagram page for their business, realising it could build a local following and direct bookings.

Another big insight: the power of **automation and systems** for a one-person business. Seeing examples of how a host can set up an automated check-in message and a review request after checkout (and hearing that this alone can significantly boost your reviews and rankings) was eye-opening. One host who was already operational literally exclaimed,

> *"I can do that?! I've been manually typing every check-in text!"*.

By the end of the demo, she was eagerly noting down which tool to try first.

A highlight was the discussion on maintaining a personal touch even as you automate. Lorcan weighed in with a gem: he described how he keeps a Google Doc with snippets about repeat guests (like their pet's name or that they love fishing) so that even his automated messages can include a tailored line when those guests book again. This reinforced that **technology should serve your hospitality, not replace it**. Participants also found reassurance in the idea that they could **manage remotely** if needed. Hearing that

was liberating for those who lived away from their property or hoped to take a holiday themselves. It normalized using tools like smart locks and cameras (ethically, for security) and having local contacts to cover on-site needs.

Another insight was about guest communication: the session stressed prompt, clear communication as part of guest experience, and how tools can assist with that. One participant shared how she implemented the suggested **"message flow timeline"** – scheduling a welcome message, a mid-stay check-in, and a departure thank-you – and saw an immediate improvement in her responsiveness rating.

Overall, the highlights of Session 3 were participants realizing that **they can compete with bigger hospitality players by leveraging smart tech and authentic storytelling**. They don't need a big team or ad budget – just a genuine voice and the right apps in their toolkit.

Benefits to Participants

- Implemented new systems
- Scheduled messaging
- Improved guest communication
- Greater confidence online

The immediate benefit from Session 3 was **increased confidence and savvy in promoting their business**. Many participants who were previously apprehensive about marketing came away with a clear plan: e.g., one decided to start posting a "behind-the-scenes" photo every week to build interest before her grand opening in spring, using tips from the session on storytelling.

Others planned to implement at least one new tool: a few latched onto the idea of scheduled messages to guests and vowed to set that up that week (saving them time and ensuring no guest arrives without the info they need).

There were also reports of quick wins: one participant actually drafted and sent a press release to a regional newspaper about her soon-to-open glamping site the day after Session 3 – something she said she'd *"never have had the nerve or know-how to do before,"* but the session's marketing segment gave her the template and courage. For those already hosting, the benefits were very tangible in terms of **time saved and improved guest satisfaction**.

One attendee excitedly noted in the follow-up that she activated an automated check-in system and it

Meanwhile, her guests got clear, instant instructions and felt taken care of. Several participants mentioned that the session helped them feel *less alone* in the daunting task of marketing; they now had a network of peers (via the session and an email group that was set up) to bounce ideas off.

Importantly, Session 3's benefits also included a better understanding of how to maintain quality as they grow. By learning about remote management and automation, participants realized they could handle more bookings or even expand to multiple units *without sacrificing personal touch*. This set the stage for sustainable growth – they can scale up knowing there are systems to help handle it.

Overall, the clinic left everyone feeling **empowered to take control of their marketing and operations**, rather than feeling controlled by the demands of the business. As one participant aptly summarized,

> *"I now have tools to work smarter, not harder — and that will let me focus on what makes my place special."*

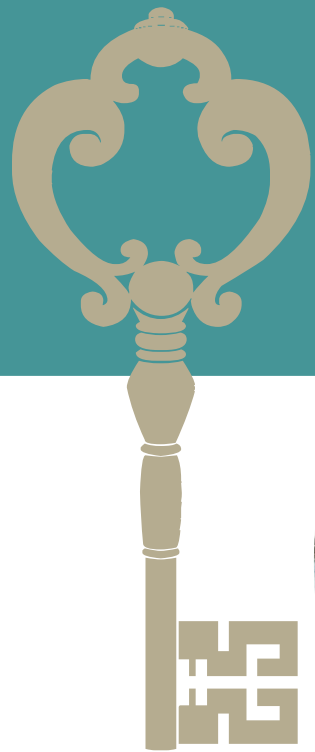### The Value of a Mentor: Lorcan Kearns, Cabin Crusaders

Lorcan's role in Session 3 was slightly different but very valuable – he acted as a **real-world case study** of how a one-man business markets and operates efficiently. He shared that he initially relied on word-of-mouth and a simple website for Crusader Cabins, then gradually embraced new tools as he grew. Importantly, Lorcan disclosed some of his digital missteps (like forgetting to sync calendars and double-booking a weekend – yikes, a mistake he only made once!).

This cautionary tale impressed upon participants the importance of using channel management if on multiple booking sites. Lorcan also demonstrated his *guest communication philosophy*: for instance, he showed the exact welcome message template he sends to guests which includes personal tips for local restaurants. Hearing these concrete examples from an experienced host reassured the group that you **don't need a fancy digital agency to succeed** – just consistency and authenticity. It also helped that Lorcan is not a tech guru himself; he learned many tools by necessity, so he was able to explain them in layman's terms and encourage those who were intimidated.

He recommended a few favorite apps (some he learned the hard way after trying others). All in all, Lorcan's presence kept the session grounded. He would often bring the conversation back to *"How does this improve the guest's stay?"* – ensuring that the group remembered technology is a means to an end (happier guests, less stressed host) not a flashy end in itself. This wisdom from someone who balances modern tools with old-fashioned hospitality helped participants see how they might do the same.

04

Mentoring Session

Bringing It All Together – Advanced Q&A and Next Steps

Session 4: Bringing It All Together – Advanced Q&A and Next Steps

Overview

A participant-led wrap-up session focusing on pricing, scaling and next actions.

The final session was a capstone clinic designed to **bring everything together and address any remaining burning questions**. By Session 4, a camaraderie had formed, and this meeting felt a bit like a roundtable. The content was more fluid and driven by participant needs, but generally it focused on **tying up loose ends** in each person's plan and discussing how to sustain momentum beyond the program. Key themes that emerged were **refining pricing strategies, long-term planning, and leveraging networks/community** as participants prepared to move forward on their own.

In many ways, Session 4 served as an open mentoring forum: part recap of major lessons, part group troubleshooting, and part pep talk to keep everyone motivated. It was all about ensuring each entrepreneur left with a clear sense of their next steps toward an "epic stay" business.

Objective

Ensure every participant leaves with a clear implementation plan.

The objective of Session 4 was to provide a **personalised wrap-up**, ensuring that no participant was leaving with unanswered questions or uncertainty about what to do next. It aimed to help each business owner solidify an *action plan* – whether that was a timeline for opening, a checklist of tasks to complete, or a strategy to secure funding – building on everything learned in prior sessions. Another key objective was to tackle more **advanced or nuanced topics** that hadn't been deeply covered yet, based on the group's requests.

For example, pricing and revenue management for alternative accommodations was something many wanted to delve into, so this session made space for that. Additionally, Session 4 aimed to strengthen the network among participants, encouraging them to continue supporting each other (some discussed forming a Whatsapp group or occasional meet-ups after the program).

In short, the goal was to ensure everyone felt **prepared and supported to make real progress** after the mentorship series – effectively turning lessons into lasting results.

Who It Was For

All participants — early stage to operational.

Session 4 was truly for **everyone who had been through the journey** – it was a culmination meant for all participants, regardless of stage. By this point, early-stage folks and those already hosting were on more even footing in terms of knowledge, so the session was broad in scope to cater to both.

It especially benefited those who had very specific questions or edge-case scenarios that hadn't been fully covered yet. For example, one participant who was converting a section of a live farm (with livestock) into accommodation had questions about balancing farm operations with guest safety – a niche topic that we finally got to address in Session 4.

Likewise, a participant planning an artist retreat got advice on how to market to creative groups and schedule workshops. So if someone had a unique model or lingering concern, this was their chance. Additionally, this session was for those who needed that **last boost of confidence** to actually *pull the trigger* – whether that was applying for that loan, setting an opening date, or launching their website.

In fact, a few participants admitted they had been procrastinating on some big decisions, and hearing others outline next steps gave them the clarity to proceed. In essence, Session 4 was for anyone who wanted to ensure they left the program fully equipped and inspired – and given that all attendees stuck around for it, it clearly hit the mark for the whole group.

Timeframe & Format

Session 4 was held on December 1, 2025, rounding out the series. The format was more **open and conversational** than prior ones. It started with a structured recap (as mentioned) but quickly moved to an **AMA (Ask Me Anything)** style Q&A and group discussion. This session actually ran a bit over time because the discussion was so engaging and no one wanted to log off – a testament to the value they were getting.

In terms of delivery, it was an online call like the others, but with an atmosphere akin to a friendly meetup. At one point, the facilitator even turned off the slide deck to allow everyone to see each other's faces in gallery view while talking, making it feel more personal. Despite being virtual, it was easy to sense nods, smiles, and the occasional *"aha!"* expression as someone received advice. They also did a fun round-robin where each person shared their next immediate step (to hold one another accountable in a positive way).

Since this was the last session, the organisers took a few minutes at the end for a heartfelt **thank you and congratulations**, and they reminded participants of the post-clinic resources available (like the EPIC STAYS online course and the fact that they can reach out to the team for further mentoring informally). The format thus shifted from teacher-led to community-led, which was the perfect ending note, demonstrating that the participants themselves have grown into a knowledgeable community.

Topics Covered

- Pricing strategy
- Revenue sustainability
- Guest experience refinement
- Partnerships
- Scaling wisely

Unlike the earlier clinics, Session 4 didn't follow a strict module format. Instead, it began with a **recap of key takeaways** from Sessions 1–3 (kind of a "you've learned a lot, here are your toolkits" summary). The facilitator highlighted a few core principles, like *knowing your guest, planning smart, creating wow, marketing authentically,* and *leveraging tech wisely*. This set the stage, and then the floor was opened for participants to guide the discussion topics. Several **core topics** naturally bubbled up:

- **Pricing and Financial Sustainability:** Many participants wanted advice on setting prices for their unique stays. They discussed how to price for peak vs. off-season, how to communicate the value of an unconventional stay (e.g. a hand-built cabin might justify a premium if its story is compelling), and when to consider dynamic pricing. Lorcan emphasised that every business in the group is niche and cannot simply copy hotel pricing models – they need to account for the extra value of experiences and stories they offer. Participants shared thoughts like considering **seasonal packages** (e.g. a winter retreat bundle with activities) to create value. This pricing chat helped demystify revenue strategy for small-scale stays.

- **Guest Experience Deep Dive:** Although guest experience was woven throughout earlier sessions, here it was a dedicated focus in response to questions. One topic was how to handle **challenging guest situations** – late check-ins, extra requests, and minor complaints. Lorcan and others provided tips on setting boundaries (e.g. polite communication templates for when you cannot accommodate a request) and on turning feedback into improvements. A consensus emerged that **guest experience is a thread running through everything** – from how you market to how you price to how you design your space – an insight explicitly voiced by the group. This holistic view helped participants see that providing a great experience isn't one task, but an outcome of many small thoughtful choices.

- **Community and Partnerships:** Given the rural context of most businesses, participants were keen to discuss working with the local community and other businesses. They explored ideas like partnering with nearby attractions (for instance, a heritage cabin host linking up with a local historical society for guest tours, or a farm stay coordinating with an adventure company for guest activities). The session reinforced that collaborating can enhance guest experience *and* marketing reach. Some had concerns about community resistance (the NIMBY effect); here, Lorcan shared how he invited neighbours to see his cabins and involved local craftsmen, which turned potential sceptics into supporters. The takeaway was that being **embedded in the community** can be a win-win: it enriches the stay for guests and earns goodwill locally.

- **Growth and Scaling Smartly:** A forward-looking topic was how to grow sustainably. A few participants actually found themselves considering expansion sooner than expected (one had a waitlist of bookings for her yet-to-open glamping pods!). The discussion touched on planning for additional units, hiring help (when does it make sense to get a part-time cleaner or a co-host?), and ensuring quality control as you scale. Mentors advised to *grow only as fast as you can maintain*

your unique quality, reminding everyone that reputation is key in this business. Tools like the ones from Session 3 were cited as crucial if scaling – e.g. a channel manager becomes essential when you have multiple listings. This gave the more ambitious attendees some food for thought on next steps beyond just launching.

Throughout these topics, Session 4 often circled back to **individual participant cases** – essentially mini hot-seats.

For example, the group might spend 5-10 minutes collectively brainstorming solutions for one participant's issue (like how to attract mid-week bookings to a remote cottage, or how to convert an old dairy shed into a quirky meeting space for guests). This collaborative problem-solving was hugely valuable because it aggregated the diverse brains in the "room." By covering these topics, Session 4 ensured a comprehensive capstone, touching on strategic and tactical aspects that will carry participants into the future.

Challenges Addressed

- Fear of launching
- Funding access
- Maintaining quality

Because Session 4 was participant-led in many ways, it addressed a variety of **individual challenges**, often ones that were more situational. Some challenges included **analysis paralysis** – a couple of participants had so many ideas and to-dos that they struggled to prioritise.

The group and mentor helped by suggesting, for example, to focus on "MVP" (minimum viable product) for launch and leave the nice-to-haves for later, which eased their anxiety. **Fear of launching** was another tacit challenge that got aired; there's always that worry "What if I open and no one comes? Or things go wrong?" The mentor addressed this by reminding them of all the preparation they've done (and fallbacks like adjusting pricing or marketing if things start slow).

A big challenge that was discussed is **maintaining quality and passion over time** – essentially, not burning out or losing the initial spark. The solution discussed was to keep engaging with peers (like this group), continuously seek feedback from guests, and maybe even take breaks to travel and see other alternative stays for inspiration.

On a more concrete level, challenges like **accessing funding** or dealing with slow seasons came up. While those could be whole sessions on their own, the group did share tips (one member had success with a LEADER grant, another had strategies for off-season workshops to generate income).

Personal limitations were also addressed: one participant was a bit older and worried about the physical demands of running a glampsite. The group brainstormed ways to make it feasible (like hiring local teens for changeovers, investing in easier maintenance designs, etc.). In tackling this broad array of issues, Session 4 effectively served as a catch-all safety net – nobody's issue fell through the cracks. It was clear that many challenges feel lighter when dissected in a group setting, and everyone left with at least a tentative solution or a resource to consult.

Key Insights & Highlights

- Business plans evolve.
- Guest experience is continuous refinement.

A profound insight from Session 4 was the realisation of how far the participants had come, which became evident as they discussed next steps. Many had a "wow, I actually know what I'm talking about now!" moment. For instance, when one member raised a challenge about integrating sustainability meaningfully, others chimed in, referencing things learned earlier:

"Remember in Session 1 we talked about aligning with values – maybe offer a tree-planting activity to guests?"

The fact that participants could now advise each other showed the knowledge they'd internalised. A highlight was when Lorcan turned the tables and asked each person to share *their* biggest insight or breakthrough from the whole series.

The responses were inspiring: one said she finally overcame her fear of failure, another discovered a passion for storytelling, another realized he doesn't have to do everything alone. This reflection not only reinforced their learning but created an emotional high point – there were even a few teary-eyed moments of pride and excitement. Another key takeaway hammered home in this session was the idea that **an alternative tourism business is a journey, not a one-time setup**.

Lorcan advised them to keep learning, adapting, and leaning on the community as things evolve. He shared how his own project continues to change (he's now looking into tiny houses and involving his children in the business). This reassured participants that it's okay if not everything is figured out on day one; what matters is having the tools and network to navigate whatever comes. A memorable quote from the discussion was,

"Your business plan is a living document – and so is your guest experience. Keep refining them."

In terms of specific highlights, the group was excited about the idea of continuing as a **peer network**. They exchanged contact info and one participant even offered to host a meetup at her farm once her project is up and running. The sense of continued support was a powerful outcome.

Lastly, one cannot forget the **"emotional story" insight** that was reiterated: building an emotional story around each stay is essential to shaping an experience-based accommodation. Hearing that again in context – now that participants had developed their own stories – was validating.

In sum, Session 4's insights were both practical and personal: it solidified knowledge and stoked the inner fire of these entrepreneurs to go forth and create something truly special.

Benefits to Participants

- Clear 90-day action plan
- Peer accountability
- Stronger confidence
- Ongoing support network

The benefits of Session 4 were a bit less tangible than a new skill or tool – but no less important. One major benefit was a sense of **closure and accomplishment**. Participants left feeling proud of how much they had learned and done over the month. Many commented that they felt "transformed" from when they first logged into Session 1, now carrying a toolkit of knowledge and a network of contacts.

For instance, one participant who had been extremely quiet in early sessions came out of her shell in Session 4, enthusiastically sharing her plan to open bookings and even offering advice to others – a boost in confidence that the mentoring journey cultivated.

Another benefit was **clarity on next steps**. Instead of finishing the program and thinking "Now what?", everyone had a concrete plan or at least a prioritised list. For example, one attendee's next steps were:

> *"I'm going to*
>
> *1) finalize pricing and set up booking page by end of January,*
>
> *2) apply for that grant in February,*
>
> *3) start building in March."*

Having this 'spoken' roadmap (which the group helped each other refine) made the daunting task of launching or expanding feel manageable. Participants also gained **a lasting support system** – arguably one of the biggest benefits. They exchanged emails, set up a group chat, and even discussed visiting each other's properties once open. This means the learning and encouragement can continue beyond the formal clinics.

Additionally, EPIC STAYS organisers provided follow-up resources (like links to funding opportunities, the compiled slide decks, and an invitation to an international showcase event), which the participants can use, so they're not left adrift.

Finally, on a motivational level, Session 4 gave everyone a surge of **momentum and accountability**. There's something powerful about publicly stating your goal and having a cohort cheer you on – it tends to propel people into action.

Indeed, feedback collected later indicated that within a few weeks of the final session, several participants had hit significant milestones (like launching a website or getting planning approval) that they attribute to the focus and drive gained in the clinic.

In summary, the concluding session ensured that participants not only learned during the program, but also were set up to **continue growing, implementing, and succeeding afterward**. Each person left with the knowledge that they have a clear path forward and a community rooting for their success – which is

perhaps the greatest takeaway of all.

The Value of a Mentor: Lorcan Kearns, Cabin Crusaders

In Session 4, **Lorcan Kearns** continued as the anchor but also somewhat stepped back to let participants take the lead in sharing and problem-solving. His role was more of a **seasoned facilitator and cheerleader** in this final meeting.

Of course, when technical or complex issues came up (like pricing strategy or handling a difficult guest scenario), Lorcan provided his expert take – often referencing how he managed similar issues at Crusader Cabins.

One notable contribution he made was breaking down his **first year after launch**: he shared the numbers of guests he had in the initial months, how he gradually increased occupancy, and even how long it took to reach profitability. This transparency gave everyone a realistic benchmark and comfort that slow starts can be normal.

Lorcan's credibility and warmth really shone as he addressed the group at the end, encouraging them to stay passionate and reminding them that by choosing to create an alternative stay, they are contributing to something bigger – more sustainable, locally rooted tourism.

Participants expressed that Lorcan's mentorship was invaluable not just for his knowledge, but for his *passion*. As one attendee said in thanks,

> *"It's clear you care about each of our projects like it's your own – that gives us so much confidence."*

Indeed, Lorcan made himself available even beyond the sessions, offering that they could call him for a chat if they hit a wall in the future. This kind of genuine investment in the participants' success exemplified the spirit of EPIC STAYS mentoring. So in Session 4, Lorcan's role evolved into ensuring the torch was passed – empowering the participants to trust themselves and each other as they move forward.

Testimonials from Participants

> *"'I can highly recommend Epic Stays Mentorship. The presenters were very informative, delivering each session in a very professional and enjoyable way. The presentation slides were excellent and made available for participants to use at a later time.*
>
> *I learned so much from the mentorship, and it has given me much valuable information to help me improve and develop my business"*
>
> *Mentoring Session Attendee, Donegal, Ireland*

> *"'A heartfelt thank you to you Laura and Lorcan for running this course. The information, guidance, experience and knowledge shared in these modules will save me a lot of time and answer a lot of the questions on my mind'.*
>
> *Mentoring Session Attendee, Leitrim, Ireland*

> *"'Many thanks for the very useful mentoring for Epic Stays and the generous advice given by Laura and Lorcan from Crusader Cabins. Useful technology, learning from others' mistakes and some fantastic innovative ideas were the key takeaways. I look forward to using all the practical tips shared in planning our Epic Stay in Co. Cavan'."*
>
> *Mentoring Session Attendee, Cavan, Ireland*

Irish Mentoring Clinics Takeaway

The Irish EPIC STAYS mentoring clinics demonstrate that structured, action-led mentoring accelerates rural tourism innovation. Download the toolkit so you can do something similar:

- Run the full 4-session programme
- Adapt it to your audience and region
- Deliver it as a mentoring, workshop or incubator
- Reuse templates and learning materials

Get to Work

1. Download the Mentoring Pack
2. Download the Blank Templates
3. Review the Irish Example
4. Start running your own clinics

Sources: The above summary is based on content and participant experiences from the EPIC STAYS Ireland mentoring clinics, including the program's slide decks, mentor discussion recaps, and attendee feedback. All insights reflect the real-world focus and outcomes of the sessions as documented in the EPIC STAYS project materials and firsthand accounts.

No information about mentoring session attendees is disclosed for GDPR reasons.