Small lodge or inn

3 to 20 rooms, a few people who do everything

Playbook | For: Owners and managers of lodges, inns, motels and small B&Bs

Who this is for

You run 3 to 20 rooms with a small team. Picture a three-room fly-in lodge with two staff who cook, clean, fix the generator and greet the floatplane. Nobody has time for software. You want one list of what needs doing, a record of what was done, and maybe a QR card so guests can ask for towels without hunting you down.

Use ExpTix lightly. Switch on what saves you a trip or a forgotten job, and leave the rest off. You can switch more on later without starting again.

What to switch on and what to leave off

Area	Recommendation	Why
Departments	Keep 3 or 4: Front office, Housekeeping, Engineering (call it Maintenance if you like), Kitchen. Untick **Active** on the rest.	Fewer departments means fewer places for a job to hide.
Housekeeping board	On.	Even with three rooms, red, blue and green tells the other person what is ready.
Food safety	On if you serve food.	Fridge and freezer readings in seconds, and a clean log for the health inspector.
Preventive maintenance	On, with a short list: generator service, water treatment, smoke alarm test, chimney or stove check.	Remote sites cannot wait for a repair person. PM jobs remind you before things fail.
Guest QR portal	Optional.	Worth it if guests are spread across cabins. Skip it if

Area	Recommendation	Why
		guests eat with you and just ask.
PMS link (Opera)	Off.	You run fine without one. Set **Occ** or **Vac** and **Due in** or **Due out** by hand on **Rooms**.
Canary, email to ticket, sensors	Off at first.	Each one is something else to look after.
Notifications	In-app and web push only.	No SMS or email setup needed.
Events and BEOs, Key control, purchase requests	Off or ignored.	Turn them on if you host groups or hand out master keys.

Without a PMS, the board is only as accurate as your taps. Make “tap the room when a guest arrives or leaves” part of the routine.

Hosting: keep it simple

Use SQLite on ordinary shared web hosting that offers an up-to-date PHP 8.2+ and cron. SQLite needs no database setup and is fine for a small property with a few dozen staff. The deployment guide walks through shared hosting in about an hour.

You need three things whatever you pick: HTTPS, the cron job running every minute, and `demo_mode` set to `false`. Without cron, SLA timers and reminders stall overnight.

Limited internet

ExpTix needs a connection to the server to save work. If the link drops, staff see that they are offline. Write the job down and log it when the link is back.

On a satellite or slow link, keep it light:

1. Use phones on the lodge Wi-Fi, installed from the browser with **Add to Home Screen**.
2. Take photos only when they help. Every photo is an upload over your link.
3. Skip integrations you do not need. Each one adds traffic.

A small computer at the lodge instead

You can run ExpTix on a small computer at the lodge so staff on the local Wi-Fi keep working when the outside link is down. Only do this if someone can maintain it. The trade-offs:

- **For it:** staff can log and finish jobs on the local network during an outage.
- **Against it:** you own the power, updates, backups and HTTPS certificate. Push alerts still need the internet, because they travel through the phone makers' push services. Guests outside your Wi-Fi cannot reach the QR page. A failed disk with no off-site backup loses the record.

For most small lodges, ordinary hosting with a written fallback is the safer choice.

Setup in order

Step	What	Time
1	Hosting, install, `create-admin`, HTTPS, cron (see the deployment guide)	About 1 hour
2	Sign in, change the temporary password, turn on MFA in **My account**	5 minutes
3	Departments: switch off the ones you do not need, rename the rest	10 minutes
4	**Users**: one account per person. Never share a sign-in	10 minutes
5	Room types and **Rooms**	15 minutes
6	SLA policies: keep the defaults, loosen the ones you cannot meet	10 minutes
7	Request categories: keep a short list of quick picks	20 minutes
8	Checklist templates: one room check, one opening or closing check	20 minutes
9	PM schedules for the 4 or 5 things that would hurt most if	30 minutes

Step	What	Time
	they failed	
10	Food safety points, if you serve food	15 minutes
11	Each person: **Add to Home Screen**, **Enable push alerts**, **Send a test**	10 minutes each
12	Optional: **Room QR codes**, print and place	20 minutes

Plan on one afternoon, plus the hosting hour.

SLAs for a small team

The demo timers assume a staffed hotel (a guest amenity in 20 minutes, a Critical response in 5). Two people cannot always meet those. Set timers you can keep, and keep Critical tight for safety. A breached timer should mean something went wrong, not that someone was out on the dock.

Who does what

At a lodge, one person wears several hats. Give each person the lowest role that covers what they do.

Person	Role in ExpTix	Departments
Owner or manager	General manager (also the administrator)	All
Second staff member	Supervisor	Housekeeping, also works in Kitchen and Maintenance
Seasonal help	Staff	Their main area, plus **Also works in** for the rest
Visiting trades (generator, water, propane)	Contractor	Maintenance only

The GM role covers **Users**, **Integrations** and **API and MCP**, so a separate administrator account is optional. If you keep one, use it only for setup.

Only Front desk and higher roles can change **Occ**, **Vac**, **Due in** and **Due out**, and only Supervisor and higher can mark a room **Inspected**. Whoever checks guests in needs at least the Front desk role.

Assign every user to every department they help with, using **Also works in**. Otherwise they will not see jobs for that team.

A day in the life

1. **Morning:** both staff tick **On shift**. The manager reads the **Shift logbook** and taps **Mark read**.
2. **Kitchen opening:** temperatures go in with **Save reading**. A bad reading opens an urgent job by itself.
3. **Guests leave:** the room is marked **Due out**, then **Start cleaning** and **Clean**. The manager checks it and taps **Inspected**.
4. **Something breaks:** whoever sees it taps **+ New**, types “shower drain slow in cabin 2”, adds a photo. It goes to Maintenance.
5. **The generator PM comes up:** it appears in **My work** with a checklist. Tick, **Log time and parts**, **Resolve**.
6. **Evening:** one line in the **Shift logbook** for tomorrow. Both untick **On shift**.

Reports to check weekly

Open **Reports**, pick 7 days. Ten minutes is enough.

- **Open and overdue jobs:** anything older than a week needs a decision.
- **Repeat-problem rooms:** the same cabin keeps coming up? Fix the cause.
- **PM on time:** missed PM at a remote site costs more than anywhere else.
- **Parts used:** reorder before the next supply run.
- **Guest ratings,** if you use QR codes.

Common pitfalls

- **Switching everything on.** More screens means more to ignore. Start small.
- **No cron.** Timers and PM jobs stop. Check it in week one.
- **Shared sign-ins.** ExpTix writes a name on every action. Shared accounts make the record useless.
- **Forgetting room status.** Without a PMS, nobody else updates Occ, Vac, Due in and Due out.
- **No backup.** Run `cli.php backup` daily and copy it off the server. Keep `app.key` safe too.
- **Expecting support from a vendor.** ExpTix is free software with no support contract. Know who your IT person is before you need them.

When to grow

Move to the mid-size hotel playbook when:

- you have more than about 20 rooms or a few dozen staff,
- you hire department heads who need their own SLAs and checklists,
- several people update ExpTix at the same moment all day.

At that point, move to MySQL. There is no built-in converter yet: export each table to CSV and import it into a freshly migrated MySQL database, or start fresh at a quiet time.