

# AI's growing role in tourism highlighted at World Travel Market Summit

The World Travel Market Ministers' Summit, held in partnership with UN Tourism and the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC), brought together over 20 tourism ministers and industry leaders from Expedia, HBX Group, and JTB Corp. in London to explore the transformative role of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the tourism sector.

## AI: A Tool for Transformation

Opening the discussion, **Natalia Bayona**, Executive Director of UN Tourism, underscored the critical role of generative AI in revolutionizing the industry. She remarked:

"Tourism thrives on storytelling, and AI offers us the tools to craft personalized and compelling narratives. From marketing and destination promotion to digital infrastructure and education, technology can enhance the sector's growth. However, AI must work in harmony with human intelligence to achieve its full potential."

## UN Tourism's AI Roadmap

The summit showcased UN Tourism's strategic roadmap, highlighting:

- **Research and Adoption:** Accelerating the integration of AI across tourism operations.
- **Workforce Reskilling:** Preparing the workforce for tech-driven roles.
- **Innovation Investment:** Supporting new technologies to boost efficiency and competitiveness.

The roadmap envisions AI not only as a productivity tool but as a driver for job creation, with a strong focus on upskilling to meet emerging demands.

## WTTC's Vision for the Future

**Julia Simpson**, President and CEO of WTTC, celebrated the sector's resilience and potential, stating:

"In 2023, Travel & Tourism added nearly \$10 trillion to the global economy and supported 330 million jobs. This year, we're poised to surpass these figures. By

embracing AI and other innovations, we can ensure a sustainable, inclusive, and resilient future for the industry."

Simpson emphasized the need to balance technological advancements with sustainability and inclusivity, positioning AI as a critical tool for addressing global challenges such as climate change.

### **Driving Innovation and Inclusion**

The summit also featured the launch of the **Artificial Intelligence Challenge**, an initiative to inspire AI-powered solutions in tourism branding, marketing, and operations. Complementing this, UN Tourism announced regional awards and capacity-building programs aimed at fostering innovation and ensuring equitable benefits for small businesses and emerging destinations.

The Ministers' Summit underscored a shared commitment to leveraging AI to propel tourism into a future that is smarter, more sustainable, and deeply human-centered.