

# AM News

VOL. 85 - February 2026



**UN Tourism**



*Dear Affiliate Members,*

*I am pleased to introduce the first edition of the Affiliate Members Newsletter for 2026. This monthly publication will keep you updated on the latest news, events, and initiatives related to your membership and the Affiliate Members network. Also included is the provisional calendar of events for 2026, featuring key UN Tourism events.*

*Only a few weeks ago, several Affiliate Members from all over the world were actively engaged in FITUR 2026, the leading international tourism fair in Madrid, Spain. FITUR opened 2026 by confirming the strong momentum of the global tourism sector, surpassing 255,000 visitors over its five days. This favourable context is reflected in 2025 figures, a year in which, according to UN Tourism, international tourist arrivals worldwide exceeded 1.5 billion.*

*I would like to extend our sincere thanks to all Affiliate Members who participated in and supported the dedicated activities organized by the Affiliate Members and Public-Private Collaboration Department (AM-PPC). These included:*

- **Affiliate Members Corner: “Cross-Sector Value in Tourism”**, which brought together diverse perspectives on how collaboration across industries can enhance tourism competitiveness and innovation presented by expert Affiliate Members in their respective tourism sectors.*
- **Launch of the publication A Guide for the Development of Astrotourism**, produced by UN Tourism in collaboration with the Affiliate Member Starlight Foundation, highlighting practical strategies for developing sustainable and educational astrotourism experiences.*

*We continue to see a very positive response to the new tools available on AMConnected+, including the mobile app now accessible on both iOS and Android. I encourage all Affiliate Members to stay active on the platform, where you can access resources, explore collaboration opportunities, and contribute to shaping the future of tourism together.*

*The Affiliate Members and Public-Private Collaboration Department remains fully committed to supporting your initiatives and strengthening partnerships across our network. Please feel free to share your ideas, suggestions, or comments with us at any time.*

*Sincerely,  
Ion Vilcu  
Director,  
AM-PPC*



# **AGENDA OF THE AFFILIATE MEMBERS - EVENTS 2026**

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## **UN TOURISM STATUTORY AND HIGH-LEVEL MEETINGS**

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### **UN TOURISM GENERAL ASSEMBLY & EXECUTIVE COUNCILS**

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10-11 June	<b>126th Executive Council</b>	Toledo, Spain
Oct.	<b>127th Executive Council</b>	Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

### **UN TOURISM REGIONAL COMMISSIONS**

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10-12 Feb.	<b>52nd Regional Commission for the Middle East</b>	Kuwait, State of Kuwait
4-6 May	<b>38th Joint Meeting of East Asia and the Pacific and South Asia</b>	Iran (Islamic Republic of)
21-22 May	<b>72nd Regional Commission for Europe</b>	Valletta, Malta
2-4 July	<b>69th Regional Commission for Africa</b>	Mahé, Republic of Seychelles
TBC	<b>71st Regional Commission for the Americas</b>	Paraguay

### **BOARD OF THE AFFILIATE MEMBERS**

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21 Jan.	<b>63rd Meeting of the Board of the Affiliate Members</b>	Madrid, Spain
TBC	<b>64th Meeting of the Board of the Affiliate Members</b>	WTM, London, UK

### **COMMITTEE ON MATTERS RELATED TO AFFILIATE MEMBERSHIP**

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TBC	<b>9th Meeting of the Committee on Matters Related to Affiliate Membership (CMAM)</b>	TBC
TBC	<b>10th Meeting of the Committee on Matters Related to Affiliate Membership (CMAM)</b>	TBC

## **UN TOURISM/AM-PPC THEMATIC EVENTS WITH THE PARTICIPATION OF AFFILIATE MEMBERS**

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20 March	<b>1st UN Tourism Awards for Excellence in Sustainable Sports Tourism powered by FIA</b>	Madrid, Spain
25-27 March	<b><u>13th World Congress on Snow, Mountain and Wellness Tourism</u></b>	Ordino, Andorra
27 Sept.	<b>World Tourism Day</b>	El Salvador
27 Sept.	<b>World Congress on Screen Tourism</b>	Madrid, Spain
TBC	<b>10th UN Tourism Global Wine Tourism Conference</b>	
TBC	<b>11th UN Tourism World Forum on Gastronomy Tourism</b>	

## AM-PPC NEWS

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### **FITUR 2026: Key Highlights and Achievements of UN Tourism Affiliate Members**

FITUR 2026 once again proved to be a key global platform for collaboration, innovation, and strategic dialogue among UN Tourism Affiliate Members. Throughout the week, Affiliate Members actively contributed to high-level governance discussions, knowledge exchange, thematic debates, and bilateral engagements—reinforcing the essential role of the Affiliate Membership in advancing UN Tourism’s mission.

On this occasion, the 63<sup>rd</sup> Meeting of the Board of Affiliate Members took place, hosted by IFEMA, Affiliate Member and Board Member, whose hospitality made the meeting possible within the framework of the fair.

This meeting marked an important moment of reflection and forward-looking planning, as it was the second in-person official meeting of the Board for the 2026–2029 mandate. The session was opened by UN Tourism Secretary-General Shaikha N. Alnuwais, who delivered welcome remarks highlighting the strategic importance of Affiliate Members as a key pillar of UN Tourism and as drivers of innovation, expertise, and public-private collaboration.

Throughout FITUR 2026, the Affiliate Members and Public-Private Collaboration Department held numerous bilateral meetings aimed at strengthening existing partnerships and exploring new opportunities.

Productive exchanges took place with Affiliate Members, including:

- AFEET
- CANATUR Peru
- Concanaco
- Consorzio Turistico Valchiavenna
- FAEVYT
- FIA
- Fundación Starlight
- ICCA
- ICVB
- IGLTA
- Nayarit Tourism Board
- Observatorio Turístico de Guanajuato
- Secretaría de Turismo de Yucatán
- Visit Buenos Aires

FITUR 2026 reaffirmed the strength, diversity, and strategic value of the UN Tourism Affiliate Membership. The Organization looks forward to continuing these collaborations and transforming shared ideas into impactful initiatives in the coming period.

You can find more information [\*\*HERE\*\*](#)



# AM-PPC NEWS

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## 2026: A Landmark Year for Astrotourism

2026 is shaping up to be an exceptional year for astrotourism. This year will feature major astronomical events, including the total solar eclipse visible across parts of Europe. These rare phenomena are driving unprecedented interest in sky-related travel and reinforcing the strategic importance of astrotourism for destinations worldwide.

In this context, UN Tourism officially launched the publication *A Guide for the Development of Astrotourism* at FITUR 2026, developed in collaboration with its Affiliate Member Fundación Starlight. The guide provides practical support to destinations and tourism stakeholders seeking to design and manage sustainable astrotourism products.

The session highlighted FITUR as a strategic platform to showcase the value of the UN Tourism Affiliate Members network and its contribution to applied knowledge for the sector. This initiative follows previous publications such as *Artificial Intelligence Adoption in Tourism*, reinforcing UN Tourism's commitment to innovation and future-oriented tourism development.

### Why astrotourism?

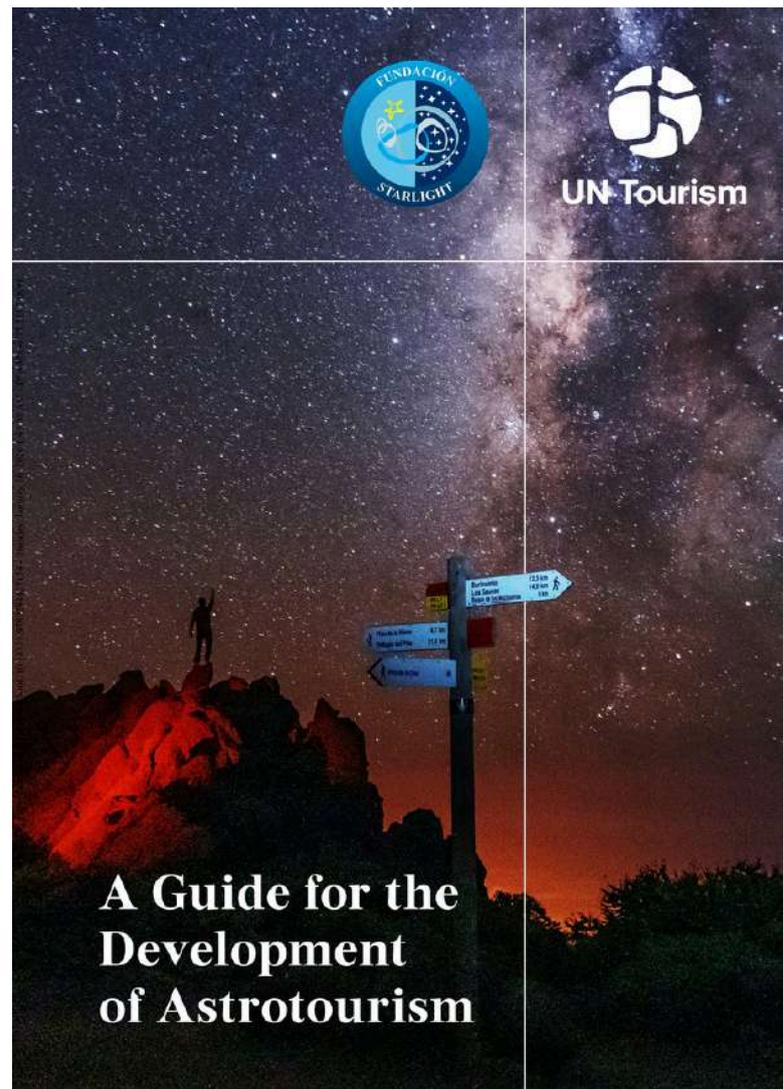
Astrotourism is rapidly gaining momentum as travelers seek authentic, science-based and nature-connected experiences:

- Bookings linked to dark sky destinations have increased by 320% since 2022 (Tripadvisor Trendcast 2025).
- 58% of travelers express interest in trips centered on celestial phenomena (Booking.com Travel Predictions 2025).

The guide offers practical guidance to:

- Design and structure astrotourism products
- Protect the night sky as natural heritage
- Integrate scientific education and cultural interpretation
- Engage local communities
- Ensure long-term sustainability

You can find more information [HERE](#)



## AM-PPC NEWS

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### Affiliate Members take the stage at FITUR in the Corner "Cross-Sector Value in Tourism"

A new edition of the Affiliate Members Corner took place on Friday, 23 January, in the framework of the International Tourism Fair (FITUR) in Madrid.

Under the title "Cross-Sector Value in Tourism", the session brought together Affiliate Members to explore how cross-sector collaboration is contributing to the development of more competitive, resilient, and sustainable destinations.

Through concrete case studies and data-driven insights, the session highlighted the growing interdependence between tourism and a wide range of sectors, demonstrating how cross-sector collaboration fosters innovation, diversifies tourism offerings, and creates shared value at the destination level.

Representatives from the following affiliated entities presented their respective topics:

- Culture: Istanbul Convention & Visitors Bureau (ICVB)
- Music and Festivals: Tripadvisor
- Health and Wellness: European Historic Thermal Towns Association (EHTTA)
- Shopping and Retail: Madrid Destino Cultura, Turismo y Negocio
- Sport: Fideicomiso de Promoción Turística del Estado de Nayarit
- Hospitality: Zanzibar Association of Tourism Investors (ZATI)
- Real Estate and Urban Development: Maraey
- Insurance and Travel Services: Allianz Partners Spain

Once again, this session demonstrated the key role of the Affiliate Members in contributing knowledge, expertise, data, and practical experiences that inspire destinations and stakeholders worldwide. All relevant information, including the video recording, photos, and presentations, is available on the event website.

You can find more information [HERE](#)



# AM-PPC NEWS

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## The Summary of Affiliate Members' Activities for 2025 is now available

The Summary of Affiliate Members' Activities for 2025 (January–December), now available on AMConnected+, the Affiliate Members' exclusive platform.

This report has been developed to provide all Affiliate Members with a comprehensive overview of the main activities, initiatives, and services carried out by the Affiliate Members and Public-Private Collaboration Department (AM-PPC), as well as to highlight the contributions and achievements of our Affiliate Members throughout the year.

The 2025 Summary offers a panoramic view of the engagement, collaboration, and impact of our Affiliate Members—both in their work with UN Tourism and in their partnerships with one another.

All activities implemented from January to December 2025 and involving our Affiliate Members have been presented in a visual, accessible, and engaging format.

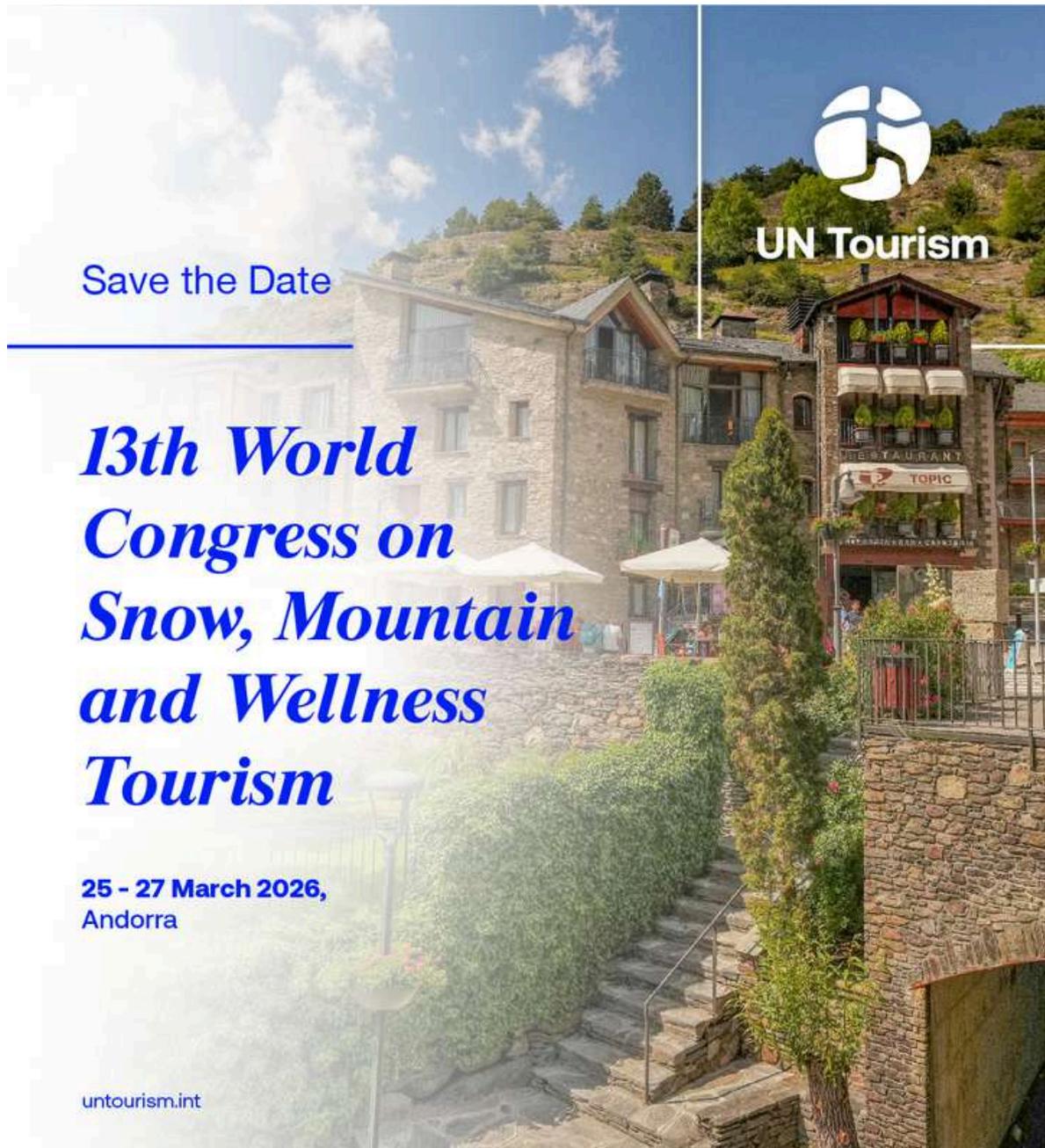
As always, supporting our Members in the accomplishment of their objectives—and celebrating the excellent results achieved along the way—remains a top priority for us. We believe it is essential to showcase the valuable role that Affiliate Members play in advancing a more responsible, sustainable, and innovative tourism sector.

From the Affiliate Members and Public-Private Collaboration Department, we hope this document will serve as a useful tool to discover new opportunities for collaboration, expand your network, and further increase your participation in our activities.

You can find more information [HERE](#)



# UPCOMING EVENTS



Save the Date

## *13th World Congress on Snow, Mountain and Wellness Tourism*

25 - 27 March 2026,  
Andorra

[untourism.int](http://untourism.int)



**MOUNTAINLIKERS**

13<sup>th</sup> WORLD CONGRESS ON SNOW, MOUNTAIN, AND WELLNESS TOURISM  
25 - 27 March 2026 - Ordino - ANDORRA  
[www.mountainlikers.com](http://www.mountainlikers.com)

Organisers:



Comú d'Ordino



Govern d'Andorra



UN Tourism



Andorra  
[www.turismeandorra.com](http://www.turismeandorra.com)

Technology Partner



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# UN TOURISM HIGHLIGHTS

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## International tourist arrivals up 4% in 2025 reflecting strong travel demand around the world

International tourist arrivals (overnight visitors) grew by 4% in 2025, as most destinations worldwide posted solid results. According to the first World Tourism Barometer of the year, an estimated 1.52 billion international tourists were recorded globally in 2025, almost 60 million more than in 2024.

These numbers reflect a return to pre-pandemic growth trends, closer to the 5% average increase per year between 2009 and 2019. Results were driven by strong demand, robust performance from large source markets and the ongoing recovery of destinations in Asia and the Pacific. Increased air connectivity and enhanced visa facilitation also supported international travel in 2025.

Key takeaways from this edition show:

- **Europe**, the world's largest destination region, recorded 793 million international tourists in 2025

- The Americas (218 million) recorded 1% growth last year, with mixed results across subregions.
- Africa (81 million) saw an 8% increase in arrivals in 2025, with particularly strong results in North Africa (+11%).
- The Middle East recorded 3% growth in 2025, equivalent to 39% above pre-pandemic levels, the strongest results relative to 2019.
- Arrivals in Asia and the Pacific (331 million) grew 6% last year but are still 9% below 2019 levels as the region continued to rebound.

After solid growth in 2024, most destinations continued to enjoy strong results in 2025.

International tourism is expected to grow 3% to 4% in 2026 compared to 2025, assuming that Asia and the Pacific continue to recover, global economic conditions remain favorable, and geopolitical conflicts do not escalate. Uncertainty from current geopolitical tensions and conflicts poses an increasing risk for tourism in 2026.

You can find more information [HERE](#)



# UN TOURISM HIGHLIGHTS

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## UN Tourism launches road map towards the International Year of Sustainable and Resilient Tourism 2027

UN Tourism is leading the shift from dialogue to delivery as it begins preparations for the International Year of Sustainable and Resilient Tourism in 2027.

The United Nations General Assembly mandated UN Tourism with the implementation of the International Year. Now, with the launch of its new Road Map, the Organization has taken another step towards delivering on its responsibility. The Road Map is the product of a collaborative process, and was warmly welcomed by UN Tourism's Committee on Tourism and Sustainability (CTS).

UN Tourism Secretary-General Shaikha N. Alnuwais says: "Sustainability and resilience are not end goals; they are a continuous process. The International Year of Sustainable and Resilient Tourism 2027 will allow UN Tourism, as the leading international tourism organization, to support our Member States in positioning tourism as a truly transformative sector within the post-2030 agenda."

Meeting in Madrid, the Committee commended UN Tourism's work in listening to the priorities of its Member States, and welcomed the clear commitment of the new leadership to begin the build-up to 2027 as strongly as possible.

Chair and Minister of Tourism of Costa Rica William Rodríguez López said: "As leaders of tourism, we consistently highlight the sector's transformative potential and its critical role in national and global development agendas, including climate action and reflections beyond 2030. The International Year offers a unique opportunity to translate this shared understanding into more concrete and coordinated action."

The process will be anchored in the Committee on Tourism and Sustainability, guided by a Steering Committee of Member States, informed through consultations held within the Regional Commission meetings and endorsed by the Executive Council.

The Committee on Tourism and Sustainability (CTS) is a subsidiary organ of the Executive Council, responsible for monitoring the implementation of the Organization's programme of work in sustainable tourism.

You can find more information [HERE](#)



# UN TOURISM HIGHLIGHTS

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## Tourism Investment in Bulgaria: new UN Tourism Guidelines Highlight Opportunities in the Sector

UN Tourism has officially launched Tourism Doing Business: Investing in Bulgaria, a comprehensive set of guidelines of the opportunities available to investors in the country's tourism sector.

The publication comes as Bulgarian tourism enters a new investment cycle, underscored by macroeconomic predictability, full EU integration, strong tourism performance, and an asset base that is diverse and differentiated from its competitors. The guidelines were officially presented to Bulgaria's outgoing Minister of Tourism H.E. Mr. Miroslav Borshos, during his official visit to the UN Tourism headquarters in Madrid.

Bulgaria has established itself as a year-round destination, with diverse attractions, including sun and beach tourism, with 25 Blue Flag beaches, a winter travel destination, and a leader in both wellness tourism and cultural and heritage travel, with 10 UNESCO World Heritage Sites

**Tourism Doing Business: Investing in Bulgaria** provides potential investors with key data and analysis of the opportunities and investment regulations and processes. Key takeaways from the publication show that:

- Bulgaria welcomed a record 13.3 million international visitors (2024), surpassing 2019 levels by 5.6%.
- The country is enjoying a domestic tourism boom: spending reached EUR 1.14 billion in 2024, +89% vs 2019.
- International receipts from tourism totalled USD 4.3 billion in 2024, with 2025 continuing an upward trajectory.
- Major brands are increasingly investing in Bulgaria: Hyatt, Marriott, Hilton, Melia, Radisson, IHG, Accor, through both rebranding and new developments across Sofia, Plovdiv, Albena, Burgas, Obzor. Additionally, pipeline strengthening projects such as the Marriott I Tower and anticipated entry of luxury brands (e.g., Nobu) reinforce Bulgaria as a rising premium market.

You can find more information [HERE](#)



# AFFILIATE MEMBERS NEWS

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## Risk Management for Outdoor Programs

Forty-Hour Online Certification Course for Outdoor, Adventure and Travel Professionals  
Viristar's Risk Management for Outdoor Programs course offers a comprehensive training in safety management for outdoor, adventure, travel and related programs.

This 40-hour course covers theoretical models of incident causation and prevention, safety standards, and detailed procedures for helping prevent and mitigate incidents.

The curriculum addresses risk assessment and safety management practices, an overview of general legal principles, and adventure activity standards and good practice guides.

Graduates complete the course with valuable, practical skills and expert guidance for improving safety at their organization.

### Course Dates

- February 4 - March 4, 2026
- March 4 - April 1, 2026
- April 1 - 29, 2026

- May 6 - June 3, 2026
- August 5 - September 2, 2026
- September 2 - 30, 2026
- October 7 - November 4, 2026
- November 4 - December 2, 2026

### Group and Custom Course Options

The training can be delivered to intact groups, teams and professional communities. Participants receive the same globally respected Viristar curriculum offered in open-enrollment courses, delivered on dates and schedules selected by the group.

A minimum of ten participants is generally required for group delivery. Viristar offers a 20 percent tuition discount for enrollments of ten or more participants.

Enroll in a course at:  
<https://www.viristar.com/course/risk-management-for-outdoor-programs/>

### Additional Services Offered by Viristar

- [Adventure Safety Accreditation](#)
- [Risk Management Review](#)
- [Incident Review](#)
- [Safety Systems Development](#)



**VIRISTAR.**



## AFFILIATE MEMBERS NEWS

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### **The Faculty of Tourism and Gastronomy Celebrates 50 Years of Academic Excellence and Commitment to the Sector**

On Tuesday, November 25, Universidad La Salle Bajío, located in Leon, Guanajuato, Mexico, celebrated the 50th anniversary of the School of Tourism and Gastronomy, commemorating five decades of academic excellence, service, and community.

Over its first 50 years, the Faculty has experienced remarkable growth, establishing itself as a benchmark in the education of professionals in the sector. This progress is reflected in the achievement of various accreditations and reaccreditations that certify the quality of its academic programs recognized by national and international organizations such as CONAET (National Council for Quality in Tourism Education), CONPETH (Pan-American Confederation of Schools of Hospitality, Gastronomy, and Tourism) and AMESTUR (Mexican Association of Higher Education Schools in Tourism and Gastronomy).

As part of its commitment to continuous improvement, the Faculty has currently applied to TEDQual Certification, developed and administered by UN Tourism, formerly the United Nations World Tourism Organization, UNWTO.

which evaluates academic programs in tourism to ensure they meet international standards of quality, relevance, and sustainability.

A key element in the Faculty's development has been its close collaboration with various stakeholders in the tourism and gastronomy sectors. Examples of this include its active participation in organizations and networks such as Slow Food and CONPEHT, as well as its significant involvement in strategic projects, most notably its role as a founding member of the Guanajuato Tourism Observatory Member of the UN Tourism International Network of Tourism Observatories (INSTO).

The history and presence of the Faculty, as well as the Tourism program's impact on the regional context, have been documented in the compilation *Five Decades of Passion for Service*. This publication highlights the Faculty's contribution to the education of more than three thousand graduates and its subsequent expansion into the field of gastronomy, with one of the first bachelor's degree programs in the region.



## AFFILIATE MEMBERS NEWS

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### Submit your entry for the Alimara Awards 2026!

The Alimara Awards recognize products, services, strategies or actions that bring an innovative perspective to communication, digitalization, sustainability and research within the tourism sector.

The submission period is open until February 3, 2026 at 11:59 p.m., and the 41st edition arrives with new features:

#### **New category: THROUGH AUDIOVISUAL**

This award recognizes marketing strategies and actions that use audiovisual content as a key element to raise awareness of a company, position a brand, or promote a destination.

### The Alimara CAT Award joins the competition

For the first time, the Alimara CAT Award — which honors the effective use of the Catalan language in tourism, hospitality, or gastronomy communication — will be included among the official award categories. Help us discover inspiring projects that are transforming the tourism, hospitality, and gastronomy sectors.

Participate or suggest a nomination: <https://www.cett.es/en/alimara-awards>

Organized by CETT-UB Tourism & Hospitality, Education/Research and B-Travel Tourism Fair, with the support of UN Tourism and the Language Policy Department of the Government of Catalonia.



## 41st CETT Alimara Awards Barcelona

Shine on the great night of tourism, hospitality, and gastronomy

[Submit your application](#)

# AFFILIATE MEMBERS NEWS

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## 15th Asia Tourism Forum to Take Place in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia

Co-hosted by School of Hotel and Tourism Management, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, and Mongolia Tourism Organisation, the 15th Asia Tourism Forum will be held in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, on 11-13 June 2026. Taking the theme of “The Asian Paradigm in Hospitality and Tourism”, the forum will address important issues Asia’s tourism industry is facing, particularly in the areas of development, service management, marketing and sustainability of tourism.

Join us on a journey through the captivating history of Ulaanbaatar, where ancient nomadic traditions blend seamlessly with modern vitality. Discover a unique tapestry of culture, heritage, and the warm hospitality that defines Mongolia.

The Forum invites submissions of research papers on (but not limited to) the following topics:

- Hospitality and Tourism in the Asian Paradigm
- Asian Hospitality
- Culture and Tourism
- Innovation and Entrepreneurship
- Luxury Experiences Management

- Sustainable Tourism and Regenerative Tourism
- ESG (Environmental, Social, Governance) in Tourism
- DEI (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion) in Tourism
- Health and Well-being
- AI and Service Robotics
- Digital Transformation
- Tourism Planning and Development
- Pedagogies and Innovations in Tourism and Hospitality Education
- Nature-based Tourism
- Rural Tourism
- Urban Tourism
- Tourism Economics and Forecasting
- Destination Management and Marketing
- Other topics relevant to the theme of the conference

Details: <https://atf2026.mto.mn/>

For enquiries about paper submission, please contact Professor Jinah Park, Assistant Professor, School of Hotel and Tourism Management, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University: [jinah.park@polyu.edu.hk](mailto:jinah.park@polyu.edu.hk)



SCHOOL OF HOTEL AND TOURISM MANAGEMENT



SCHOOL OF HOTEL AND TOURISM MANAGEMENT



Legal entities of public law

11-13 June 2026

# 15th Asia Tourism Forum

## Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia

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The Asian Paradigm in  
Hospitality and Tourism



# AFFILIATE MEMBERS NEWS

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## **A New Era for Irish Tourism. TOPOSOPHY's analysis for Ireland's new Tourism Policy Statement 2025-2031**

TOPOSOPHY is proud to support our clients across Ireland following the publication of the Irish Government's new Tourism Policy Statement. This pivotal document will shape the next five years of Irish tourism to 2031. Given our expertise in tourism policy and strategy, we have analysed the Policy and present below our top ten takeaways and their implications for the Irish tourism landscape.

### 10 Key Takeaways from the New Irish Tourism Policy Statement

- **Measuring Wider Contribution:** Focus on capturing the broader potential of Irish tourism across economic, social, and environmental themes.
- **Ambitious Growth Targets:** Setting clear, growth-focused targets for visitor numbers, employment, revenue, and distribution.
- **Extending the Off-Peak Season:** Introduction of "A New Tourism Season for Ireland" focusing on the shoulder months between May and October.
- **Regional Domestic Growth:** Emphasis on incentivising the domestic market to explore "less mature" regional destinations.
- **Climate Action & Emissions:** Aligning the tourism industry with national climate action targets and supporting emissions reductions.
- **Reshaping the Strategy Landscape:** The delivery of a host of new strategies and initiatives that will fundamentally reshape the existing tourism planning and strategy landscape.
- **Data & Monitoring Upgrade:** Implementing a new approach to tourism data, monitoring, and infrastructure, including developing new data sets and platforms for measuring impact.
- **Event Diplomacy & Festivals:** Prioritising the development of business events, major sports event diplomacy, and supporting a unique year-round festivals calendar.
- **Prosperity Distribution:** A focus on distributing tourism prosperity regionally, seasonally across the year, and temporally across the day, including the night-time economy.
- **Digital & AI Transformation:** Promoting digital transformation and the adoption of Artificial Intelligence across the Irish tourism sector.

At TOPOSOPHY look forward to continuing our partnership with our Irish clients to navigate and develop the Irish tourism economy and landscape under this new Tourism Policy Statement to 2031.

# TOPOSOPHY

PLACE MAKING & MARKETING AGENCY



## AFFILIATE MEMBERS NEWS

### Diriyah Expands Lifestyle and Luxury with New Global Brands and Four Seasons Partnership

Diriyah is rapidly transforming, positioning itself as a living, breathing destination where global luxury meets local soul. And the latest developments from Diriyah Company reflect its long-term strategy to create a year-round hub that balances high-end hospitality with the practicalities of daily life.

A foundation of this ongoing transformation is the newly announced partnership between Diriyah Company and Midad Development and Real Estate Investment Company. Together, they are bringing the Four Seasons Hotel and Private Residences Diriyah to the heart of the masterplan. This isn't just about adding hotel rooms; it's about introducing a permanent luxury lifestyle. By combining private residences with world-class hospitality, the project strengthens Diriyah's position as a place where heritage and high-end living are seamlessly linked. This move directly supports broader economic goals, creating diverse job opportunities and elevating the Kingdom's tourism profile on the global stage.

Alongside this luxury expansion, Diriyah Square is taking shape as a premier lifestyle hub. Recently, eight new brands across the retail, wellness, and lifestyle sectors joined the fold, including Adidas, Spinneys, Seven Luxury Wellness, OliOli, Al Dawaa Pharmacy, Alo Yoga, On Running, and Fakeeh Clinic, further expanding the destination's diverse mix of international lifestyle brands and essential Saudi services.

These additions, covering everything from sports and health to family entertainment, ensure that Diriyah Square functions as a complete ecosystem. It is designed to support the daily routines of residents just as much as it delights visitors, with the area transformed into a vibrant neighborhood.

These milestones highlight Diriyah Company's integrated development philosophy. In Diriyah, hospitality, retail, and wellness aren't viewed as isolated sectors but as connected threads in a single fabric. Whether visitors are enjoying a long-term stay at a luxury residence or a simple afternoon spent at a local café, the focus remains on authenticity and quality. Diriyah is becoming a place to live, a place to work, and a destination that people will want to return to time and again.



# AFFILIATE MEMBERS NEWS

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## From Volume to Meaning: Tourism Trends for 2026

The beginning of a new year signals a renewed cycle for global tourism, shaped by deep transformations in territorial dynamics, traveller behaviour and strategic priorities across the sector. Therefore, it is essential to identify the structural movements that will influence tourism demand and inform decision-making.

IPDT – Tourism Intelligence presents its annual Tourism Trends study, grounded in continuous market analysis and direct contributions from key industry decision-makers, through the IPDT Tourism Barometer.

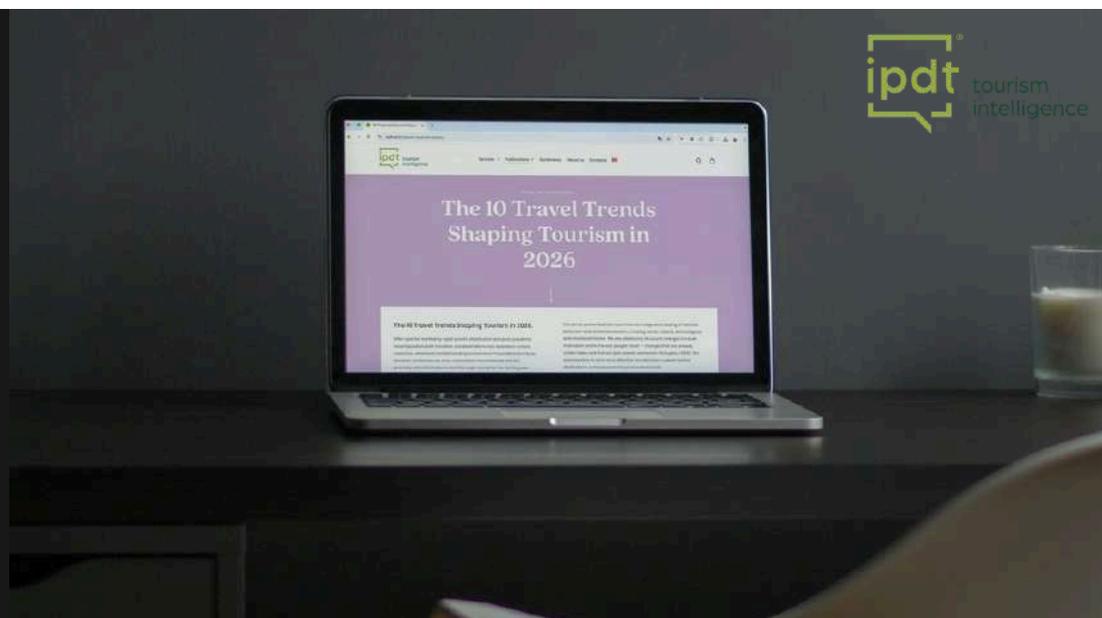
The 10 tourism trends in 2026:

- The luxury of self-care: Travel becomes a space for physical and emotional wellbeing, redefining luxury through care.
- State of Mind Travel: Travel choices are guided by emotions, personal rhythm and psychological needs.
- The world as a reading room: Destinations linked to literature, storytelling and imagination gain relevance.
- Silence as a destination: Silence emerges as a strategic asset and essential infrastructure for wellbeing.

- When the Destination Calls Again: Travellers return to places with which they maintain strong emotional ties.
- The flavour of everyday life: Exploring territories through food, local routines and lifestyle.
- The religion of the Stands: Stadiums and sports museums consolidate their role as cultural destinations.
- Travel as a relationship polygraph: Travel exposes personal dynamics and emotional compatibility.
- Travel as a signal: Journeys act as rites of passage, moments of decision or opportunities for inner clarity.
- The invisible algorithm: Artificial intelligence discreetly personalises experiences without replacing the human role.

Together, these trends point to a shift towards more conscious, selective and meaning-oriented tourism, where quality and value prevail over volume. Technology assumes a supportive and unobtrusive role, while emotional, cultural and relational dimensions become central to travel decisions.

A detailed analysis of each trend is available in the full study on the [IPDT website](#) and represents a valuable contribution to strategic tourism planning for 2026.



## AFFILIATE MEMBERS NEWS

### Celebrating 500 Future Culinary Leaders: HTMi Saudi Arabia Graduation & Employment Gala

The Culinary Arts Management Diploma Program at HTMi KSA has played a transformative role in shaping the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's hospitality and food service sector. By successfully integrating local talent into the culinary workforce, the program has contributed to building a sustainable pipeline of skilled Saudi professionals and nurturing the next generation of Saudi chefs.

Through its internationally aligned curriculum, hands on industry training, and strong partnerships with leading hospitality institutions, HTMi Saudi Arabia equipped young Saudis with advanced culinary techniques, professional kitchen management skills, and the highest standards of food safety and quality. The program ensured that graduates are not only technically proficient but also workplace ready, capable of meeting global hospitality expectations.

Beyond technical mastery, the program fostered a broader global perspective. Trainees were immersed in international culinary traditions, diverse food cultures, and contemporary hospitality practices, preparing them to serve as ambassadors of Saudi hospitality.

Graduates leave empowered to welcome international visitors with confidence while innovating boldly.

This transformative journey was celebrated during a graduation and employment ceremony held on 1 February 2026 at the King Fahd Cultural Centre. The ceremony reflected cultural heritage and professional achievement as 500 future chefs, dressed in pristine white uniforms, filled the venue with pride. Families, institute leadership, faculty, industry partners, and supporters from the Human Resources Development Fund and the Cultural Development Fund gathered alongside representatives from the Embassy of Switzerland and the UN Tourism Regional Office for the Middle East, celebrating perseverance, growth, and shared pride aligned with Vision 2030.

Reflecting on the moment, Faisal, one of the top graduates, shared that standing on the graduation stage and seeing his family's pride made every challenge worthwhile. Taif, also among the highest-achieving graduates, added that the ceremony filled her with confidence and purpose to contribute to Saudi Arabia's culinary future.





The UN Tourism Affiliate Members and Public-Private Collaboration Department is responsible for the management of the partnership between UN Tourism and the public and private sectors.

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*UNprecedented Perspectives  
by UN Tourism Affiliate Members*