

Concept Note

27 September 2026. El Salvador.

Travellers plan their journeys through digital platforms and, increasingly, by asking artificial intelligence: where should I stay, what should I see and where should I go. **What is crucial is that destinations have a voice in shaping this.** World Tourism Day, observed in every Member State since 1980, exists to make the world see what tourism is worth. In 2026, that comes down to one question: who benefits from this transformation, and who decides?

Why this year is unlike any other

Every previous theme named a force tourism should harness. This year's theme is a force already redesigning the sector while the day is observed: **for the first time, the technology under discussion is deciding, daily, which destinations travellers see.** AI answers are becoming commercial space, and once visibility can be bought, the largest brands will buy it. The window in which the rules are set is open now, and it will not reopen.

Nor has any host stood where El Salvador stands. Weeks before the celebration, El Salvador co-chairs the first **UN Global Dialogue on AI Governance** in Geneva, the only universal forum on how this technology is governed. The country hosting the world's tourism day on AI is the country chairing the world's conversation on AI.

What the day will deliver

A celebration built to be seen, not read about. In San Salvador, a **demonstration-led programme**, with ministers and industry leaders at its centre, will show AI working live rather than discussing it: sharper decisions for governments, businesses and travellers, new skills for tourism's workforce, and new ways for destinations to be discovered. Across the world, a **global public campaign** will give every Member State a way to take part on the day itself. And beyond the day, a **lasting outcome**: the foundations of the sector's first common position on the technology now redesigning it, to be carried forward through UN Tourism's governing bodies.

This year the theme is not something tourism observes. It is something tourism must answer. On 27 September, in San Salvador and in every Member State, it will.