

The 20th UN Tourism / PATA Forum on Tourism Trends and Outlook

The Next Frontier: Travel Trends in the Age of Artificial Intelligence

19-21 October 2026, Guilin, China

Concept Note

--as of 03 Sept. 2026

A. Aim of the Forum

The [20th UN Tourism/PATA Forum on Tourism Trends and Outlook](#) marks a significant milestone in one of the Asia-Pacific region's most enduring platforms for tourism intelligence and policy dialogue. Since its launch in Guilin in 2007, the Forum has brought together policymakers, researchers, and industry practitioners annually to analyse tourism trends, exchange knowledge, and shape strategies for the future of the sector. This anniversary edition arrives at a pivotal moment, as **artificial intelligence** and **digital transformation** are fundamentally reshaping how tourism is produced, distributed, experienced, and governed.

Under the theme “*[The Next Frontier: Travel Trends in the Age of Artificial Intelligence](#),” the Forum will provide a high-level platform for stakeholders from governments, academia, and the private sector to examine the opportunities and challenges that AI and digitalization present for the tourism sector in Asia and the Pacific. It will also serve as a platform to present key institutional outputs, including the September 2026 issue of the [UN Tourism World Tourism Barometer](#).*

Key objectives of the 20th Forum:

- Present and analyze global and regional tourism data, trends and outlook, including the September 2026 World Tourism Barometer.
- Examine how AI and digital platforms are reshaping the tourism marketplace, travel behaviour and destination competitiveness, and explore how tourism administrations and industry stakeholders can translate data-driven insights into effective market strategies.
- Facilitate **high-level policy dialogue** on the governance dimensions of the digital tourism transition, including regulatory frameworks, public–private collaboration and international cooperation.
- Explore how AI and digital innovation can support more inclusive tourism development, from community-based tourism and cultural heritage preservation to regional cooperation across Asia and the Pacific.
- Strengthen collaboration among UN Tourism, PATA, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, and the host city of Guilin in advancing a shared agenda for tourism intelligence and innovation in the region.

B. Participants

The Forum brings together a multistakeholder audience of approximately 200–250 participants from across the Asia-Pacific region and beyond, including:

- **Policymakers and Destination Managers:** Representatives from Ministries of Tourism, National Tourism Administrations (NTAs), National Tourism Organizations (NTOs), and Destination Management Organizations (DMOs), focused on trends, market intelligence, and tourism governance.
- **International Organizations:** Representatives from UN Tourism and other multilateral bodies engaged in tourism policy, sustainable development, and digital governance.
- **Industry Practitioners:** Leaders from digital platforms, online travel agencies, hospitality groups, airlines, and tourism technology companies.
- **Academics and Researchers:** Scholars and postgraduate students from The Hong Kong Polytechnic University and partner institutions, specializing in tourism, hospitality, and digital innovation.
- **Community Representatives:** Stakeholders engaged in community-based tourism, cultural heritage, and inclusive tourism development.

C. Forum Format

The Forum takes place over **three days** at the Shangri-La Hotel Guilin. The main event runs on **20–21 October 2026**, followed by optional technical tours on 21–22 October. The programme includes the following session formats:

- **Opening Ceremony:** Includes a commemorative video celebrating 20 years of the Forum, a cultural performance, and official welcome remarks from the organizers.
 - **Keynote Presentation:** A high-profile address on the role of digital platforms and AI in reshaping travel behaviour, traveller expectations and the tourism economy.
 - **High-Level Ministerial Roundtable:** A ministerial-level dialogue on tourism policies that shape the future, covering digital transformation, consumer trends, resilience and international cooperation.
 - **High-Level Dialogue:** A focused conversation with senior industry leadership on how AI and digital platforms are reshaping the tourism marketplace and the balance between policy, platforms and destinations.
 - **Panel Discussions:** Multi-stakeholder panels examining (1) how social media and digital platforms are redefining travel decisions and destination strategy; and (2) the Chinese outbound market, decoding traveller behaviour through booking and payment data, and translating insights into data-driven market strategies.
 - **Research Spotlight:** A short evidence-based presentation by The Hong Kong Polytechnic University on AI-driven tourist behaviour and satisfaction insights from the Greater Bay Area, setting the scene for Panel Discussion 2.
 - **World Tourism Barometer Presentation:** Presentation of the September 2026 issue, providing the latest global and regional tourism data and outlook.
 - **Industry Outlook:** A forward-looking presentation by the PATA CEO on China's 2030 tourism vision, examining how data, AI, innovation, visa facilitation and destination competitiveness can drive the next frontier of inbound growth.
 - **Fireside Chat:** A moderator-led conversation exploring how evolving consumer culture, creativity and digital engagement are reshaping travel motivations and experiences, particularly among younger generations.
-

- **Technical Sessions:** In-depth discussions on (1) how data systems and AI are enabling better destination planning and management; and (2) how AI and digital platforms can support community-based tourism and local impact.
- **Spotlight Dialogue — Digital Dunhuang:** A moderated dialogue between a representative of the Dunhuang Academy and a ministerial guest on the digital transformation of endangered world heritage, exploring how AI and technology are reshaping visitor experiences and destination management at one of the world's most iconic heritage sites.
- **20th Anniversary Recognition Ceremony:** 20th Anniversary Tribute: A tribute held during the Welcome Dinner to honour individuals whose sustained contributions have shaped the Forum over two decades.
- **Technical Tours:** Technical Tours: Optional visits for delegates departing on or after 21 October, offered in three options. Option 1 – Guilin City Tour, on the afternoon of 21 October. Option 2 – an overnight excursion to Yangshuo, featuring a scenic Lijiang River cruise and an evening performance of Impression Liu Sanjie (first come, first served). Option 3 – a visit to the Longsheng Rice Terraces and Dazhai Village, a FAO Global Important Agricultural Heritage System (GIAHS) site and UN Tourism Best Tourism Village (first come, first served)..

D. Key Deliverables

The 20th edition will produce and present the following outputs:

- Presentation of the **September 2026 issue of the UN Tourism World Tourism Barometer**, providing updated global and regional tourism data and trends.
 - **A summary of policy dialogue outcomes and recommendations** from the ministerial roundtable and panel discussions, to be shared with all parties following the Forum.
 - Continued strengthening of the Forum as a regional knowledge platform, reinforcing its role in supporting evidence-based policymaking and tourism intelligence across Asia and the Pacific.
-