[World Tourism Day: harnessing new technologies to transform travel](#)

The United Nations is marking this year's [World Tourism Day](#) by exploring how technological advances such as big data, artificial intelligence and digital platforms can contribute to the way people travel and foster innovation in the tourism industry.

"The digital transformation is about providing benefits to all, and we are making sure that tourism contributes to this global commitment," said Zurab Pololikashvili, Secretary-General of the World Tourism Organization ([UNWTO](#)).

Tourism has become one of the fastest growing and most important economic sectors in the world, according to the Madrid-based UNWTO, with international tourist arrivals having grown from 25 million in 1950 to nearly 1.3 billion today. The sector represents an estimated 10 per cent of the world's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and 1 in 10 jobs globally.

UNWTO expects that tourism will continue to grow at an average of 3 per cent annually until 2030, as more people have access to travel thanks to the decline in the price of transport, especially air transport, and growing middle classes worldwide.

"The sheer size of global tourism and its impact on many other sectors, and all of the Sustainable Development Goals, puts it at the forefront of social responsibility, which today goes hand-in-hand with innovation on all levels," said Mr. Pololikashvili.

"Harnessing innovation and digital advances provides tourism with opportunities to improve inclusiveness, local community empowerment and efficient resource management, amongst other objectives within the wider sustainable development agenda," he added.

In his message for the Day, [Secretary-General António Guterres](#) said the wide reach of tourism into many sectors, from infrastructure and energy to transport and sanitation, and its huge impact on job creation, make it a vital contributor to the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#). At the same time, tourism plays a "pivotal" role in advancing cultural understanding and bringing people together.

"Yet tourism needs innovation in technology to realize its potential contributions," he stated, adding that its benefits need to flow to host communities.

"On World Tourism Day, I call on governments to support digital technologies that can transform the way we travel, reduce the ecological burden of tourism and bring the benefits of tourism to all."