

AI and Digital Tourism | EN

I recently attended the Mediterranean Tourism Forum “SEA,” where I was invited in my own merit as a specialist in technology and artificial intelligence. Given the Forum’s direct relevance to Malta’s digital and tourism sectors, and in view of our committee’s mandate on AI and Digital Affairs, I felt it was important and timely to share the key insights and implications arising from this event on the Tourism sector.

The Mediterranean Tourism Forum has become one of the most significant regional platforms for tourism policy, innovation and strategic dialogue. Its 10th edition, held in Malta, carried the theme “SEA”—Sustainability, Experience and Artificial Intelligence—three pillars that now define the evolution of Mediterranean tourism. The Forum is organised by the Mediterranean Tourism Foundation, an institution born out of the Malta Hotels and Restaurants Association’s long-standing work to promote regional cooperation and supported strategically by the Malta Tourism Authority, ITS Malta and the Ministry for Tourism.

Through this strong public–private partnership, the event has grown into a major regional gathering, attracting more than a thousand delegates from across the Mediterranean and beyond.

This year, Artificial Intelligence was placed at the centre of the strategic debate, not as a supplementary topic but as one of the fundamental drivers shaping the industry’s future. Throughout the plenaries and technical sessions, it became clear that AI is transforming tourism at every level. Key discussions highlighted the **deployment of AI for operational efficiency**—such as smart energy systems in hotels, predictive maintenance, and advanced visitor-flow forecasting tools capable of mitigating overcrowding and environmental pressure, which are particularly relevant for Mediterranean island states like Malta.

Equally important were the conversations around how AI is reshaping the **visitor experience**. Delegates examined emerging tools such as personalised itinerary generation, dynamic pricing engines, multilingual chatbots and AI-driven recommendation systems. **These technologies are increasingly seen as essential to maintaining competitiveness and enhancing value creation in an industry where traveller expectations are continuously rising.** Many speakers stressed that destinations capable of integrating AI responsibly and strategically will be better positioned to move towards higher-quality, lower-impact tourism models.

The Forum also emphasised the governance dimension of AI. Several interventions underlined the need for robust ethical frameworks, transparent data-governance systems and clear guidelines to ensure the responsible use of visitor data. There was also a strong focus on skills development, particularly for SMEs, which often lack the human and technical resources to invest in digital transformation. Without targeted support—training, financial incentives and shared digital infrastructure—smaller operators risk lagging behind larger industry players.

From Malta’s perspective, the discussions are directly aligned with national priorities. Our tourism sector continues to be a major contributor to the economy, and even incremental gains achieved through AI-driven optimisation can translate into significant national benefits. AI can also play a vital role in reinforcing sustainability—monitoring ecological pressures, improving resource efficiency and supporting our shift towards a more balanced, quality-driven tourism model that enhances residents’ wellbeing.

The Forum further confirmed that Malta is well positioned to serve as a regional testbed for responsible AI innovation. Our small scale, robust digital infrastructure and concentrated tourism ecosystem provide the ideal environment to pilot and refine new solutions. Aligning such initiatives with Malta’s broader AI strategy and digital governance frameworks will enable us to build a more resilient and future-ready tourism sector.

In summary, my participation at the Mediterranean Tourism Forum “SEA” reaffirmed that artificial intelligence now stands alongside sustainability and experience as a core strategic pillar for tourism in the Mediterranean.

I considered it opportune to present this overview to the Committee, as it highlights both the opportunities and responsibilities Malta faces in ensuring that AI is integrated ethically, effectively and to the long-term benefit of our economy and society.

I invite all members to remark during our sitting.