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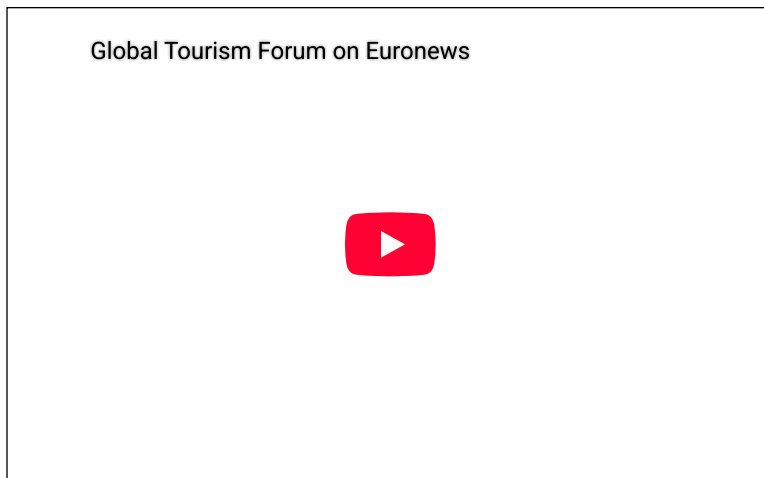
Tourism Is Not a Sector — It Is National Infrastructure


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Tourism Is Not a Sector — It Is National Infrastructure
 Reflections from Euronews Brussels Studios | Global Tourism Forum



Yesterday, the Global Tourism Forum was featured on Euronews from the Brussels Studios for a wide-ranging conversation on the transformation reshaping travel and tourism. The discussion was not about trends for the sake of trends. It was about a structural shift that governments, investors, and industry leaders can no longer afford to treat as optional.

The central message is clear: **tourism is not a standalone "sector."** Tourism is **national infrastructure**. It influences employment and skills

development, foreign currency inflows, investor confidence, air connectivity, regional development, and a country's international positioning. In many economies, tourism is the most immediate bridge between policy decisions and real economic impact—especially in job creation and SME growth.

From the Global Tourism Forum perspective, the question is no longer *whether* tourism will transform, but **which destinations will lead this transformation—strategically, safely, and competitively.**

Why the “Tourism as Infrastructure” lens matters

When a country treats tourism as infrastructure, it changes everything:

- **Policy becomes coordinated** (aviation, borders, security, urban mobility, digital services, investment incentives).
- **Investment becomes bankable** (projects are packaged with realistic returns, clear governance, and long-term planning).
- **Competitiveness becomes measurable** (connectivity, safety, experience quality, sustainability, and digital readiness).

The result is not only better visitor numbers. It is **stronger resilience** in times of crisis, **more diversified economies**, and **greater global relevance.**

Four priorities defining the next decade

During the Euronews conversation, we emphasized four areas that will shape the next era of tourism leadership.

1) The Tourism Revolution: new expectations, new realities

Tourism is being redesigned by a combination of forces: shifting traveller expectations, a more complex geopolitical environment, and new economic pressures. The “post-pandemic traveller” is more value-conscious, more safety-sensitive, and more digitally enabled than ever before.

Destinations that still treat tourism as a seasonal activity will struggle. Those that treat it as a strategic pillar—supported by governance, infrastructure, and investment—will lead.

What this means in practice:

- Clear destination positioning and brand credibility
 - Seamless mobility and visitor journey design
 - Consistent quality delivery across public and private stakeholders
-

2) AI and the new operating model for destinations

AI is not an add-on. It is becoming the **operating system** of modern tourism competitiveness.

Used effectively, AI can help destinations:

- **Forecast demand** and manage seasonality
- **Personalize experiences** at scale while improving satisfaction
- **Optimize pricing and capacity** across hotels, airlines, and attractions
- **Improve public services** through smarter destination governance

But the winners will not be those who adopt AI fastest. They will be those who adopt it **responsibly**—with a serious approach to **trust, privacy, transparency, and human-centered hospitality**. Tourism is ultimately a people industry; AI should elevate human service, not replace its core value.

3) Destination security and resilience as competitiveness

Security is now a central pillar of destination competitiveness. This includes traditional on-the-ground safety, but it also extends to:

- **Cyber resilience** and data protection
- **Crisis readiness** and inter-agency coordination
- **Reputation protection** in a hyper-connected media landscape

In today's environment, a destination's reputation can shift within hours. Confidence is fragile. And confidence is everything. The strongest destinations are those that proactively build resilience frameworks that protect travellers, protect citizens, and protect investor trust.

4) Investment, infrastructure, and the real foundations of growth

Long-term tourism performance is built on fundamentals—not slogans. The foundations of growth include:

- **Air connectivity and route strategy**
- **Border efficiency and visa facilitation**
- **Urban mobility and visitor logistics**
- **Digital public services** that reduce friction
- **Destination infrastructure** aligned with market demand

This is where many destinations face the same challenge: ambition is high, but investment is fragmented. The path forward is clear—**aligned public-private partnership (PPP) models**, credible project packaging, and serious capital deployment.

Tourism growth that is not supported by infrastructure eventually becomes a bottleneck. Tourism growth supported by infrastructure becomes an engine.

The role of Global Tourism Forum

At Global Tourism Forum, our role is to bring **decision-makers, investors, and destination leaders** into the same room to move beyond conversation—toward **practical pathways, partnerships, and measurable outcomes**.

This is why we focus on:

- Decision-level dialogue with accountability
- Investment positioning and bankable project development
- International visibility through strategic media platforms
- Creating trusted environments where public priorities meet private capital

Tourism has earned its place at the table of global decision-making—not as a side conversation, but as a strategic instrument of economic resilience, diplomacy, and competitiveness.

The destinations that lead the next decade will be those that treat tourism as what it truly is: **national infrastructure**.

Thank you to the **Euronews** team in Brussels for the hospitality and for giving tourism a strategic platform—one that reflects its real weight in the global economy.

Bulut Bağcı President, World Tourism Forum Institute (WTFI) On behalf of Global Tourism Forum#GlobalTourismForum #WTFI #Tourism #TravelAndTourism #AI #DigitalTransformation #DestinationSecurity #TourismInvestment #Resilience #Infrastructure #PublicPrivatePartnership #EconomicDevelopment #Euronews #Brussels

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Maura Gast • You
Impassioned Destination Definer; Irving Evangelist; Runs With Scissors

now ⋮

Love this concept - it really adds some great perspective and substance to the framework I've been preaching that "it all starts with the visit...and the visit starts with us."



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mathieu hoerigs LLM • 2nd
CEO at World Sports Office WSO NV

1d ⋮

Many thanks. So glad to see that tourism is getting the position it deserves

Of course AI helps hugely however it will take still a while before AI can replace the "experience" element. ...more

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1d ...

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Yes ! Tourism as a national infrastructure has tremendous potential as a powerful engine for economic growth of the region / district or state .

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