

AI and future of travel: balancing technology and authentic experience

- A Monitor Desk Report

Date: 03 January, 2026



Dhaka: The recent boom of artificial intelligence has impacted almost every sector of the modern world, and speculations regarding its influence on education, employment, and even human understanding have been a regular discussion.

However, in the travel and tourism industry, the use of AI and related technologies is often overlooked. As a result, these technologies are commonly utilized for operational efficiency rather than focusing on consumer experience.

As the second quarter of the 21st century begins, notable industry veterans believe it is the right time to focus on what AI means for travel and tourism and how its proper implementation can lead to smart tourism.

Recently, multiple media outlets reported growing fears of an AI bubble and its possible consequences on the global economy and professional jobs. Even leading financial institutions, like the Bank of England, warned of a "sharp correction" in the value of major technology companies.

Meanwhile, the European Broadcasting Union's research found AI assistants misrepresented news content in 45 percent of evaluated cases and high "hallucination rates" among the popular models. These issues suggest the real picture of artificial intelligence is still in darkness, surrounded by overhyped expectations and widespread speculations.

While talking about the rise of AI and related technologies in tourism and hospitality, Harold Goodwin, founder of [ICRT.global](https://www.icrt.global) and managing director of Responsible Tourism Partnership, shared a recent travel experience of an Australian traveler in China.

The traveler, a PhD candidate at Griffith University, checked in to her hotel room in Shanghai right from the taxi on her way from the airport. Upon arrival, a porter robot carried her luggage to her room, and she unlocked the room with a digital key on her smartphone. Then she sat on her bed, asked an AI assistant to turn on the light, close the curtain, and recommend a nearby restaurant.

Goodwin believes the first experience with robots and AI should be memorable, but most travelers would not like it to repeat. He insists tourists prefer meeting local people, experiencing local cultures, and feeling the warmth of local hospitality.

"Smart tourism" should focus on utilizing AI and related technologies to manage flows, rebalance tourism, and tackle overtourism. AI assistants could encourage travelers to move beyond the most popular tourism sites and help them engage with local people and communities or practice the best behaviors during travel.

Consumer demand for experiences has been, and continues to be, an important driver of travel and tourism. A properly balanced implementation of modern technologies and authentic hospitality will always be essential for enhancing the overall travel and tourism experience.

