

Creating smart cities for innovative tourism experiences

The UNWTO Conference on *City Breaks: Creating Innovative Tourism Experiences* concluded in Valladolid, Spain on 16 October 2018, with a call for cities to become smart tourism destinations, where tourism governance and the digital economy mesh together to offer travellers diverse and authentic experiences.



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The conference brought together tourism leaders from the public and private sectors to analyse how to respond to the growing trend of city breaks as leisure experiences. They concluded that public-private partnerships, the inclusion of local communities and the creation of smart destinations are crucial for urban destinations to gain the knowledge and define the policies they need in order to respond to the new demands of hyper-connected and hyper-informed tourists.

"We must understand the evolution of tourists towards greater sustainability and inclusiveness, using new technological tools," said Jaime Cabal, deputy secretary-general of the World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO). "Creativity and innovation are needed when designing the experiences they are increasingly demanding."

Answering the city break experience call

The councillor for culture and tourism of Valladolid, Ana Maria Redondo, echoed this call, adding: "We need a better understanding of the fundamentals behind the current demand for city break experiences. Smart destination tools are our means to obtain this knowledge."

The deputy director-general for tourism Development and Sustainability of the Ministry of Tourism of Spain, Ruben Lopez Pulido, suggested that cities and all destinations change their models of tourism development to respond not only the most demanding tourists, but also to the rise of the digital and knowledge economy. "Being a smart destination is not just a label, but a process towards the comprehensive transformation of destinations, while always aiming at the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals."

Speakers at the conference included Dieter Hardt-Stremayr, President of European Cities Marketing and CEO of the Graz Tourism Office in Austria, who described what he considered key challenges for the growth of city breaks: transportation issues, seasonality, and the dispersion of tourism demand within a city and over time. "Our main challenge is to attract visitors to come right at this moment. To overcome it destination managers should focus on parts of the tourism offer that are 'temporary'...[Read the full article on eTurboNews.](#)

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