

In 1950, Codebreaker and now celebrated computer scientist Alan Turing posed one of the most interesting questions ever faced by humankind. Can machines think? Artificial intelligence, AI, has occupied scientists for decades. But in 2023, it caught the attention of global businesses, policymakers, and civil society alike. In the UK, King Charles III called it one of the greatest technological leaps in the history of human endeavor. The UN Secretary General described AI as unprecedented, and even the Pope stated that AI has the potential to contribute in a positive way to the future of humanity before dedicating World Peace Day 2023 to the use of AI. As business leaders in travel and tourism, it is vital that we understand the opportunities and challenges of this transformative technology. I am therefore delighted that the World Travel and Tourism Council, WTTC, has partnered with Microsoft, one of our members in a leading technology company, to bring you the very latest insights into AI and what it could mean for our sector. What follows is the first report in a four-part initial series on artificial intelligence. We begin with an introduction to AI, how it works, where it came from, and the different types of AI available today. Three further publications will explore how AI is currently being used in travel and tourism, and the fast-moving world of AI governance, safety, and regulation. By understanding these trends, we aim to help travel and tourism business leaders to prepare for the future and navigate the complexities of AI. But this report isn't just technical facts and figures. We also examine how AI can help tourism grow and do good over the years to come, opening up new and exciting possibilities for personalized, seamless, and sustainable travel experiences. Ultimately, AI is just an engine. The task now is to ensure that it fuels us towards a destination of our choosing, a sector that is greener, safer, more prosperous, and more free. After all, as Alan Turing said back in 1949, we may be experiencing only a foretaste of what is to come, and only the shadow of what is going to be. If we get it right with AI, that destination could be very bright indeed.