



# Workshop on Recommenders in Tourism (RecTour)

Julia Neidhardt  
TU Wien  
Vienna, Austria  
julia.neidhardt@ec.tuwien.ac.at

Wolfgang Wörndl  
Technical University of Munich  
Garching, Germany  
woerndl@in.tum.de

Tsvi Kuflik  
The University of Haifa  
Haifa, Israel  
tsvikak@is.haifa.ac.il

Dmitri Goldenberg  
Booking.com  
Tel Aviv, Israel  
tsvikak@is.haifa.ac.il

Markus Zanker  
Free University of Bozen-Bolzano  
Bolzano, Italy  
University of Klagenfurt  
Klagenfurt, Austria  
markus.zanker@unibz.it

## ABSTRACT

The Workshop on Recommenders in Tourism (RecTour) 2022, which is held in conjunction with the 16th ACM Conference on Recommender Systems (RecSys), addresses specific challenges for recommender systems in the tourism domain. In this overview paper, we summarize our motivations to organize the RecTour workshop and present the main topic areas of RecTour submissions. These include context-aware recommendations, group recommender systems, recommending composite items, decision making and user interaction issues, different information sources and various application scenarios.

## CCS CONCEPTS

• **Information systems** → **Recommender systems**; • **Human-centered computing** → **User models**.

## KEYWORDS

Tourism recommenders, next-POI recommendations, context-aware recommendations, destination characterization, evaluation of tourism recommenders.

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

RecTour 2022 focuses on a variety of challenges specific to recommender systems in the tourism domain. This domain offers considerably more complicated scenarios than matching travelers with the presumably best items. Planning a vacation usually involves searching for interconnected and dependent product bundles, such as means of transportation, accommodations, attractions, and

activities, with limited availabilities and contextual aspects (e.g., spatio-temporal context, social context, activity sequence, and environment) with a major impact. In addition, travel related products can be considered as emotionally loaded and are thus largely experiential in nature; therefore, decision taking is often not solely based on rational or objective criteria [6, 11]. Therefore, information provisioning at the right time about destinations, accommodations and various further services and possible activities is challenging. Additionally, and in contrast to many other recommendation domains, information providers are usually small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) that many times do not possess the capacity to implement basic recommender systems. Moreover, there is no single, standard format to house information which might be included in these systems. Last, much of the tourism experience is co-produced, i.e., it occurs during the consumption of the product and interaction with the provider. Therefore, the context of the recommendation is extremely important [3]. Thus given this diversity, building effective recommender systems within the tourism domain is extremely challenging [4].

The rapid development of information and communication technologies (ICT) in general and the web in particular has transformed the tourism domain whereby most travelers rely little on travel agents or agencies [10]. Indeed, recent studies indicate that travelers now actively search for information using ICT in order to compose their vacation packages according to their specific emotionally driven preferences [12]. Additionally when on-site, they search for freely available information about the site itself rather than renting a visitor guide that may be available, but considered to be expensive and sometimes outdated.

However, like in many other cases, the blessing of the web comes with a curse; the curse of information overload. As such, recommender systems have been suggested as a practical tool for overcoming this information overload. However, those designing tourism-focused recommender systems face huge challenges as the tourism domain is extremely complex. This is especially true recently with the appearance of COVID-19 and the uncertainty and transformative power it brings to travelling [2].

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## 2 WORKSHOP GOALS

This workshop brings together researchers and practitioners from different fields (e.g., tourism, recommender systems, user modeling, user interaction, mobile, ubiquitous and ambient technologies, artificial intelligence and web information systems) working in the tourism recommendation domain. The workshop aims to provide a forum for these people to discuss novel ideas for addressing the specific challenges for recommender systems in tourism with the goal to advance the current state-of-the-art in this field. Another goal of the workshop is to identify practical applications of these technologies within tourism settings from the point of view of individual users and user groups, service providers, as well as from additional stakeholders (e.g., destination management organizations). Finally, RecTour 2022 aims to continue the community building processes and discussions started at previous RecTour Workshops, i.e., at RecTour 2016 in Boston, MA, USA [1], at RecTour 2017 in Como, Italy [5], at RecTour 2018 in Vancouver, BC, Canada [7], at RecTour 2019 in Copenhagen, Denmark [9] and at RecTour 2021 in Amsterdam [8].

## 3 WORKSHOP TOPICS

Key topic areas of submissions from the last RecTour workshops can be summarized as follows.

**Context-aware recommender systems.** The aim is to not only provide personalized recommendations for points-of-interests (POIs), destinations, hotels, restaurants and other items, but to adapt the recommended items also to the current context. This includes the location of a user but also additional attributes such as weather, season, date, time of visits, demographic data of a user or user history.

**Group recommender systems.** People are often not traveling alone but together with their family or friends. Therefore, travel recommendation is often a problem of recommending to a group of people, where individual preferences and group dynamics need to be taken into account. A related topic is to recommend peers to travel with.

**Recommending composite items.** Combining POIs to a suitable path to follow is an instance of the Tourist Trip Design Problem (TTDP), which involves moving from recommending single items to personalized sets or sequences of relevant items. Within TTDP, users choose from a large number of items (in the context of leisure activities), but then figure out how to combine them into a practical itinerary or route. One topic in this regard is predicting the next POI a traveler is likely interesting in.

**Decision making and user interaction issues.** Previous workshop submissions addressed the problem of how to present items to support decision making. Thus, visualizations that represent aggregated data are very important in this context. In addition, some paper addressed issues on how to incorporate user feedback, e.g. in a conversational recommender system.

**Different information sources.** Several approaches have been proposed, which retrieve and analyze data from social network sources. However, apart from product databases in the travel industry, crowdsourcing plays a major role in research related to recommenders in tourism. One focal point is analyzing information from user reviews.

**Various application scenarios within tourism.** Application domains considered in previous workshop submissions include the hotel sector with the aim to recommend hotels enriched by cross-domain information, road networks with the aim to recommend routes that cross certain landscapes, and the airline industry with the aim to recommend airlines to particular passenger groups as well as to address the problem of airline itinerary selection.

**Additional topics of interest.** Other important topics include challenges of evaluating recommender systems, explanations for travel recommendations, applying machine learning algorithms, natural language analysis of review data and multidimensional modeling of users and travel recommendations.

RecTour 2022 will also feature a keynote presentation and industry participation.

## 4 SUMMARY

The submission to RecTour 2022 draw special attention to the various challenges for recommender systems in the tourism domain and offer useful and well-considered approaches for addressing them. Therefore, the workshop series constitutes an important forum for recommender systems research in this popular application domain. Details about the program and the workshop proceedings can be found on the website of the workshop at <https://web.ec.tuwien.ac.at/rectour22/>.

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