General Background:

Today, cultural tourism is one of the largest and fastest-developing global tourism markets: an estimated four out of ten tourists choose their destination based on its cultural offering. Tourists are increasingly attracted by intangible factors such as the atmosphere of a place, its association with famous people, ideas or events – in other words by a place's culture, history and traditions.

This international seminar intends to provide a specialized platform for UNWTO Member States, Affiliate Members and relevant stakeholders to exchange information and experiences. The event recognizes the significance of innovation in managing and promoting cultural tourism and seeks to enhance the deployment of emerging and cutting-edge technologies into tourism practices in their respective destinations and products.

Nonetheless, tourism faces a number of challenges ranging from the accountability of social and environmental impacts of tourism to the effective management of increasingly digitalized strategies in order to meet the demands of the modern traveler and the need to increase competitiveness. Alongside tourism's continued growth in recent years, we have also witnessed a shift in business models and consumer behavior, such as the emergence of C2C digital platforms (often referred to as the sharing economy), big data and geo-localization, mainly in response to the global economic crisis and advances in technology.

In order to anticipate, address and overcome the new challenges and cater to the new trends of the tourism sector, the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) is currently incorporating innovation and digital transformation into tourism as a whole to qualify destinations to realize their full potential.

Thematic focus:

Innovation and technological progress through the generation of new opportunities and disrupting the sector are instrumental in enhancing cultural tourism development.

Technology and innovation, including information and communication technology (ICT), serve as enablers of the sustainable development of cultural tourism whereby improving governance, enhancing competitiveness and profitability, upgrading quality of tourists' experience and residents' wellbeing, as well as preserving intangible and tangible cultural resources.

Objectives:

- To recognize the opportunities of integrating innovative governance into the management of cultural tourism destinations;
- To share and exchange knowledge, views, experiences and best practices;
- To build public-private partnerships to develop synergy and boost cooperation among involved stakeholders aiming at advancing and implementing innovative cultural tourism practices and deploy appropriate technologies;
- To provide recommendations on strengthening governance and management mechanisms to ensure the sustainable development of cultural tourism;
- To develop strategic and innovative tourism products by understanding the current social trends and customer needs in the area of cultural tourism;
- To identify potential areas or projects requiring capacity building and financial support.

The seminar addresses the role of innovation and technology in enhancing cultural tourism in the panels as set out below:

Keynote Panel: How Cultural Tourism Potentials can be Triggered by Innovation and Technology

In today´s increasingly diverse and globalized world, appreciating various cultures, religions and ethnic groups, tourism spurs dialogue and exchange, builds the bridges among cultures and promotes the value of tolerance, mutual understanding and respect among travelers and host communities. Many developing countries have outstanding cultural heritage sites, unique scenic spots and other social, cultural, and natural assets as well as historic and religious sites, which offer great potential attractions for domestic and international tourism. Innovation and technological advances are instrumental in enhancing cultural tourism development. Together, they generate new opportunities and motivate different players to join this thriving global industry.

Panel 1: Innovation: Driving Sustainable Development in Cultural Tourism

Innovation is essential in both the development and the governance of cultural destinations, as it contributes to the formulation of appropriate policies and strengthened institutional capacities. It enables stakeholders to ensure long-term sustainability and host participation in tourism, as well as the promotion of cultural tourism products while preserving their authenticity.

The effectiveness and efficiency of performance of both public and private sectors can move towards improved sustainability by:

- Improving policy-making and enhancing tourism infrastructure;
- Preserving and safeguarding cultural assets and enhancing resource efficiency;

- Shifting from Business as usual towards innovative business models such as destination management, shared economy, etc.

Panel 2: Technology and Cultural Tourism: Fostering Glocalized Competitiveness

Technology is revolutionizing the entire travel and tourism value chain by deploying cutting-edge methods in cultural tourism services and products, redefining marketing tools, and addressing target markets. The profitability and competitiveness of cultural destinations can be triggered by:

- Developing and diversifying cultural products by incorporating new technology: virtual reality, augmented reality, smart tour guides, artificial intelligence, etc.
- Enhancing digital services: payment applications, wireless optimal networking, booking systems, mobile applications, etc.
- Fostering digital marketing: evolution of digital tools and online marketing and distribution channels.

Participants:

International participants are primarily from:

- UNWTO members, including 157 countries, 6 associate members and over 500 Affiliate Members representing the private sector, tourism institutions and associations and tourism authorities;
- Entities, institutions, academia, SMEs and start-ups, investors that work in tourism promotion, destination management, technology, and innovation;
- Companies in the tourism sector: hotels, tour operators, travel agencies, web experiences, tourist management apps, among others;
- Companies that want to position their brand in the tourism sector and more specifically in innovation and technology in tourism;
- Potential clients of activities and events related to tourism;
- Civil society in general.