

NETWEBMEDIA AI SERIES · 14 INDUSTRIES

AI and Hospitality & Tourism

Direct bookings, guest messaging, revenue management and reviews: how small hotels, rentals and tour operators use AI in 2026.

HOTELS

B&BS

VACATION RENTALS

TOUR OPERATORS

First edition · September 2026

Book 3 of 14 · netwebmedia.com

Photo: Samuel Wibisono / Unsplash

About this series

Fourteen books, one question: what does AI actually change for a business like yours? Each book is written for one industry — its customers, its tools, its rules — so you can act on it this month, not someday. Buy one, or get all fourteen in the bundle.

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Every statistic in this book carries a numbered reference to a named, dated source in the Sources section. Benchmarks are medians or averages from other businesses as published by those sources — not predictions of your results.

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Start here

This book is for the people who actually run hospitality businesses: the couple with a twelve-room inn who answer the phone themselves, the host managing six vacation rentals across two towns, the kayak outfitter who runs three tours a day in summer and does the books in winter, the general manager of a 60-room independent hotel who is short two front-desk staff again. If you sell rooms, beds or experiences and want to know what AI changes for a business your size, this is written for you.

It is not a book about the future of AI. It is a book about the next thirty days. Every chapter ends in something you can do this week, and every number in it comes from a named, dated source you can check in the Sources section.

Here is what you get. Chapter 1 shows where your peers already are, with the 2026 adoption data from the hotel, vacation-rental and tour-operator surveys. Chapter 2 explains, in plain English, the five jobs AI can do in a hospitality business and the ones it cannot. Chapter 3 is about your guests: how travellers now plan with ChatGPT and Google's AI answers, and why most properties are invisible there. Chapter 4 ranks the ten use cases that pay back fastest. Chapter 5 gives you a tool stack with real September 2026 prices, in three budgets. Chapter 6 covers the rules: the FTC's fee and review rules, short-term-rental registration, TCPA and Chile's new data-protection law. Chapter 7 is the 30-day plan. Chapter 8 is for readers in Chile and Latin America.

You can read it front to back in about forty minutes. If you are short on time, read Chapter 4 and Chapter 7 and come back for the rest.

● Hospitality and AI in 2026 — four numbers to know

98%

of hoteliers used AI somewhere in operations in the past six months

<10%

of hotels report manual-work reductions above 30%

94%

of hotels are invisible in AI search results

37%

of US travellers now use AI to plan travel

Sources: Mews, 2026 (vendor survey); RateGain, 2026 (vendor survey); Skift / Curacity-Cornell, 2026; Allianz Partners / Ipsos via Hotel Dive, 2026 (vendor survey)

The pattern those four numbers describe is the whole story of this book. Almost everyone in the industry uses AI somewhere. Very few can point to a measured result. Meanwhile more than a third of US travellers ask an AI where to stay and what to do, and the AI cannot recommend a property it

cannot read. The operator who uses AI carefully, to answer faster, price better and be found where guests now look, has an advantage that is getting bigger, not smaller.

1. Why AI matters for hospitality now

A flat market with fewer hands

The US hotel business is stable and slow. AHLA projects guest spending of nearly \$805 billion in 2026, up 1.7% on 2025, with about 2.2 million direct hotel employees; but profit per available room in 2025 was still only about 90% of its 2019 level once inflation and costs are counted.¹ Most of those hotels are small businesses: franchised properties are nearly 60% of all US hotels, and a typical owner-operator runs seven hotels, 713 rooms and 165 associates.²

Independent hotels are squeezed harder. Cloudbeds' 2026 study of 90 million bookings found that online travel agencies (OTAs, the Booking.com and Expedia of the world) delivered 63.4% of independent-hotel reservations, and that OTA bookings cancel at 21.8% against 10.6% for direct ones; global ADR (average daily rate) fell 5.8% and RevPAR (revenue per available room) fell 5.4% for independents in 2025, with an average booking lead time of 40 days.³

Key number: 63.4% of independent-hotel reservations come through OTAs, and OTA bookings cancel at 21.8% versus 10.6% for direct bookings.³ Every guest you move from an OTA to a direct booking is worth more twice: you keep the commission and the reservation is half as likely to cancel.

Vacation rentals are steadier. AirDNA's midyear outlook has US short-term-rental supply and demand both growing 2.7% in 2026, occupancy at 57.4% and RevPAR up 2.9%.⁴ Tours and activities are a \$253 billion global market made up of very small companies: more than 70% of experience operators are small or micro-businesses, and only 33% of experiences were booked online in 2025 against 64% of travel overall.⁵

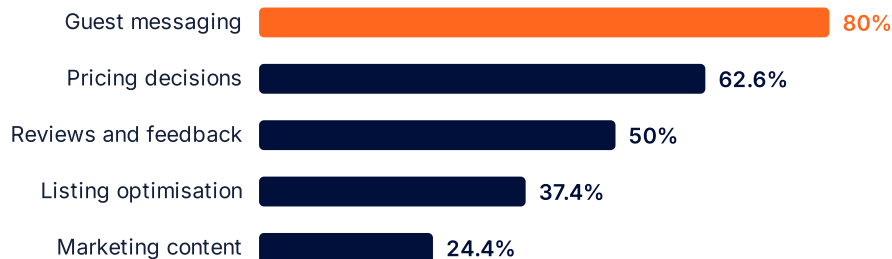
Labour is the pressure underneath all of it. In AHLA's January 2025 survey, 65% of US hotels reported staffing shortages; housekeeping (38%) and front desk (26%) were hardest to staff.⁶ When the front desk is short, the 11 pm "is parking included?" message goes unanswered. That is the job AI is best at.

Where your peers are

Adoption is no longer the question. In Canary Technologies' early-2026 survey of more than 400 hotel technology decision-makers, 82% expect AI use to increase in the next year and 71% say AI is already having a significant or transformative impact.⁷ Mews' survey of 500+ properties found 98% of hoteliers used AI somewhere in operations in the past six months, with AI involved in an average of 11 of 19 common hotel tasks; 59% say welcome and check-in should stay human.⁸

Vacation-rental operators are close behind: 61% used AI in 2025, 74% say their market is more competitive than a year ago, and nearly two-thirds get less than a quarter of bookings direct.⁹ Hospitable's survey of 550+ hosts shows where the AI actually goes.¹⁰

● **Where vacation-rental hosts use AI (550+ hosts, co-hosts and managers, Jan 2026)**



Source: Hospitable 2026 Industry Report via The Host Report, 2026 (vendor survey)

Tour and activity operators tell a more mixed story. In GetYourGuide's March 2026 survey of 505 operators, 64% use AI more than a year ago, mostly for content: 84% for product descriptions, 81% for web and blog copy and 74% for SEO content. But 56% say AI tools feel overwhelming and 44% have received inaccurate or misleading output.¹¹

The impact gap

Using AI and getting results from it are different things. RateGain's 2026 distribution study, covering 58,000+ properties, found that more than half of hotels use or are procuring generative AI, yet fewer than 1 in 10 report manual-work reductions above 30%; 55% report no or only minor change to their distribution strategy; and over 80% of commercial teams still spend one to two days a week on manual reporting.¹²

The difference is mostly process. Mews found 41% of properties have no formal AI policy; properties with a written policy report strong trust in AI at 92% versus 49% without one, and 52% of the most AI-proficient properties name revenue growth as the main outcome.⁸