Finalists Named in UNWTO Moroccan Tourism Startup Competition

Madrid, Spain, 7 August 2023 - UNWTO has recognized the most influential innovators reshaping tourism in the Kingdom of Morocco. The finalists of the first Moroccan Tourism Startup Competition showcase the power of the sector for driving post-pandemic recovery, protecting cultural and natural heritage and providing opportunities for both rural and urban communities.

After being announced in November 2022, the competition attracted 135 applications from across the Kingdom. The competition focused on identifying solutions to advance the development of the Moroccan tourism, reaching out to startups with a focus on five pillars:

- Innovation in blue and green economies (life under water)
- Innovation in natural heritage: Desert & Oasis Adventure.
- Innovation in cultural heritage: Preservation through cultural innovation.
- Sustainable Urban Futures: Innovation in urban tourism.

Ten Finalists Announced

The startups were judged on their solutions and on their commitment to tourism as a pillar of the Sustainable Development Goals. Of the 135 startups that entered the competition, 60% look forward to achieving sustainable SDG8, focused on decent work and economic growth, and 54% wish to achieve SDG17, focused on partnerships.

The ten finalists reflect the diverse talent of the Moroccan national tourism sector.

- For innovation in blue and green economies, the winning startups are MOUJA, The Surf and Watersports Guide for Morocco and NAMA SOCIAL HUB, an event agency specializing in the organization of events for surfing enthusiasts in Imssouane.

- In the trekking and hiking category, the two finalists are ANEGMA, a reservation platform for atypical and unusual accommodation in Morocco, INTO THE WILD, a concept for novel accommodation in national parks.

- For innovation in deserts and oasis adventures, the finalists are UMNYA Morocco Experiences, an innovative eco-accommodation, and TERRE DES ETOILES, an atypical and original eco-accommodation.
• The finalists in the preservation through cultural innovation category are **ATAR**, a mobile application to discover cultural heritage and **MACHI MOUCHKIL**, a Moroccan street food concept.

• Finally, **MAROCULTOUR**, an online booking service for cultural tours on an electric tricycle driven by Moroccan women, and **PIKALA BIKES**, an ecological transport concept that offers an authentic experience for tourists to explore the city of Marrakech by bike, are the finalists for innovation in urban tourism.

**Embracing innovation**

The collaboration between UNWTO and the Moroccan Agency for Tourism Development has two key aims. Firstly, to invigorate the tourism sector by infusing it with fresh ideas and creative solutions. And secondly, to create a sustainable framework that benefits both the environment and the local communities.

UNWTO Secretary-General, Zurab Pololikashvil says: “The Kingdom of Morocco is a true leader in tourism, with innovation being a crucial aspect in its rapid recovery from the impacts of the pandemic”.

Her excellency Fatim- Zahra Ammor emphasized that “Through our start-up contest with UNWTO, we have unwavering confidence in the creativity and potential of Moroccan tourism start-ups. Today, I am incredibly proud of the 10 winning start-ups. They will receive invaluable mentorship, personalized support, and global access to venture capitalists. This will not only help them grow but also enhance our tourists’ experiences and create new job opportunities.”

Imad Barrakad, CEO of SMIT adds: “I am proud to see so many innovative projects in a promising sector looking for new creative ideas. Together we can make the difference!”

Natalia Bayona, Executive Director of the UNWTO mentioned how “tourism needs the power of startups and sustainable driven companies to start again”.

**A Winning Network**

SMIT guides the growth and planning of Moroccan tourism and aims to support groundbreaking ideas to fulfill the needs of startups and SMEs. UNWTO has collaborated with Huawei, Plug and Play, Cercle de l’innovation, Accelab, Hospitality Web Services, Emerging Business Factory who will be supporting the finalists with mentorship and acceleration programmes, and will participate in the Tourism Tech Adventures edition where the winners will be announced.

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For more information on UNWTO initiatives, finalists and winner’s announcement, visit the [organization website](#) and also the accounts @unwto and @unwtoacademy in social media platforms.
More information on specific challenges https://www.unwto.org/unwto-challenges
For contacting the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) on Innovation:
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