

Hoteliers Guide to AI



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Introduction: What AI Means in 2026

When our team first started advising hotels on generative AI, these tools were helpful answer engines that could recommend your hotel.

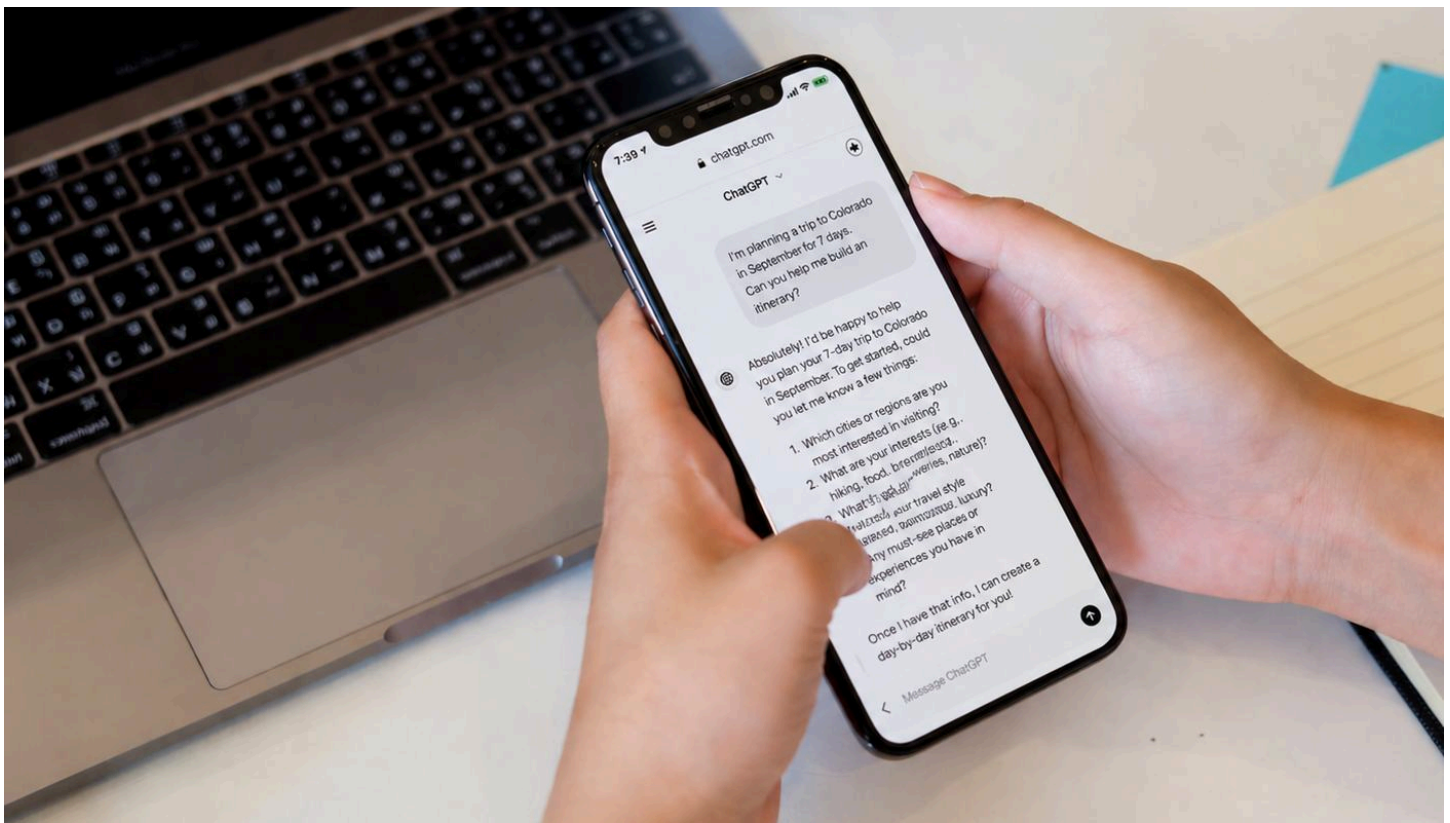
They have rapidly transformed into personal travel assistants for your guests.

In the last year, the number of people using AI to search for travel grew by **527%**. Meanwhile, **93%** of AI search sessions never even visit a website.

Two emerging technical standards, **Model Context Protocol (MCP)** and **Unified Context Protocol (UCP)** likewise increase the capabilities of AI tools. Hotel websites using MCP can share live inventory with AI agents and allow them to book for a user. UCP lets AI "remember" user preferences, helping them quickly find options based on past searches and use loyalty perks.

What do these developments mean for hotels on a practical level?

Travelers can now use AI agents to handle research, compare options, and book, from a handful of quick chat messages. As these engines grow more sophisticated, hotels must adapt in terms of content and technical capabilities to remain visible and position themselves to win more bookings.



This guide helps you do exactly this



527%

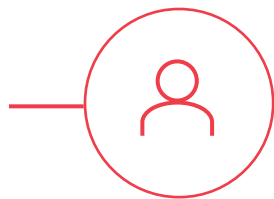
Growth in AI Travel searches last year



93%

93% of AI search sessions never even visit a website.

The Evolution of Travel Discovery:



1990s

Travel Agents



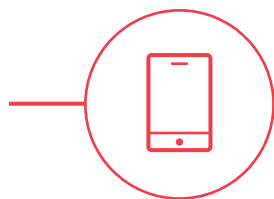
Early 2000s

OTAs like Expedia and Travelocity



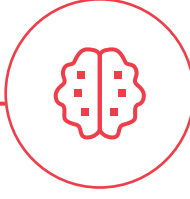
2010s

Meta-Search Engines (Google Hotel Ads, Trivago)



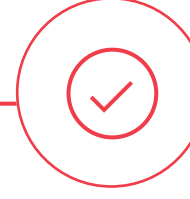
Late 2010s

Mobile-first booking apps, social media discovery



2023+

AI-powered trip planning (ChatGPT, Google SGE, AI Concierges)



2026+

AI Agents access live inventory to finish bookings for the guest.

What Can AI Do for Travelers Today?



Plan and book entire trips

AI agents now use data standards like Model Context Protocol (MCP) to check your live inventory and exchange booking credentials for the guest.



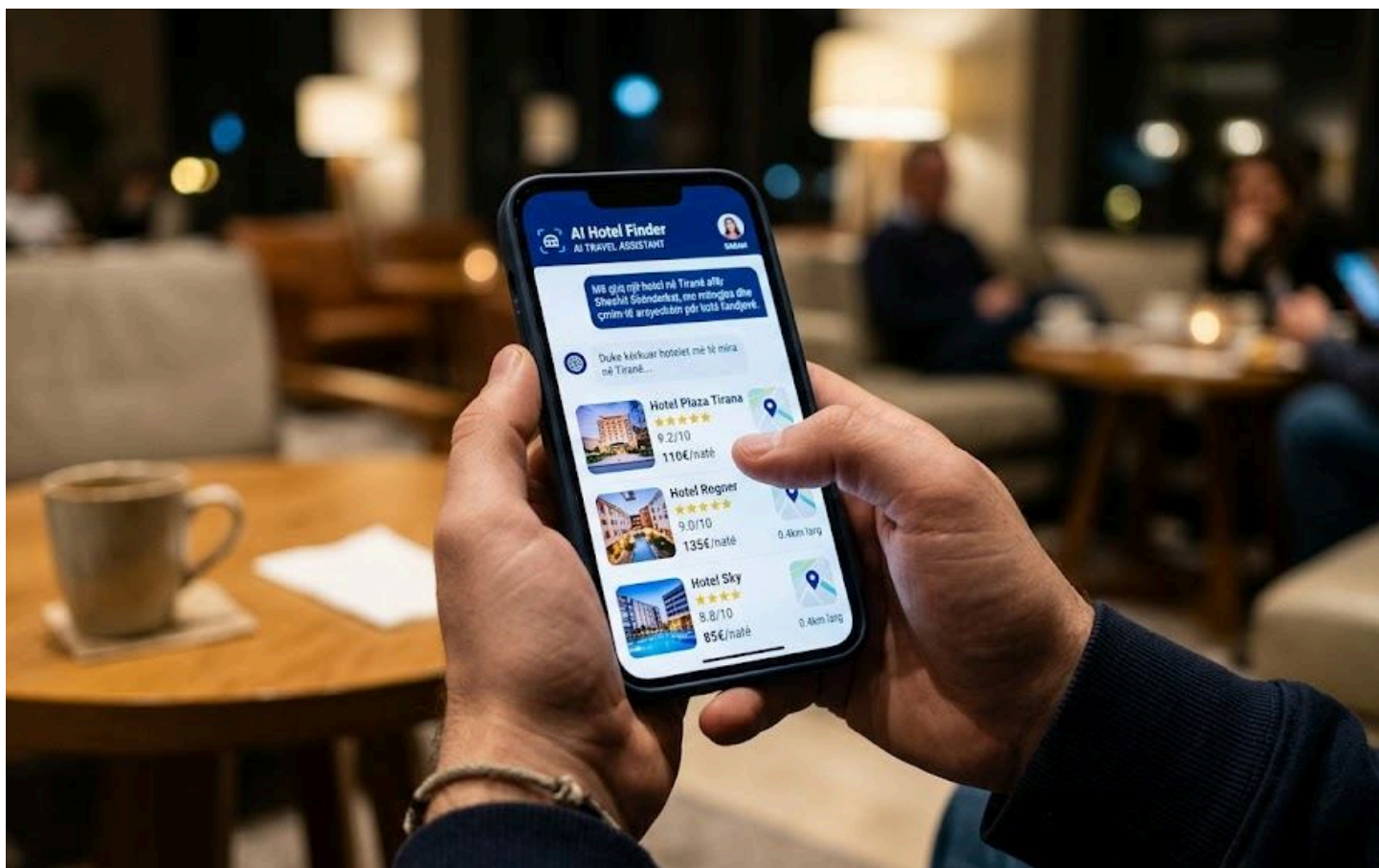
Skip web results for direct answers

Travelers ask questions like "Where should I stay in Boston for a concert?" and get a summary of options instead of a list of links.



Search with photos and voice

Guests can snap a picture of a resort they like or describe their dream vacation to find a match instantly.





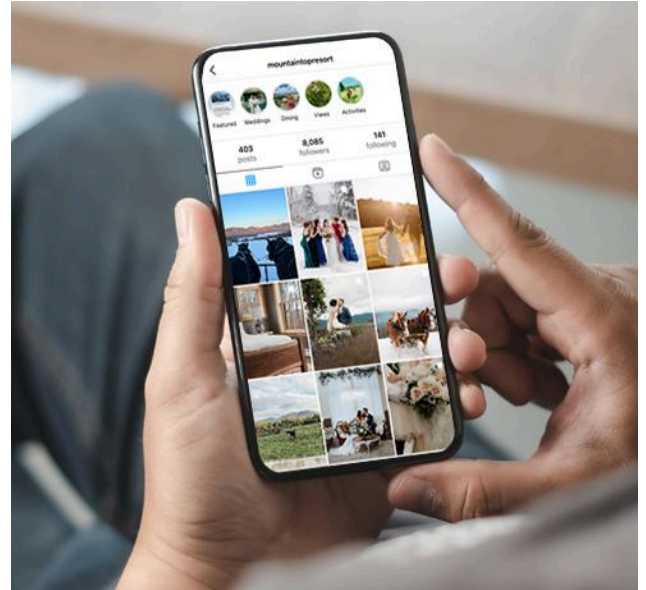
Many hotels are caught off guard.

“Are we supposed to overhaul everything? Again?”

Successful hoteliers are anticipating the ways guests will search, plan, and book—whatever the tool or platform—and adapting their online footprint. AI's rapid advancement makes this a challenge. However, it doesn't mean changing everything.

This guide offers a point of departure. It reviews changing traveler behavior, updated technical capabilities, and the ways you can take advantage of them, often with the website and infrastructure you have today.

The hotels that move now will show up in searches and earn more direct bookings, possibly from people who never visited their website.



AI Impact Areas in Hospitality:



Zero-Click Searches

With **93%** of AI search sessions end without a click to a website, your site must prioritize direct answers to important questions.



Trip Planning

AI search traffic exploded **527%** last year as more guests moved their research to AI agents.



Direct Discovery

AI now pulls **56%** of its recommendations from non-OTA sources for experience-based searches.



Search Optimization

Almost **70%** of businesses report a higher return on investment when they use AI to help with their search strategy.

Changing Behavior: How Guests Use AI Today

Planning a trip used to take many hours, and many rounds of deliberation. This is precious family time, me time, PTO days, and a lot of money. For the high-value customer, it's a personal, carefully considered decision, conducted over dozens of browser tabs.

Now, AI folds all that work into a single conversation. Travelers can speak to their device and describe what they want in normal language.

Tools like **Google AI Mode** or **ChatGPT** are now capable enough to consider complex, plain-language queries. They can remember previous sessions and dial in on user preferences. Soon, they'll offer to book a room, given the go-ahead.

AI now works with a broader context, backed by more capabilities to act on a user's behalf. They're becoming personal assistants.



Booking Today Combines AI and Traditional Searches

Most guests using AI use it to do the heavy lifting of research and inspiration. Then, they switch to Google for validation. Even with **700 million weekly active users** on ChatGPT, **95%** of them still use Google to double-check details before they book.

Current Tools Travelers Use:

ChatGPT & GuideGeek

Create personalized itineraries based on conversational prompts.

Google's AI Mode

Provides AI-powered summaries that bypass traditional blue-link listings.

AI Trip Planners (Mindtrip, Roam Around)

Combine AI with calendars, maps, and booking engines based on "vibe".

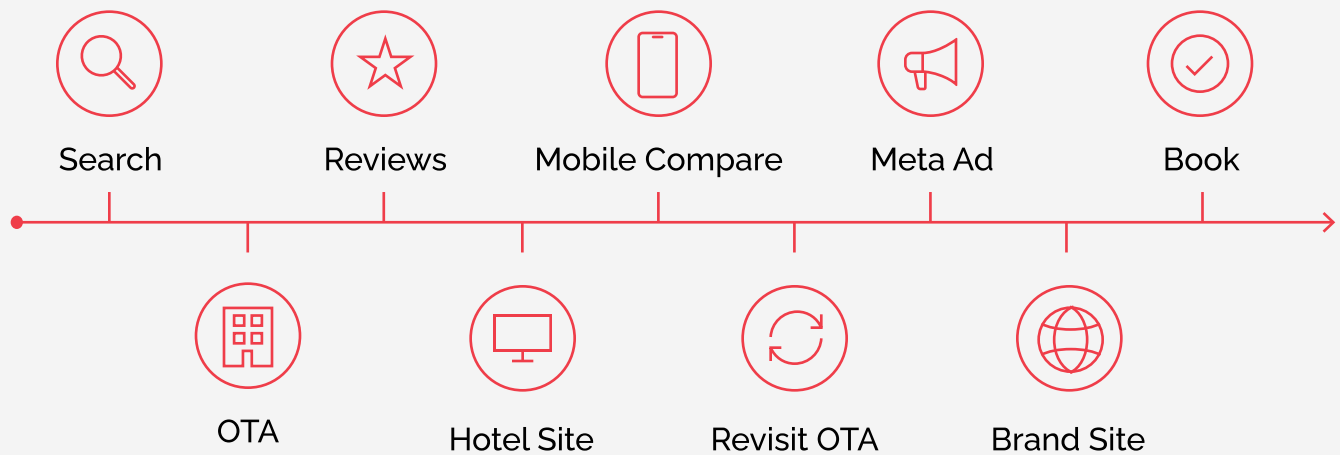


What's Next:

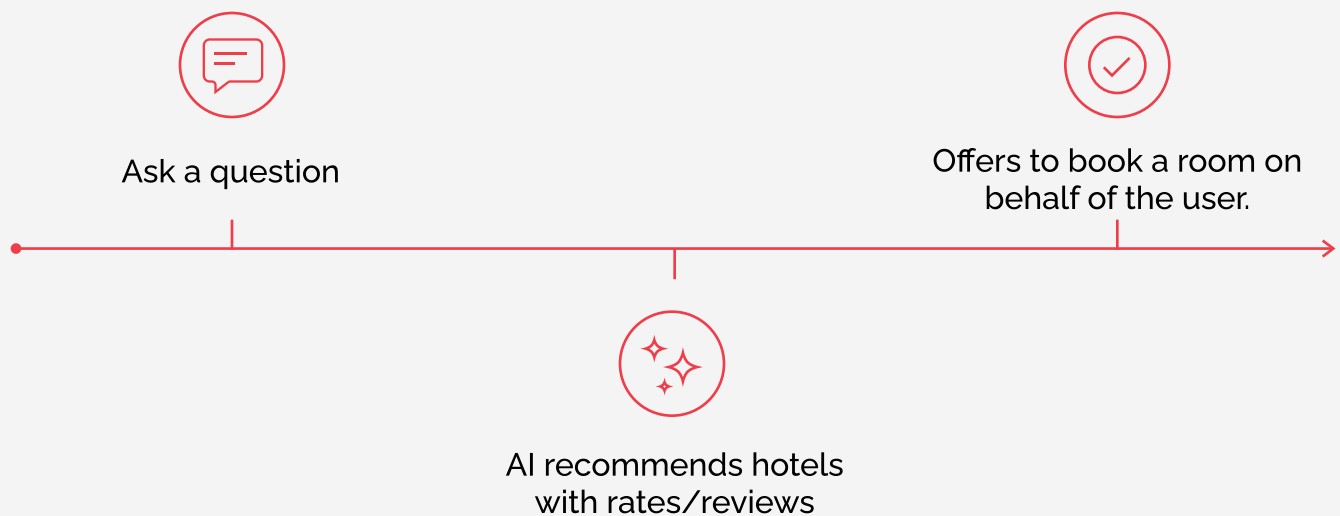
- **Live Inventory:** AI engines connect directly to your reservation database and CRM to check real-time availability.
- **Persistent Memory:** The Unified Context Protocol (UCP) lets AI remember factors like a guest's loyalty points and past bookings across different apps.

Traditional Search vs. AI

Traditional (9 steps)



AI Agent (1 step)

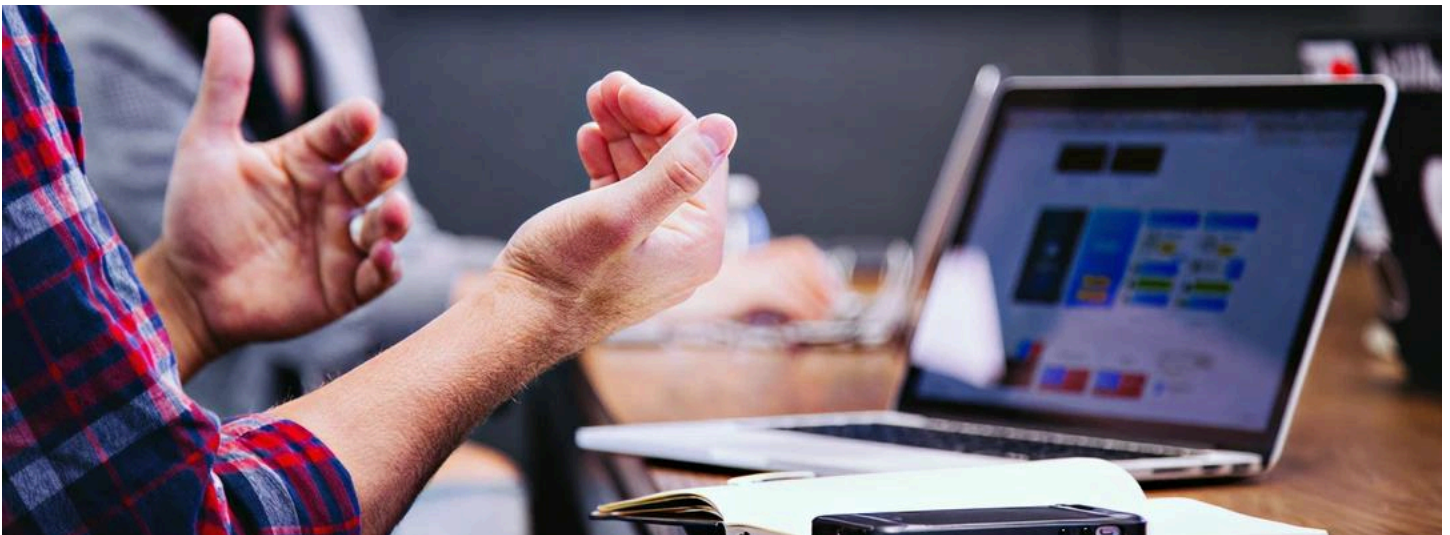


AI in Hotel Marketing: Capturing Inbound Intent

HINT: They want easy answers. And they're very specific.

"Inbound intent" is customers finding a business without an ad click. For hotels, that intent is often highly personal—like a family weekend in central San Francisco with a pool, attached rooms, and pet-friendly policies.

Traditionally, OTAs dominated these complex searches. Today, AI pulls **56%** of its recommendations from non-OTA sources. Marketers now have the opportunity to become a direct source and reclaim traffic by seeding their websites with content that AI models can use for these multidimensional queries.



AI IN MARKETING IS NOTHING NEW

Finding patterns in huge sets of data? AI models are very good at this. Hotel marketers have used AI tools for years via Google, Meta, and other platforms. They help us identify and serve ads to groups of people with online behaviors that match our customer profile.

In recent years, tools like Google AI Max have introduced ads that construct ads based on website content and serve them to relevant audiences. No human-made creative needed. It requires careful oversight, but campaigns running today for several of our current clients show promising performance growth in certain applications.

Now, with generative AI in the hands of everyday people, marketers play a big role in making sure that brands are equipped to meet their needs.

What This Means for Hotels

AI doesn't just scan websites, it **interprets** them. It's no longer about ranking for a single phrase, but showing up in AI answers that blend intent, emotion, and context.

The Goal Has Changed: Your website is a data source for AI agents first, then a place for humans to validate their research.

THREE STRATEGIES FOR 2026:



1. Write for People First, Then AI

AI models understand emotion and context. Instead of just listing "fireplaces," describe the experience of using them. Rich, sensory details help AI "sell" your hotel's vibe to the right guest.

Cluster your "people" based on guest type.

Guests search based on their needs, their fellow travelers, and the "why" of their trip. Create a page that describes the ways they can experience your property. Update room descriptions and amenities for the people they serve best.

For example:

- I. Couples planning anniversaries.
- II. Families visiting local schools or historical sites.
- III. Solo travelers looking for coastal quiet.
- IV. Work retreats that need space to focus and socialize.



2. Write for People First, Then AI

Technical SEO is now about Generative Engine Optimization (GEO). Use clean headings and FAQ blocks to make it easier for AI to extract facts and surface them in a chat.

Use Schema markup, a technical setup that labels information like your property, location, and amenities. This allows AI to verify your pet policy or pool hours in milliseconds.

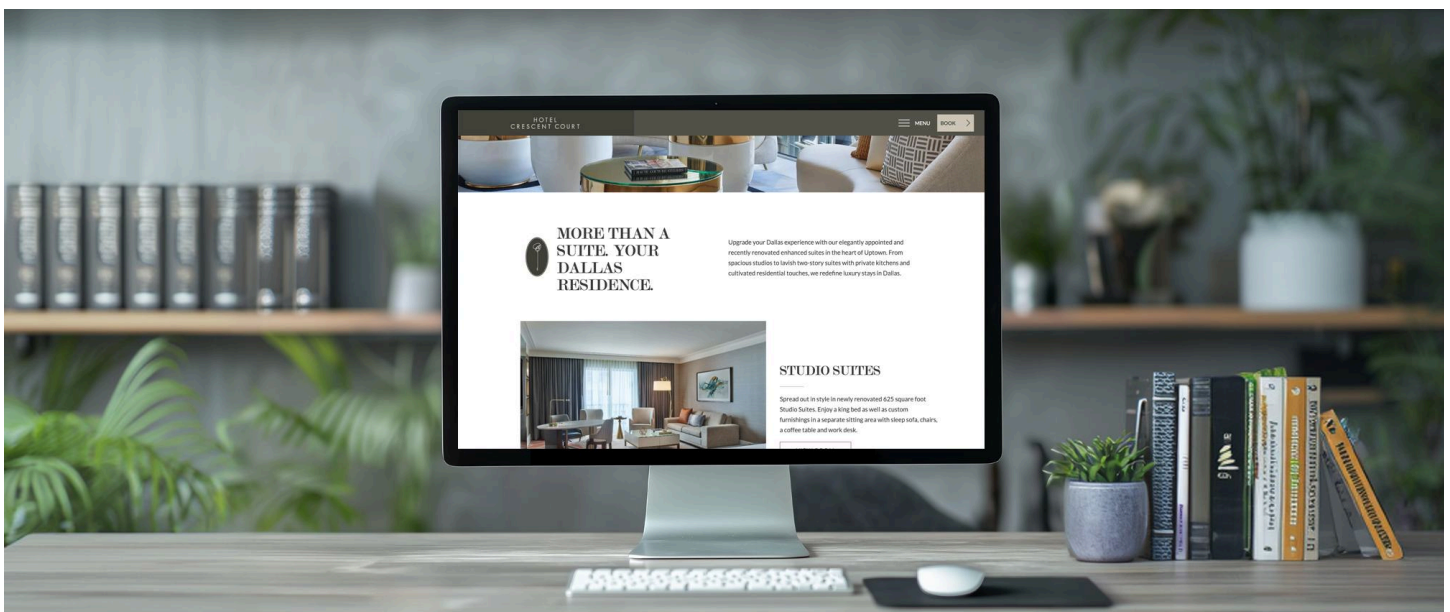


3. Match Search Intent, Not Just Keywords

In 2026, optimization is about answering specific needs. With 83% of travelers now interested in AI tools for planning, your content must speak directly to their questions.

What Can You do Today:

- **Structure Content Around Answers:** Since 93% of AI searches never lead to a click, your content must definitively answer questions. Draft FAQ blocks and add Schema markup so AI agents can extract your facts.
- **Update Your Room Descriptions:** Modern AI processes text, images, and video simultaneously. Enhance basic amenities with sensory details, like the texture of the linens, the bustle of the street below, or the fresh ocean breeze, to help AI match your "vibe" to a guest's dream trip.
- **Invest in Content Clusters:** Build themed groups of pages that focus on your best guests. For example, create a "Romantic Getaways" section that includes room types, local dining tips, and a ready-to-use two-day itinerary. These "clusters" tell AI that you are an authority on that specific type of travel.
- **Get ready for AI booking:** Contact your booking engine provider to confirm support for Model Context Protocol (MCP) or similar direct-access APIs. This technical standard allows AI agents to query your live rates and inventory to complete a reservation on behalf of the guest, bypassing the need for a website click.
- **Gather Staff "Insider" Tips:** Record a 10-minute briefing with your front desk or concierge about their top local recommendations. Use AI to transcribe and format these into a "Local Guide" page. This seeds AI engines with the unique, non-OTA facts they need to recommend your property for experience-based searches.
- **Help AI "Read" Your Media:** Update image alt-text and video descriptions to include specific sensory and lifestyle details "Heated infinity pool with harbor sunset views" will draw more interest than "heated pool." This allows AI models that process visual data toward your hotel's "vibe" and amenities for voice and visual searches.



AI in Hotel Marketing: Powering Outbound Campaigns

Inbound traffic carries valuable intent. Outbound campaigns, from sources like emails, digital ads, and social media, find new guests and generate new revenue. As AI becomes more capable and context aware, it's an invaluable tool for scaling and personalizing outbound content. Hotels using AI to power these campaigns report a **higher return on investment (ROI)**.

With nearly **70% of businesses** seeing improved results from AI integration.
Build an "AI Content Engine"

Scaling outbound means taking in research and providing better inputs to your AI tools. A single 15-minute staff conversation about a new spring package can be fed into an AI to instantly generate:

- 3 versions of email copy for different segments.
- A blog post titled "Weekend in Burlington: Ski, Spa, Repeat."



Call logs, customer feedback forms, and social feed activity can all feed AI summaries, quickly and easily generating ideas for fresh takes on your property that are timely and relevant.

Personalize Without Rewriting Everything

Outbound messaging works best when it is tailored, and AI makes it easy to fit different audiences. Using the **Unified Context Protocol (UCP)**, AI systems can now manage a guest's identity and preferences across different apps and devices.

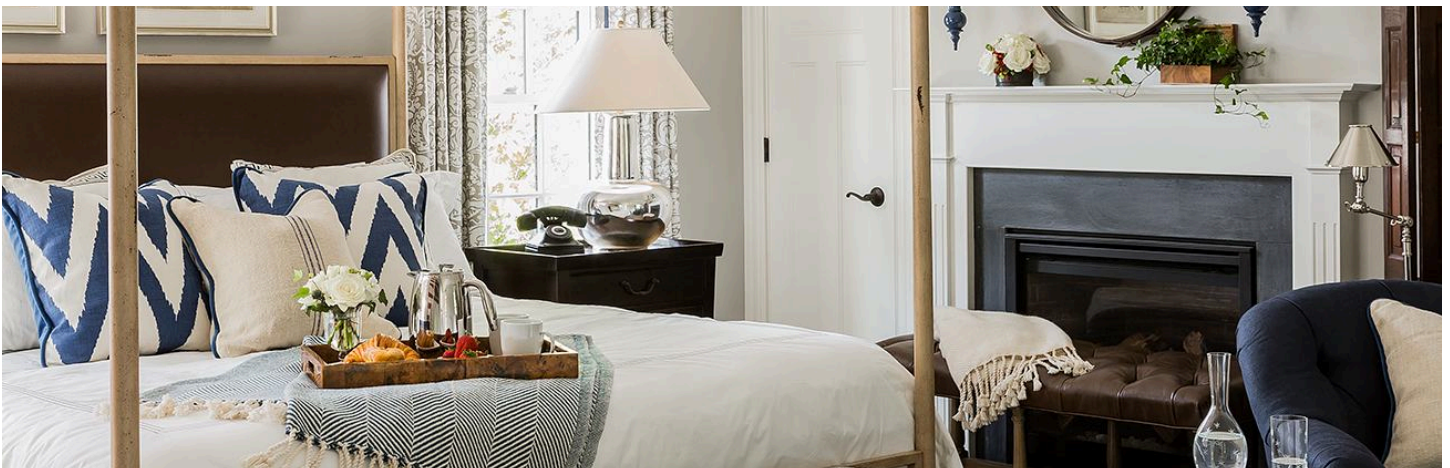
For example, a historic inn in Mystic, Connecticut, can ask AI to review its local tourism site and its own history to spin different versions of an email:

A **"quiet luxury"** version for remote workers.

A **"romantic getaway"** version for couples.

A **"heritage and history"** version for older travelers.

AI can draft them in minutes. Then, an AI query could quickly identify which guests should get each email and build lists.



“

- “Walk from your casita to Santa Fe’s top galleries—then unwind by the fire.”
- “Where the art is world-class, and the margaritas aren’t far behind.”
- “Stay steps from Canyon Road’s best studios.”



At the same time, AI helps test versions for other groups like spa-goers or foodies, ensuring you never miss a promising angle.



Draft ads and landing pages:

Have AI scan social media activity around your area. Produce seasonal campaigns on your experiences and packages that capitalize on these trends. Even simple ads, paired with descriptive landing pages can drive incremental bookings.



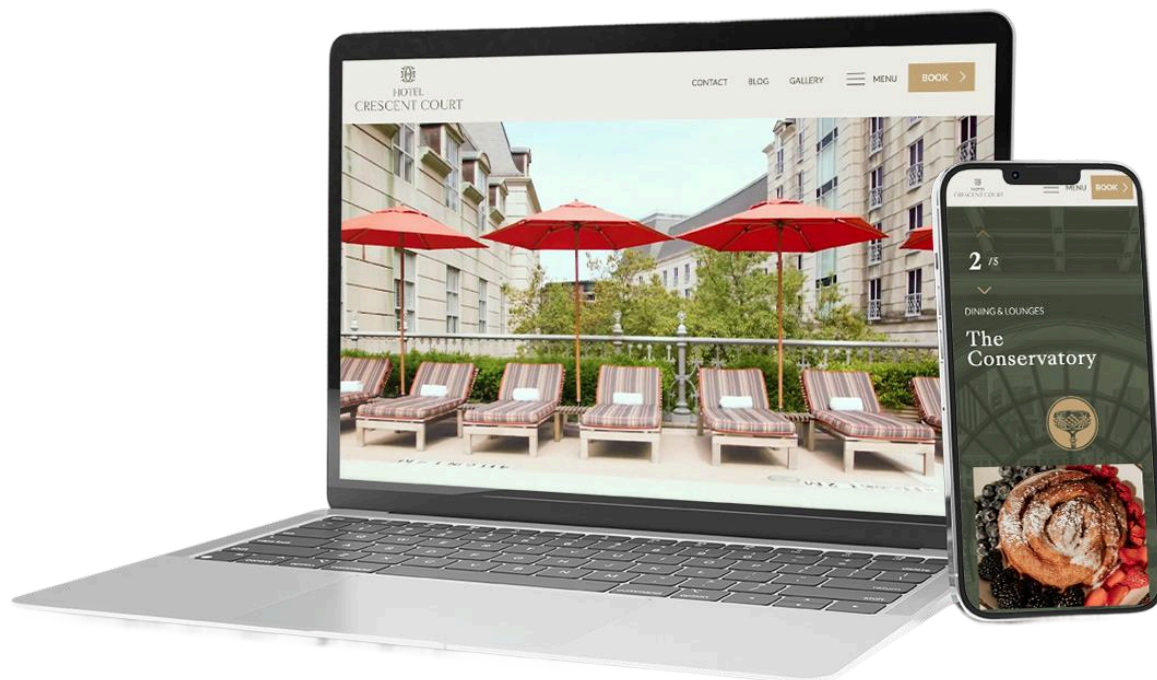
Attract a new type of guest:

Ask your staff to profile a guest who loves to visit, but sits outside the typical "type." Feed it to AI for campaign concepts, then work with your agency to activate across ad channels.

	Original Ad	AI-Enhanced Ad
Headline	"Book a Stay in Wine Country"	"Escape to Sonoma - Rustic Stays & Vineyard Views"
Text	"Great rates on boutique hotels"	"Enjoy peaceful mornings and world-class dining at Sonoma's top boutique hideaways."
CTA	"Book Now"	"Plan Your Getaway"

Your Guest Experience: Market What Makes You Special

Marketing isn't just a list of amenities; it's a way to make someone feel the stay before they book. Communicate your unique setting, design, quirks, and personality.



AI is increasingly able to read these cues, both in language and visuals, and interpret them.



Turn On-Site Insight into Online Storytelling

If a team member always tells guests to visit the harbor just before sunset, that tip should be on your blog, in your welcome emails, and part of your itineraries. AI tools make this easy. Feed in local knowledge, and they'll help write it up in your brand's unique voice.



Show the Right Story to the Right Guest

For a resort that sees both romantic couples and large family reunions, AI helps you adjust landing pages, select the right images, and pull the specific testimonials that match the moment. Same property. Two different stories. Both true.

Use AI to Act on Guest Feedback

AI can summarize hundreds of reviews and guest surveys in seconds, surfacing trends you can promote. If **most** guests rave about your porch breakfast, that's your marketing "hook".

Quick Wins for 2026:



Identify Your Hooks

Ask AI to scan your reviews and suggest content ideas like "Absolutely no one skips our breakfast"

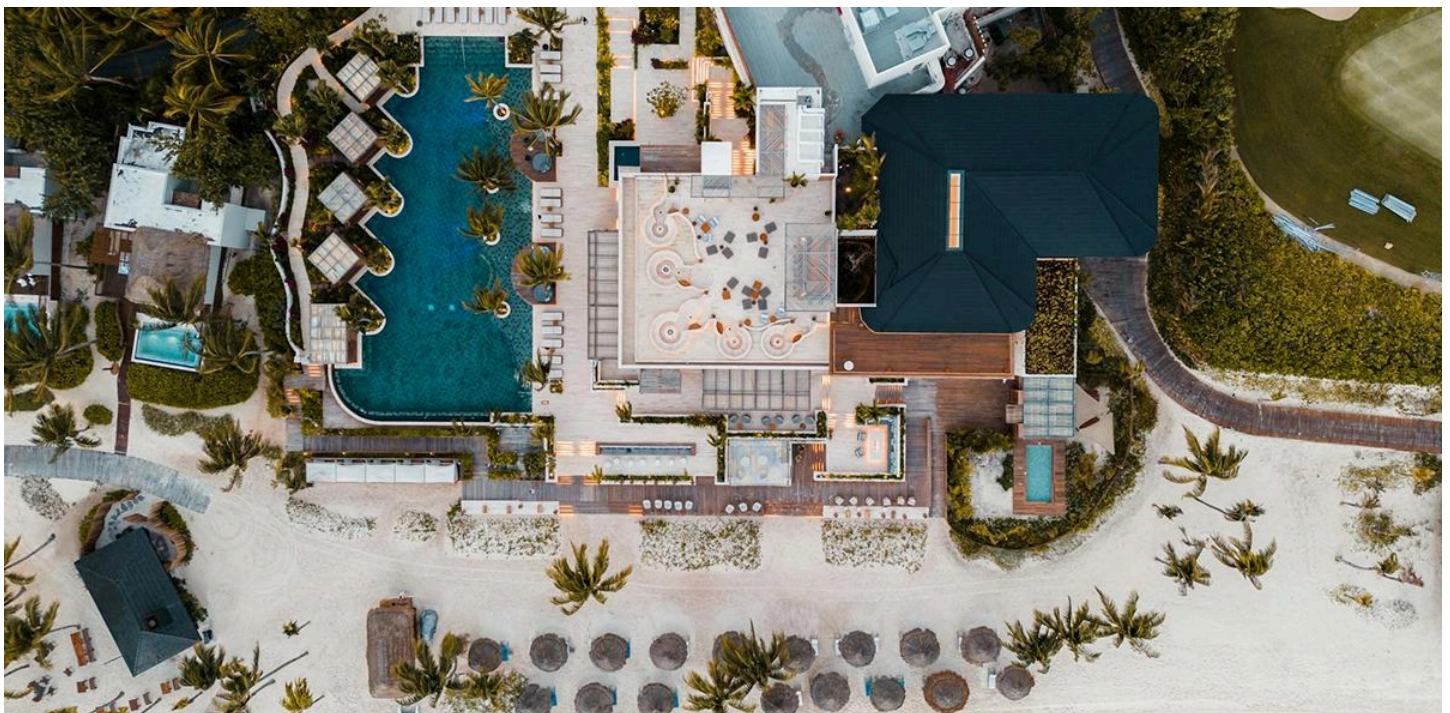


Interview Your People

Record a talk with the team members who have the most local knowledge. Have AI pull 4-5 themes to fuel your blog and social media.

Long-Term Investment:

Build a story-driven content library. One page for each guest type. One story for each season. AI helps generate and organize it, but the details come from you—and that's what sells.



Build Your Hotel's AI Strategy

START WITH A TECHNICAL FOUNDATION

No hotel, big or small, needs to "AI-proof" their business overnight. But starting today brings big benefits in the very near future. AI is fundamentally changing how people find, judge, and book hotels. We recommend starting at the technical foundations that make your content as discoverable as possible. Then choose additional areas, like AI-generated emails or blog content. Test more ideas and speak to more types of guests. Then, expand as you go.

WHAT AN AI STRATEGY LOOKS LIKE

A good AI strategy focuses on outcomes.

More direct bookings
by answering the specific questions people ask AI tools.

Capturing automated agents
using standards like MCP to turn your site into a live inventory source for AI agents.

Better content
that builds authority and captures niche queries by sharing the personality of your hotel

Confidence:
Knowing what to delegate to AI, what to keep human, and how to help your AI tools create great content.

WHAT TO DO TODAY

Prepare for agents:

Check that your property's data is ready for AI assistants to find your hotel and book.

Brainstorm with your team:

Who are your favorite guests? Why do they book and what do they enjoy time after time?. Record the audio with a phone and feed it to an AI to help it learn about you.

Rewrite for clarity:

Use AI to improve the richness and relevance of your most important pages, ensuring they are easy for both humans and AI agents to read.



Where a Partner Helps

A strong hotel marketing partner helps you do more than just use software.

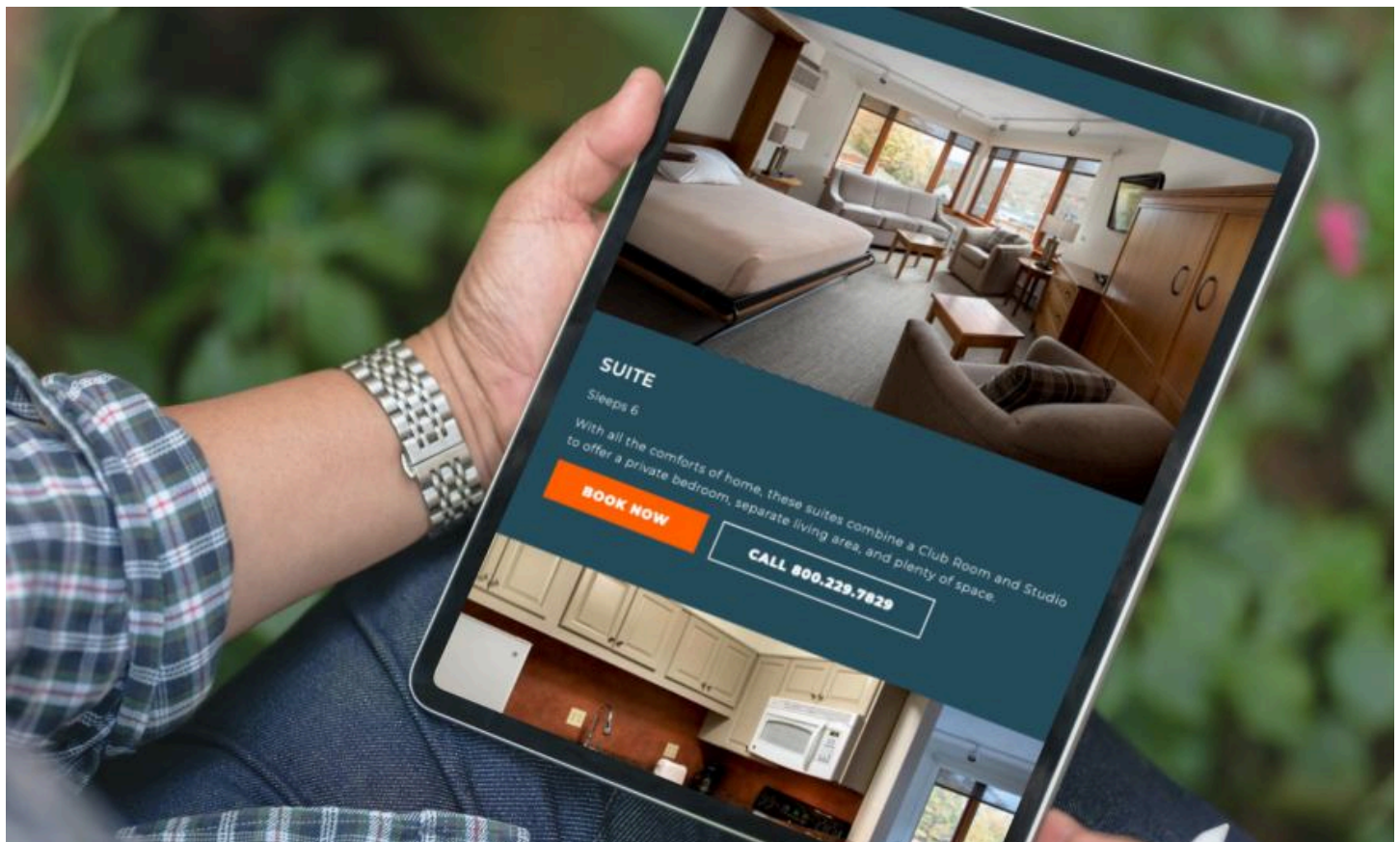
They help you:

Reinforcing website fundamentals like ensuring machine-readable structure and schema markup.

Choosing the right direction with campaigns that focus on guest preferences and content that wins bookings.

Keeping your brand consistent to stand apart in summaries and attract guests as they do their research.

Measure and adapt, guiding even AI campaigns with human strategy that grows performance over time.



O'Rourke Hospitality has guided hotels through every digital shift for over 20 years. This one is no different. From setup to execution, we help you apply AI where it makes the biggest impact—earning you more visibility, more direct bookings, and more control over your brand story

Strategic Hospitality Marketing

With more than 20 years of hospitality marketing experience, O'Rourke uses a comprehensive and strategic approach to help both independent and branded hotels take their digital marketing to the next level. We create an online presence for your brand that captures guests from their initial online engagement with you and seamlessly transitions them to your real-world experience.



To discuss your business and learn more about our services, please contact:

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