

From SEO to GEO: How Generative AI is Changing Search

By Rebecca Ready (ZU)

Search is evolving, and the way visitors discover tourism experiences is changing along with it. As generative AI tools become more common in search, traditional search engine optimization (SEO) is expanding into a broader concept often referred to as GEO, or Generative Engine Optimization. As search tools increasingly summarize and surface information for users, the clarity and structure of your

content play a growing role in visibility and credibility. Well-written content helps visitors understand what you offer, builds trust, and improves your chances of being discovered.

This resource focuses on practical writing approaches that help your content perform across modern search tools and better support how visitors plan and choose tourism experiences.

Learning Expectations

By using this resource, you will learn to:

- Understand the shift from traditional SEO to Generative Engine Optimization (GEO)
- Recognize how AI tools interpret and summarize website content
- Apply clear writing principles that improve visibility and usability
- Identify simple, practical changes to improve your website content

Why This Shift Matters

Search is no longer just about ranking on a results page. Visitors are asking full questions and receiving summarized answers.

For tourism businesses, this means:

- You are competing to be included in answers, not just listed in results
- Clear, specific content is more likely to be used by AI tools
- Visitors expect quick, direct information to plan their experiences

Strong content helps:

- Improve discoverability across search tools
- Build trust and credibility with visitors
- Reduce confusion and support decision-making
- Increase the likelihood of being recommended

SEO to GEO: What's Changed

Traditional SEO

- Focus on keywords
- Ranking on Google
- Driving clicks

GEO (Generative Engine Optimization)

- Focus on clarity and meaning
- Being included in AI-generated answers
- Supporting summaries and recommendations

Key Takeaway

SEO helps you get found.

GEO helps you get chosen.

HOW AI USES YOUR CONTENT (SIMPLIFIED)

AI tools scan multiple sources and look for:

- Clear, direct answers



- Consistent and accurate information
- Content that is easy to understand
- Signals of credibility (reviews, completeness, freshness)

They then summarize this information into a response.

What this means for you:

If your content is vague or hard to scan, it is less likely to be used.

CORE PRINCIPLES: WRITING FOR WEB AND AI

Good writing for AI starts with good writing for people.

Focus on:

Clarity

- Use plain, direct language
- Avoid jargon and overly promotional phrases

Specificity

- Clearly describe what you offer
- Include details like location, duration, and audience

Structure

- Use headings, lists, and sections
- Break content into smaller, scannable pieces

Relevance

- Answer real visitor questions
- Use language your audience would use
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Context

- Write so content makes sense on its own
- Assume it may be read out of context

WHAT CONTENT WORKS BEST FOR GEO

Content that performs well typically:

- Answers common questions
- Is easy to scan and understand
- Provides clear, complete information

Examples:

- FAQs (What should I bring? Is this beginner-friendly?)
- Service descriptions (what, where, how long, who it's for)
- "What to expect" sections
- Location-based content

STEP-BY-STEP: IMPROVE ONE PAGE

Start small. Focus on improving one page at a time.

Step 1: Choose a Page

- Select a key page (homepage, experience, or service page)

Step 2: Make It Clear and Specific

Replace vague language with clear details. Ask:

- What is the experience?
- Where is it located?
- Who is it for?

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Step 3: Add Structure

- Break content into sections
- Add headings (What to expect, Who it's for, etc.)
- Use bullet points

Step 4: Answer Key Questions

Add 3–5 FAQs:

- What should I bring?
- How long is the experience?
- Is it suitable for beginners?

Step 5: Check Your Details

- Ensure location, hours, and services are accurate
- Fix broken links
- Update your Google Business profile

Step 6: Build Credibility

- Encourage reviews
- Respond to reviews
- Keep content up to date

QUICK WINS FOR TOURISM OPERATORS

Simple changes that can have immediate impact:

- Rewrite one description to be more specific
- Add FAQs to your top-performing page
- Break large paragraphs into sections
- Use headings to organize content
- Ensure all links are working
- Update your Google listing
- Ask one recent guest for a review

Start small. Consistency over time is what creates results.



FINAL TAKEAWAY

You do not need to become an expert in AI or search technology.

Focus on what you can control:

Clear, structured, and specific content

If your content is easy to understand, it is more likely to be found, trusted, and used—no matter how search continues to evolve.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Rebecca Ready

Is a Strategy Director at zu with 15 years of experience helping teams launch meaningful digital products. She specializes in aligning digital strategies with user needs and business outcomes. At zu, Rebecca leads the research and strategy practice and helps tourism operators evaluate their content, simplify complex challenges, and create purposeful digital strategies that connect business goals with visitor expectations.

