

ISRAELI TOURISM INDUSTRY ON THE RISE AGAIN



Israel tourism industry does suffer from the conflicts in the region. The Lebanon war as well as terrorist attacks within Israel naturally scared off a number of tourists. Nevertheless, last year (2007) was a change in this development. The year 2007 was exceptionally good for the country's tourism. Numbers of visitors has risen by 25 per cent compared to the year 2006.

A total of approximately 2.95 million tourists visited the country. Majority of foreign tourists came to Israel from the U.S., especially from the states of New York, California, New Jersey, Florida, Pennsylvania and Illinois. There were 542,000 entries from the U.S. last year which was 24 per cent of the whole year tourists' influx in here.

Second most important market was France with 246,000 tourist entries and the third was Russia, from where 193,000 tourists traveled to Israel. There were also 101,000 travelers from Germany and 172,000 visitors from the UK. Approximately 1.8 million travelers came to the country by air. The activity at Ben Gurion International Airport has risen by 16 per cent. People enter the country also via Israel's land crossing terminals.

Many people who travel to Israel come here because of their Jewish heritage. Nevertheless, many of the visitors are not Jews and are lured to see the Bible- and Jesus Christ-related sights. Popular places are Jordan River, the Sea of Galilee and the olive grove where the Sermon on the Mount was delivered. Other groups of tourists are attracted by Israel's boutique hotels, wineries, special restaurants and spa facilities. Airlines have noticed the increased demand for travel to Israel and they are raising their flights to the destination. It has been reported that Delta Airlines will add a second daily flight from the United States to Israel in March. Other airlines like e.g. Continental Airlines are going in similar direction.

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