

ISRAEL: GROWING NUMBERS OF POLISH TOURISTS



Israel, despite its complicated safety situation, lures numerous tourists from all over the world. Poland is a particularly important source market for the Israeli tourism industry. The number of Polish tourists coming to visit Israel has been continuously rising over the few last years. Actually, there has been a 104 per cent increase in the number of Poles visiting the country in 2007 compared to 2006.

Approximately 86,000 Poles traveled to Israel in 2007. In January 2008 there were 8347 tourists from Poland, which is a 169 per cent increase over the number of visitors in January 2007. This makes Poland the fifth most important European source market for the Israeli tourism industry.

According to an official statistic, 200,000 tourists visited Israel this February, which is up 46 per cent in comparison with the numbers for February 2007. Majority of the visitors (141,400) came by air. Approximately 25,000 tourists, primarily from Russia, the Ukraine and Poland, crossed over from Sinai in February, for one-day visits in Israel. A number of Poles flies to Egypt first and then visit Israel just for one day. Israeli officials plan to increase the number of Polish visitors by 30 per cent this year. Nevertheless, they need to deal with various obstacles. For example, a considerable problem is the lack of Polish speaking tour guides offering their quality services to the Polish pilgrims. It is also necessary for Israel to increase the number of flights going directly to the country.

However, a very important improvement has been made in the visas politics. For instance, Romanians no longer need visas to travel to Israel. This will probably significantly increase the number of Romanian tourists coming to Israel. Last year (2007) twenty thousand Romanians visited the country and experts believe the number will double this year. The same is happening in Russia. Starting in June the Israeli and Russian tourists will not need visa to enter the other country any more.

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