

ISRAEL PLANS TO ATTRACT MORE CHINESE TOURISTS



A visa reform regarding Chinese tourists to Israel has come into effect as the Israeli Tourism Ministry seeks to increase Israel's visibility and presence in the lucrative Chinese tourism market. This means making Israel more accessible to Chinese tourists.

The procedure for visa application by Chinese visitors will now be less bureaucratic. **There is even an option for an independent traveler to get a visa and travel within Israel without any sort of assistance from local tour operators.** Uzi Landau, the Tourism Minister for Israel, announced this new reform campaign on 12 July.

The Tourism Minister said that the two countries have an interwoven history that is centuries old. He pointed out that Chinese tourists to Israel are sure to find inspiration and joy in Israel since the two countries share a rich historical heritage. Uzi Landau also reiterated that China was indeed an emerging market of outmost importance to the Israeli Tourism Industry. He pledged to work hard to increase the overall number of Chinese tourists to Israel in the next couple of years.

This announcement comes in the backdrop of the commencement of weeklong seminars in Guangzhou, Beijing and Shanghai. The Tourist Office of the Israeli Government in China will be the host of all of these seminars. They will cater to over five hundred Chinese travel agencies. A number of these agencies specialize in the Middle Eastern travel market. The main purpose of these seminars is to introduce Israel as a viable tourism destination to both travel agents and ordinary Chinese travelers.

Attractions at these seminars include Dead Sea mud treatments and Israeli cuisine. Extensive tourism marketing efforts in both the mainstream Chinese media and various trade platforms in China will follow these elaborate seminars. **There will also be an effort at creating a round table meeting between Chinese and Israeli tour operators to bolster cooperation and business between the two.**

The Israeli Bureau of Statistics estimates that over 20 000 Chinese tourists visited Israel in 2012. The same Bureau estimates that the number of Chinese tourists had increased by over 27% during the first five months of 2013 in comparison to the same period last year.

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