

# ISRAEL TO BUILD MORE HOTELS FASTER



A new program was announced by the Israeli Tourism Ministry to speed up construction and build more hotel rooms, so that the high rates of hotels in the country can be reduced. Israel, as per the World Economic Forum, is the 19th costliest destination in the whole world, and in 2013, its average room rate was \$201.30/night, which is costlier than United States or Japan.

Yariv Levin, the new minister of tourism said that the time needed to construct a hotel has become an impractical process, and this proves to be the biggest hurdle in way of lowering prices, because if the supply is not enough, there also will be no competition. **The ministry said it will take measures to simplify the procedure of building new hotels, and construction approvals will also be quick.**

Tourism, which is a very important part of Israel's economy during spring, suffered last year, after the Operation Protective Edge. Last summer, tourism experienced a drop of 31.1%. Even after the end of the war, in October, there still were 19% fewer tourists in the country compared to October in the previous year.

As per the latest Israeli report, 14,200 Arab tourists went to Israel between January - May 2014. According to the Central Statistics Bureau of Israel, 5,200 tourists came from Egypt, 1,500 from Morocco, and 7,500 from Jordan. This is from a total of about 1,259m tourists, which includes 756.5m from Europe.

The maximum number of tourists visiting Israel was from United States, next in the list is Russia, and then France. **If compared to the number of visitors, who had traveled to Israel last year, in the same time, the tourism rate has gone down by 9.7%.**

The large number of tourist traveling from Jordan is perhaps because of the high number of Palestinian refugees residing in Jordan, who have family or friends in Israel, or because of the Palestinian Territories. Thousands of Jews of Moroccan origin travel to Israel from Morocco, regularly.

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