

ISRAELI TOURISM SUPPORTED BY LOCALS



Israel's war against Hamas may not be raging like a few years back, but the international perception of the conflict still dampens the Israeli tourism industry's recovery.

Foreigners' night stays have gone up by 4% this February, a definite improvement in comparison to last year's scenario, but **the recovery signs of Israeli tourism are still quite timid, when compared to pre-war figures.**

Sadly, Israel had been having a very good year for tourism before the war, as foreigners' stays in local hotels during February 2014 were an astounding 21% higher than those of this recovery year.

Unlike foreigners, however, Israelis keep boosting their country's tourism now, as they accounted for an 8% more night stays in the local hotels, as compared to the same period last year.

When you add that to the renewed interest foreigners are showing for Israel, there is a 6% rise in night stays overall, as both Israelis and foreigners were responsible for 1.3 million hotel stays in February of this year.

According to the Israel Hotels Association's CEO, Israeli's themselves are the biggest contributors to the industry's slow yet promising recovery, as aggressive discounting has piqued their interest in national tourism, but while this is good news, the fact that the Tourism Ministry has not launched its own initiatives is not. The ministry, on the other side, volleys the responsibility for its lack of action back at the industry.

Moreover, the Israeli Tourism Ministry's director general doesn't even acknowledge any crisis in the sector, noting that **there was a rise in stays in spite of the renewed violence that still plagues the country.**

Still, they proposed an aggressive discounting promotion where rooms would cost 400 shekels during the week and double rooms 600 shekels during the weekend, with no limitations, which would understandably be a bad deal for industry professionals.

Occupancy rates have been notably low in Israel this year, despite the recovery. While a decrease from 58% to 53% overall may not seem dramatic, the drop registered in Jerusalem - from 60% in February 2014 to 47% this past month - is quite significant.

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