

RUSSIAN TOURISM BOOM IN ISRAEL



Israel is experiencing a tourism boom. The Tourism Ministry reported the highest ever inflow of tourists in November. The authorities recorded 287,900 visitors during the month. This number represents a 38% increase compared to last November and a 12% increase compared to the previous all time-November high in 2013 (256,500).

According to the Tourism Minister, Yariv Levin, the tourism boom in Israel is the result of “the intensive marketing efforts in new countries such as China and India, as well as targeted campaigns for the winter season.”

The increase however is not only a matter of Chinese and Indian tourists. **In November, Israel received 33 thousand tourists from Russia** (including one day visitors and cruise ship passengers). According to the Ministry this is 35% more than in the same period last year. Overall 55.8 thousand people from CIS countries arrived in November - 44% more than last year.

31.8 thousand Russians visited Israel for more than one day and arrived in the country on cruise liners. This is 56% more than in November 2016 which is quite a tourism boom.

As a result of the rise, the Ministry will carry out a program to subsidize charter flights from Russia to Ovda airport. As a part of this program, 393 charter flights from Moscow and Saint Petersburg to Eilat will be in operation.

According to the head of department of the Ministry of Tourism of Israel in Russia and CIS Countries, Ksenia Kobyakova, the country aims to receive 600 thousand Russian tourists in 2017.

“Our goal for 2017 is to return to pre-2014 figures, when Israel welcomed 600 thousand Russian tourists per year,” Kobyakova said.

In order to attract Russian tourists, Israel plans to increase the budget to promote the country’s tourism potential in the Russian market. Russia has the second largest inflow to Israel after tourists from the United States. Russian inflow accounts for about 13% of tourist flow into the country, according to results from 2015 and Israel will look to improve this rate with their policies.

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