

TOURISM IN ISRAEL ON THE RISE THANKS TO CHINESE AND RUSSIAN VISITORS



According to the Ministry of Tourism in Israel, in September 2017 the country was visited by 300,100 travellers from all over the world, including one-day tourists and passengers of cruise liners. This is an increase of 6% compared to last year.

At the same time, by the end of the third quarter of 2017, the tourist flow to Israel amounted to 2.7 million tourists. **This is an increase of 23% compared to 2016, when the country was visited by 2.2 million people.**

In 2013, 2.96 million tourists stayed overnight in the country. In 2014, there was a decrease in the tourism in Israel to 2.92 million visitors due to the Gaza war. 2015 saw a fall further to 2.79 million, though in 2016 the inflow rose again to 2.9 million (all these numbers do not include the day-trippers).

However, if we include day-trippers, the country saw a year-by-year decline in the last years. From 3.5 million in 2013 to 3.07 million last year, as reported by the Central Bureau of Statistics.

However, seeing the current increase, it is fair to say that tourism in Israel has perhaps found the right recipe to attract tourists. According to the Tourism Minister, Yariv Levin, the reason is that Israel has changed its marketing plan. The focus has moved from targeting Christian pilgrims and Diaspora Jews to promoting the country as a sun and beach destination.

Chinese tourists are the group of visitors attracted to Israel more than before. In the first seven months of 2017, 64,000 thousand Chinese travelled to Israel. This is a growth of 66% compared to the same period last year. It is expected that over 100 thousand Chinese tourists will visit Israel by the end of the year.

One of the reasons for this growth is the expanding amounts of direct flights between the both countries. For example, the Tel Aviv - Shanghai flights that were launched this year.

The flow of tourists from Russia to Israel is also growing. In September, 39,300 Russians visited the country, which is 31% more than in 2016 and 6% more than in 2015. In the first 9 months of this year, the tourist flow amounted to 282,400 travellers. This is an increase of 46% compared to last year.

The top three Israeli source markets are still the USA, Russia, and France. However, the growth rate of the Russian tourist flow is much higher than the other two. The interest in Israel in Russia is constantly growing.

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