

ISRAEL ANNOUNCED OPENING BORDERS FOR FOREIGN TOURISTS



Israel has announced the reopening of its borders to foreign tourists, subject to certain conditions, from May 23. First, only vaccinated visitors will be allowed.

Tourism Minister Orit Farkash-Hacohen and Health Minister Yuli Edelstein have reached an agreement to open up Israel, with **the first step being to allow entry for vaccinated groups of foreign tourists**. The plan announced by the government provides for a limited number of groups authorized to arrive on May 23. This number will then be increased according to the health situation and the progress of the program.

Individual Travelers Next

Individual travelers will be allowed to enter Israel at a later date. Once again, they will have to be vaccinated against Covid-19. The date of their return will depend on the first results following the opening of the borders.

All travelers will be required to have a PCR test before boarding a flight to Israel. In addition, a serological test to prove their vaccination will be performed upon arrival at Ben Gurion airport. Israel also states that discussions are ongoing with several countries to reach agreements on the validation of vaccination certificates. This would, therefore, cancel the need for the serological test.

Some Exceptions Already Planned for

While waiting for the reopening of borders closed since March 2020, some exceptions are already planned for the travel of non-Israelis vaccinated or cured of the coronavirus.

A citizen or permanent resident living abroad who has a first-degree family member in Israel may come with his spouse and children, even if they are foreigners. A non-Israeli who has a first-degree family member residing in Israel (citizen or permanent resident), may also come with their spouse and children to visit them.

The following protocol must be followed by everyone: All non-Israelis wishing to enter Israel must prove their vaccination or recovery (except infants up to one year old). Proof of proximity of a first-degree family member will be done by checking with the population registry and presenting relevant and legally verified documents (apostille stamp) proving the family relationship, and then registering with the population registry.

In exceptional cases, the head of the consular division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or his deputy will waive the apostille stamp. Applications should be submitted to the Ministry or directly through the Embassy.

Opening Thanks to Vaccinations

Almost five million Israelis (53% of the population) received two doses of vaccine in Israel. In mid-

January, the country had recorded a peak of around 10,000 infections per day but this number has dropped these days to less than 200 per day with a test positivity rate of 0.3%. This drop-in contamination has enabled the authorities to reopen restaurants, bars and beaches and also facilitated agreements with Cyprus and Greece in order to allow its nationals to travel to these countries under relatively flexible conditions.

Nearly 4 million tourists visited Israel in 2019, a figure that has been increasing steadily for several years, according to figures from the Israeli Ministry of Tourism. The drop in 2020 was over 80% due to the pandemic, with just 850,000 tourists welcomed in the country.

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