

ISRAEL'S INBOUND TOURISM PLUNGES 83% IN MAY 2026 AMID ONGOING CRISIS



A fresh drop in tourist arrivals hit Israel during May 2026, leaving numbers barely above the lowest points seen since the start of ongoing unrest, figures from the Central Bureau of Statistics now confirm. Far from recovering, the travel sector faces mounting strain - once considered central to national income and global standing, it now limps through yet another month of setbacks.

Backward movement defines travel numbers for Israel come May 2026 - just 64,400 tourists arrived. That figure trails far behind the 376,400 recorded three years earlier, during May 2023. **A steeper fall appears next to May 2019's count of 440,000 international guests.** Since then, tourist arrivals have slipped roughly 85 percent when measured against that peak moment before global disruptions. Compared with 2023 alone, the decrease nears 83 percent. Visitor totals, broader than tourism alone, climbed slightly higher at 65,700 last month. Yet even that modest sum reflects a shrinkage of inbound tourism from the 126,800 visitors who arrived in May 2025.

Though one month might hint at change, the pattern stretches further. Between January and May of 2026, visitor numbers in Israel reached only 356,400 - down sharply compared to 565,300 during those months in 2025. Rather than a brief dip, specialists see this path unfolding as deep-rooted decline. After June comes July; yet the drop shows little sign of pause.

Nowhere is the role of inbound tourism limited to dollars alone - it quietly shapes how Israel engages beyond its borders. Through ties with overseas travel planners, faith-based groups, booking firms, yet air carriers too, relationships take root. Though enthusiasm exists, officials stress movement depends heavily on consistent flights returning, alongside stronger transit safeguards. Stability in access routes becomes pivotal when momentum stalls without it.

Government Approves NIS 43 Million Support Package

In response to the ongoing challenges, the Israeli government has approved a NIS 43 million support package aimed at preserving tourism infrastructure and preparing for future recovery.

The initiative, spearheaded by Tourism Minister Haim Katz, includes two main components:

- NIS 35 million allocated to an employee retention framework to help operators maintain skilled staff during the downturn.
- NIS 8 million dedicated to overseas marketing activities. Financing international marketing campaigns becomes possible for inbound tour operators through the marketing fund, which also covers participation in travel trade fairs. Trade events along with targeted promotions in major source regions find support here.

Visibility for Israel stays active during downturns because of these steps. **The Ministry of Tourism states continuity in outreach helps sustain essential marketing pathways.** Recovery of tourist arrivals relies partly on such ongoing engagement.

A wave of aid emerges just as the industry struggles through lingering effects of Operation Roaring Lion, a campaign that sharply reduced foreign visitors along with income for service providers.

Though numbers show difficulty, public funding alongside private hope points to serious attempts at protecting key functions. Still, real progress hinges on better security across the area, stronger flight links, and renewed trust among international visitors.

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