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# Tourism

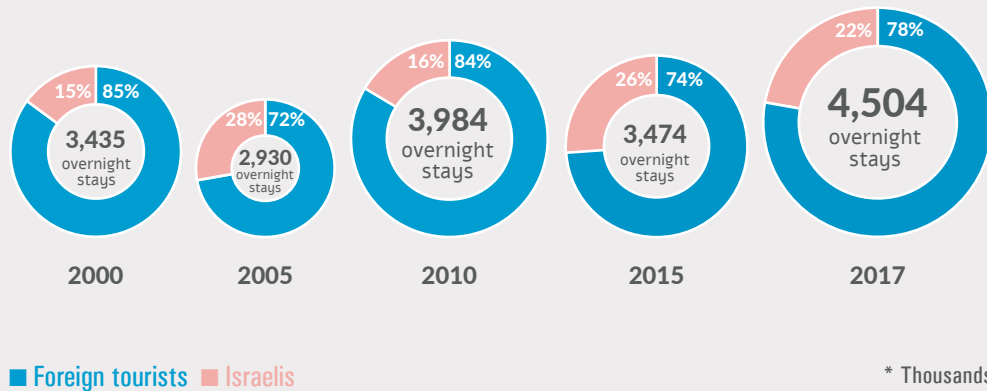
Guests and overnight stays

Jerusalem compared to select Israeli cities

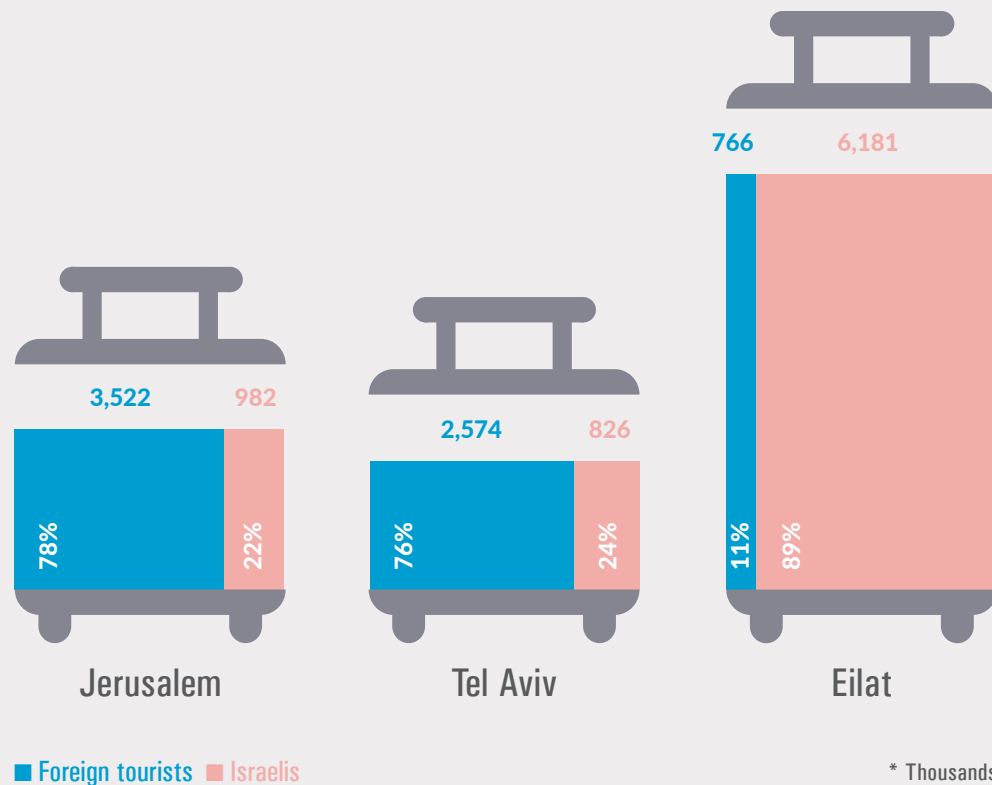
Profile of the tourists



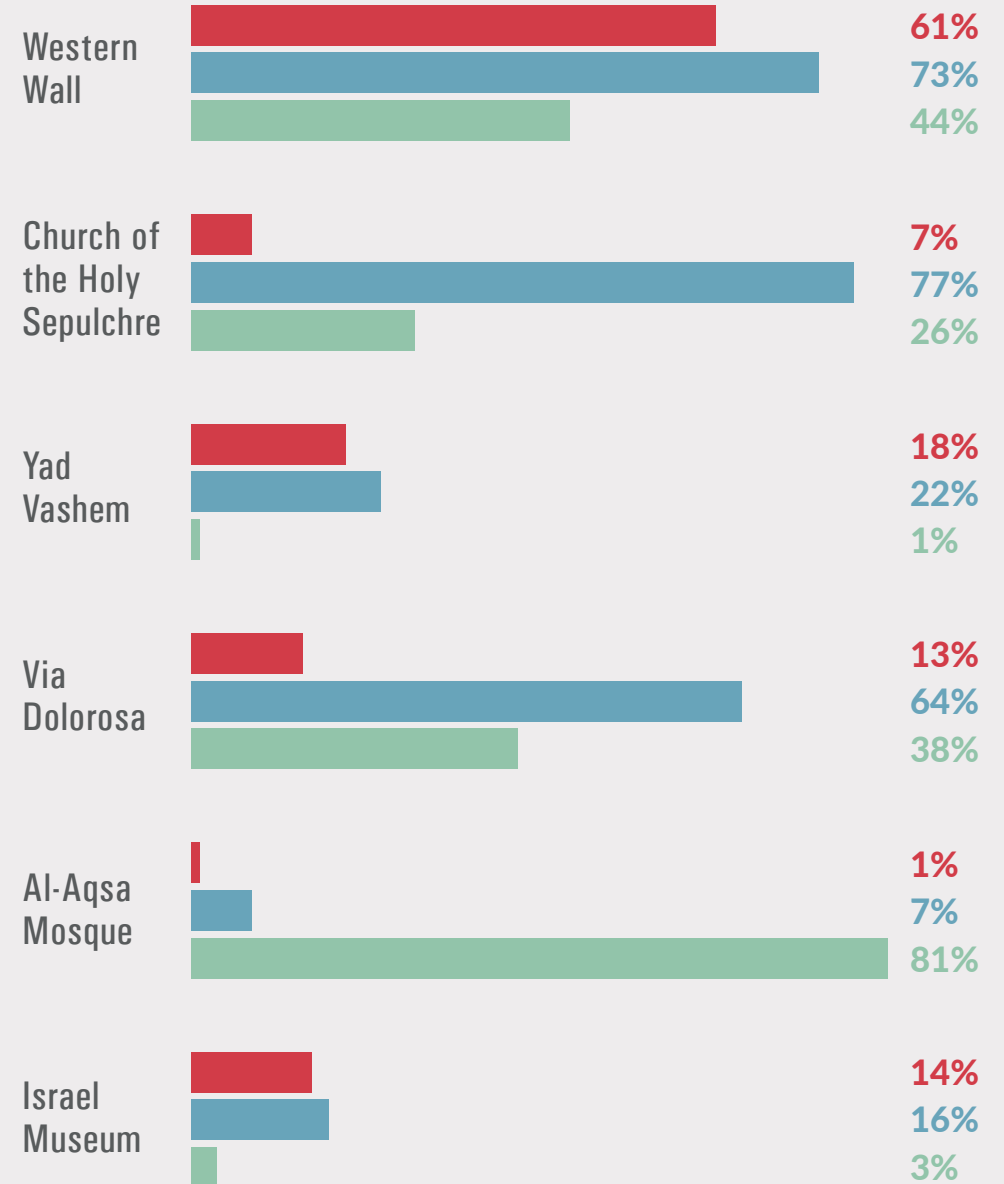
## Overnight Stays of Foreign Tourists and Israelis\* in Hotels in Jerusalem, 2000 – 2017



## Overnight Stays of Foreign Tourists and Israelis\* in Hotels in Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, and Eilat, 2017



## Tourist Visits to Selected Sites in Jerusalem\*, by Religion, 2016



\* This represents the percentage of tourists that visited the site out of all the tourists to Israel.

# Guests and overnight stays

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Jerusalem attracts visitors from across the country and the around world because of its unique cultural and religious heritage, its status as Israel's capital city, its centrality for the Jewish people as well as its sanctity for the three monotheistic religions, and the historical and archeological sites and cultural centers it has to offer. Tourism to Israel generally and to Jerusalem specifically marked record highs in 2017. The number of guests at Jerusalem's hotels reached 1,653,900 (17% of all hotel guests in Israel), and the number of overnight stays was 4,504,400 (19% of all overnight stays in Israel's tourist hotels).

In 2017 Jerusalem had 88 tourist hotels,<sup>35</sup> with a total of 10,700 rooms, constituting 20% of all rooms in Israel's tourist hotels. Jerusalem had the highest number of hotel rooms in Israel that year, with the exception of Eilat, which had 11,000 rooms (21%). Tel Aviv recorded 8,100 rooms (15%), Tiberius had 4,400 (8%), the Dead Sea area had 4,100 (8%), and Haifa had 1,600 (3%).

The number of guests in Jerusalem hotels in 2017 was the highest the city had ever recorded – 1,653,900. During 2012–2016, by comparison, the number of guests ranged between 1,243,600 and 1,348,700. The large increase in number of guests results from a significant rise in the number of visitors from abroad.

In 2017 the number of foreign tourists reached 1,072,100. This was the highest figure ever registered with the exception of 2008, when a comparable total was recorded. The number of Israeli hotel guests in 2017 reached an all-time record, at 581,800.

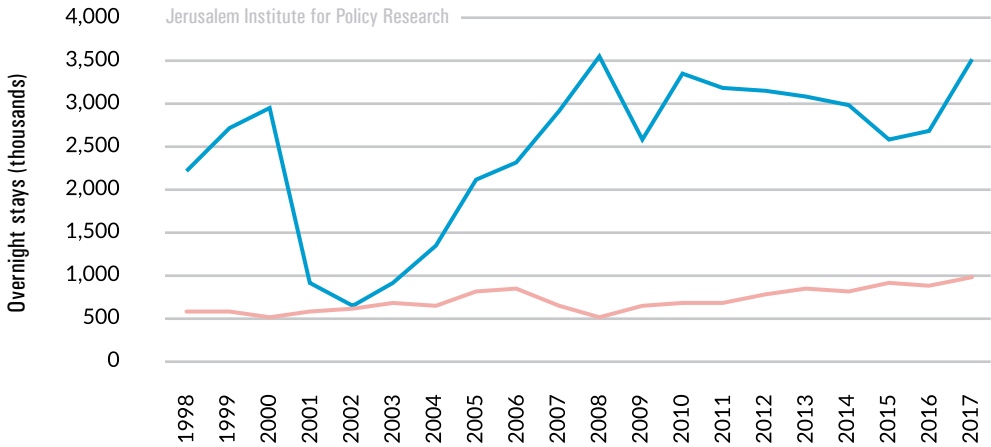
The number of overnight stays in Jerusalem hotels in 2017 also reached an all-time high, at 4,504,400. The number of overnight stays that year was significantly higher than the figures for 2012–2016, when the number of overnight stays ranged between 3,474,100 and 3,893,300.

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<sup>35</sup> The term "tourist hotels" as used in this chapter refers to hotels and guest houses registered with the Ministry of Tourism.

## Overnight Stays in Tourist Hotels in Jerusalem, 1998–2017

■ Foreign tourists ■ Israelis



In 2017 the average number of overnight stays per guest (for foreign tourists as well as Israelis) in Jerusalem’s hotels totaled 2.7. For foreign tourists the average was 3.3, nearly twice the average among Israeli guests (1.7).

In 2017 Jerusalem recorded the highest numbers of overnight stays by foreign tourists during the following months: October (402,100), May (378,800), and November (370,700). The highest numbers of overnight stays by Israelis were recorded during the months of August (144,700), September (99,200), and December (93,700).

The room occupancy in Jerusalem hotels in 2017 reached 65%, higher than the rates during the years 2015–2016, at 53%–54%. The room occupancy was comparable across hotels of different levels: the highest-ranked hotels (levels I and II) had an occupancy rate of 64%, while intermediate-ranked hotels had a rate of 66%, and the lower-ranked hotels had a 69% rate.

# Jerusalem compared to select Israeli cities

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Jerusalem has a strong power of attraction for foreign tourists in comparison with Israel's other leading tourist destinations. In 2017, 29% of foreign tourists who stayed at Israel's hotels stayed in Jerusalem, and 33% of overnight stays by foreign tourists in Israel were recorded in Jerusalem.

The number of foreign guests at Jerusalem hotels in 2017 was 1,072,100 (29% of all foreign hotel guests in Israel), compared with 24% in Tel Aviv, 12% in Tiberius, 6% at the Dead Sea, 5% in Eilat, and 3% in Haifa.

The number of overnight stays at Jerusalem's tourist hotels totaled 3,522,000 (33% of the total for Israel), compared with 24% in Tel Aviv, 9% in Tiberius, 7% in Eilat, 5% at the Dead Sea, and 3% in Haifa. The number of overnight stays by Israelis in Jerusalem was 982,400 (7% of all overnight stays by Israelis in Israel), compared with 45% in Eilat, 11% at the Dead Sea, 7% in Tiberius, 6% in Tel Aviv, and 2% in Haifa. Thus, Israelis evidently prefer Eilat and the Dead Sea as destinations, whereas foreign tourists prefer Jerusalem and Tel Aviv.

Foreign tourists accounted for a very high proportion of overnight stays in Jerusalem, at 78%, comparable to the figure for Tel Aviv (76%) but higher than the figures for Haifa and Tiberius (49%), Israel as a whole (44%), the Dead Sea (25%), and Eilat, where foreign tourists accounted for only 11% of overnight stays.

The foreign tourists who stayed at Jerusalem's hotels came primarily from the following countries: the United States (37%), Russia (6%), China (6%), France (5%), and Germany (4%). The distribution for all tourists across Israel's hotels was comparable: the United States (32%), Russia (8%), France (6%), China (6%), and Germany (5%).

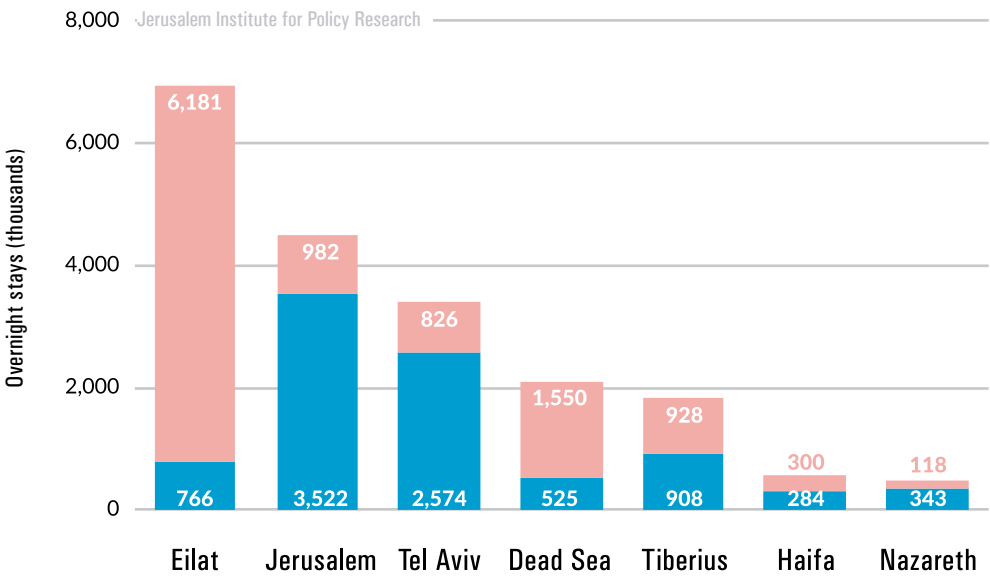
The three countries from which the largest numbers of foreign guests at Israel's hotels came were the United States (1,165,600 hotel guests), Russia (279,600), and China (206,000). Among foreign visitors from these three countries, the distribution of locations of overnight stays indicates that Jerusalem is a main tourist destination. The four main destinations among American hotel guests in Israel were Jerusalem (34%), Tel Aviv (25%), Tiberius (10%), and the Dead Sea (5%). Among Russian visitors, 24% stayed at hotels in Jerusalem, 18% in Tel Aviv, 18% in Eilat, and 13% at the Dead Sea. Jerusalem was also a key destination among Chinese visitors, about a third of whom stayed at hotels in Jerusalem, compared with 19% in Tel Aviv, 18% in Tiberius, and 6% in Nazareth.

The room occupancy rate in Jerusalem was lower than that of other leading tourist destinations. In 2017 Jerusalem had a room occupancy rate of 65%, which was lower than the rates for Eilat (73%), Tel Aviv (74%) and the Dead Sea (71%). Haifa's room occupancy rate was identical to that of Jerusalem, and Israel recorded a rate of 67%.

The average number of overnight stays by foreign tourists in Jerusalem (3.3) was higher than that of other leading tourist destinations in Israel, with the exception of Eilat (4.0). Haifa recorded an average of 3.0, Tel Aviv had an average of 2.1, the Dead Sea had 2.4, and Tiberius had 2.1 overnight stays on average. The average number of overnight stays by Israelis in Jerusalem (1.7) was comparable to the average for Tel Aviv and Haifa (1.6) but lower than the figures for Eilat (2.7), the Dead Sea (2.2), and Tiberius (2.0).

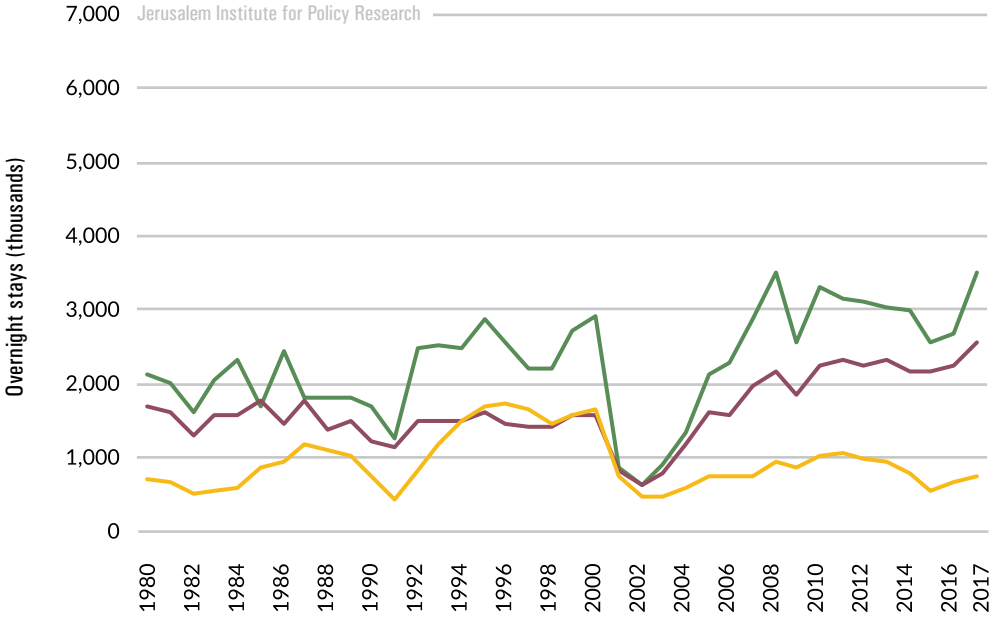
### Overnight Stays at Tourist Hotels in Jerusalem and Select Cities in Israel, 2017

■ Foreign tourists ■ Israelis



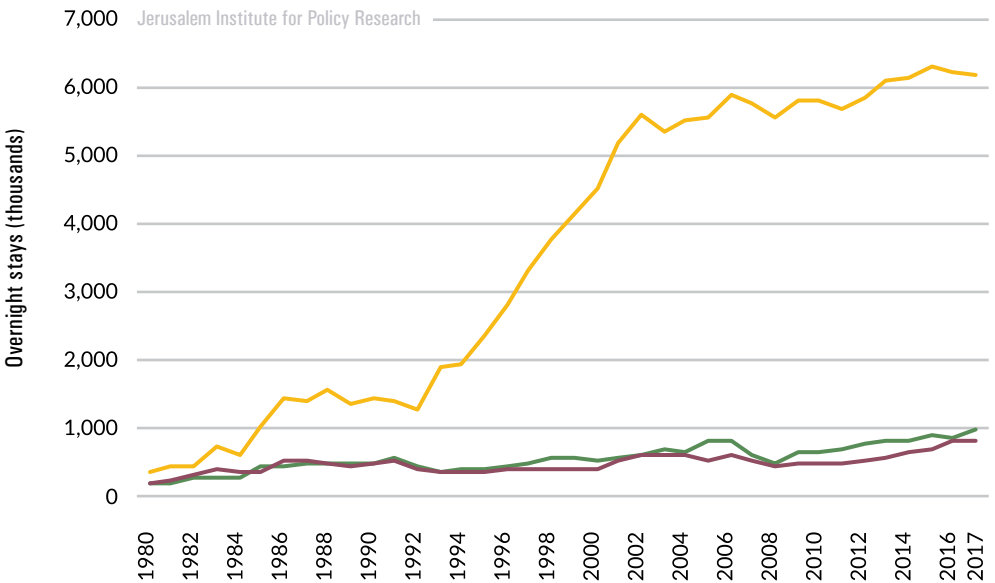
## Overnight Stays by Foreign Tourists at Tourist Hotels in Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, and Eilat, 1980–2017

■ Jerusalem ■ Tel Aviv ■ Eilat



## Overnight Stays by Israelis at Tourist Hotels in Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, and Eilat, 1980–2017

■ Eilat ■ Jerusalem ■ Tel Aviv



Over the past decade or so, the patterns of tourist accommodation have changed across the world in general, including in Israel. A growing number of tourists opt for accommodation other than hotels, especially apartments or rooms for short-term rent. Overnight stays in apartments became possible thanks to the development of platforms for online information sharing and advertising, foremost among which is Airbnb. As of April 2018, there were 3,000 short-term rentals available in Jerusalem<sup>36</sup> – 80% were apartments and 20% were rooms within apartments. The main neighborhoods in which short-term rentals were available were the City Center, Nahlaot, Rehavya, and Talbiya. Tel Aviv,<sup>37</sup> by comparison, had 8,700 rentals – 83% of which were apartments. Haifa<sup>38</sup> and Eilat<sup>39</sup> had significantly smaller numbers of rentals, at 700 and 900 respectively.

The Ministry of Tourism conducts an annual survey on incoming tourism in order to examine the scope of tourism to Israel and the characteristics of tourists. The survey found that 7% of overnight stays in Israel in 2016 were short-term rentals. The figure for Jerusalem was slightly lower, at 5%, while in Tel Aviv the portion of overnight stays in rental apartments was larger, at 12%. In Haifa the figure was 2% and in Eilat 5%.

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36 <https://www.airdna.co/city/il/jerusalem>

37 <https://www.airdna.co/city/il/tel-aviv>

38 <https://www.airdna.co/city/il/haifa>

39 <https://www.airdna.co/city/il/eilat>



# Profile of the tourists

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In 2016 a total of 2,233,000 foreign tourists visited Jerusalem, accounting for 77% of all tourists to Israel. Fifty-three percent of the tourists who visited the city did so independently. The main reasons for visiting Jerusalem were religious worship, touring, and visiting relatives and friends.

Among the tourists who visited Jerusalem, Christians accounted for a markedly high proportion – 60%. Twenty percent of the tourists were Jewish, and a small segment (3%) were Muslim. In Tel Aviv 48% of the tourists were Christian, 25% were Jewish, and 2% were Muslim.<sup>40</sup>

The main purposes cited for visiting Israel by tourists who visited Jerusalem included religious worship (32%), touring (24%), visiting relatives and friends (22%), and leisure and recreation (9%). The main purposes cited for visiting Israel by tourists who visited Tel Aviv included visiting relatives and friends (28%), touring (22%), religious worship (17%), and business and research (13%).

The main destination sites among tourists who visited Jerusalem in 2016 were the Western Wall (87%), the Jewish Quarter (81%), the Church of the Holy Sepulcher (70%), the Mount of Olives (60%), and the Via Dolorosa (59%). The ranking of sites varies in accordance with the tourist's religion. Among Jewish tourists the main sites visited were the Western Wall (61%), the Jewish Quarter (53%), and Yad VaShem (18%). Christians primarily visited the Church of the Holy Sepulcher (77%), the Western Wall (73%), and the Jewish Quarter (70%), while for Muslims the sites most visited were Al-Aqsa Mosque (81%), the Mount of Olives (63%), and the Western Wall (44%).

Fifty-three percent of the tourists who visited Jerusalem were traveling independently, 38% arrived as part of an organized tour, and 8% purchased a package tour. The distribution in Tel Aviv differed: 70% were independent tourists, 23% arrived as part of an organized tour, and 7% had purchased a package tour.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Of the tourists who visited Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, 14%-21% had no religious affiliation.

<sup>41</sup> The source for all data on tourists is the annual report Inbound Tourism Survey by the Ministry of Tourism.