

Israel Offers Christian Pilgrims New Hiking Trail

Israel hopes to attract Christian tourists with a new pilgrimage route unveiled this week in the Galilee, a network of footpaths, roads and bicycle paths linking sites central to the lives of Jesus and his disciples, the Associated Press reports.

Developing sites linked to Jewish history has long been a priority for the Jewish state, the AP says. But the Gospel Trail, inaugurated Thursday by Israeli tourism officials, is a nod to the growing number of Christians traveling to the country in recent years, outnumbering Jewish visitors.

More than two-thirds of the million tourists in Israel last year were Christian, double the amount of the previous year, and about 40 percent of them defined themselves as religious pilgrims, according to Israel's Tourism Ministry, according the Associated Press.