

# Planning a Trip to the Land of Smiles?

## A Beginner's Guide on Visa Regulations for Tourists



With its majestic golden palaces, vibrant floating markets and awe-inspiring temples, it is unquestionable why Thailand has been able to attract millions of tourists year after year. If you are thinking about making Thailand your next getaway by any chance, you should familiarize yourself with Thailand's visa and immigration regulations for tourists to avoid potential trip-ups when you travel. Here are some of the key issues that you should be aware of.

### Do You Even Need a Visa?

This is obviously the most important question. You have to find out whether or not a visa is required prior to booking sea or air travel as you may be denied boarding if you do not have a valid visa and you may not be able to get a full refund for the ticket bought. You can verify this easily by visiting the web site of the relevant Royal Thai Embassy or Consulate located in your country or the official web site of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs ("MFA"), which is available at <http://www.mfa.go.th/main/en/services/123>.

In any case, you should know that Thailand has a tourist visa exemption scheme that allows tourists who are citizens of almost fifty countries including Australia, Canada, France, Italy, and the US, to travel to Thailand without a visa (see the comprehensive list on the MFA's web site). However, there is also a requirement that tourists who are eligible for such an exemption must be able to show sufficient funds to support their stay. This could range from THB 10,000 for an individual tourist and THB 20,000 for a single family of tourists.

The period of stay under the visa exemption scheme is generally 30 days, but this can be reduced to a duration of 15 days if tourists enter Thailand via the immigration checkpoints located along the Thai borders. The period of stay can be up to 90 days for nationals of countries having international bilateral agreement with Thailand, e.g., Argentina, Brazil, Chile, South Korea, and Peru. Moreover, holders of diplomatic or official passports are generally granted similar visa exemption privileges and

are entitled to stay in Thailand from 30 to 90 days, depending on their nationality.

### Tourist Visa or Visa on Arrival (VOA)?

Tourists who are not entitled to enjoy the privileges under Thailand's visa exemption scheme must apply for a tourist visa at the designated Royal Thai Embassy or Consulate. Tourist visa applicants must also show sufficient funds of THB 10,000 or THB 20,000 to support their stay as already mentioned, produce other supporting documentations, and pay a fee of THB 1,000. The tourist visa is valid for 3 to 6 months upon issuance. This is not to be confused with the period of stay, which is 60 days upon arrival.

Nevertheless, tourists who hold a passport issued by certain countries, such as China, India, Russia, and Saudi Arabia (see the comprehensive list also available on the MFA's web site), may apply for a visa on arrival or VOA at any location of the immigration checkpoints throughout Thailand. The sufficient funds requirement also applies to this type of visa and there is a visa fee of THB 1,000. The period of stay for the visa on arrival is only 15 days and is relatively short compared to the tourist visa, so it might be a good idea for long-term travelers to consider seeking a tourist visa instead. In addition, VOA applicants must present fully paid return ticket that is valid within 15 days since the date of entry as well.

### Extending Your Stay

Prior to the end of the period of stay, tourists who have a valid tourist visa may apply for a 30-day extension of their stay by filing an application at the immigration office and paying an extension fee of THB 1,900. Tourists who are granted visa exemption privileges or have a visa on arrival may also apply for an extension by filing a similar application and paying the same amount of extension fee. Nevertheless, according to the current immigration practices, these tourists will be granted a 7-day extension only. Furthermore, applications for an extension of stay are also subject to the sole discretion of the relevant immigration officer, which means that it is not always guaranteed

that an extension will be granted.

### Is Doing a Part-time Job OK?

This is definite a no-no even if it is only a part-time job. Doing any type of work while holding a tourist visa or visa on arrival is prohibited and violators are subject to a maximum prison term of 1 year, or a maximum fine of THB 10,000, or both. If you would like to work in Thailand, you must apply for an appropriate type of visa, i.e., the non-immigrant type "B" visa, and a work permit as required by the law before you can start working.

### What if You Overstayed?

Overstaying is one of the common problems encountered by many travelers and overstayers are subject to a daily fine of THB 500 with a maximum ceiling of THB 20,000. Even though overstaying is a criminal offense, overstayers can simply pay their fine at any of the immigration offices located throughout the country and they will be granted permission to leave Thailand. However, those who refuse to pay or are unable to pay the fine will be detained, put on trial before a Court, and, if convicted, deported to their home country.

We believe getting yourself informed is a key factor to every successful venture – be it concluding a new business deal or embarking on a journey to an exotic place like Thailand. ILCT has a team of lawyers and experts to provide legal advice and help you achieve your aspired goals. To learn more about our firm, please visit us at our web site [www.ilct.co.th](http://www.ilct.co.th).

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