

## THAI IMMIGRATION PRACTICES SUMMARY OF VISA, ENTRY AND EXIT PROCEDURES, AND OTHER TRAVEL-RELATED LAWS

Immigration into the Kingdom is governed by the Immigration Act B.E. 2522 (A.D. 1979) and is administered by the Immigration Bureau of the Royal Thai Police.

### A. GENERAL INFORMATION

1. Any alien wishing to enter Thailand, unless otherwise exempted, must obtain a proper visa from a Royal Thai Embassy or Royal Thai Consulate prior to arrival in Thailand.

2. Aliens in transit and tourists from the countries listed below are permitted to obtain a visa-on-arrival at designated entry points in Thailand. A visa-on-arrival allows a stay of 15 days.

Bhutan, China (including Taiwan), Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, India, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Maldives, Mauritius, Oman, Poland, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Ukraine.

3. Aliens in transit and tourists from the countries listed below are exempted from visa requirements. They are permitted to enter and stay in the Kingdom for 30 days without an entry visa. However, these individuals must obtain an entry stamp on their passports at the immigration checkpoint of entry.

Australia, Austria, Bahrain, Belgium, Brazil, Brunei, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kuwait, Luxembourg, Macao, Malaysia, Monaco, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Oman, Philippines, Portugal, Qatar, Singapore, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Vietnam.

4. For a stay longer than 30 days, all aliens must have a valid visa which can be obtained from a Royal Thai Embassy or Consulate prior to entry into Thailand. The exceptions are nationals of Argentina, Brazil, Chile, the Republic of Korea, and Peru who are currently allowed to stay up to 90 days after obtaining an entry stamp at the Immigration checkpoint of entry.

5. Royal Thai Embassies and Royal Thai Consulates situated outside Thailand have the authority to issue visas to aliens for travel to Thailand. The authority to permit entry and stay in Thailand, however, rests with the immigration officials at the entry points in Thailand. In some cases, an immigration official may not permit a foreigner holding a valid entry visa into Thailand should the immigration official find reason to believe that the foreigner falls into the category of aliens prohibited from entering Thailand under the Immigration Act B.E. 2522 (A.D. 1979).

These lists of countries change periodically. The Immigration Bureau adds and removes countries as circumstances dictate. Therefore, checking with a Royal Thai Embassy or Consulate is recommended before traveling.

### B. TYPES OF VISAS AND PURPOSES OF VISIT

The Immigration Act prescribes eight major categories of visa below. Each category is restricted to a specific purpose. Aliens are advised to strictly obtain the right type of visa according to their purpose of entry and stay in Thailand.

1. **Transit Visa "TS"**. Applicable to aliens who enter Thailand intending to travel on to another country.

2. **Tourist Visa "TR"**. Applicable to aliens visiting Thailand for sightseeing purposes only.

3. **Non-Immigrant Visa.** Applicable to aliens entering Thailand on a temporary basis for a particular purpose:

"B"	Business.
"B-A"	Business or investment.
"IB"	Investment or other affairs connected with an investment under the law governing investment promotion.
"IM"	Investment which has been approved by the ministries or departments concerned.
"ED"	Study or observation.
"RS"	Scientific research or teaching in a research or educational institution in Thailand.
"M"	Performance of duties connected with the mass media.
"R"	Missionary work with approval from the ministry or department concerned.
"Ex"	Performance of skilled or expert work.
"O"	Other purposes as prescribed in the ministerial regulations (as dependents, retired persons, or sports trainers; for family reunions, medical treatment, or legal proceedings).
"O-A"	Temporary residence.

4. **Diplomatic Visa "D".** Applicable to those aliens entering the Kingdom on a diplomatic or consular mission or for the performance of duties with international organizations.

5. **Official Visa "F".** Performance of official duties (involving the Thai government).

6. **Immigrant Visa (Permanent Residence).** Applicable to those aliens entering Thailand for permanent residence purposes.

7. **Non-Quota Immigrant Visa.** Applicable to permanent residents wishing to leave Thailand and return within a year.

8. **Courtesy Visa.** Applicable to those diplomatic and/or official passport holders who enter the Kingdom for purposes other than official duties and to those ordinary passport holders who enter the Kingdom in response to an official Thai request.

Requirements and criteria for visa application differ depending on the category of visa and nationality of the applicant. In addition, they may be different for each Embassy or Consulate. Travelers are urged to contact their local Embassy or Consulate for specific information on visa application.

Besides the eight categories of visa prescribed under the Act, there are two more types of visa by *de facto*, i.e. (9) visa-on-arrival, and (10) special entry visa which is available to those who hold a Thailand Elite Card only.

### C. VALIDITY OF VISA AND DURATION OF STAY

It should be noted that the period of **visa validity** is different from the **duration of stay**. **Visa validity** is the period during which a visa can be used to enter Thailand. It is granted with discretion by the Royal Thai Embassy or Royal Thai Consulate-General and is displayed on the visa sticker or stamp. In general, the validity of a visa is 3 months, but in some cases, visas may be issued to be valid for 6 months, 1 year or 3 years. If the consular officer permits, the visa applicant has the option to choose a single entry or multiple entry visa, subject to different visa fees.

On the other hand, the **duration of stay** is granted by an immigration official upon arrival at the port of entry. The duration of stay granted by the immigration official is displayed on the entry stamp and shall be in the following length based on the type of visa:

<b>Transit Visa</b>	Not exceeding 30 days
<b>Tourist Visa</b>	Not exceeding 30 or 60 days
<b>Non-Immigrant Visa</b>	Not exceeding 90 days
<b>Diplomatic, Official, and Courtesy Visa</b>	As necessary

#### D. EXTENSION OF STAY IN THAILAND

Aliens who wish to stay in Thailand longer than the duration of stay granted at the time of entry could apply for an extension of stay with the Immigration Bureau.

<b>Transit Visa</b>	A transit visa may be extended for 7 to 10 days depending on applicant's nationality.
<b>Tourist Visa</b>	A tourist visa may be extended for a maximum of 7 days or 60 days (30 days at a time) depending on applicant's nationality.
<b>Non-Immigrant Visa</b>	Non-immigrant visa categories "B" or "B-A" are usually extended for a period not exceeding 1 year at a time from the date of arrival except "IM" which shall not exceed 2 years, and "IB" which is generally 2-3 years depending on the recommendation of the BOI and the size of the investment.

The government fee for an extension of a transit, tourist, or non-immigrant visa is Baht 1,900.

#### E. OVERSTAYING

The period of stay allowed is always stamped or written in the passport upon arrival in Thailand. Every alien is responsible for checking his/her passport for the authorized length of stay. Any alien who overstays in the Kingdom is subject to a fine of Baht 500 for each day after the expiration date of the permitted length of stay up to a maximum of Baht 20,000. This fine may be paid at the Immigration Division or at the airport upon departure. If an alien cannot or is otherwise unable to pay the fine for overstaying a visa, he/she is subject to detention at the Immigration Detention Center.

#### F. CHANGE OF VISA

The Thai government gives foreigners who did not get a chance to apply for a Non-Immigrant visa before arriving in Thailand to change their visa if they need to stay in Thailand longer. This procedure may be done within the country.

A foreigner who is eligible for a change of visa must have entered Thailand with a Tourist or Transit visa granted by a Thai Embassy or Consulate abroad. The foreigner must apply for a change of visa not less than 21 days before his current duration of stay is due to expire. Various documents are required depending on the purpose of the application for a Non-Immigrant visa.

#### G. RE-ENTRY PERMIT

Aliens staying in Thailand who wish to leave and return to the country by the expiry date of their duration of stay without having to apply for a new visa must apply for a re-entry permit prior to departure. A re-entry permit preserves the duration of stay and allows the alien to re-enter Thailand and use the time remaining thereunder. If a re-entry permit is not applied for, the duration of stay will automatically be canceled upon departure although it has not expired. In such case, the alien would have to obtain a new visa from a Royal Thai Embassy or Consulate before returning to Thailand unless his/her existing visa is good for multiple entries. To facilitate the travel schedules of aliens, aside from the Immigration offices throughout Thailand, a re-entry permit may be obtained at Suvarnabhumi (Bangkok), Chiang Mai, Phuket, Hat Yai, and Sukhothai international airports, as well as other designated immigration checkpoints throughout the country. Suvarnabhumi (Bangkok) International Airport operates 24 hours, 7 days a week, while other checkpoints operate from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday to Friday. The fee for single re-entry is Baht 1,000 while that for multiple re-entries is Baht 3,800. It is advisable to request a multiple visa if one expects to be frequently traveling out of Thailand. This allows him more than one entry into Thailand during his travels. If one leaves Thailand before his visa has expired and wants to return but does not have a re-entry permit, he must apply for a new visa from a Thai Embassy or Consulate abroad.

Exits may only be legally made at designated immigration control points. The crossing of any border is an exit for immigration purposes, whether or not the exit point is controlled. Thus, forays into neighboring countries are deemed exits, legal or otherwise, and returning to Thailand from such trips is a new entry, requiring proper visas or re-entry permits.

## H. WORK PERMITS

Most foreigners who intend to work in Thailand are subject to the Working of Aliens Act B.E. 2551 (A.D. 2008). Under the provisions of this Act, a foreigner cannot work unless a work permit has been issued by the Department of Employment, Ministry of Labor, or unless the individual, or the work performed, falls within an exception to the Act.

The term "work" is defined very broadly, covering both physical and mental activities, whether or not for wages or other remuneration. Working without a valid work permit even for a day is a criminal offense. The validity period of a work permit is governed by the holder's immigration status, i.e. a work permit usually expires on the last day of the duration of stay granted by immigration officials as stamped on the alien's passport.

## I. AIRPORT TAX

All persons departing Thailand from any airport in the Kingdom are subject to an airport tax of Baht 700. This amount is already included in the cost of an air ticket.

## J. EXCHANGE CONTROL

Thai Currency: While unlimited amounts of Thai currency may be imported, the amount of Thai Baht currently allowed out of the country is Baht 50,000 per person per trip. There is a maximum of Baht 500,000 per person per trip permitted when visiting bordering countries.

### Importation and Repatriation of Personal Funds

Non-Residents: An individual foreigner is not restricted in the amount of foreign currency or negotiable instruments that he can bring into Thailand. However, if the amount exceeds US\$10,000, it should be registered with the Customs officer upon entry to avoid problems upon departure.

Residents: Residents are not restricted in the amount of foreign currency or negotiable instruments which they may bring into Thailand, but as a general rule, such foreign currency must be sold to an authorized agent and converted into Baht or deposited in a foreign currency account within 7 days. According to the new foreign exchange controls, a Thai resident traveling abroad for business or pleasure can take unlimited amounts of foreign currencies out of the country. However, prior approval is required for any purchase or conversion of foreign currency in any form other than bank notes and coins in the amount exceeding US\$20,000 at a time. This includes letters of credit and/or other negotiable instruments the traveler is taking on the trip. Currently, no limits are set on credit cards.

## K. APPLYING FOR THAI NATIONALITY

Aliens who wish to apply for Thai nationality under the Nationality Act B.E. 2508 (A.D. 1965) must be permanent residence holders for 5 continuous years, have reached the age of 45, and be able to speak and understand Thai. An exception may be made to this rule if there is reasonable cause, such as marrying a Thai and having children born in Thailand or having studied in a local university/college as an undergraduate. The applicant must complete an application form and submit various required documents to the Criminal Investigation Division Group I, Subdivision 3, Royal Thai Police Headquarters, Rama I Road, Bangkok. The official fee is Baht 5,000. The processing takes 2 to 3 years. In the case of a minor child sponsored by a mother or father having Thai nationality, there must be evidence of both sponsorship and the child's birth. Likewise, a wife seeking Thai citizenship based on her husband's Thai nationality must submit evidence of the husband's nationality, the marriage, and a formal request for Thai citizenship.

Under the new provisions of the Thai Nationality Act (No. 2) B.E. 2535 (A.D. 1992), any person, whether born inside or outside Thailand, whose father or mother has Thai nationality, is entitled to register his/her Thai nationality at the local district office where he/she wants to have his/her name registered in a house registration. He/she must submit various required documents.

### WARNING

Please note that this information is not inclusive of all the answers to questions involving immigration and related matters but is intended to address general issues. Whenever appropriate, please consult a lawyer versed in immigration matters or the nearest Immigration Division officer. Policies, procedures and requirements may change without notice.

## VISA PARTICULARS

TYPE OF VISA	ABB.	WHERE TO APPLY	DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE	DURATION OF STAY*	PRO-CESSING PERIOD	OTHER INFORMATION	GOVERNMENT FEE
Tourist	"TR"	Thai embassies and consulates in foreign countries, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, embassy, or consulate of his country, or from a specialized agency of the United Nations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Passport</li> <li>- One recent photo (4X6 cm.)</li> <li>- Air ticket paid in full</li> <li>- Proof of financial means (Baht 20,000 per person)</li> </ul>	30 or 60 days	1-3 days	Exception: Visa is not required if person will remain in the Kingdom for less than 15-30 days and is a citizen of the enumerated countries.	Baht 1,000 per entry
Transit	"TS"	"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Passport plus visa of third country in passport</li> <li>- One recent photo (4X6 cm.)</li> <li>- Confirmed air ticket paid in full</li> </ul>	30 days	1-3 days	"	Baht 800 per entry
Sport	"S"	"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Passport</li> <li>- Evidence of adequate financing (Baht 20,000 per person)</li> <li>- One recent photo (4X6 cm.)</li> <li>- Confirmed air ticket paid in full</li> <li>- Letter of invitation stating the applicant's participation in sports activities</li> </ul>	30 days	1 week		Baht 800 per entry
Controller & Crew of Conveyance	"C"	"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Passport</li> <li>- One recent photo (4X6 cm.)</li> <li>- Name of conveyance</li> <li>- List of crew members</li> </ul>	30 days	1 week		Baht 800 per entry
<b>Non-Immigrant</b>							
Business	"B"	Thai embassies and consulates in foreign countries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Letter concerning applicant and reasons for employment of an alien</li> <li>- Directors' Certificate</li> <li>- Certificate of Incorporation</li> <li>- VAT Certificate or official form Phor.Phor. 01 or 09</li> <li>- Cooperation letter from the company</li> <li>- Passport</li> <li>- Two recent photos (4X6 cm.)</li> </ul>	90 days	1 week-3 months	Any alien wishing to obtain a business visa must first enter the Kingdom under a non-immigrant visa, category B. Within 90 days from entering the Kingdom, the alien should apply for a business visa at the Immigration Bureau.	Baht 2,000 for single entry Baht 5,000 for multiple entries
Business Approved Visa	"B-A"	Thai embassies and consulates in foreign countries or Immigration Bureau in Bangkok	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Same as above plus approval from the Department of Employment</li> </ul>	1 year	1 month	Approval shall be given by the Immigration Bureau in Bangkok before issuance of visa.	Baht 2,000 per entry
BOI	"IB"	"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Letter of confirmation</li> <li>- Passport</li> <li>- Two recent photos (4X6 cm.)</li> </ul>	90 days	1 week		Baht 2,000 for single Baht 5,000 for multiple
Capital Investment	"IM"	Thai embassies and consulates in foreign countries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Letter of confirmation from the ministry or department concerned</li> <li>- Passport</li> </ul>	90 days	1 week		Baht 2,000 for single Baht 5,000 for multiple
Study/Observation	"ED"	"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Letter of confirmation from university official</li> <li>- General information about the institution</li> <li>- Passport</li> </ul>	90 days	1 week	Exceptions: International School, Ruam Rudee School, Bangkok Patana School, Thai-Japanese Assoc. School	Baht 2,000 for single Baht 5,000 for multiple

TYPE OF VISA	ABB.	WHERE TO APPLY	DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE	DURATION OF STAY*	PRO-CESSEING PERIOD	OTHER INFORMATION	GOVERNMENT FEE
Scientific Research Education	"RS"	Thai embassies and consulates in foreign countries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Letter of confirmation from government unit at the department level</li> <li>- Job description</li> <li>- Resume and certificates of educational qualifications</li> <li>- Evidence of previous salary</li> <li>- Employment contract</li> <li>- Passport</li> </ul>	90 days	1 week		Baht 2,000 for single Baht 5,000 for multiple
Mass Media	"M"	"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Letters of confirmation from Department of Public Relations and Department of Information, Ministry of Foreign Affairs</li> <li>- Passport</li> </ul>	90 days	1 week		Baht 2,000 for single Baht 5,000 for multiple
Missionary Work	"R"	"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Letter of confirmation from Religious Affairs Department, Ministry of Education</li> <li>- Passport</li> </ul>	90 days	1 week		Baht 2,000 for single Baht 5,000 for multiple
Expert	"EX"	"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Letter of confirmation from the government unit at the department level</li> <li>- Passport</li> </ul>	90 days	1 week	Exception: for entry involving installation or repair of machinery, a letter from the company or business enterprise which states reasons for hiring the expert is required.	Baht 2,000 for single Baht 5,000 for multiple
Others (includes dependents and retired persons)	"O"	"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Passport</li> <li>- Letter of confirmation from government or company of financial resources, if applicable</li> </ul>	90 days	1 week-3 months		Baht 2,000
Temporary Residence	"O-A"	Thai embassies and consulates in foreign countries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Passport</li> <li>- Three recent photos</li> <li>- Personal data form</li> <li>- Bank statement and letter of guarantee from bank</li> <li>- Criminal clearance certificate from country of nationality</li> <li>- Medical certificate</li> </ul>	1 year	1 week		Baht 1,000
Diplomatic	"D"	Thai embassies and consulates in foreign countries, from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, embassy or consulate of his country, or from a specialized agency of the United Nations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Passport</li> <li>- Letter of confirmation</li> </ul>	Open	1 week		Baht 2,000
Official	"F"	"	"	Open	1 week		Baht 2,000
Non-Quota Immigrant		Immigration Bureau, Residence Certificate Section, Sub-Division 1, Bangkok	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Endorsement of notice of departure</li> <li>- Residence certificate</li> <li>- Alien certificate with recent photograph</li> <li>- Passport</li> </ul>		1 day	Non-quota residents must return to Thailand within 1 year of issue date	Baht 1,000 for single Baht 3,800 for multiple

\*For extension of stay, see Section D of this summary.

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