



VISA RULE CHANGES

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12 month validity, multi entry non-immigrant visa

Pre-obtained at a Royal Thai Embassy/Consulate (usually) in your home country and will result in the holder obtaining a 90 day 'permission to stay' stamp upon entry. Each time the holder enters the Kingdom whilst the visa is valid, he/she will obtain a further 90 day 'permission to stay stamp'. Such visas can be issued for students/work/family etc. but normally require supporting documentation. This visa can also be extended up to one year for specific reasons and with the required documentation (see 12 month extensions).

Note: a 12 month validity, multi entry non-immigrant visa may also be obtained from some Royal Thai embassies outside your home country if you can provide evidence of your marriage to a Thai citizen (marriage certificate).

12 month extension to a non-immigrant visa. If you are holding a non-immigrant visa, you have the option of extending this by 12 months based on either retirement (50 years old or over) or support to a Thai citizen, work, education and such. This may only be accomplished at an immigration office inside the Kingdom and certain criteria have to be met. Such extensions consist of a stamp in your passport detailing "issue date" and "permitted to stay until" date.

Note 1: If you are residing in the Kingdom under an extension to a non-immigrant visa and wish to leave the Kingdom at any time, then you will need to obtain a "re-entry permit" to avoid losing the extension and the subsequent need to re-apply (i.e. applying for a new non-immigrant visa and then extension of stay).

Note 2: If you are residing in the Kingdom under an extension to a non-immigrant visa it is a legal requirement that the holder reports current address to an immigration office every 90 days. Re-entering the Kingdom is the equivalent of a 90 day report. Failure to comply will result in a fine not exceeding 5,000 baht and possibly 200

baht extra for each day you haven't reported.

Abolition of investment visa.

This visa allowed foreigners to reside in Thai for a year provided they placed 3 million baht in a Thai bank or in bonds. It was often used by foreigners under 50 who did not yet qualify in age for a retirement visa but wished to be based in Thailand. The understanding is that existing applications and renewals will be accepted, but that no new applications can be made from the beginning of October 2006.

The so called retirement visa.

This allows foreigners aged 50 and over to extend a non-immigrant visa for up to 12 months from the date of the last entry into Thailand. It requires either 800,000 baht in a Thai bank or a combination of cash in the bank and proof of pension paid in the home country. A letter from the respective embassy is required for proof of pension. From now on, the immigration officer will need to see proof that the 800,000 baht has been there for three months prior to the visa being issued. This is to stop the practice of moving money into a bank account, and promptly out again, once the visa is granted.

The old regulation, however, that you must produce an annual medical certificate for this visa has been withdrawn.

The so called marriage visa.

This allows the foreign, legal spouse of a Thai national to extend a non-immigrant visa for up to 12 months from the date of the last entry into Thailand. The minimum cash in a Thai bank is 400,000 baht. As with the retirement variant, checks will be made in future to ensure that the cash is not simply put in a bank and then removed. This visa is issued in Bangkok only and, during the waiting period, checks can be made by immigration police at your bank to see if there has been a big cash withdrawal! If the funds have disappeared, you may be ordered to leave Thailand in 7 days. Local immigration officers will also visit your

home to verify that you really do live together as man and wife.

Work permit regulations.

We are advised that work permits with the term "Consultant" in the title will not be accepted in future. It is felt the term is too vague and potentially condones work related activity contrary to the alien labour act. Obviously, work permit holders need to consult their lawyers about the detail.

Those applying for work permits for the first time will first require a non-immigrant business (type "B") visa from a Thai consulate or embassy abroad. This will only be granted if the applicant has a Wp3 work permit receipt form from the Labour Office, photocopy of all limited company registration papers, all official paperwork showing company stamp, invitation letter from the limited company advising on your potential role and stating salary, photocopy of your passport, two passport size photos.

Multiple entry visas.

Many Thai consulates in the Pacific rim, specifically Penang, have now issued statements that they will issue only single entry visas in future. This ruling is irrespective of type. However, if foreigners choose to return to the country of their passport (say Europe, USA, Australia) they may find that multiple entry visas, both tourist and non-immigrant, are still being awarded.

The reasoning seems to be that if you need a double, triple or multiple entry visa, then go back to your own country.

The information given above is for guideline purposes only.

Each individual's circumstances may differ to such an extent that a definitive description of the procedures involved is virtually impossible to present. And, the final decision on visa application/issue or entry into the Kingdom will always be at the discretion of the immigration officer.