

# PATTAYA: CITY WITH BAD REPUTATION



Let's start with the positives: the tourism industry of Thailand is growing rapidly, even at a faster rate than many more developed tourism sectors of some American and European economies. Thailand even matches China in terms of Asian growth and is beginning to earn revenue, which can create competition for Asian super economies, such as Japan. However, there is one very sad fact attached to this progress: much of the Thai tourism success and revenue are based on the country's prostitution industry, especially in Pattaya.

Pattaya is dubbed by some as "paradise on earth", whereas others refer to it as "sin city". This, naturally, depends on the point of view from which we view this particular trade. The saddest aspect of this whole area is that Pattaya used to be famous for its long and sandy beaches, particularly in the 60's and 70's, along with its legendary status as a boozing destination for youths, especially from Europe. Nowadays, the city has a reputation of being a cheaper and sleazier giant version of Hamburg's Reeperbahn or Amsterdam's red light district.

Around 6 million tourists spent 60 million bahts (€1,2 mln) in 2007 in Pattaya. The so-called flesh trade generated most of this cash. The biggest problem today is that the industry is attracting prostitutes not only from Asia, but from other parts of the globe, particularly Russia and the Ukraine. An ensuing problem is that very few of these women are involved in running their own business and are often accompanied by a pimp. This situation, naturally, leads to further problems with crime. It may well be described as a negative snowball effect. The description of "paradise on earth" is now becoming exclusively applicable to the lower levels of society, particularly those willing to abuse.

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