

VISA ON-ARRIVAL OPTION IN BURMA SHOULD BOOST TOURISM



Beginning on June 1, Burma / Myanmar started its visa on arrival program. This program is primarily aimed at assisting foreigners who wish to travel throughout the country. Officials expect that the visa program will also encourage tourism in the country. Although the program had been successful previously, it was ended in September of 2010. Various reasons for the program's termination were discussed including the Burma elections which were held in

November of that same year.

In order to qualify for the visa on arrival program, visitors must be in the country for business or for traveling purposes. In addition, the visitors must be from one of the 27 countries on the visa list. This includes countries that are members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. Member nations include western countries like Australia, the United Kingdom, and also America. Asian nations include China and Japan.

Travelers that are applying for visas for business reasons will be granted a 70 day visa. Tourists will be granted 28 day visas. Those that are in transit will be allowed a visa for only 24 hours.

Official statistics show that almost 400,000 arrived at the Yangon International Airport in 2011 to travel the country. In total, almost 1 million people came to the country to travel. This was an increase of over than 3% from the previous year's tourist arrivals numbers.

Estimates for 2012 are for over 1 and a half million people to visit the country. The increase is expected to occur due to the simplifying entry visa system.

Tourists mainly arrive from North America and Western European countries. However, there are a growing number of tourists who arrive from Asia, Australia, and New Zealand. A small percentage of tourists are from Africa and the Middle East.

In 2011 alone, over \$300 million USD were spent by tourists in the country. This is an increase from \$250 million spent the year before.

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