

THAILAND TEMPORARILY WAIVES VISA FEES



The Thai government decided not to charge visa fees between March 5 and June 4 so that it can lure back tourists.

Thailand needs to lure the tourists back. The global crisis, protests against the government that blocked airports and caused troubles to foreign tourists as well as strong Baht are all reasons for which the Thai tourism is going down. For example **tourist arrivals at Bangkok's Suvarnabhumi International Airport dropped by 20 per cent** this January.

Thai officials are making steps to improve the situation and to boost the ailing tourism industry. The government has decided to change the country's visa policy. Tourist visa applications will be **without fee between March 5 and June 4 this year**. Currently, tourists from 20 countries are getting visa on arrival for a stay that does not exceed 15 days. Tourists from 42 countries do not need the visa unless they want to stay longer than 30 days. In such case they need to apply for visas at the Thai embassies or diplomatic missions abroad before they arrive to Thailand. The government has already approved a **visa exemption for transit passengers** through Suvarnabhumi International Airport. Those people often have to wait long hours for their flights and the exemption will make it possible for them to temporarily leave the airport without a visa. They will be allowed to go to the nearby shops and thus get to know the Thai culture a bit.

Among other measures that should improve the situation in the tourism industry is the **143 million dollar rescue package** that was approved by the government. The money will be used as loans for tourism industry businesses. The president of the Association of Thai Travel Agents, Apichart Sankary, warned that if the stimulus budget is not injected by April many people could lose their jobs.

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