

THAILAND FINALLY APPROVES LONG-STAY TOURIST VISA



Last week, the Thai government approved long-stay tourist visa for up to 270 days as Thailand is set to reopen to foreign visitors as early as next month to limit the damage to the tourism sector crippled by anti-COVID-19 measures.

Visitors will be able to extend twice a 90-day visa that costs 2,000 baht (54 euros), said deputy government spokeswoman Traisulee Traisoranakul at a briefing.

The government aims to allow foreign visitors from low or zero risk countries - from the Covid-19 perspective - to visit the country starting next month, declared the governor of the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), Yuthasak Supasorn. The long-stay tourist visa should boost the sector.

"I want this to happen quickly. I will try to do it in October or the fourth quarter at the latest," he said.

Several hundred visitors who have accepted a quarantine of 14 days will be allowed per month and "we also want them to travel by a direct flight to reduce the risks".

The plan is to start with the provinces that offer an Alternative State Quarantine (ASQ), Yuthasak Supasorn said.

For reasons that are still unclear, Thailand reported only 3,480 cases of Covid-19 and 58 deaths despite the fact that authorities continued to receive tens of thousands of tourists from China, the epicenter of the epidemic for two months after the outbreak of the virus in the kingdom.

But Thailand has previously suspended plans to reopen to foreign tourists, in particular a travel bubble plan with East Asian countries and the idea of designating sites such as Phuket to host holidaymakers under strict conditions with a minimum stay of one month, mandatory quarantine and other movement restrictions.

The country, which relies heavily on tourism, has not registered any foreign visitors since April when it imposed the travel ban.

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