

NEW VISA CONDITIONS AFFECT TOURISM IN VIETNAM



Prior to the Coronavirus pandemic, tourists and business travelers could visit Vietnam without a visa and obtain one upon arrival in the country. After the reopening of the borders, this is no longer possible. The new regulation has caused several problems and could even jeopardize the recovery of tourism in Vietnam.

For many years, Vietnam offered a visa on arrival (Visa on Arrival or VOA). Tourists and business travelers could obtain it upon arrival in the country and did not have to apply for a visa before traveling. **Following the global epidemic of COVID-19, the conditions regarding visas for Vietnam changed significantly.** Currently, travelers need to apply for their visa in advance and can only stay in the country for a maximum of 30 days.

Oddly, the Vietnamese immigration services have not officially announced cancelling the visa on arrival at any time. However, after the reopening of the borders, not a single visa has been issued. The immigration services have neither confirmed nor denied the reinstatement of the visa on arrival, but it does not appear that this will happen at the moment.

Currently, the number of urgent visa applications for Vietnam is increasing considerably. Some visa agencies offer an expedited visa processing service for an additional fee.

The cancellation of the visa on arrival is having major consequences for tourism in Vietnam. In 2022, only 3.6 million tourists traveled to the country, 80% less than in 2019. By contrast, neighboring countries Thailand and Cambodia saw the number of tourists arriving in the country recover rapidly. In 2022, the number of tourists in Thailand was 72% less than the number of tourists received in 2019 and in Cambodia 65%.

These records are surprising, especially considering that in the period between 2015 and 2019, the number of tourists travelling to Vietnam experienced unprecedented growth.

While the number of international tourists visiting Vietnam in that period had more than doubled, in Thailand and Cambodia it had only increased by 30 to 40 percent. Therefore, **it is not surprising that many Vietnamese groups and companies are urging the government to relax the current visa regulations** so that the tourism sector can finally recover from the negative effects of the coronavirus pandemic.

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