

# SHORTEN THAI VISA PROCESSING TIMES TO ATTRACT MORE CHINESE TOURISTS



The Association of Thai Travel Agents (ATTA) has asked the Thai Department of Consular Affairs to shorten the visa approval period for Chinese tourists, which can be as long as 15 working days, to facilitate the stay of Chinese tourist groups wishing to visit Thailand.

ATTA President Sisdivachr Cheewarattanaporn added that Thailand only recorded one million Chinese visitors in the first five months of this year. The disappointing figure is unlikely to reach the association's previous estimate of 2 million Chinese tourists in the first half of 2023.

The Ministry should remove unnecessary procedures that slow down the flow of tourists; otherwise, Thailand would not be able to reach the target set by the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) of welcoming 5 million Chinese tourists by the end of the year.

The TAT also estimated that revenue from Chinese tourists would reach 446 billion baht. "If the Thai visa application period continues this long, fewer tour groups will come to Thailand and miss our target. "Most groups will be FITs (independent foreign tours), which are much smaller," said Sisdivachr Cheewarattanaporn. "A shorter visa application period would help last-minute travel buyers decide to visit Thailand."

Statistics show that only 111,997 Chinese tourists entered group tours from January to May, around 10% of total Chinese visitors. This is a significant drop from 2019 statistics, which saw around 1 million Chinese tourists arriving per month, 60% of them taking part in group tours.

Sisdivachr said an overhaul of the visa application period aimed at reducing unnecessary steps and shortening waiting times would boost the number of Chinese tourists in the year's second half. "We estimate that an average of 600,000 Chinese tourists will visit Thailand each month from June onwards, amounting to 3.6 million for the rest of the year, bringing us closer to the 5 million target," he said.

Thailand would need to process 10,000 to 20,000 Chinese to issue Thai visas daily to reach its target of 5 million visitors; however, the current e-visa platform can only handle 84,000 applicants a month.

Date: 2023-05-30

Article link:

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