



Siam Legal Phuket Clarifies Entry Rules for First High Season Under 30-Day Visa-Free Stay

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Siam Legal Phuket, a law firm in Phuket, is clarifying how Thailand's new entry rules will apply to passengers on four direct international routes launching in October. The flights arrive during the island's first high season since the 60-day visa exemption ended on September 15, 2026.

Virgin Atlantic is scheduled to begin three weekly flights between London and Phuket on October 18, followed by Edelweiss Air's Zurich route on October 25, Kuwait Airways' twice-weekly Kuwait service on October 27, and Belavia's twice-weekly flights from Minsk on October 29. The launches follow Tourism Authority of Thailand figures presented at the Phuket provincial administration meeting on September 28, which showed the island received 9,200,166 visitors between January and August, a 1.76 percent decline year on year. Foreign arrivals fell 2.52 percent to 6,790,293 over the same period.

Under four Ministry of Interior notifications published in the Royal Gazette on August 31, 2026, the previous 60-day exemption for nationals of 93 countries and territories was replaced by a 30-day exemption for nationals of 60 countries and territories. The United Kingdom, Switzerland, and Kuwait all appear on the new list, meaning holders of those passports arriving on the London, Zurich, and Kuwait routes may enter

visa-free for up to 30 days. The exemption now covers tourism only, so short-term business visits and urgent work assignments that were permitted under the 2024 scheme now require an appropriate visa. Screening of visa-exempt arrivals at Phuket International Airport had already tightened before the change, as covered in an earlier Siam Legal Phuket immigration update.

Belarusian nationals fall under a different arrangement. The Visa on Arrival list was cut from 31 nationalities to three, namely Azerbaijan, Belarus, and Serbia, so Belarusian passport holders on the Minsk service do not enter visa-free and must instead apply for a visa on arrival at a designated immigration checkpoint or obtain a visa in advance.

Phuket's three largest source markets show how the new framework varies by passport. Russia, with 661,876 visitors in the first eight months of the year, and China, with 459,218, were removed from the unilateral list because both hold bilateral visa exemption agreements with Thailand that allow stays of up to 30 days. India, with 393,277 visitors, remains on the unilateral 30-day list. The permitted stay is the same for all three, but the legal basis for it is not.

Nationals on the 30-day list may apply once for an extension of up to 30 additional days at an immigration office for a fee of THB 1,900, allowing a total stay of up to 60 days. Travelers who entered Thailand on or before September 14, 2026, keep the period of stay granted under the previous scheme. Visitors planning to remain longer than 60 days, or to combine a holiday with business activity, will generally need a tourist visa through the Thai e-Visa system or a long-stay visa category suited to their circumstances.

"Many buyers first see Phuket as tourists, and a 30-day stay leaves little time to view properties, complete due diligence, and sign contracts," said Omar O Manee, Attorney at Law at Siam Legal Phuket. "Visitors who think a trip may turn into a purchase should choose a visa that matches that plan before they travel, rather than trying to fit a property transaction into a tourist stay."

The full country-by-country breakdown of the revised framework, including which nationalities lost visa-free access and which moved to bilateral terms, is covered in Siam Legal's visa exemption explainer. Siam Legal Phuket continues to advise visitors and long-stay residents on entry requirements, visa planning, and related property and business matters on the island.

Siam Legal Phuket is a full-service law firm providing legal and regulatory advisory services to both foreign and Thai clients, with a focus on property law, corporate structuring, immigration, family law, and litigation.

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Siam Legal Phuket provides litigation, immigration, family law, contract drafting, real estate conveyancing, and corporate services. Our lawyers assist foreign clients with effective, cost-efficient legal strategies in Southern Thailand.

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