



Siam Legal International Issues Advisory on Thailand's July 2026 Visa-Free Policy Update

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Siam Legal International, a full-service law firm with more than 22 years of experience assisting foreign nationals in Thailand, is advising travelers and long-term residents to review their entry status following Thailand's Cabinet approval on July 14, 2026, of an expansion to its tiered visa-free system, adding six new nationalities and completing the alignment of all 27 European Union member states under a uniform 30-day visa-free entry framework.

The newly added countries are Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, India, Malta, and the Maldives. With this update, all 27 EU member states now receive the same 30-day visa-free access, a move officials say is intended to aid future Schengen visa discussions and apply a one country, one entitlement principle aimed at simplifying entry rules and removing overlapping visa categories. For India, which represents Thailand's third largest tourism market after China and Malaysia, the update confirms visa-free status rather than a shift to visa on arrival, addressing a period of uncertainty that contributed to a nearly 20% drop in Indian arrivals during the policy transition. Economic ties, reciprocity, and international relations have also influenced which countries fall into each tier of the revised framework.

Travelers should note that the revised rules will only take legal effect 15 days after publication in Thailand's Royal Gazette, meaning those entering before that date remain covered by current regulations. The July 14 Cabinet approval does not constitute immediate implementation, and Siam Legal advises all affected nationals to confirm the gazette publication date before making travel arrangements based on the new entitlements. Thailand is also expanding the use of the Thailand Digital Arrival Card system alongside these changes, which will be used to track travel patterns and verify that visitors comply with their stated purpose of entry.

"The policy direction is toward a cleaner, more structured visa framework, but the transition period creates real confusion for travelers who are acting on incomplete information," said Rex Baay, Operations Manager at Siam Legal International. "The gazette publication requirement means there is a gap between Cabinet approval and legal effect that travelers need to account for. Anyone whose travel plans depend on the new 30-day entitlement should verify the implementation date before departure. Further adjustments to the tiered system may follow as the policy moves through formal gazette publication and implementation." A full breakdown of the July 2026 update and what it means for each affected nationality is available in Siam Legal's Thailand visa-free policy update.

The current update is part of an ongoing policy shift that began in July 2024 when Thailand introduced a 60-day visa exemption for 93 countries. By May 2026, authorities moved to scale back that system, citing concerns over overstays and misuse of long-stay exemptions for non-tourism purposes. A shorter tiered model was introduced, including 30-day and 15-day visa-free categories alongside a reduced visa on arrival list. Authorities continue to emphasize that individuals intending to work, study, or conduct business in Thailand must obtain the appropriate visa rather than relying on visa-free entry, and enforcement of this requirement has intensified alongside the broader immigration compliance measures introduced in 2026.

Siam Legal International is a full-service law firm with more than 22 years of experience assisting foreign nationals in Thailand, with offices in Bangkok, Chiang Mai, Phuket, and Pattaya. The firm provides comprehensive legal and immigration support across visa planning, application processing, and long-term compliance.

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