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Coping With Thailand's Tightened Visa Regulations

By Nola L. Kelsey

It is the end of an era in Thailand. Political changes occur rapidly in SE Asia. Nowhere is that more evident than inside the Land of Smiles. In the wake of the John Karr / JonBenet Ramsey fiasco, Thailand has tightened restrictions on Tourism Visas and stymied the lives of tens of thousands of travelers. Officials claim the two are not connected.

For many years now, backpackers have flocked to Thailand. It's tropical climate, gentle citizens, inviting beaches and ease of travel beckon youthful exuberance. Over time, many of us have matured to suitcases and still less-stylish travelers followed suit.

During these Golden Years of Thai travel visitors from 39 countries could enter the Kingdom of Thailand for thirty days without obtaining a visa before their arrival. Those staying on longer would simply make a border run, cross out of the country and return, often within minutes. Whish! Stamp! Boom! They had another thirty days.

Currently details of the new regulations are as clear as mud in an unlit cave. It appears starting October 1, 2006, travelers such as myself will be able to make a maximum of two border runs. We receive thirty days on arrival. Then, we receive thirty days each for the two reentries. After that we may not enter Thailand again for ninety days. In other words, after ninety days in, we must leave for ninety days. Whish! Stamp! Stamp! Out!

The tourism industry will suffer! From taxi drivers and guest houses, to massage schools and laundry services, the impact will be felt. I imagine a Tuk Tuk driver will look up this January and think, "Hey, where'd everybody go?" I like to believe the cumulative economic loss will be more than the Kingdom fathoms and policies will loosen again over time. I also still hang a Christmas stocking up for myself.

Alongside Thais, how are long-term travelers being affected by the changes? If you think the inconvenience to individuals is negligible, consider the following. Here are some examples.

Donald Wood - UK "My sister and her family were to spend February in Thailand with me. They have canceled their trip. Why? Because, I'll be out for ninety days by then."

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Kelly Laidlaw - USA "I paid for a one month TEFL Course and two months 'volunteer' teacher training on Samui next year. That's three months total. I lose days from each 30 day allotment, because I have to do my visa border runs on weekend (to not miss class). This is what I'm left with. I leap into Thailand the day before class starts and sprint for Samui. Then, I fly out the day after I finish teaching/graduate. Perhaps a prospective school can interview me in the Tuk Tuk on the way to the airport."

Claude DeVosjoli - France "I had many plans for my six months- sure to travel, but more. I'm always doing something. Mahout training, an expansive meditation experience, maybe I learn to cook Thai. And, there's trekking, Muay Thai courses... There's so much to do here. Now I can do only half. Half lose my francs. It's so hard to choose."

Barry Anderson - Australia "Funny thing is Burma (a.k.a. Myanmar) lost business because of the Thai regs. I wanted to hop over there bouts for a week mid-November. Can't now. That would use up one of

my precious two visa runs early. Don't wanna torch thirteen days I figure."

Kathy Taylor - Canada "I sold my home to come to SE Asia for a couple years. The thinking was I would maintain a small apartment in Chiang Mai, take some classes, travel around a bit and have a place to nest and write in between. Now when I travel to other countries it will go lock, stock and barrel, along with my tourism dollars for many months."

Alan McLawrie - UK "I'm currently taking classes to learn to speak Thai. I'll miss the third level now. Of course, I'll be off in Vietnam not able to practice what I just learned anyway. Also, I volunteer at a dog rescue and will miss the pups. I'm financially independent, yet too young to meet the 50 year old requirement for a Retirement Visa here. Officials actually said this new law will stop bad people and not hurt good people. Well, if financially successful, charitable volunteers who study their culture are bad guys, send me to the front of the line."

Anita Kroll - USA "This change is a bit of a pickle for me. I have a three month course this spring. So, in December when my 90 is up, I have to leave Thailand for almost four months, not three. I'll need the whole next lot of ninety days to cover my class time. The course starts in late April and I'm out in December. I wish there had been more notice before the government changed things, though in retrospect I did not have to pay in advance."

As you see there are dozens of ways Thailand's new policies will cause little inconveniences. But, how little are they? You see, I am Anita. I am Alan. I am Kathy, Barry, Kelly, Donald and even Claude DeVosjoli. All these issues occurred for just one peaceful gal who simply loves Thailand. What else do these issues have in common? That's easy. They take money away (Whish!) from the Kingdom of Thailand and its citizens.

Nola L. Kelsey is the author of *Bitch Unleashed: The Harsh Realities of Goin' Country* and coauthor of the scathing political satire *Keeping the Masses Down*. To read more of Kelsey's work, visit her rarely up-to-date website at:

<http://www.nolakelsey.com>

Learning More About Visa Credit Card

By David Riewe

Today when everything is just a click away, owning a credit card or two is nothing new. Plastic cards have replaced paper money. Why it's very convenient! You don't have to worry about running out of cash every time you go shopping. Spending time counting pennies or loose change is no longer a problem. Credit cards have made life easier for every consumer.

Visa is the most common credit card in the market with more than one billion users. It is also the first credit card known to everybody since its debut in 1976.

What can you do with your Visa Credit Card?

1. Pay your taxes. Standing in queue to pay for your taxes is long over. You can now pay your taxes using the Visa Credit Card.
2. Pay your bills. Now you don't have to make stops to the billing centers to pay your bills. Paying them is a phone call away with your Visa Credit Card.
3. Donate to charity. Feeling generous? Give your share to those in need using Visa and feel great with the help you gave.
4. Travel with Visa. Pay your air fares and other needs while you're away for vacation. Travel has never been this fun using Visa with its Visa Traveler's Check, Visa Travel Money and even the Visa currency converter.

Now that you know what you can do with a Visa Credit Card, it's time to get one. But first, let's see which visa credit card that would best suit your needs.

1. Visa Classic. This credit card type is the most convenient for the first timers. It's the roadway to building a good credit history.
2. Visa Gold. This is the card created to suit your need. This is for holders that have a good strong credit history.
3. Visa Student. This card is offered to students. It includes special discounts for books and computers when you use your card to purchase.

Now that you're equipped with the basics about your Visa Credit Card, it's time to know a little more about what Visa has to offer.

There's no pleasure like gift-giving. Visa offers The Visa Gift Card. This is a prepaid debit card perfect for birthday gifts and for other occasions.

Teach your teens how to spend their money wisely with the Visa Buxx. This is a prepaid card for

teenagers that could be loaded by their parents.

Enjoy your dream vacation with no worries. Let the Visa TravelMoney take care of your purchasing needs while on vacation.

David Riewe is a Publisher and Online Marketer. Visit his Credit Resources Blog Below:

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