



Expatriate Counsel

RETIREMENT VISAS IN THAILAND II

Last time we talked about the requirements to get the Non-Imm O-A retirement visa to Thailand by applying from at an embassy or consulate outside the country. This time we're going to explain the procedure for changing to a non-immigrant retirement status from a tourist visa while you're already in Thailand.

In a nutshell, to switch to retirement status while in Thailand you must come in on a tourist visa and convert it to a Non-Imm O visa. The period of the Non-Imm O is only 90 days, but during this period you can extend your stay to one year for retirement purposes.

You should be aware that you can't be converted to a Non-Imm O visa from the standard 30-day entry permit tourists and other entrants receive on arrival at the airport. This is often confused with a tourist visa, but a tourist visa has to be obtained at a Thai consulate before arrival. Also, you must have at least 21 days remaining on your tourist visa when you apply for the conversion to the Non-Imm O.

In Bangkok you must apply for the Non-Imm O visa and later adjustment to retirement status at the Immigration Bureau, 507 Soi Suan Phlu, Sathon Tai road in Bangkok. Outside Bangkok, you must do all of this at one of the regional immigration offices.

To convert from a tourist visa to a Non-Imm O your passport must have at least 18 months of validity remaining. It must also contain your most recent TM.6 (entry-exit) form, the white one clipped inside by immigration when you arrive in Thailand. You must also submit a photocopy of all of the pages of your passport and sign each page, preferably in blue ink.

For both the Non-Imm O and to extend it to one year you will need to prove you have financial resources. This will be discussed next time.

The fee to convert to Non-Imm O status is 2,000 baht. There are two forms you must complete and submit, TM.86 (application for visa status alteration) and TM.87 (application for visa). You must also submit a 4cm x 6cm photo-taken within the last six months.

Once the Non-Imm O is granted, if you plan to travel outside Thailand, you must get a re-entry permit. A single re-entry permit, good for one trip, costs 1,000 baht. A multiple entry permit costs 3,800 baht. If you travel without a re-entry permit the Non-Imm O will be invalid when you return.

Once you have the Non-Imm O you can extend it to one year if you are 50 or older, pay the fee of 1,900 baht and submit form TM.7. The other requirements for the Non-Imm O such as the financial resource documentation must be submitted yet again.

We want to emphasise that many of the items we discuss in connection with immigration matters are a result of experience with our clients' applications or conversations with immigration officers we know. Immigration officers have fairly wide discretion about a lot of these issues and your particular experience with these application processes may differ here and there. Our objective is to help you understand your options and give you a general picture of the legal process.

Next time we'll discuss the rest of the requirements for the Non-Imm O and some considerations that apply to both the Non-Imm O-A and the Non-Imm O. ■

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