

Thailand is Destination of Choice for India and China Visitors – Travel Daily News, 27<sup>th</sup> Jan 2010

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Thailand: Destination of choice for India and China

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*REPORT-BRUNEI-ATF 2010:* As Thailand restructures its marketing strategies to better exploit the opportunities amongst the high-potential and productive markets, country giants like India and China are expected to produce more than their fair share of arrivals to Thailand in the years ahead.

With most of the major cities of both countries having easy access to Bangkok, Thailand rates highly as a popular destination of choice for both Indians and Chinese. They also find Thailand offering them a perfect combination of value for money, quality service standards, and excellent products.

In addition to growing airline accessibility, both Chinese and Indians also now get visas on arrival. The Royal Thai Government has agreed to extend the exemption of the visa fee for Chinese and Indian tourist visa applications until 4 March. The exemption will apply to all applicants for visa on arrival at all international airports in Thailand as well as those applying at Thai embassies abroad for stays longer than the period for which they are normally eligible.

## India

India and Thailand have enjoyed good diplomatic relations since 1947. India is a very important partner country for Thailand in the context of cultural, social, political, and economic relations. Buddhism, the dominant religion of Thailand, originated in India, and the written script of the Thai language is based on Pali.

Today, the two countries have advanced their economic and technical co-operation in various fields including tourism, fishery, and transportation.

India is today the biggest source market for visitors from South Asia. There were a total of 611,983 Indian visitor arrivals to Thailand in 2009, a 13.97% increase over 2008. Having opened a new office in Mumbai in 2008, TAT is targeting India as a priority market in the future and investing heavily in it. It is pursuing creative ways to expand Thailand's brand image in India, amongst both consumers and trade.

There has been rapid growth in aviation access. In January 2010, there are 124 direct weekly services between Bangkok and major Indian cities including Delhi (35), Kolkata (24), Mumbai (35), Gaya (12), Bangalore (7), Hyderabad (4), Madras/Chennai (7) by 8 airlines; such as, Thai Airways International, Indian Airlines, Air India, Cathay Pacific Airways,

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Royal Bhutan Airlines, Jet Airways, Air India Express, and Kingfisher Airlines.

In recent months, Indian filmmakers from Bollywood have begun to discover Thailand as good place to shoot movies and TV serials. In 2008, for the first time, Thailand hosted the Indian International Film Awards (IIFA), one of India's well-known Bollywood film awards ceremonies. Since then, there has been a major increase in Indian feature films, documentaries, and advertising spots being shot in Thailand along with pre-and post-production work.

Thailand is also becoming extremely popular for Indian honeymooners and shopping enthusiasts.

## **China**

China has been one of the fastest growing markets in terms of visitor arrivals to Thailand in the last few years. In 2006 and 2007, arrivals crossed the one million mark but fell substantially in 2008 due to various factors, including the domestic political instability in Thailand, global economic conditions, and declined by 4.2% to 960,095 in 2008. In 2009, Chinese visitor arrivals to Thailand by nationality totalled 775,709, a decline of 6.16%.

TAT is working closely with related offices to stimulate the Chinese tourism market. It is undertaking advertising campaigns through Chinese media like CCTV and stepping up cooperation with Chinese tour operators to launch special promotional packages from specific cities at different times of the year.

Charter flights are also being organised between China and the southern part of Thailand like Phuket, Krabi and Samui.

In 2007, Thailand was voted one of the world's most favourite destinations for Chinese tourists. Major contributing factors making Thailand increasingly popular among Chinese visitors include the fact that Thailand is a short-haul and value-for-money destination with good airline connections.

Thailand and China also have much in common in terms of food, cultural and ethnic relationships. Many Thai prominent businessmen and political families have their roots in China.

As of January 2010, there are 139 direct weekly flight services linking Thailand and major cities in China; such as, Beijing (25), Chengdu (4), Guangzhou (46), Kunming (12), Shanghai (31), Shantou (3), Shenzhen (10), Xiamen (3), Chongqing (3), Kunming – Chiang Mai (2), which are operated by 11 airlines ;such as, Thai Airways International, Air China, China Southern Airline, China Eastern Airline, Thai Air Asia, Shenzhen Airlines, Sri Lanka Airlines, Kenya Airways, Ethiopian Airlines, Shanghai Airlines, and Egypt Air