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Thailand ends its afternoon alcohol sales ban

The new nationwide rule allows beer, wine and spirits to be sold from 11 a.m. until midnight.

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Thailand has eased one of its most confusing alcohol rules for foreign visitors, allowing beer, wine and spirits to be sold from 11 a.m. until midnight nationwide and ending the long-standing afternoon ban that had barred sales between 2 p.m. and 5 p.m.

The change took effect on May 29 after publication in the Royal Gazette, according to local reports, and is expected to make it easier for tourists in Pattaya and other major destinations to understand when they can buy alcohol. For years, visitors often found that restaurants, bars and convenience stores were open in the afternoon but could not legally sell alcoholic drinks during those hours, a rule that frequently caught travelers off guard.

Tourism operators said the revised schedule should reduce confusion and improve the visitor experience, especially in places like Pattaya, where beach dining, nightlife and entertainment are central to the local economy. The city depends heavily on international arrivals, and businesses there have been competing for travelers as tourism continues to recover.

The new rule does not remove other restrictions. Thailand’s legal drinking age remains 20, and alcohol sales and consumption are still banned in certain places, including temples, government offices, petrol stations, public parks and public transport areas unless specifically allowed by law. Additional limits can still apply during elections, major Buddhist holidays and other periods announced by authorities.

Some venues continue to operate under separate licensing rules, including hotels, licensed entertainment establishments, approved event sites and international airport areas serving overseas passengers. Officials have also continued to urge responsible drinking and safe transportation after alcohol consumption.

For wine sellers and importers, the change may help broaden daytime sales in tourist areas where lunch service and early afternoon dining are important parts of the market. In a country where many visitors had assumed alcohol could be purchased throughout the day, the new hours are meant to align the law more closely with how tourists use restaurants and retail outlets.