



nileGUIDE

ALL YOU NEED TO PLAN YOUR PERFECT TRIP



Rene Ehrhardt

Beach Vacation in Phuket

Phuket, 3 Days

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Guide Description



AUTHOR NOTE: Phuket is truly an island paradise, surrounded on nearly all sides by miles of spectacular white sand beaches and towering palms. With reefs for snorkeling and diving, boating and lots of water sports to try, and delicious Thai cuisine to enjoy, this is the place to go for a beach vacation.

Itinerary Overview

things to do
restaurants
hotels
nightlife

Day 1 - Phuket

DAY NOTE: Mom Tri's is one of most luxurious exotic resorts you could dream up, with privacy, exceptional service, lovely gardens and grounds, and beautiful ocean views. You couldn't find better in Phuket... or many other places, for that matter. Head north from the resort today to see some of the beaches on the western coast of the island. Nai Yang and Nai Thon are on the long northern stretch of the island coast, and are less frequented by tourists. The sharp dropoff off the beach makes the water look less clear and inviting for people, but makes the area more inviting for sea turtles, which you can frequently spot here. Another long stretch of equally unvisited beach is Laem Sing and Kamala Beach, which are mainly visited by locals and are a good place for some relaxation in the sand and surf. If you would like to do some private snorkeling or diving, Kalim Beach is the place to go, since it's relatively unvisited and is a great spot for exploring the coral reefs there. Or, if you're new to snorkeling and/or diving, go out with an outfit like West Coast Divers, who are reputable and knowledgeable, and do both shorter and longer trips to some of the better reefs and islands in the area. When you start thinking about dinner, Sea Hag is easily one of the best restaurants in Phuket. It's small and simple, but you'll get served some of the most delicious Thai fish dishes here - fresh out of the water, and as spicy as you can handle.



Nai Yang Beach

Seclusion and silence for the beach lover.



Nai Thon Beach

A Great Escape



Laem Sing Beach

Delightfully Intimate Beach



Kamala Beach

Relatively Undeveloped Beach



Sea Hag Restaurant

Simple Seafood

Day 2 - Phuket

DAY NOTE: One of the best places to take a day trip from Phuket is Koh Hae, or "Coral Island", which is a small island quickly accessed by boat from Phuket and is largely uninhabited, other than a small fishing village. If you're looking for a quiet place to spend the day in and out of the water, and to find some good food from local vendors, this is the place to be. Take a walk down to Prom Thap Cape for a beautiful view of the ocean on

your way north to stop at some of the beaches on the eastern coast. Just north of the cape is Rawai Beach, where you can see what life in Phuket is like away from tourism and modernity. The Chao Le people have retained many aspects of their historical culture, but have also moved to take advantage of the smaller numbers of visitors that come through here, so you can buy some interesting handicrafts on the beach here, too. You can also hire a boat nearby to pop over to Ko Kaeo, a quick 10 minute ride, to see some golden Buddha statues and get in some great diving or snorkeling on the remarkable reefs here. Keep going north at the end of the day to Ka Jok See, a little restaurant off the tourist track, and you won't regret it if you stop in to see what all the locals are going for. The food is good enough, but just wait until the dancing (and drinking) start! A delicious dinner and a great show in one.



Coral Island

Snorkelers' paradise just 20 minutes by speed boat from Chalong Pier.



Ko Kaeo

Interesting Island



KAKS

A Hidden Gem Discovered

Day 3 - Phuket

DAY NOTE: Head out for another snorkeling or diving trip today to a place such as Kata Beach, where there's lots of good reef spots, and also water sports equipment for rental, some good snack shops, and souvenirs. A couple more beaches for an afternoon swim or sandy relaxation time are Karon Beach, a relaxed bay where the pace is slow and local fishermen still cast their nets, or Patong Beach, which is a more touristy beach destination where you can enjoy the water but can also enjoy some more lively culture. Save room for dinner at Sam's, which may be housed in the Holiday Inn, but it also is the best steakhouse in Phuket. There are Thai dishes and other international cuisine, but it's all excellent.



Kata Beach

Popular Water Sports Playground



Sam's Steaks & Grill

The American Feel

Day 1 - Phuket

QUICK NOTE

DAY NOTE: Mom Tri's is one of most luxurious exotic resorts you could dream up, with privacy, exceptional service, lovely gardens and grounds, and beautiful ocean views. You couldn't find better in Phuket... or many other places, for that matter. Head north from the resort today to see some of the beaches on the western coast of the island. Nai Yang and Nai Thon are on the long northern stretch of the island coast, and are less frequented by tourists. The sharp dropoff off the beach makes the water look less clear and inviting for people, but makes the area more inviting for sea turtles, which you can frequently spot here. Another long stretch of equally unvisited beach is Laem Sing and Kamala Beach, which are mainly visited by locals and are a good place for some relaxation in the sand and surf. If you would like to do some private snorkeling or diving, Kalim Beach is the place to go, since it's relatively unvisited and is a great spot for exploring the coral reefs there. Or, if you're new to snorkeling and/or diving, go out with an outfit like West Coast Divers, who are reputable and knowledgeable, and do both shorter and longer trips to some of the better reefs and islands in the area. When you start thinking about dinner, Sea Hag is easily one of the best restaurants in Phuket. It's small and simple, but you'll get served some of the most delicious Thai fish dishes here - fresh out of the water, and as spicy as you can handle.

contact:

tel: +66 26 94 1222
<http://www.tourismthailand.org/>

location:

Nai Yang Beach Road
Sakhu 83140

1 Nai Yang Beach

OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:

If you want to have a picnic or plan on spending a long time here, bring your own food and drinks. There aren't many shops around and the closes restaurants might not be open at all times.

DESCRIPTION: Nai Yang Beach is one of the farthest beaches from central Phuket. Located more than 19 miles from the city, Nai Yang offers something very difficult to find in Phuket: Solitude. Part of the reason for this peace and quiet is that the beach is not particularly remarkable and doesn't have much to offer in terms of water sports or attractions. However, the beach is located right to the Sirinat National Park's entrance and is bordered by a mangrove forest. If you want a unique view of Phuket and a soothing spot to enjoy the clean sand on your own, this is the right beach to try. © NileGuide



editor

contact:

tel: +66 76 22 2177

location:

Thalang District
Sakhu 83000

hours:

24hrs

2 Nai Thon Beach

DESCRIPTION: Nai Thon Beach lies to the northwest of the island. It is an isolated area and a great place to escape the crowds. Sheltered from the wind and big waves, it is peaceful and relaxing. Many locals use this beach for picnics and family get-togethers. You can buy refreshments from the charismatic beach vendors who sell tropical delights in the shade of the mammoth trees. This is a great place for surfing. © wcities.com



wcities

contact:
tel: +66 76 22 2177

location:
Near Ban Lum Fuang
Kamala 83120

3 Laem Sing Beach

DESCRIPTION: On the winding coastal road between Kamala and Surin, Laem Sing is an intimately-sized beach accessible via a rocky walking track from the road above. Because of its size and location, it is missed by many tourists and is therefore a lovely spot for lazing around in relative isolation. In high season, a couple of local families run small food stalls and bars, making it a worthwhile stopover on your way along the coastal road. © wcities.com



wcities

contact:
tel: +66 76 22 2177

location:
Kamala Beach
Kamala 83120

hours:
24hrs

4 Kamala Beach

DESCRIPTION: Located six kilometers north of Patong Beach this two-kilometre beach is one of the quietest on the island. Nearby beaches include Laem Sing and Surin, as well as several small sandy coves. The name is derived from a nearby Muslim fishing village. In the afternoons on this peaceful and picturesque beach, water buffalo can often be seen cooling off in the water. There is a large range of accommodation available and many small Thai restaurants, specializing in fresh seafood. It is also the location of Thailand's best and most famous entertainment park, FantaSea. © wcities.com



Photo courtesy of MsAnthea

contact:
tel: +66 76 34 1111
<http://www.kenyaphuket.com/>

location:
78-5 Soi Permong, Soi
Wattana
Phuket 83150

hours:
Daily Noon-4p & 6p-Mid

5 Sea Hag Restaurant

DESCRIPTION: Using only the freshest of ingredients, this simply designed Thai restaurant is a relatively new addition to the restaurant scene in Patong. While offering little in the way of decor, the Sea Hag has managed to build a reputation based on good food alone, which draws both locals and travelers. Dishes to savor include some hearty salads and satay, curry and whole fish. A variety of international dishes are also on offer, all will be enhanced by a drink from the fully stocked bar. © wcities.com



wcities

Day 2 - Phuket

QUICK NOTE

DAY NOTE: One of the best places to take a day trip from Phuket is Koh Hae, or "Coral Island", which is a small island quickly accessed by boat from Phuket and is largely uninhabited, other than a small fishing village. If you're looking for a quiet place to spend the day in and out of the water, and to find some good food from local vendors, this is the place to be. Take a walk down to Prom Thep Cape for a beautiful view of the ocean on your way north to stop at some of the beaches on the eastern coast. Just north of the cape is Rawai Beach, where you can see what life in Phuket is like away from tourism and modernity. The Chao Le people have retained many aspects of their historical culture, but have also moved to take advantage of the smaller numbers of visitors that come through here, so you can buy some interesting handicrafts on the beach here, too. You can also hire a boat nearby to pop over to Ko Kaeo, a quick 10 minute ride, to see some golden Buddha statues and get in some great diving or snorkeling on the remarkable reefs here. Keep going north at the end of the day to Ka Jok See, a little restaurant off the tourist track, and you won't regret it if you stop in to see what all the locals are going for. The food is good enough, but just wait until the dancing (and drinking) start! A delicious dinner and a great show in one.

contact:

tel: +66 2 694 1222

fax: +66 2 694 1220

location:

Koh Hae Island
Koh Hae

1 Coral Island

DESCRIPTION: Coral Island (also known as Koh Hae) is one of the best popular snorkeling destinations around Phuket. Located just south of Phuket, it's easily accessible by boat, either on your own or as part of a tour. Beginners can stay near the shallow reef against the beach, while more experienced snorkelers or divers can head farther away into the ocean. Besides snorkeling, the beach is popular with sunbathers who want to escape the craziness of the major beaches in Phuket. Most visitors are day-trippers, although there are beach bungalows where you can spend the night if you're prepared to pay their upscale prices. © NileGuide



flicker by Eli Duke

contact:

tel: +66 76 22 2177 (Tourist Information)

http://www.discoverythailand.com/Phuket_Koh_Kaeo.asp

location:

South of Rawai Beach
Ko Kaeo Island

2 Ko Kaeo

DESCRIPTION: Easily accessible by boat from Rawai Beach in South Phuket, the tiny Kaeo island boasts a rare replica of Buddha's holy footprint which, for some, signifies the island as having, "a certain purity of spirit for those who seek semi-solitude." It also offers picturesque beaches and underwater scenery, with mazes of colorful corals and exotic tropical fish. And diving gear, though an added advantage, is not a prerequisite for viewing the fabulous coral, at low tide a large expanse of corals emerge, a rare picturesque scene, which will be long remembered by visitors. © wcities.com



wcities

contact:

tel: +66 76 217 903

location:

26 Takuapa Road
Phuket 83000

3 KAKS

DESCRIPTION: Every now and again one finds a "hidden gem," where all the ingredients for a memorable evening are in place. That is why Ka Jok See, arguably Phuket Town's most popular restaurant, has been drawing the locals, and a few lucky tourists, for the past 14 years. The building is an 18th century Sino-Portuguese treasure with simple decor, but a charming sense

hours:
Tu-Su 6p-mid

of style. Dishes such as the succulent prawns and Jurassic Salad are prepared in a traditional Bangkok style and cooked with a flair that raises even the simple dishes to new heights. © wcities.com

Day 3 - Phuket

QUICK NOTE

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contact:
tel: +66 76 22 2177
<http://www.tourismthailand.org/>

location:
Kata Noi Road
Phuket 83000

hours:
24hrs

1 Kata Beach

DESCRIPTION: Located 17 kilometers south of the town, the bay at Kata is really made up of two smaller bays, Kata Yai and Kata Noi. Both are blessed with impressively long, relatively peaceful, sandy beaches. Here you can swim, sail, windsurf, sunbathe and even scuba dive, as there is an extensive coral reef off Pu Isle, just in front of the beach. Kata itself offers all tourist related amenities such as accommodation, tour agents, shops and restaurants. © wcities.com



Photo courtesy of Rene Ehrhardt

contact:
tel: +66 76 34 0608
fax: +66 76 34 0435
<http://www.holiday.phuket.com/sams-steakhouse.htm>

location:
52 Thaweewong Road
Phuket 83150

hours:
Mo to Su from 06:00 PM to 10:15 PM

2 Sam's Steaks & Grill

DESCRIPTION: Sam's at the Holiday Inn Resort, Phuket, is one of Phuket's leading steakhouses, with its tasty US beef being a firm favorite in this restaurant. The décor resembles a Chicago-style steakhouse, with dark wood and deep-colored fabrics. Take a jumper, as the air-conditioning can get very cold. Appetizers are often hearty enough to serve as a main meal and are both innovative in recipe and creative in presentation. The mainstay dishes include Fillet Steak, Pepper Steak and Fillet of Salmon with Ginger Cream Sauce. Check website for more details. © wcities.com



wcities

Phuket Snapshot

Local Info

Dating back to 1025 A.D., the island of Phuket just southwest of mainland Thailand has a long and complex history, mostly as a trading post for foreigners carrying and seeking valuable materials such as rubber, tin, pearls, timber, ivory, and gems. The glitter of these villains, traders and travelers still glows today in the spirit and the culture of the island.

Connected by two principal bridges to mainland Thailand, Phuket attracts millions of tourists each year with the hopes of experiencing the marvelous natural wonders, bizarre spectacles and fascinating history in the form of an exotic vacation. From Las-Vegas style shows highlighting, among other things, dancing elephants, to natural waterfalls and stunning views of the ocean, this tiny gem in the Andaman Sea is not to be underestimated.

At Patong Beach, catch the Simon Cabaret Show, likely the most exotic experience you'll find in a show-like atmosphere. Expect to glimpse a fair share of world-famous 'ladyboys', better known as transvestites, putting on a glistening performance marked by fantastic costumes and unbelievable bodies. Women and men will both agree, this show will leave you speechless. And if 'ladyboys' are up your street, then a late night stroll down Bangla Road might also find its way into your agenda, where you'll be amazed by the sheer quantity of flamboyant characters prancing around and beckoning your guilty senses.

Day breaks and you might seek some refreshment in the form of spiritual retreats or natural wonders. Both treats blanket the island of Phuket. Wat Chalong, for instance, is one of the island's most important temples, where you'll find intricate carvings and glass mosaics decorating several pagodas. This is Phuket's spiritual center, with a cultural importance that highlights the unique history of the island. On special holidays, you'll also find country style fairs where you can nibble on traditional Thai dishes while breathing in the aromas of the fragrant natural surroundings.

At 45 meters high, be sure not to miss the Big Buddha monument, a recent arrival in Phuket with a spectacular view of surrounding Chalong, Kata, and Rawai. Catch a traditional Thai Boxing match, plan an excursion to relaxing outdoor retreats surrounded by waterfalls, make a quick return visit to your favorite 'ladyboy' performers, or simply indulge in the exotic nature of this one-of-a-kind world destination. Whatever the case, Phuket offers diversity in spectacle and attractions that will leave you with plenty to talk about upon your departure.

© NileGuide

History

There is a common misconception that the island of Phuket is a recent find—that backpackers stumbled across a tropical haven in the 1960s and it was only then that its history began. Nothing could be further from the truth, although records are scarce and much of the island's background relies upon the documentation of foreign visitors and archaeological finds from the past three decades.

The geographical location of Phuket ensured that it would be stumbled upon by traders from the West, traveling from India to the Far East and looking for an easier passage than sailing south through the then uncharted waters of Malaysia and Indonesia. Historical records tell of sailors visiting the island as far back as the 9th Century and antique charts show the island's position as far back as the 2nd Century (Claudius Ptolemy of Alexandria produced a map featuring what looks like Phuket).

Although the island's coves and bays were frequently used as safe harbors from the storms so frequent in the Andaman Sea, it was not until the 13th century that the Thais discovered the island and began trading here. For the travelers from the West, they also provided food and shelter from the pirates so prevalent between India and Peninsular Malaysia at the time. Known as 'Junk Ceylon' the island was

predominately populated by Mon-Khmers from Burma and the Chao Talay, now commonly known as Sea Gypsies and famed for their talents in fishing, diving and sailing.

The arrival of the Thais led to tin mining, a very lucrative trade as the tin veins were close to the surface and easy to exploit. As trade routes grew, the island blossomed and became famous as a pearl-fishing center (the Phuket Sea Shell Museum not far from Rawai Beach has many fine examples from this period). As news of these riches traveled to Europe in the 16th century, Dutch pearl traders arrived by the hundreds. In addition to tin and pearls, the Europeans sought precious rhino horn, colorful corals, ambergris and valuable bird's nests to that they would then trade with the Chinese. Phang Nga Bay to the northeast of Phuket is still an area famed for the quality (and cost) of its bird's nests.

The centuries-long threat of Burmese aggression came to a bloody conclusion in 1785, when a marauding force swept across the island in an attempt to take it for their own. Following the death of the governor of (then capital) Thalang, his grieving widow, Chan, and her sister, Muk, led a group of Thai forces and repelled the invaders. Disguised as men, their courage terrified the Burmese, who fled north after a seven-week insurgence. In recognition of their bravery, the sisters were honored by King Rama I and given the noble titles of Lady Thepsatri and Tao Srisuntorn. A bronze statue of the two, with swords drawn, was erected in the center of Thalang in 1966. The Two Heroines Monument is regularly visited by locals, who rub gold leaf on the base as both a mark of respect and as a way to seek merit. Just off the Heroines Monument is the Thalang National Museum, which has a wide array of local history displays and artifacts.

In the late 18th century, Captain Francis Light of the East India Company traveled to Bukhit (Malay for hill) to engage in commerce. He met and married a local woman, then declared the island a British outpost. However, as the island flourished,

Phuket Snapshot continued

Bangkok ordered that Bukhit become part of the Kingdom of Thailand and Light retreated south to British colonial holdings in Penang and the Straits of Malacca. Had things been different, Phuket might have developed along the lines of Singapore.

The 19th century saw an influx of Chinese immigrants who were leaving the disintegrating Qing empire and who were attracted to the opportunities provided by the island's rich resources. The Peranakan community, locally known as Phuket Babas are the descendants of Chinese immigration and influenced the architecture, religion and culture on Phuket, notable in the Sino-Thai flavor of many establishments in Phuket Town. Although there were no invasions at this time, fighting between tin miners approached unbearably violent conditions. The ending of hostilities is marked each year at Wat Chalong, the most sacred of the 29 temples on the island. In 1903 the first rubber trees were planted, beginning another lucrative business, and Phuket rapidly became the richest part of Thailand. Another Englishman, Captain Edward Miles, arrived in 1907 and proceeded to harness the power of local elephants to transport ore and other produce around the island. By 1910, Phuket had become the first place in Thailand to have paved roads and motorcars. In 1933, the island was declared an official province.

The mid-20th Century proceeded fairly quietly. Phuket remained remote because of the few boats to travel between the island and the mainland, so visitors were infrequent. In the early 1970s Sarasin Bridge was built, connecting Phuket to neighboring Phang Nga Province. Soon, travelers began to arrive by the busload from Bangkok, roads were cut through the mountains to the western Patong Beach, Kata Beach and Karon Beach, marking the beginning of the tourism boom.

Although much of Phuket's heritage takes time to find, the search is worthwhile. Down small side streets in Phuket Town you can stumble across a centuries-old Chinese door, a Sino-Portuguese building or a temple hidden behind a modern

convenience store. The wild rhino, once so prevalent on the island, have long since disappeared, as have the crocodiles. However, Phuket and the surrounding areas are home to many wildlife and marine parks. The reserves on the Phi Phi Islands and Krabi are a short boat journey away and north of the island Khao Lak and Khao Sok National Park are idyllic retreats along the road to once-feared Burma (Myanmar). To the west lie the Surin Islands and Similan Islands, and to the northeast Phang Nga Bay features some of the most outstanding natural scenery in Asia. The small domestic airport became an international airport in the 1990s and infrastructure expanded rapidly. Phuket is now the leading island holiday destination in Southeast Asia and is still the wealthiest province in Thailand.

On December 26, 2004, the Boxing Day Tsunami, triggered by a magnitude 9.1 earthquake in the Indian Ocean, swept through the Andaman Sea, affecting everything in its path and causing one of the largest natural disasters in recorded history. The western and southern parts of Phuket including Patong Beach and the Phi Phi Islands areas were completely devastated and infrastructure was swept away along with more than 500 lives. Because Phuket's emergency services were not greatly damaged, the island was able to begin rescue and recovery efforts immediately following the disaster. Since late 2005 with the help of generous international assistance and aid, most of Phuket's roads, resorts and infrastructure has been completely restored.

©

Hotel Insights

Phuket Island offers visitors a host of choices when it comes to accommodation. However, it is often the season, rather than the area, that plays a more important part in deciding where to stay. On the island there are two seasons, the dry "High Season" from November to April and the Monsoon or "Green Season" from May to October. During this time, heavy tropical rains can make water activities on west

coast beaches treacherous. Trips to such destinations as the Similan and Surin Islands may be canceled. On the east coast, these conditions are generally not as serious. Hotel rates are considerably lower during this time with numerous 'special packages' on offer.

Phuket Town

The provincial capital, Phuket Town, is packed with hotels, restaurants shops and lots of local history. Two top establishments here are the Metropole Hotel and the Royal Phuket City Hotel. Others include the Phuket Merlin Hotel in a quieter part of town and the Thavorn Grand Plaza Hotel. A sister hotel, the Thavorn, is the oldest in town and its collection of historical memorabilia makes it worth a look even for those staying elsewhere.

Panwa Cape to Rawai Beach

Seven kilometers from Phuket Town, the secluded Panwa Cape, home to the Phuket Marine Biological Centre and Phuket Aquarium, offers upmarket rooms at the Panwaburi Hotel. More moderately priced are the Panwa Beach Resort and Panwa House Hotel. Rawai Beach is the location of The Evason Phuket. There are also a number of inexpensive bungalows at the southern end of Chalong Bay.

Nai Harn Beach

Around from Prom Thap Cape is Nai Harn Beach, also home to the Phuket Yacht Club. Le Royal Meridien Phuket Yacht Club offers luxurious accommodation, as do the Nai Harn Villas.

Kata Noi Beach to Patong Beach

On the west of the island, Kata comprises two lovely beaches, Kata Yai and Kata Noi. This area is dominated by Club Med Phuket, which offers "all inclusive" holiday packages. The Kata Beach Resort is an exclusive boutique hotel and the Mom Tri's Boathouse boasts the award-winning Wine & Grill Restaurant. There is also the Kata Thani Hotel & Beach Resort, which is accompanied by several small restaurants. Neither of the beach areas have discos or large clubs, so nightlife is confined to the

Phuket Snapshot continued

small, late-night pubs and outdoor bars in the vicinity.

Karon Beach

Across a low hill from Kata lies Karon Beach, known for having the softest sand in Thailand. There are numerous beachside restaurants, shops and late-night bars. Notable establishments here include the five-star Phuket Arcadia Hotel & Resort, Le Meridien Phuket, the Thavorn Palm Beach Resort, Ramada Karon, the Waterfront Hotel and Moevenpick Resort and Spa. Less expensive accommodation is available at the Centara Villas Phuket and Phuket Ocean Resort, while the Sea Breeze Inn is a good, inexpensive location.

Patong Beach

This area provides all manner of attractions with the most nightlife on the west side of the island. This is where the majority of visitors to Phuket stay and there are literally hundreds of accommodation possibilities, from resorts and hotels to modest bungalows, and something for every budget. At the luxurious end of the scale is the Amari Coral Beach Resort, the Club Andaman Beach Resort and the Diamond Cliff Resort & Spa. Middle-range establishments include the Deevana Patong Resort and Spa, the Phairin Beach Hotel and the Phuket Grand Tropicana. At the lower price end is the Baan Lamai Beach Resort, the Deva Patong Resort and the Royal Palm Beach Front, to name but a few.

To the north, at Nakalay Beach, is the upmarket Thavorn Beach Village, which includes the popular restaurant Old Siam Nakalay plus one of the better island spas, Nakalay Spa.

Laem Sing, Surin & Kamala Beach

The upmarket Kamala Residence is located on the small, picturesque Laem Sing Beach, separated by a small headland from Surin Beach, where the five-star Chedi Hotel is located. The relatively undeveloped Kamala Beach is home to Thailand's most outstanding hotspot, Phuket FantaSea. Places to stay include the deluxe Kamala Bay Terrace Resort, the moderately-priced

Phuket Kamala Resort and the Kamala Beach Hotel & Resort.

Bang Tao Beach & Laguna Phuket

The Laguna Phuket Complex is made up of the Banyan Tree, Dusit Laguna Resort Hotel, Sheraton Grande Laguna, Allamanda Laguna Phuket and Laguna Beach Resort. These are some of the most luxurious resorts on the island, set on 1,000 acres and interconnected by road, canal and lagoon. Facilities include the Canal Village Shopping Center, an 18-hole golf course, a horse-riding club and a skills-challenge course.

Moderately-priced accommodation elsewhere in the area includes Bangtao Beach Cottage and Pen Villa Hotel.

Nai Yang Beach

This is the longest beach on the island, and where giant sea turtles come ashore in the dry season to lay their eggs. There is superb swimming along the beach with access to a camping area and Nai Yang National Park. Places to stay include the Crown Nai Yang Suite Hotel and the Pearl Village.

Offshore Islands

On Phi Phi Islands, recognized among the most beautiful islands in the world, there are both five star and budget accommodations available, including Holiday Inn Resort—Phi Phi Island, Phi Phi Cabana and Phi Phi Natural Resort.

Coral Island is one of the most popular one-day tour destinations, surrounded by colorful coral reefs. The Coral Island Resort is a moderately-priced establishment. On Cruiser Island there is the charming, inexpensive Cruiser Island Resort, while Mai Thon Island offers the deluxe and exclusive Maiton Resort.

Wherever you choose to stay in Phuket, you can be sure of a friendly welcome and comfortable accommodation in prices to suit all pockets.

©

Restaurants Insights

Apart from being one of the world's leading rice growers, Thailand is blessed with an abundance of fresh fruit and vegetables; rarely does one see either canned or frozen ingredients being used in Thai cuisine. Phuket is famous for the crabs, oysters, prawns, lobster, squid and variety of fish that are caught daily from the surrounding waters of the Andaman Sea.

Part of the fun of traveling is to experience the local delicacies and methods of preparation. In Phuket, a typical breakfast dish is Khanom Chin—Thai rice noodles with a curry soup made from minced fish or shrimp. Fried noodles such as Mi Hokkien with fresh shrimp, pork, shellfish and green cabbage are very traditional, as are Mi Sapam with seafood and gravy or and Kaeng Luang—sour curry with fish.

Some of the best dining locations to be found on the island are in Phuket Town, Chalong Bay and Patong Beach.

Phuket Town

Fortuna Pavilion, at the Metropole Hotel, offers a delicious dim sum selection for lunch and one of the best Chinese a la carte selections. Their Metropole Cafe also provides a hugely popular lunch buffet comprising a vast array of Thai dishes prepared in the manner of the many regions of Thailand. In the evening, you will not be disappointed with the delicious offerings at the atmospheric and popular Ka Jok See. Or, try Shintaro, which is, in all probability, the area's least expensive Japanese restaurant and offers alfresco dining. If you are after something more European, La Gaetana offers tasty Italian fare.

Chalong Bay, Rawai Beach & Nai Harn

Some of the island's best seafood is to be found in this area and many people head for Kan Eang's, which is known for outstanding fish dishes. Klaus and Mouse has a large following of German patrons and the Regatta Restaurant at The Royal Meridien Yacht Club on Nai Harn Beach is a must for celebrations and special occasions. The informal Don's Café at Rawai Beach is said to serve the island's

Phuket Snapshot continued

best spareribs, their unique flavor coming from the mesquite wood burnt amongst the charcoals on the barbecue. Also at Rawai Beach, a number of eateries offer seating on mats at the water's edge and serve such simple dishes as grilled chicken or the catch of the day.

Kata

Kata offers a number of eating opportunities, including the upmarket Mom Tri's Boathouse Wine and Grill and the less formal Gung Cafe.

Karon Beach

Along the beach strip from Kata, there are some excellent restaurants and lively open-air bars, including Sala Thai, On the Rock, and Long Beach Terrace, where you can sit and enjoy a stunning sunset over the water, and Old Siam, which features classical dance on Wednesdays and Sundays.

Patong Beach

Where you choose to dine here is really a question of what type of cuisine or ambience you prefer on any particular night. Among the mass of restaurants are Sam's, said by many to be the island's best steak house, Otowa and Rengaya, two excellent Japanese outlets, and Da Maurizio, a great Italian restaurant. A new kid on the block is It's Alive! with an innovative seafood menu. For a fusion of East meets West, there is Sala Bua, which also boasts a romantic ocean-side setting. Baan Rim Pa offers traditional Thai cuisine while the Royal Kitchen serves Cantonese food. The Viking Grill Garden offers a Scandinavian family buffet and Le Galion is a creperie with an interior that many say is the most interesting on the island.

Interesting pubs in the area include the Safari Club& Disco, Molly Malone's Irish Pub and the Irish Bar.

Kamala& Surin Beaches

For a memorable dining experience, a visit to FantaSea, the ultimate cultural theme park, includes the hugely popular Golden Kinnaree buffet that seats up to 4000 people. Other popular establishments include the Toto Restaurant and Old Siam Nakalay, which serves traditional Thai

cuisine in an authentic, tropical garden setting.

Whichever restaurant you choose to eat in or watering hole to drink in, mealtime in Phuket is an unforgettable experience. Balmy sea breezes are conducive to outdoor dining, and there is nothing more pleasant than savoring a delicious meal, complemented by a good wine, augmented by pacific sea views or lush tropical gardens.
©

Nightlife Insights

There is hardly any activity that is not centered around fun on Phuket Island, be it indoor, outdoor, active or more sedate, whether it is day or night.

In the Water

Phuket is a major destination for scuba diving. The Similan, Surin and Phi Phi Islands, as well as some of the smaller islands and beaches, offer great dive sites, perfect for scuba or snorkeling. Many companies, including Coral Seekers, offer diving trips.

On the Water

This is a popular activity and anything from a dinghy to a yacht, with or without crew, can be chartered. The Andaman Sea provides great opportunities for big game fishing. Tours and charters are run by Surasak and Big Game Fishing.

Phang Nga Bay, with its incredible marine topography, is an idyllic, all-year sea canoe destination, boasting the Viking caves and mangroves. Trips are run by Santana Kanoutouren and Sea Canoe. Near Kathu Waterfall there is water-skiing at Phuket Water-ski Cableways.

Hiking& Trekking

For those who enjoy walking, guided forest treks in the Khao Phra Thaeo Wildlife Sanctuary or Sirinat National Park are fun ways to explore Phuket's natural beauty. Elephant treks along the beach at Kalim and up into the hills are another interesting way to get around. Tours can be booked through Kalim Elephant Trekking and Siam

Safari Nature Tours. Horse riding can be enjoyed amid stunning beaches and lush, tropical scenery with the Phuket Riding Club.

Golf& Adventure Sports

Golf is a popular pastime on the island and there are top notch courses at the Banyan Tree Golf Club, the Blue Canyon Country Club, Loch Palm Golf Club and the Phuket Country Club Golf Course. For a family outing there is Dino Park Mini Golf. For those with a steady hand and good eye, target shooting with small and large-caliber guns and shotguns takes place at the Phuket Shooting Range. Nearby there is also paintballing at Top Gun's Paint Ball and bungee jumping at Tarzan Jungle Bungee Jump. Go-karting is another fast paced kind of fun at Patong Go-Kart Speedway.

Films& Live Performance

Movies are shown daily at Pearl Cinema in Phuket Town. Films are usually in Thai but some English titles can usually be found. Traditional Thai dance, also known asKhon, is performed in several locations across the island to the accompaniment of classical Thai music. Dinner shows featuring traditional cuisine and dance can be found at the Thainaan Restaurant and the Old Siam Nakalay. At Patong Beach, the Phuket Simon's Group's Cabaret features a stunning nightly show performed bykatoeys or cross dressers. Muay Thai, or Thai boxing, is staged at the Phuket Town Stadium and the Vegas Beer Bar& Muay Thai.

Live Music

Live music venues throughout the island include the spacious Timber'n' Rock, a great rock'n' roll venue, and Gitano's, which caters to all musical tastes from blues and soul to golden oldies and also jazz. In Patong Beach there is a piano bar at Baan Rim Pa, country and western at Pow Wow, plus jazz, blues and even opera at Da Maurizio.

Theme Parks

Well known throughout the whole of Thailand and a cultural must-see is the huge FantaSea at Kamala Beach. The

Phuket Snapshot continued

beachfront at Patong also features a carnival-like boardwalk full of amusements.

Museums, Aquaria & Galleries

The Phuket Sea Shell Museum near Rawai Beach probably houses the world's most valuable collection of seashells, while the Phuket Aquarium at Panwa Cape is an interesting place to learn about the environment and protection of marine species in Phuket. The Thalang National Museum details some of the history of Phuket with ancient artifacts. Major exhibits include a depiction of the famous battle on Phuket against the Burmese invasion of 1785.

Spas

There are many spa and massage centers all over the island, ranging from simple beach massages to the herbal steam saunas used centuries ago as a method of healing. These include the Island Herbal Sauna, the Panwa Gardens Herbal Sauna where foot reflexology is performed by blind masseurs and the Banyan Tree Spa. Traditional spa treatments are a specialty at Hide Away, which features the only Thai massage school on Phuket.

Shopping

Phuket Island is a great place to shop for goods, including pewter products, pearls and hand-dyed batik. The main shopping areas are Phuket Town and Patong Beach. Other areas to explore include Kata Beach, Karon Beach and the Canal Village Shopping Center.

Festivals

More and more visitors plan their holidays to coincide with one of the many festivals that take place here each year. "High Season" is the most active time of the year, with events such as Patong Carnival and the Phuket Vegetarian Festival drawing crowds in October and November. The huge sailing competition King's Cup Regatta takes place in early December and in the spring there are big celebrations surrounding Chao Lay's Floating Boat

Festival and Songkran, also known as Thai New Year.

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Things to Do Insights

Over three million tourists visit Phuket Island annually. A good road network enables easy exploration from Chalong Bay and Rawai Beach on the east coast, round Cape Prom Thep at the southern-most point and up to the western shoreline, which includes Nai Harn Beach, Kata Beach, Karon Beach, Patong Beach and Kamala Bang Tao. North of Phuket Town, roads branch off to Khao Phra Thaeo Wildlife Sanctuary and the many eastern bays, westward to Nai Yang Beach and across the mountains to Kamala and Patong beaches.

Phuket Town

The center of Phuket Town is best explored on foot. Sino-Portuguese buildings fill the streets, some dating back over a century, such as the San Jao Chui Tui Temple. Follow along Ranong Road past the traffic circle to dip into Radsada and admire the arts and crafts, hand woven silk and cotton textiles, pewter and jewelry. A visit to Phuket Town Central Market allows a real insight into Thai life. A heady mix of aromas, sights and sounds envelop the stalls, which sell a variety of foods, perfect for picnics in the park atop Rang Hill (Khao Rang), which offers great views over the town and the islands beyond.

Chalong Bay

Along the road from Phuket Town to Chalong Bay are several interesting stops, including the incredible Phuket Aquarium, Wat Chalong, Phuket's most beautiful monastery, Phuket Zoo and Phuket Sea Shell Museum, said to have the largest shell collection in the world. Chalong Bay is not suitable for swimming, but its pier is the departure point for many dive and boat tours. Take the coconut palm-fringed road from Chalong Circle to Rawai Beach—one of the most beautiful on the island. There are a number of restaurants here and many locals choose this spot for weekend picnics. To the east, Laem Ka Beach is excellent for

swimming, while to the west is Prom Thep Cape, the island's southern-most point.

Patang Beach

As an international destination, Patang Beach sees a culturally diverse stream of visitors year round. The cosmopolitan atmosphere is complimented by a myriad of shops, food stalls, restaurants, pubs, nightclubs and spas catering to one region of the world or another. Along the beachfront road is the Famous Old Dutch, a northern beer establishment from top to bottom. Down the stretch is the King's Fashion Tailors where you can have a suit of clothes or anything else you fancy tailor made. Or head down to World Gems to be dazzled by the selection of stones from around the world. Continue to sample international fare at La Boucherie which features a simple and elegant French menu. Finally take a short ride up to Hide Away, which offers relaxing massage next to a waterfall at Phuket's only Thai massage school.

The North Side of the Island

Surin Beach is a remote and peaceful spot on the north side of the island. Nearby Kamala Beach is where you will find FantaSea, a cultural theme park with lots of shopping and excellent dining in the Canal Shopping Village. During the fall and winter, giant sea turtles come to Nai Yang Beach to lay their eggs. If you are lucky, you might spot one. This beach is also not far from Wat Phra Tong, an important Buddhist monastery, and Wat Phra Nang Sang, which boasts the three largest Buddha statues in the world.

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Travel Tips

Getting There

By Air

The Phuket International Airport (HKT) (+076 327230 7/<http://www.airportthai.co.th/>) is Phuket's major airport.

Airlines include:

Asia Air (+603 8660 4343/<http://www.airasia.com>)

Phuket Snapshot continued

Bangkok Airways(+66 02 265 5678/http://www.bangkokair.com/)

Britannia Airways(+1 800 626 747/http://www.ba.com/)

China Airlines(http://www.china-airlines.com/)

Far Eastern Air Transport(http://www.fat.com.tw/)

Finn Air(http://www.finnair.com/)

Hong Kong Dragon Airlines(+852 3193 2000/http://www.dragonair.com/)

Lauda Air(+43 0 820 320 321/http://www.laudair.com/)

Malaysian Airlines(+1 300 88 3000/http://www.malaysiaairlines.com/)

Nova Airlines(http://www.novair.net/)

Premi Air(+01895 830900/http://www.premi-air-aviation.com/)

Silk Air(+66 53 904 985 7/http://www.silkair.com/)

Thai Airways(http://www.thaiairways.com/)

Bus

The Intercity Bus Terminal(+66 0 762 11480) is located at City Park Complex, Phang-Nga Road in Phuket Town

Ground Transportation

In the arrival hall(+66 0 762 272307) has the most up to date information on ground transport from the airport. Several resorts and hotels offer courtesy pick up and drop off from the airport.

Car Rental

Thai Rent A Car(+66 0 763 28341)

Andaman Car Rental(+66 0 763 2 5222/http://www.andamancarrent.com/car.htm)

David Car Rental(+66 0 763 27487/http://davidcarrent.com/)

Around Town

Several small mini-buses operate in place of public transportation from 6a until 6p. Most trips around town are 10 Baht. Transit to the beaches and between towns on the island is also available on mini-buses or by private taxi. All transit options should have a company name or phone number printed on their vehicle. Never accept a ride from a bus or taxi that does not. Tuk-tuks or small open air taxis, are good for short distances. It is recommended to negotiate a fare with the driver before your trip begins.

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Fun Facts

Phuket

Country: Thailand

Phuket by the Numbers:

Population: 314,000

Average Annual Rainfall: 315 mm

Average January Temperature: 29 C/85 F

Average July Temperature: 25 C/77 F

Quick Facts:

Electricity: 220 volt AC both two prong flat and two prong round outlets are regularly used

Time Zone: GMT+7

Country Dialing Code: 02 Area Code: 076

Did You Know?

Thailand is a constitutional monarchy with His Majesty the King recognised as Head of State, Head of the Armed Forces, Upholder of the Buddhist religion and Upholder of all religions.

The kingdom of Thailand lies in the heart of Southeast Asia, making it a natural gateway to Indochina, Myanmar and Southern China.

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