

## Phuket Information

### Introduction

Phuket is Thailand's largest island, and is approximately the size of Singapore. Phuket nestles in balmy Andaman Sea waters on Thailand's Indian Ocean coastline 867 kilometres south of Bangkok. Phuket formerly derived its wealth from tin and rubber, and enjoyed a rich and colourful history. The island was on one of the major trading routes between India and China, and was frequently mentioned in foreign traders' ship logs. The Portuguese, French, Dutch and English traded with Phuket. Other visitors were less friendly. Phuket's most famous monument is the memorial statue of the heroines Thao Thepkasattri and Thao Sisunthon, who rallied islanders in 1785 to repel Burmese invaders.

Phuket is blessed with magnificent coves and bays, and powdery, palm-fringed beaches; sparkling island-dotted seas; sincerely hospitable people; superb accommodation and seafood; delightful turn-of-the-century Sino-Portuguese architecture; numerous sporting and leisure opportunities; a lush tropical landscape -- all of which combine to create a delightful ambient for truly memorable holidays.

### Location and Boundaries

Phuket is an island connected by bridges to southern Thailand's Andaman Sea coast, in the Indian Ocean, lying between 7°45" and 8°15" north latitude, and from 98°15" to 98°40" west longitude on the map. Phuket, Thailand's largest islands, is surrounded by 32 smaller islands that form part of the same administration, with a total area of 570 square kilometers. Measured at its widest point, Phuket is 21.3 kilometers; at its longest, 48.7 kilometers. It is bounded thus :

North	Lies The Pak Prah strait, spanned by two bridges running side-by-side, the older Sarasin Bridge, and the newer Thao Thep Krasatri Bridge.
South	Is the Andaman Sea.
East	Is Phang-nga Bay (In the jurisdiction mainly of Phang-nga Province).
West	Is The Andaman Sea.

### Climate

Phuket has two major seasons: the Rains Season from May through October, and the Hot Season from November through April. There are many sunny days throughout the Rains Season: showers customarily last little more than 2 or 3 hours. September is the wettest month. The best months are November through February. Average temperatures range between 22 and 34 degrees Celsius.

### Attractions

#### Phuket Town

The compact provincial capital serves mainly as a dormitory and commercial and shopping centre. Splendid colonial-style residences built by late 19th-century tin and rubber barons, and shophouses from the same period, with shaded walkways, provide distinctive character.

#### Rang Hill

This provides a pleasant view of town while dining, and has a Fitness Park, a series of hillside sculptural tableaux which enhance calisthenics.

#### The Thai Village

Also on Thepkasattri Road, the village serves daily a typical southern Thai lunch that is followed by a spectacular cultural show including Thai dances, sword-fighting, Thai boxing, southern customs and elephants. Handicrafts are also on display.

#### Thalang National Museum

Located near the Two Heroines Monument, this museum contains permanent exhibition of life in old Phuket, ancient artifacts and remains discovered on the coast and , materials used during war with Burma (Myanmar).

### Island Attractions

Phuket's glory is its magnificent coastline. Beaches range from gentle crescents of white sand with calm waters to rocky headlands pounded by raging surf. Counterclockwise, from Phuket's northern tip, where the Sarasin Bridge connects the island with the mainland, Phuket's major beaches (and temples and botanical gardens) are as follows:

#### Mai Khao Beach (40 kilometres from town)

This pine-lined stretch of sand is Phuket's longest beach. Each year, from November through February, gigantic sea turtles struggle ashore to lay their eggs on Mai Khao Beach.

#### Nai Yang Beach (30 kilometres from town)

This forms part of a national park. The tranquil surroundings are ideal for relaxation, picnics, swimming and snorkelling.

#### Wat Phra Thong

Inland from Nai Yang Beach, the temple enshrines a famous, partially buried Buddha. Local legends relate how a boy tethered his buffalo to a post protruding from the ground. Subsequently, both boy and animal fell mysteriously sick. Suspicious villagers uncovered the post and discovered it was the decorative topknot of a buried golden Buddha. They were able to unearth no more than the upper part of the image, over which they constructed the present chapel. Burmese invaders attempted to remove the image in 1785 but failed when they were attacked by vicious hornets.

### **Ton Sai Waterfall**

#### **Forest Park & Khao Phra Thae o Wildlife Park** (22 kilometres from town)

The 22-square-kilometre area teems with various mammals, including bears, porcupines, gibbons and macaques, reptiles and lizards, and over 100 bird species, in an idyllic setting cooled by sonorous cascades.

### **Pansea Bay, Surin Beach, (24 kilometres from town)**

#### **Sing Cape & Kamala Beach**

These unfold in rapid succession. Swimming is not recommended at Surin Beach due to powerful surf and a treacherous undertow. The beach is a favoured spot for witnessing sunsets. The northern end of Kamala Beach is suitable for swimming.

#### **Patong Beach** (15 kilometres from town)

Phuket's most developed beach offers numerous leisure, sporting, shopping and recreational options along its 3-kilometrelong crescent bay. Windsurfing, snorkelling, sailing, swimming and sunbathing number among popular daytime activities. Patong is equally well known for its vibrant nightlife, among which seafood restaurants prominently feature.

#### **Karon & Kata Beaches** (20 & 17 kilometres from town)

Both beaches are impressively long, relatively peaceful and eminently suitable for swimming, snorkelling, sailing, windsurfing and sunbathing.

#### **Nai Han Beach** (18 kilometres from town)

The white beach fronts a shallow lagoon between rocky headlands. Swimming, windsurfing, sailing and sunbathing number among popular activities.

#### **Phromthep Cape**

Adjacent to Nai Han Beach, Phuket's southernmost point is the perfect place from which to view spectacular sunsets.

#### **Rawai Beach** (17 kilometres from town)

The palm-fringed beach is best known for 'sea gypsies', a formerly nomadic fishing minority believed to be of Melanesian descent.

#### **Chalong Bay** (11 kilometres from town)

This beach has several restaurants selling some of Phuket's best seafood.

#### **Wat Chalong**

A few kilometres inland from Chalong Beach, this Buddhist temple enshrines statues of Luang Pho Chaem and Luang Pho Chuang, Phuket's most revered monks.

#### **Phanwa Cape** (10 kilometres from town)

The southernmost tip of this cape is home to a Marine Biological Research Centre and Phuket's Aquarium where visitors may inspect several hundred exotic, grotesque and flamboyantly colourful marine species found mainly in Phuket's teeming waters.

#### **Pearl Farms**

Pearl farms are located on islands neighbouring Phuket, including Nakha, Rang Noi, Rang Yai and Bon. Special permission is needed to visit them. Details are available from Phuket's TAT office.

## **Activities**

### **Golf**

There are now 4 challenging, 18-hole golf courses in Phuket, including the Phuket Country Club (Tel: (076) 321-038-40) in Kathu, Blue Canyon (Tel: (076) 327-440-7) in Thalung district nears the airport, the Banyan Tree Club (Tel: (076) 324-351-60, 324-358) at Bangtao beach and the Phuket Century Country Club (Tel: (076) 321-929, 321-933-4) in Kathu. All courses offer reasonably priced golf club rentals, green fees and caddy services.

### **Horse Riding**

Three riding clubs, one on Patak Road, on the way to Kata Beach, Ban Sai Yuan on the way to Nai Harn Beach, and Laguna Phuket, Bangtao Beach, offer facilities for beginners and experienced riders alike.

### **Windsurfing**

This popular sport is enjoyed at most major beaches. Boards may be rented by the hour, half-day, full day or week. Expert tuition from Thai teachers is free.

### **Sailing**

Enjoyed mostly at Nai Han, Patong and Kata beaches. Toppers and dinghies are available at Patong. Catamaran, Hobie Cats and Top Cats are available at Kata.

### **Waterskiing**

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Popular at Patong on a half-hour or hourly basis. Automated cable water-skiing is available at the Phuket Waterski Cableway behind the Phuket Century Golf Course in Kathu district.

### **Deep Sea Fishing**

Daily tours are available, making early morning departures and late afternoon returns, mostly to lesser islands to fish for Red Snappers, Rainbow Runners and other game fish.

### **Swimming**

This can be enjoyed throughout the year, and is mostly safe. However, undertows can be problematic during the Rains Season. It is best to seek the advice of local people regarding swimming conditions.

### **Snorkelling**

This can be enjoyed in sheltered bays all around Phuket. It is particularly enjoyable at easily accessible reefs at Patong, Karon and Kata beaches. Fins, mask and snorkel can be rented on a daily basis from shops all over the island.

### **Scuba Diving**

Expeditions regularly leave Phuket for dives around neighbouring islands, and further afield, most particularly around the enduringly popular Phi Phi Islands in neighbouring Krabi province, some 2 hours east of Phuket, and the Similan Islands, in Phangnga province, some 110 kilometres northwest of Phuket, and the Raya Islands, 1-3 hours due south of Phuket, depending on the type of boat. Several dive shops concentrated in the Patong, Kata and Chalong areas have Asian and European expatriate(s) (speaking English and several other languages) and bi-lingual Thai dive instructors who offer inexpensive beginner's courses. All diving equipment is available for hire.

### **Sea Canoeing**

This form of eco-tourism is available in several forms, as popular one-day tours, or more extended tours involving overnight camping on island beaches, and occurs principally in the neighbouring Phangnga Bay and Krabi province, where mangrove swamps and island grottoes are accessible only by canoe.. Complete details of the several companies offering such tours is available from the TAT office in Phuket, and the TAT information centre in Krabi.

### **Yacht Services**

Yachtsmen visiting Phuket can enjoy a full range of services, including dry dock facilities and boat repairs, and safe and secure moorings, principally at Ao Chalong, the Phuket Boat Lagoon Marina and Laem Prao Marina. Yachts of ever shape and size can be chartered, either as bareboats or with full crew. Please check with the Phuket Immigration Office for details regarding bringing in a yacht, or leaving by yacht.

### **Mountain Biking**

It 's easier than it looks Anyone can enjoy himself on a mountain bike, which has gearing sufficient to take the mightiest incline. (Andaman Trails : Tel. (076) 235353)

### **Herbal Saunas and Thai Massage**

are available in a variety of price ranges and levels of expertise. The best known herbal sauna is : The Hide Away in Patong on Soi Na Nai Rd at Tel. (076) 340591.

### **Thai Boxing**

"**Muay Thai**" as it is called in Thai, strikes blows at and with every part of the body. The stadium is located at Saphan Hin in Phuket Town and bouts are held Friday nights.

### **Target Shooting**

Take aim with guns from small caliber to big bore and shot guns (Phuket Shooting Range at Chalong at Tel. (076) 381667-8; Fax. (076) 281054

Paintball Play at war with guns that shoot paint instead of lead. Loads of fun. (Top Gun at Chalong at Tel. (076) 381667; Fax. (076) 381665

### **Monkey School**

at Chalong, show times are 11:00, 14:00, 16:00 daily except Friday Tel. 01-9569338.  
Snake Farms and Cobra Shows :are located at Chalong and Patong.

## **Excursions & Tours**

Phuket is the ideal place from where to visit popular attractions in neighbouring provinces, either on day tours or as overnight excursions. Principal destinations include:

### **Phangnga Bay**

Located northeast of Phuket, and containing scores of limestone islands, some riddled with aquatic grottoes, this picturesque bay is an enduringly popular excursion. Tours are offered by hotels and tour companies throughout Phuket.

### **Phi Phi Islands**

These picturesque islands in Krabi province are probably Phuket's most popular excursion.

### **Similan Islands**

Phuket dive shops operate daily excursions to the Similan islands during the high season of November-May when underwater visibility is at its best.

## Souvenirs

Cultivated pearls, batiks and pewterware are Phuket's best known products. Shops specializing in such products are found on Rasada, Phangng, Yanwarat, Montri and Tilok Utit 2 roads in town, and on tourist beaches such as Patong, Kata, Karon and Rawai.

## How To Get There

### By Air

Thai Airways operates daily jet flights between Bangkok and Phuket. There are further domestic connections with Surat Thani and Hat Yai. Phuket also enjoys international connections with Penang, Kuala Lumpur, Singapore, Japan, Taiwan a Hong Kong and Australia.

Bangkok Airways offers direct flights linking Phuket with Ko Samui, the principal island in the Thai Gulf.

[Please click here to preview flight timetable or to book a flight](#)

### By Coach

Air-conditioned coaches and non-airconditioned buses leave Bangkok's Southern Bus Terminal every day. For further details, please contact Bangkok 435-1200, 434-3233, 435-3018.

### By Car

Take Route 4 from Bangkok to the south. Along the way pass the provinces of Nakhon Pathom, Ratchaburi, Phetchaburi, Prachuap-Khirikan, and at Chumphon go right to Ranong. From Ranong, go south through Kraburi and Kapoe Districts to Phang-nga Province. In Phang-nga the road passes through Kuraburi, Takuapa, and Thai Muang Districts before reaching the town of Kok Kloy. Then, cross the Thao Thep Kasattri or Sarasin Bridge to Phuket Island. The distance is 867 kilometers.

### By Sea

Foreign and domestic cruise ships frequently berth at the Port of Phuket at Ao Makham, and off Patong Beach, yachts at Ao Chalong, the Phuket Lagoon Marina and the Laem Prao marina.

*Please note that all pleasure boats and yachts arriving at Phuket must stop first and register with their Immigration Office and Customs Office, and with the Harbour Office within 24 hours of arrival*

## Travel within Phuket

Phuket offers convenient intra-island transport services. Tuk-tuks serve within municipal area or can be hired to go to other places; rates are dependent on distance and negotiable.

Rot Song Thaeo (modified pick-ups) and regular buses run from the Talat Sot (fresh produce market) near the fountain on Ranong Road to the beaches and other places. Departure every thirty minutes starting from 06:00 hrs. to 18:00 hrs. Fares are 10-20 Baht depending on the distance.

## Travel to other neighbouring provinces

There are regular bus services to Krabi, Nakhon Si Thammarat, Phang-Nga, Ranong, Surat Thani, Satun, Hat Yai, Takua Pa and Samui Island. Departures are from the Phuket Bus Terminal on Phang-Nga Road, Tel : 076-211-977.

## Festivals

### Phuket Vegetarian Festival

is held from the first through the ninth nights of the ninth Chinese lunar month; that is, in September or October. It was first celebrated in 1825, when a troupe of actors enacted these rites toward off a plague. Vegetarian food is eaten by participants and white clothes worn during the period of the fest. Selfmutilization is practiced by those whose bodies become the temporary residence of powerful gods. Parades of worshippers brave fireworks while carrying images through the street; others walk on fire or climb bladed ladders. Participants number in the thousands. The whole forms one of the most bizarre festivals in Thailand.

### Por Tor Festival

This is an ancestor's festival of the ethnic Chinese that falls on the seventh Chinese lunar month, which is the same as the ninth lunar month of the Thais. Special foods, flowers and candles are presented to the ancestor's altars. Cakes in the shape of turtles are made from flour. This is done because turtles live to great age and it is believed that by making such offering worshippers may extend the length of their lives. It is an important merit-making festival.

### Thao Thep Krasatri-Thao Sri Suntorn Festival

is held on 13 March yearly in memory of the two heroines who led the defense of the island against the Burmese in 1785.

### Turtle Release Fair

is held on Songkran, the nationwide Thai water festival, on April 13. It is also the National Fisherman's Day. Baby turtles are released into the sea at various locations.

### Chao Le Boat Floating Festival

falls during the middle of the sixth and eleventh lunar months yearly. The fest is held at the Chao Le, or Sea Gipsy, villages in Phuket. The Rawai and Sapam villages hold their ceremonies on the 13th; Sire village celebrates on the 14th; and the village at Laem La (east of the bridge on Phuket's northern tip) celebrates on the 15th. Ceremonies, which center around the setting adrift of small boats similar to the Thai Festival of Loy Krathong, are held at night and their purpose is to drive away evil and to bring good luck. Fingernail clipping and strands of hair are put in the little boats before being released, along with little dolls fashioned from wood. Afterwards, the villagers perform their famous dance round their own boats, called the Ram Rong Ngeng.

### Tourist Season Opening Festival

is usually called the Patong Carnival in English according to from the place where celebrations occur, and is held on November 1. There are many stalls with merchandise and food, parades, sports event, and a beauty competition for foreign tourists. The fest is held to cement solidarity among the government, the private business sector, and the people.

## Phuket King's Cup Regatta

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was first held in 1987 in honour of His Majesty's 60th birthday. The King of Thailand is a noted boating enthusiast and yachts come from around the world to participate in the competition, which is the largest and most popular in Southeast Asia. It is held yearly on the anniversary of His Majesty's birthday, 5 December. Site of the regatta is Nai Han Bay.

#### **Laguna Phuket Triathlon**

This annual year end event sees the world's top triathletes and hundreds of amateurs competing for prize money and placing on the world triathlon circuit. The course, which includes swimming, bicycling, and running through the beautiful natural surroundings of Laguna Phuket in Tambon Choeng Thale, takes from two-and-a-half to five hours to complete.

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