

## Koh Samui Information

### Introduction

This beautiful 247-square-kilometre island, one of the most famous attractions of Thailand, is some 84 kilometres east of Surat Thani's provincial capital. It can be reached by boat from Surat Thani Town, or by ferry either from Don Sak (some 70 kms. from Surat Thani) or Khanom (in Nakhon Si Thammarat). A 51-kilometre ring road encircles the island, which has numerous lovely beaches and bays, and is almost literally an island of coconuts and forested hills. Samui's best beaches line the northern and eastern coasts. The most popular are Hat Chaweng and Hat Lamai where, generally, attractive accommodation can be found. Besides marvellous beaches, other interesting attractions include the Samui Butterfly Park; the Monkey Centre; the Hin Lat and Na Muang waterfalls; the phallic rock formations at the southern end of Lamai Bay, and a massive seated Buddha image on Ko Fan. The island's major seafront settlement is at Na Thon where shops, restaurants and tour agents are located.

### Major Beaches

#### Chaweng Beach

Samui's most popular and lively beach. Along the seven kilometer stretch can be found some of the island's best hotels, together with an endless number of bungalows, beach bars restaurants, discos and shops. The strip splits naturally into three sections, with the resort town located in the central area. In recent years it has blossomed into the island's second largest town, and is a magnet for visitors from all over the island. All of the attractions are easily accessed by the road which runs parallel with the beach.

Central Chaweng Beach has the greatest concentration of venues, and most of the nightlife attractions are located here. You will find a good choice of music venues ranging from traditional Thai to jazz, rock to roots-reggae, many of them keeping open until dawn. For a quieter evening there are plenty of bars and restaurants right on the beach, offering a dreamy view of the Gulf. Food lovers can find just about anything, whether it be Thai or western fare, and there are some excellent seafood restaurants.

Chaweng has the greatest number of dive shops on Samui, many of which organize night dives off the beach. Despite all the activity, however, Chaweng still maintains the classic image of a palm-fringed tropical beach.

#### Lamai Beach

Samui's second most popular beach, Lamai is a little quieter, a little looser, and a little cheaper than Chaweng. There is something distinctly boom-town about the main strip, which is generally referred to as Lamai Gulch, with its bars, diners and shops crammed together along the roadside and down the dusty sidelanes. Ride or walk to the back of the beach road and you're in the heart of banana groves and coconut plantations, and you can take a mountain bike ride up the hilltracks and into the rugged interior... Or follow the road down past the headland where the infamous Grandfather and Grandmother rocks attract picnicking Thais.

Lamai is home to a charming old temple with a tiny museum, and a number of local gyms where you can take Thai boxing lessons. You will also find a choice of dive shops and even a couple of meditation centers. After dark Lamai Gulch loses its sleepy daytime persona and becomes a jumping nightspot. There are some real home-style alfresco places with Thai and western food, pub/saloons featuring live bands, video movies on show and several discos which start swinging 'round about midnight.

Central Lamai has a broad selection of bungalow type accommodation, ranging from budget lodgings to the magnificent, the latter with tended landscaped gardens, swimming pools and sweet seclusion.

#### Lipa Noi & Taling Ngam Beach

Ta-Ling Ngam Beach is a quiet and remote enclave, far from the crowds, with one luxury resort being almost the only building here.

#### Maenam Beach

Maenam Beach is some two kilometers to the west of Bophut. There is a largish village here with several small restaurants and some dive and windsurfing centers.

Maenam has a smooth white beach running for four kilometers along the calm, scenic bay. This is a pleasant, secluded spot for swimming and sunbathing, and attracts families and honeymooners. For nightlife you need to travel.

#### Big Buddha Beach

Big Buddha Beach is to the east of Bophut and takes its name from the twelve meter tall statue sitting out on an islet connected to Samui by a causeway. This is part of the Koh Farn temple, which is the focal point of this area; there is no town as such, although there are plenty of little shops and restaurants around the temple. The beach itself is very quiet and peaceful and the waters are calm.

#### Choeng Mon Beach

Choeng Mon Beach is eastwards past Big Buddha. A remote and quiet part of the island it has several smaller capes and bays, some of which have been developed into self-contained resorts. Owing to the geography of Choeng Mon there is no central village: this really is where you can get away from it all.

### Attractions

### **The Big Buddha**

Samui's most popular attraction, The Big Buddha sitting 15 meters tall was built in 1972 by the local society to give visitors a place to pay respect to The Lord Buddha. This monumental landmark is placed on the island's Northern shore.

### **Namuang Fall**

Na Muang Waterfall is located 10 km south from Nathon at Ban Thurian. There are 2 waterfalls. Na Muang one is 18 meter high and can be reached by vehicle.

Na Muang two is about 80 meters high and can only be reached by a 30 minute walk. The waterfalls are the most scenic on the island

### **Hin Ta - Hin Yai**

Strangely shaped rocks at south Lamai.

A local story tells of an old couple whose ship was wrecked in the bay. Their body's were washed ashore to create the rocks

### **Hin Lad Water fall**

Hin Lad Waterfall is located? 2 km south of Nathon Town. He can be reached by a 3-4 kilometer walk down a country foot walk. In evergreen, rain forest setting with palms and creepers, the waterfall have several levels with a cool pool for a fresh water swim.

### **Secret Buddha Garden**

The secret Buddha garden is hidden in the hills of Samui. You can see several statues, temples and waterfalls which are build by one man in the last 20 years.

### **Ancient House**

A house made of teakwood without any nails at Ban Thale is the oldest house on the island. It was built approximately 150 years ago, is constructed of teak planks and shows off many beautiful woodcarvings.

### **Butterfly Garden**

Na Tian Butterfly Garden is situated at the bottom of the hill south of the island. Apart from the numerous species of butterflies on display, there are also other interesting features in the garden: The bee house, a Thai style house which allows the visitor to observe the activities of bees. The insect museum, rare insects from Thailand and other countries are displayed here.

### **Snake Farm**

A definite must see for all those visiting the island. Shows featuring snakes indigenous to Samui as well as Centipede, Scorpion and Cock Fighting shows. Informative and entertaining. Great for the entire family and worth looking for. Follow the signs seen throughout the island. Show times are 11.00 and 14.00 everyday.

### **Naga Pearl Farm**

Visit the Naga Pearl Farm and discover how pearls are cultured. A 30 minute boat ride from Ban Thong Krut landing will bring you to Koh Matsum and the Naga Pearl Farm. After you learn about pearl culture, you will enjoy eating Thai food and spend the afternoon on the white sandy beach. Don't miss the Naga Pearl Shop, located at 81/1 Ban Thong Krut, where all varieties of pearl and pearl products are offered. Pearl shells and special handicrafts are very nice souvenirs to bring back home.

## **Activities**

### **Elephant Trekking**

If you prefer to see the trees without the help of motors, you can go on an elephant trek. While elephants are not native to Samui, their appearance on the island is actually a good sign. Because Thailand's remaining natural forests are now protected, elephants are no longer employed in their traditional logging work, and so have plenty of free time to work with visitors. Despite their huge size, elephants are incredibly sure footed, even on steep and narrow trails. And the world just looks more amazing from 3 metres up on the back of an elephant. Standard trips last a half hour, but longer trips can be requested.

### **Diving**

Diving is one of the most popular activities on Samui and the surrounding islands, because going beneath the waves reveals a whole new world. If you are experienced or not, have your own equipment or not, you can find a dive school and tour to suit your tastes.

Around Koh Samui itself there are five dive spots: Matlang Island, Chaweng Reef, Car Ferry Reef, Five Islands and Koh Matsum. Several of them can be reached by swimming from the shore, and Matlang Island, especially, is excellent for snorkeling. Beyond Samui there are two excellent sites: Hin Samran (Samran Pinnacles) and Hin Bai (Sail Rock). Some dive masters in Samui say that Sail Rock - "just full of big fish" - is their favourite.

### **Kayaking**

You can glide across the water's surface near Samui's shores or around the cave studded islands of Angthong National Marine Park. Sea Kayaks are very stable and easy to use. A number of hotels in Chaweng rent kayaks or Blue Stars Kayaking can arrange a full day tour complete with guides and kayaks in the marine park.

### **Running**

The Hash House Harriers has been described alternately as runners with a drinking problem, or drinkers with a running problem. Either way, they gather

every other Saturday (December 2, 16 and 30) to run. They meet at Tradewinds Cottages in Chaweng at 3:30, and the Red Fox Bar in Lamai at 4pm. From there they head to a different location on the island each time for some running fun and some seriously entertaining company.

### Adventure Sports

If you desire more than the average adrenaline rush, you have a number of options. You can head to Samui Shooting Sport on the main road between Bophut and Chaweng, to safely use rifles and handguns. You can shoot your friends with paintballs at Samui Paintball, near the Samui International Hospital. You can head to Lamai to shoot up into the air compliments of the Jungle Bungy Catapult. Or you can head to Samui Go Kart between Mae Nam and Bho Put to shoot around their track.

### Jungle Tours

Koh Samui is covered in a number of areas with fantastic dense jungle. The biodiversity of these areas make a trip inland well worth tearing yourself away from the beach for a day. Many places can be reached by jeep and/or a short hike. Most travel agents will have information about and pictures of the various tours and can book a reservation for you.

### Thai Cooking

One of the best things about Thailand, of course, is the food. If you want to have more than a passing knowledge of classic Thai dishes, you can learn how to cook them yourself. A culinary institute and several hotels offer demonstrations and hands on practical experience in Thai ingredients and cooking techniques. Introductory courses can take as few as three hours while more intensive courses can last up to a week or two.

For more information contact: Samui Institute of Thai Culinary Arts (SITCA) - Tel: 413-172, Health Oasis Resort - Tel: 420-124

## How To Get There

### By Bus

**Bangkok to Samui:** First class air-conditioned buses leave Bangkok's Southern bus terminal in Thonburi twice in the morning and once in the evening. Journey time to Surat Thani is 11 hours and the fare is 315 baht. There is also one second class air-conditioned departure at 10.00pm that costs 250baht and one VIP departure at 8.00pm for 400baht. Private Companies also run 'Super VIP' buses with only 24 seats for 500baht. Ordinary buses leave the Southern bus terminal in the morning and once in the evening for 180 baht. Public buses and share taxis run from the Talat Kaset 1 or 2 markets.

**Samui to Bangkok:** Depart 2.00pm from Nathon, arriving 4.00pm at Surat Thani pier. It's then a 30-minute bus journey into Surat Thani. The main bus then departs Surat Thani at 7.00pm and arrives into Koa Sarn Road, Bangkok the next morning. The boat journey portion can commence from any of the local islands, but there will be a surcharge for this. En-route, the buses stop regularly for refreshments. The fare for the VIP bus is 450 baht.

### By Rail

**Bangkok to Samui:** Trains for Surat Thani, which actually stop in Phun Phin, 14kms. west of Surat Thani, leave Bangkok's Hualamphong station at 12.20pm (rapid), 2.15pm and 2.35pm (special express), 3.50pm (rapid), 5.05pm (express), 5.35pm and 6.20pm (rapid), 7.15pm (express) and 10.30pm and 10.50pm (express diesel railcar), arriving 10 to 11 hours later. The 6.20pm (rapid) train is most convenient as it arrives at 5.28am allowing you plenty of time to catch a boat to Ko Samui (if that's where you are going). Fares are about 519 baht in 1st class, 248 baht in 2nd class and 107 baht in 3rd class, not including the rapid/express/special express surcharges or berths.

(Surcharges are 50 baht/person for the express train, 30 baht/person for the rapid train, and 70 baht/person for the special express train. Extra charges for an air-conditioned sleeping berth are: 520 baht/person for a 1st class double cabin, and 220 baht/person for an upper bed on the 2nd class rapid service (270 baht for the lower bed.)

Tickets for the train can be booked at Bangkok Railway Station and many travel agencies in Bangkok. A combination ticket can be purchased from the State Railway of Thailand that allows you to go straight through to Ko Samui or to Ko Pha-Ngan from Bangkok on a train, bus and boat combination, The saving is typically little more than 50 baht.

**Samui to Bangkok:** Take the 2.00pm boat from Nathon to the mainland, a connecting bus will take you from the pier to the train station in Surat Thani. The train departs at 6.20pm from Surat Thani and arrives at 8.00am the next morning in Bangkok. There are other later trains leaving from Surat Thani, but that means a longer wait at the train station. You can opt for a seat or a bed. Upper beds are cheaper than the lower as they are smaller, but people 6ft or taller would be advised to request a lower bed. Tickets purchased from agents in Samui normally include the boat, bus and train fares. The ticket is cheaper if you go to the station yourself but there is a good chance that the train will be fully booked as much as a week in advance.

### By Air

Bangkok Airways is the only airline that flies directly to Koh Samui. They operate approximately 17 flights per day during high season between Bangkok and Samui International Airport. From Samui International Airport you can take a pick-up truck (they operate as small buses in Thailand) or taxi to your hotel.

Thai Airways does not fly directly to Samui, but flies to Surat Thani from Bangkok twice daily, flight time is 70 minutes. Passengers must then make the onward journey to Samui by bus and ferry (approx. 3 hours). Air-con vans from Surat Thani airport to town cost about 80 baht per person. Thai also runs a limousine service for 150 baht or 280 baht all the way to Ko Samui.

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

**By Car**

Surat Thani can be most conveniently reached by car from Bangkok by taking Highway 4 (Buddha Monthon Road) to Nakhon Pathom, and thence to Chumphon via Phetchaburi, Hua Hin and Chumphon, and thence onto Highways 41 and 401.

**Surat Thani-Ko Samui Connections**

1. Express boats leave Tha Thong pier two times daily at 08.00 and 14.00 hours. Duration 2 hours.
2. Night ferry leaves Ban Don pier nightly at 11 p.m. and reaches Na Thon around 5 a.m.
3. Vehicle ferry leaves Don Sak pier 7 times daily. Duration 1 ? hours.

**Samui-Phangan Connections**

Daily boat services connect the two islands. Contact the TAT office in Surat Thani for full details.

[Hotels in Koh Samui](#) | [E-Biz-Travel.com](#)