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Area featured in this brochure
Phuket, Phangnga, Krabi and Trang
provinces

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Phuket

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 ambience for truly memorable holidays.

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.

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-fight-

ing, 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

Thaeo 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-kilometre-long 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.

Sporting Opportunities

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 Thalang 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

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.

Special Events

Chinese Vegetarian Festival

Each year, beginning on the first day of the 9th lunar month (usually October), Phuket islanders of Chinese ancestry commit themselves to a 9-day vegetarian diet, a form of purification believed to help make



the forthcoming year 'trouble-free'. The festival is marked by several ascetic displays, including fire-walking and ascending sharp-bladed ladders.

King's Cup Regatta

Early each December, the Phuket Yacht Club hosts international yachtsmen, largely from neighbouring countries who compete in the Nai Han Beach area for royal trophies.

Phuket Triathlon

Each December, the triathlon (a 1,000-metre swim, a 5-kilometre bike race and a 12-kilometre run) attracts world-class athletes from all over the world and qualifies winners for the prestigious Hawaii Ironman

Triathlon.

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. Reservations may be made in Bangkok (Tel: 280-0060 and 628-2000), and in Phuket (Tel: 211-195, 212-946, 212-499 and 216-755) for both domestic and international flights.

Bangkok Airways (Tel: Phuket (076) 225-033-4, Bangkok: 229-3434, 229-3456, 535-2429, 535-3756) offers direct flights linking Phuket with Ko Samui, the principal island in the Thai Gulf.

Orient Thai Airlines (Tel: Phuket (076) 232-302-3, 327-270-1, Bangkok: 267-3210-5, 535-2021-2) offers direct flights linking Phuket with Bangkok.

By Bus

Airconditioned 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

From Bangkok, take Highway 4 through Nakhon Pathom, Prachuap Khiri Khan, Chumphon, thence through Ranong province's Kraburi and Kaper districts, Phangnga province's Takua Pa and Takua Tung districts and onto Phuket island across the Thao Thepkasattri Bridge. The total distance is 867 kilometres.

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

Accommodation



Cultivated pearls, batiks and pewterware are Phuket's best known products. Shops specialising 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.

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, (see Phangnga information for further details) 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 (see Krabi information for more details) are probably Phuket's most popular excursion.



Similan Islands

Phuket dive shops operate daily excursions to the Similan islands (see Phangnga information for further details) during the high season of November-May when underwater visibility is at its best..

Etiquette

Polite behaviour is welcomed everywhere. What is considered polite in other countries is probably considered polite in Thailand, too. However, there are a few cultural pitfalls, mainly social and religious taboos, the breaking of which can cause offence. For example, visitors should dress neatly in all religious shrines. They should never go shirtless, or in shorts, hot pants or other unsuitable attire.

Shoes should be removed when entering private Thai homes, chapels where Buddha images are kept, and any of the Islamic community's mosques.

Each Buddha image, large or small, ruined or not, is regarded as being a sacred object. Never climb onto one to take a photograph, or do anything that might show lack of respect.

It is considered rude to point your foot at a person or object.

Thais regard the head as the highest part of the body, both literally and figuratively. Therefore, they do not appreciate anyone patting them there, even as a friendly gesture.

Phangnga

This province is directly north of Phuket and covers an area of 4,170 square kilometres. The provincial capital is 788 kilometres south of Bangkok. The province's major attractions are the marine national parks of Ao Phangnga (**Phangnga Bay**), Mu Ko Similan (**Similan Islands**) and Mu Ko Surin (**Surin islands**).



Phangnga Bay has been featured in several international movies, including the 007 adventure *The Man with the Golden*

Gun, and contains some 100 largely uninhabited limestone islands scattered around almost perpetually calm waters. Many islands are riddled with aquatic grottoes, and are best explored aboard sea canoes which are able to enter inner chambers, essentially collapsed cave systems, sometimes only at low tide. The timeless 'Jurassic Park' atmosphere of such islands contrasts vividly with more popular venues such as **James Bond island**, **Nail island** and **Panyi island** which supports a Muslim village built on stilts embedded in the sea. The far



less commercialised **Similan islands**, nine in all, are renowned among diving enthusiasts for the variety of dives, superb underwater visibility between November and May, and teeming marine life. The Similans offer more than 30 dive sites, with coral

walls, huge sea fans and barrel sponges, big rocks, swim-throughs, coral gardens and plenty of shallows for snorkelling. The five **Surin islands**, equally secluded, offer similarly good diving opportunities and, because of seasonal weather changes, are best visited between December and March. Phangnga is conveniently accessible by road or boat from Phuket and offers accommodation ranging from bungalows to deluxe hotels. Full transport and accommodation details are available at the TAT Phuket office.

Krabi

This coastal province covers an area of 4,709 square kilometres. The provincial capital is 814 kilometres south of Bangkok, and is conveniently accessible by road from the capital (Tel: (02) 435-1200 and 435-1195-6 for bus service information) and Phuket. Krabi's major attractions are located largely along its extensive coastline, which contains several well-known beaches and bays, and numerous offshore tropical islands. Most such attractions fall within the aegis of national parks. Major islands include the **Phi Phi** cluster which is popular with yachtsmen, scuba-divers, snorkellers and day trippers from Phuket. The islands are characterised by rocky cliffs, tranquil seas, dazzling underwater life, birds' nest caves and fine white sandy beaches. Accommodation is available on **Phi Phi Don island**. The **Ko Lanta National Park**, conveniently accessible by regular boat services from Phi Phi Don island, offers several coral-fringed islands, and prime diving sites, and comparative solitude. The largest island, **Ko Lanta Yai**, is the site of park headquarters, and is also home to *Chao Le*, or sea gypsies who sustain themselves largely through fishing. The islands are best visited during the non-monsoon months of October through April. Yet more islands, some 80 in all, and most relatively small, are located off **Ao Nang** beach on



the mainland. Ao Nang is some 6 kilometres from **Hat Noppharat Thara**, probably Krabi's finest mainland beach which is fronted by pine trees, coconut groves and resort hotels. One of Krabi's most unusual attractions is a 'shell graveyard', known

locally as *Su San Hoi*, where fossilised shells, believed to be 40,000,000 years old form coastal slabs resembling ancient concrete. Two predominantly mainland national parks, **Khao Phanom Bencha** and **Than Bokk-horani**, offer scenic attractions including waterfalls and caves, and opportunities for trekking, birdwatching and savouring the lush southern tropical landscape in natural surroundings. Krabi offers a wide range of accommodation at major attractions, including award-winning resort hotels. Accommodation details may be obtained from the TAT office in Phuket.

Trang

This coastal province covers an area of 4,917 square kilometres. The provincial capital is 828 kilometres south of Bangkok and is conveniently accessible by air, road and rail. Contact Thai Airways (Bangkok 628-2000), the Transport Company Ltd. (Bangkok 937-0261-70) and State Railways of Thailand (Bangkok 223-0941) for relevant details. Trang's major attractions are scenic, largely within the confines of terrestrial and marine national parks such as **Mu Ko Petra** and **Hat Chao Mai** featuring Andaman Sea beaches and islands, and wildlife sanctuaries such as **Khao Chong** and **Khlong Lamcham Waterfowl Park** featuring waterfalls, nature trails and caves. Accommodation ranges from resort bungalows to urban hotels.