

## AT A GLANCE

### General Info

Phuket is a world-famous tourism destination, renowned for its beautiful beaches, clear waters, lots of offshore islands that are great sites for diving, as well as plentiful high-quality resort accommodation. Formerly, the island's great wealth came from tin mining and the influence of the Chinese tin and rubber entrepreneurs is evident, especially in the town, where the numerous Chinese temples and shrines celebrate a Vegetarian Food Festival every October. Today the province's wealth comes from the vast tourism industry that has developed in recent years, as travelers around the world discover that Phuket has a lot to offer in the way of sun and sea. By contrast, the hilly interior hides forests, a national park, a gibbon rehabilitation center and promises of elephant treks.

### Attractions

#### Mai Khao Beach

Mai Khao Beach is the longest beach in Phuket. This 17 kms unspoiled beach is adjacent to the Sirinath Marine National Park and protected marine turtle nesting area. As long as a generation ago, Mai Khao villagers had a tradition of holding "Marine Turtle Walks" where villager would plan picnics at the beach and take their children for walks in the evening hours with great hopes of catching a glimpse of the magnificent Leatherback turtle which was the major marine turtle species nesting in this area. The objective of these walks was to simply get a glimpse of the illusive marine reptiles.

#### Patong Beach

This is Phuket central tourist and night-time entertainment district. Over the years, Patong has evolved from a fishing village into one of the island's two cities. The famous bay is known as a center of entertainment with restaurants catering to every nationality. Live music can be found in most pubs and bars and the shopping opportunities appear to be endless.

#### Kamala Beach

This is the preferred beach for sunset-watching and the northern end is suitable for swimming. While Kamala does not attract tourists in the same numbers as other beaches, it has a certain niche among those who say "we like it just the way it is, so don't tell anyone and it will remain unspoiled".

### **Surin Beach**

Evergreen trees line this small, curving bay beneath the foothills north of Kamala. Surin is home to Phuket first golf course, a nine-hole course laid out more than 60 years ago during the reign of King Rama VII that is now a park.

### **Karon Beach**

This is the second largest of Phuket beaches. The sand is very white and squeaks audibly when walked on. The southern point has a fine coral reef stretching toward Kata and Poo islands. Restaurants, bars, tour companies and other non-hotel businesses may be found at the north end, near the traffic circle and to the south, on the little road connecting the back road with the beach road. The narrow road between Kata and Karon has a number of small businesses including Dino Park Mini Golf.

### **Kata Beach**

The smallest of Phuket three main tourist beaches, Kata is different in appearance and style from both Karon and Patong. The beach itself is broad and curvaceous and the structures bordering it are low-rises. The water is perfect for swimming and at the north end there is a coral reef with a variety of coral and fish that stretches out toward Poo Island about ½km offshore. Facilities abound in every price range, from hotels, bungalows and tour companies to restaurants, bars and clubs. There is regular daytime bus service to and from Phuket Town.

### **View Point**

From this point, one of the island's best views, the bays of Kata Noi, Kata and Karon and also Poo Island may be seen. There is a large public sala or shelter for visitors and several vendors sell food, drinks and souvenirs in the area. The view point is between Kata and Nai Han Beach.

### **Wat Chalong**

This is the largest and most prominent Buddhist temple on the island. About 8km southeast of Phuket Town, Wat Chalong is associated with two monks, Luang Por Chuang and Luang Por Cham, who lived during the time of the tin miner's rebellion in 1876 and were famous for their medical skills. Statues and memorabilia of the two monks, including some of the robes they wore, are housed in a teakwood building within the temple compound. Admission is free although a small donation of at least ten baht is solicited for its maintenance.

### **Similan Islands**

This 31,630-acre national park is comprised of nine small islands 50km off the west coast of Phang-Nga in the Andaman Sea. Skin Diver magazine rated them among the ten loveliest places on earth for the natural beauty of the islands themselves as well as the extensive surrounding coral gardens beneath the waves. The islands are undeveloped and unspoiled; numerous species of fish, crustaceans and other forms of sea-life abound. Water clarity and diving are excellent. The name Similan is a corruption of the Malay word “Sembilan” and means “Nine”. From north to south the islands are Koh Bon, Koh Ba Ngu, Koh Similan, Koh Pahyoo, Koh Miang (two islands), Koh Pahyan, Koh Payahng and Koh Hu Yong.

### **Phi Phi Islands**

The Phi Phi islands are among the loveliest in Southeast Asia. Just a 45-minute jaunt from Phuket, these picture-postcard islands offer the ultimate tropical getaway. Their classic beaches, stunning rock formations and vivid turquoise waters teeming with colorful marine life make them paradise perfected. There are two islands, Phi Phi Don and Phi Phi Leh. The larger and inhabited Phi Phi Don attracts hundreds of visitors to its lovely shores.

## **Phuket Information**

### **Bangpae Waterfall**

Best known as the site for the Gibbon Rehabilitation Center, a project to return domesticated gibbons to the forest. Bangpae is a small waterfall with a shady forest and thick foliage. To get there, go to the Two Heroines Monument and take Pakhlok Road East 7km looking out for the posted signs.

### **Phuket Old Town**

This district in downtown Phuket is dominated by early Sino-Portuguese and purely Chinese architecture. Built by Chinese merchants during the tin-mining boom of the 19th century, these buildings may be found on Dibuk, Talang, Phang-Nga, Yaowarat and Krabi roads. Old wooden doors with Chinese carvings and colorful ceramic tiles are the dominant characteristics of the façades. Some of these structures are privately owned and off limits to visitors. Those open for viewing include old public places like the Provincial Hall (Sala Klang), the Phuket Courthouse (San Changwat) and Siam City Bank.

### **Phuket FantaSea**

From the creators of Safari World, Thailand's most popular animal and leisure park, comes a new and unique cultural theme complex – Phuket FantaSea – that promises to provide the ultimate in night-time entertainment in Phuket. Inspired by Thailand's rich and exotic heritage, Phuket FantaSea not only showcases all the charm and beauty of the kingdom, but also enriches ancient Thai traditions with the wonders of cutting-edge technology and special effects. The result is a stunning 140-acre theme complex, packed with a multitude of activities and entertainment.

###