



Hat Kata



www.tourismthailand.org

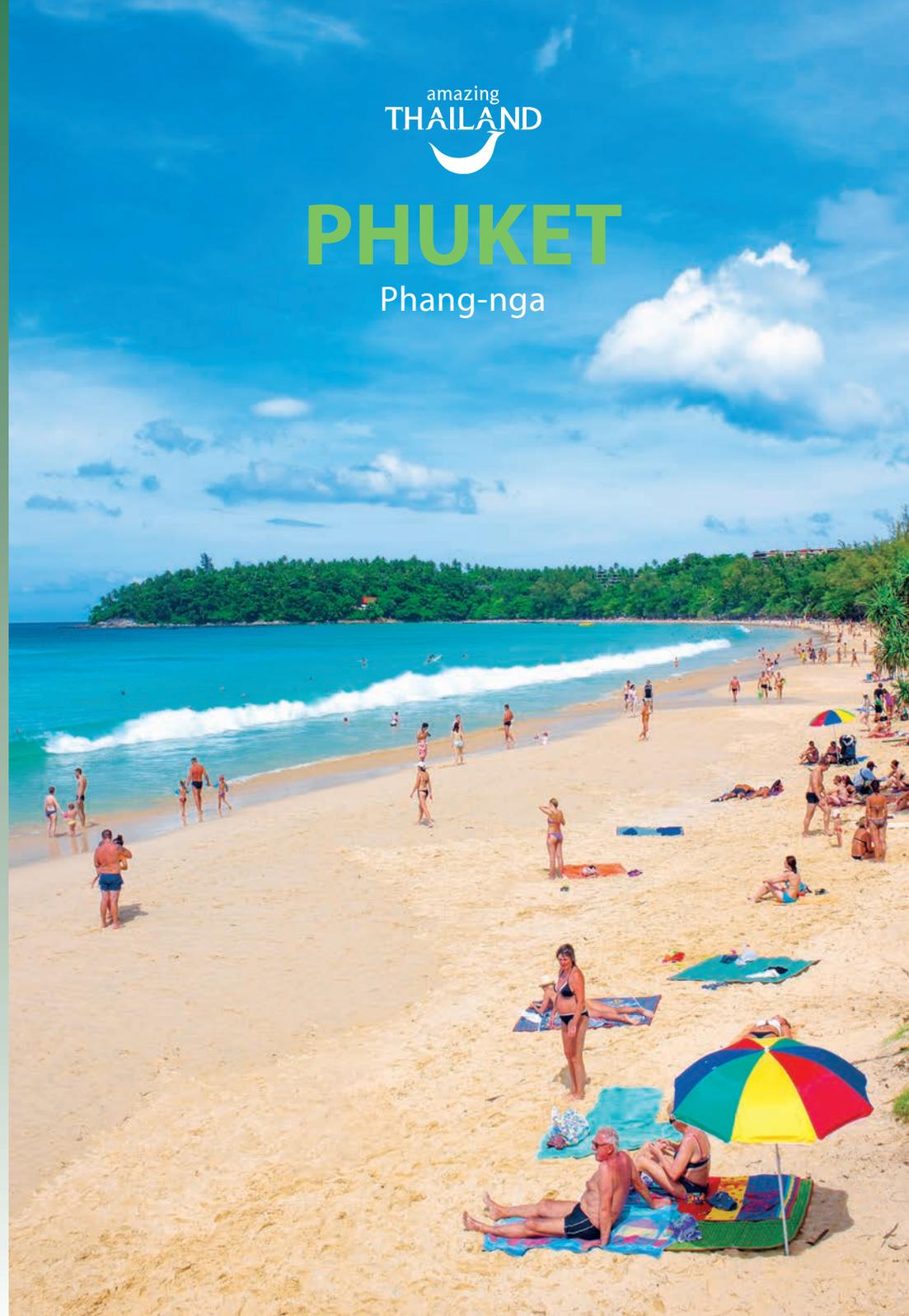


Printed in Thailand by Promotional Material Production Division,
Marketing Services Department,
Tourism Authority of Thailand for free distribution.
www.tourismthailand.org E/JUNE 2016
The contents of this publication are subject to change without notice.

amazing
THAILAND

PHUKET

Phang-nga





Ao Nui

CONTENTS

PHUKET	8
<i>Beaches & Bays</i>	9
<i>Major Sights & Attractions</i>	11
<i>Recreations</i>	15
<i>Special Events</i>	18
<i>Getting There</i>	19
PHANG-NGA	20
<i>Islands</i>	21
<i>Other Attractions</i>	22
<i>Sporting Opportunities</i>	25
<i>Special Event</i>	25
<i>Getting There</i>	26

PHUKET PHUKET

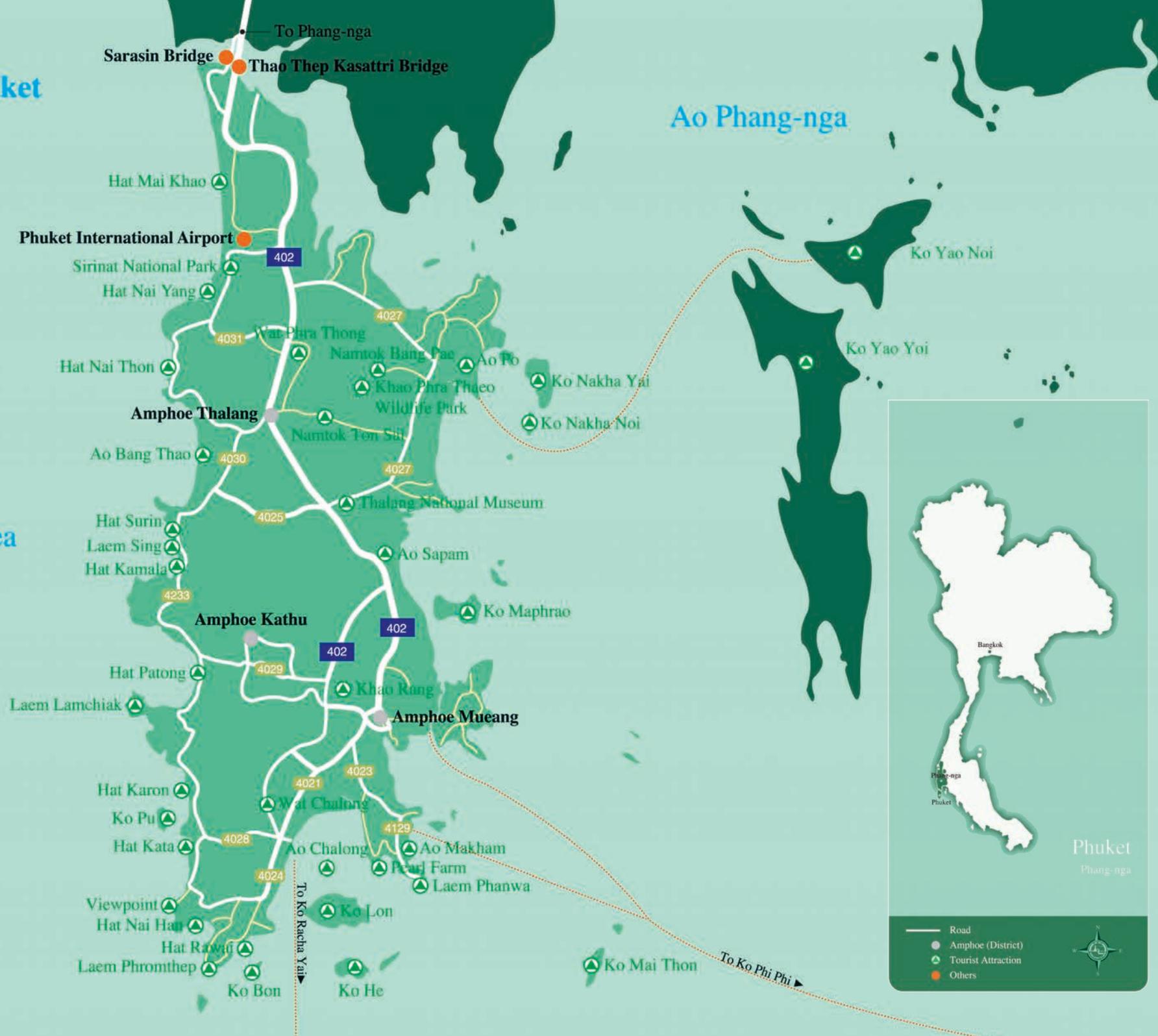
Phang-nga



amazing
THAILAND

www.tourismthailand.org

Map of Phuket





Laem Phromthep

PHUKET

Often referred to as the Pearl of the Andaman, Phuket is Thailand's largest island, shaped like an irregular pearl. It is located 867 kilometres south of Bangkok and measuring approximately 21 kilometres long. Connected to the mainland by a causeway, it has a coastline fringed with white sandy beaches and quiet coves, bathed by the clear blue waters of the Andaman Sea and set against a backdrop of green hills, coconut groves, and rubber plantations.

Phuket formerly derived its wealth from tin and rubber, and has 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 ships' logs. The Portuguese, Dutch, English, and French came to trade during that time.

Phuket's most famous monument is the memorial statue of the heroines Thao Thep Krasattri and Thao Sisunthon, who rallied the islanders in 1785 to repel Burmese invaders.

Blessed by nature and the smiling hospitality of its people, and supported by superb tourism facilities, Phuket is today one of the world's premier tropical resorts. Palm-fringed beaches, an island-studded sea, superb accommodation, delicious seafood, numerous sporting and leisure opportunities and, of course, year-round sunshine, are a few of what makes a trip to Phuket a truly memorable holiday.

CLIMATE

Phuket has two main seasons: rainy from May through to October and hot from November to April. However, there are sunny days throughout the wet season; showers customarily lasting little more than 2-3 hours. The best months to visit are November to April.

Average temperatures range between 22 and 34 degrees Celsius.

BEACHES & BAYS

Phuket's glory is its magnificent coastline. Beaches range from gentle crescents of white sand to rocky headlands. Counter-clockwise, from the island's northern tip, where the Sarasin Bridge connects with the mainland, the major beaches and bays are:

Hat Mai Khao

This pine-fringed stretch of sand is Phuket's longest beach. Each year, from November through to February, giant sea turtles struggle ashore to lay their eggs here. Every year, Hat Mai Khao organises a "doen tao" festival in which the locals join hands in cleaning up the beach and taking care of the turtle's eggs. Visitors who seek tranquility would enjoy a cluster of deluxe resorts available here.

Hat Nai Yang

This forms part of the Sirinat National Park and is backed by casuarina pines, as well as a mangrove forest. The tranquil surroundings are ideal for relaxation, picnics, swimming and snorkelling.

Hat Pansea & Hat Surin

The two scenic coves offer very picturesque settings although dangerous undercurrents can make swimming unsafe.

Hat Laem Sing

One end of Hat Laem Sing is connected to Hat Surin, whereas the other end is only 5 minutes walking distance from Hat Kamala. Even though it is dotted with rocks, this beach is popular amongst the foreign tourists for its beautiful white sandy beach and crystal clear water.



Ko Racha Noi

Hat Kamala

This is another fine stretch of sandy beach where the northern end is suitable for swimming and is partly shaded by casuarinas.

Hat Patong

Phuket's most developed beach offers numerous leisure, sporting, shopping, and recreational options along its 3 kms. crescent bay. In addition to its daytime attractions, Patong is also known for its vibrant nightlife and prominent seafood restaurants.

Hat Karon & Kata

Both beaches are impressive, peaceful and eminently suitable for swimming, snorkelling, windsurfing, and sunbathing.

Hat Nai Han

This white sandy beach fronts a shallow lagoon between rocky headlands. Conditions for swimming, windsurfing, sailing and sunbathing are all excellent.



Royal Phuket Marina

Hat Rawai

The palm-fringed beach is best known for its village of "Sea Gypsies", formerly a nomadic fishing minority believed to be of Melanesian descent as well as a place where you can find fresh seafood.

Ao Chalong

A location popular for its several restaurants serving some of Phuket's best seafood, Ao Chalong is also the largest port of Phuket that takes visitors to several nearby islands including Phi Phi Island.

Laem Phanwa

The southern tip of the cape is the location of the Marine Biological Research Centre and Phuket's Aquarium, where visitors can see several hundred exotic and colourful marine species.

Ko Si Re

The small island separated from the mainland only by the Tha Chin Canal, is located 4 km.

northeast of the town. There is a sea gypsy village considered the largest in Phuket.

Sirinat National Park

The Park, located near Phuket International Airport along Routes No. 402 and 4026, some 30 kms., occupies a total area of 90 sq. kms. and has an uninterrupted 13 kms. long stretch of beaches namely, Hat Nai Thon, Hat Nai Yang, Hat Mai Khao, and Hat Sai Kaeo.

MAJOR SIGHTS & ATTRACTIONS

Mueang Phuket (The Old Town Phuket)

The compact provincial capital serves mainly as a commercial and shopping centre although traces of the old Sino-Portuguese architecture give Phuket a distinctive character.

Khao Rang

This provides a pleasant view of the town, also a park and series of hillside sculptural tableaux.

Phuket Fantasea

Inspired by Thailand's rich and exotic heritage, Phuket Fantasea not only showcases the charm and beauty of Thailand, but also enriches ancient Thai traditions with the wonder of cutting edge technology and special effects. The result is a stunning 140-acre theme complex packed with a multitude of activities and entertainment: a festival village with carnivals, games, handicrafts and shopping; a 4,000-seat restaurant offering a grand buffet of Thai and international cuisine; a breathtaking Las Vegas-style theatrical show, where state-of-the-art technology and special effects



Sino-Portuguese Buildings

enhance the beauty of Thailand's myths, mysteries and magic in a wondrous extravaganza certain to delight everyone. For more information, call +66 7638 5000. or www.phuket-fantasea.com

Siam Niramit

The theatre is located on Pracha Uthit 3 Road, Tambon Ratsada. This is an entertainment venue of Phuket, presenting a beautiful show of Thai traditions and culture, with state-of-the-art technology in light and sound spectacular performances and special effects in extravagant setting; such as, flying angel, lightning, rain, etc. It is open daily except Tuesdays. offering one show time at 8.30 p.m. For more information, contact Tel. +66 7633 5001-2 Fax: +66 7633 5055 Bangkok Tel. +66 2649 9222 or www.siamniramit.com

Simon Cabaret

There's not a diva in the west who can compare, and many a catwalk model has turned green with envy at the sight of the lady-boy performers of Simon Cabaret. This hugely popular tourist attraction, on the hill just outside Patong, has been wowing audiences for years with its exotic, hilarious, and transvestite cabaret. With sets and choreography that would do Broadway justice, and gowns dripping with diamante, the boys who are girls stiletto-strut their stuff to full houses each night at 7.30 p.m. and 9.30 p.m. Tel. +66 7634 2011-5, +66 7634 2114-6 or www.phuket-simoncabaret.com

Aphrodite Cabaret

It is situated on the Bypass Road opposite Tesco Lotus. The cabaret theatre is built to accommodate 950 seats and to offer an utmost comfort with cool elegance. The highly professional production team, sound light and stage personal with high

technical qualifications and the latest technology in stage set up ensure the highest quality entertainment. Show times are 5.00 p.m., 6.30 p.m. and 8.00 p.m.. Tickets 600-800 Baht. For more information, Tel. +66 7661 2888, +66 7624 8666 or visit www.phuket-aphroditecabaret.com.

Phuket Seashell Museum

This museum is located near Rawai Beach on the island's southwestern shores. The emphasis is on shells from Thai waters, which are among the most sought-after by collectors; however, shells from every part of the world are featured. There are numerous rarities and freaks including the world's largest golden pearl (140 karats), large sections of sedimentary rock containing shell fossils, and a shell that weighs 250 kilogrammes. The Museum is open daily from 8.00 a.m. till 7.30 p.m. Tel. +66 7638 1888 or www.phuketseashell.com

Marine Biological Research Centre

The Marine Biological Research Centre at Laem Phanwa offers the opportunity to observe local marine life up close without the necessity of diving beneath the waves. More than a hundred aquatic species are housed at this facility, which is one of Thailand's principle centres for research into the whales, dugongs, sharks, dolphins and sea turtles that make their home in the water around Phuket. The centre is open daily from 8.30 a.m. to 4.00 p.m. Tel. +66 7639 1126 or visit www.phuketaquarium.org for further information.

Ban Chinnapracha

It was built in 1903 A.D. in the later period of King Rama V by Phra Phithak Chinnapracha (Tan Ma Sieng), son of Luang Bamrung Chinnaprathet (Tan Neow Yee). He was born in Fujian province,

China, and held the military title of "Boontek Chongkul". Most of the furniture in the house was inherited from Chinese ancestors and other materials used were imported from foreign countries because trading between Penang and Phuket at that time flourished tremendously. The house is located at 98, Krabi Road, Tambon Talat Nuea, Amphoe Mueang Phuket, Phuket. It is open from 9.00 a.m. to 4.30 p.m. Tel. +66 7621 1281 Fax: +66 7621 1167.

Phuket Thai Hua Museum

It has been renovated to be one of the historical tourist attractions of Phuket. The 74-year old Sino-Portuguese architecture displays a photo exhibition and video media which tells the history of the Chinese people in Phuket, mining, local costumes, Sino-Portuguese architecture, local foods, tradition and culture of Phuket. It is located on 28, Krabi Road, Tambon Talat Yai, Amphoe Mueang Phuket, Phuket. Tel. +66 7621 1224. The Museum opens daily from 9.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m.

The Thai Village

On Thap Krasattri Road, the village serves typical southern Thai specialties for lunch, and dinner, as well as staging cultural shows featuring ASEAN dances. Handicrafts are also on display. It is open from 9.00 a.m. - 2.00 p.m. and 4.00 p.m. - 9.00 p.m. Tel. +66 7621 4859 or +66 7623 7400 for more information.

Thalang National Museum

Located near the Two Heroines Monument, the museum contains a collection of exhibits of ancient artefacts and other materials illustrating life in Phuket in the past. Open except public holidays from 9.00 a.m. - 4.00 p.m. For more information, Tel. +66 7637 9895-7.



Wat Phra Thong

Wat Phra Thong

Situated near Hat Nai Yang, the temple enshrines a famous, partially buried Buddha image. Local legend has it that a boy tethered his buffalo to what he thought was a post sticking out of the ground. Subsequently, this boy and his animal fell mysteriously ill. Suspicious villagers uncovered the post and found that 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 the present temple was constructed. When Burmese invaders attempted to remove the statue in the 18th century, they were attacked by a swarm of hornets.

Laem Phromthep

The southern most point of Phuket is the perfect place where picturesque sunsets are seen.

Ko Kaeo

This is an offshore isle about 3 kms. from Hat Rawai and can be reached in 30 minutes by boat. There are sandy beaches and captivating

underwater scenery, as well as a replica of the Holy Footprint on the island.

Ko Racha Yai

The gleaming beaches can be reached by chartered boat from Ao Chalong. It takes about 2-3 hours for the boat trip during the off-peak season (December-April). At Ko Racha Yai, there is the most perfected and versatile of corals for visitors to see. Sightseeing services are available from tour operators in town. Accommodation is available.

Ko Nakha

A small island with a long stretch of peaceful beach, Ko Nakha is a great place to relax, sun-bathing, and swimming. Small shops selling cold beverages are available on the beach.

Namtok Ton Sai & Khao Phra Thaeo Wildlife Sanctuary

An idyllic setting cooled by sonorous cascades, this 22 sq. km. area is rich in wildlife, including bears, porcupines, gibbons, and macaques, as well as over 100 bird species. For nature enthusiasts, the sanctuary has also mapped out walking trails.

Wat Chalong

A few kilometres inland from Ao Chalong, the temple enshrines statues of Phuket's two most revered monks - Luangpho Chaem and Luangpho Chuang.

Ban Bang Rong Community

Awarded Thailand Tourism Award for Outstanding Community Based Tourism Attraction, Ban Bang Rong Community is a Muslim community in Amphoe Thalang which provides visitors with various activities involving diverse nature as well as interesting cultures. The activities that

based on the aim to develop the sustainable community include a boat trip along the mangrove forest, visit the goat farm, and observe the fruit plantations.

Pearl Farms

Several pearl farms are located in and around Phuket. Please contact the TAT Phuket Office at +66 7621 7138, +66 7621 2213 for details of arranging visits.

Native Handicrafts Centre

Located on Thep Krasattri Road, the Centre has artisans skilled in silk weaving, lacquerware, silverware, jewellery-making and the crafting of parasols.

Phuket Butterfly Farm

The farm is situated 3 kms. from town and has a fascinating collection of such tropical creatures as butterflies and insects; all displayed in natural surroundings. Open daily 9.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m. Tel. +66 7621 0861.

Wat Phra Nang Sang

A historical Phuket landmark, Wat Phra Nang Sang was originally a fort built to protect the country from Burmese invaders. Enshrined in the main hall are three large ancient Buddha statues made of tin.

Tours & Cruises

Several tour operators arrange island tours, visit to pearl farms, island cruises, dive safaris and more. Up-to-date and more information on these and other sightseeing and touring options are available at the TAT Phuket Office Tel. +66 7621 2213, +66 7621 1036.



Red Mountain Golf Club

RECREATIONS

Golf

There are 18-hole golf courses in Phuket, which offer an excellent and challenging landscape amidst the magnificent view of the mountain range or incredible view of the ocean, along with international standard facilities. Phuket is probably Thailand's best destination for wonderful warm-weather golf. All offer reasonably priced green fees, golf club rentals, and caddy services, while some golf courses offer accommodations and spa or massage service.

Horse Riding

There are three riding clubs: the first is on Patak Road, on the way to Hat Kata, the second is Ban Sai Yuan situated on the Hat Nai Han route, and the Laguna Phuket at Bang Thao. These three clubs provide facilities for visitors' convenience and courses for both beginners and experienced riders.

Windsurfing

This sport can be enjoyed at most major beaches. Boards may be rented by the hour, half-day, full-day, or week. Expert tuition is also available.

Sailing

Small boat sailing is popular, especially at Hat Nai Han, Hat Patong and Hat Kata. Toppers and dinghies are found at Hat Patong, while catamarans, hobie cats and top cats are available at Hat Kata.

Water-skiing

Popular at Hat Patong and those interested can enjoy this activity on a half-hour or hourly rental. Cable water-skiing is available at the Phuket Waterski Cableway, located behind the Loch Palm Golf Course in Amphoe Kathu.



Snorkeling

Deep Sea Fishing

Daily tours, departing early morning and returning late afternoon, cruise around the smaller offshore islands for deep sea fishing.

Swimming

You can enjoy swimming throughout the year as most locales are always in good conditions. However, there are undertows off certain beaches, especially hazardous in the rainy season. It is best to seek local advice regarding safety in advance.

Snorkelling

This can be enjoyed at many sheltered bays around Phuket, the most readily accessible spots being Hat Patong, Hat Kata, and Hat Karon. Fins, masks and snorkels can be rented on a daily basis from numerous shops around the island.

Scuba-diving

Dive boats regularly leave Phuket for expeditions of 1 to 7 days around neighbouring islands, as well as further afield, notably to Muko Phi Phi, in Krabi, some 2 hours east of Phuket, and Muko Similan, which lie in Phang-nga some 110 km. north-west of Phuket. Several dive shops are concentrated in Hat Patong, Hat Kata, and Hat Chalong areas. These dive shops also have Thai and expatriate dive instructors who are qualified to provide expert tuition. All diving equipment is available for hire.

Sea kayaking

This form of ecotourism, exploring islands and marine caves that are accessible only by kayaking, has become extremely popular in recent years. Day tours and overnight camping trips, mostly in Phang-nga, are offered by

various sea kayak companies, with full details are available from the TAT Phuket Office.

Yacht Charters

Yacht charters, either with or without crews, as well as sailing courses are available. Contact the TAT Phuket Office for the names of charter companies and full details.

Mountain Biking

It's easier than it looks. Nearly any person can enjoy themselves on a mountain bike, which has gearing sufficient to take the mightiest incline.

Trekking

Khao Phra Thaeo Wildlife Park offers the best trekking in Phuket with a well-preserved natural environment. May through October is the best time for jungle trekking, when the forest is full of blossoms. The Park has a marked hiking route for visitors to follow.

Other sports and games;

such as, go-karting, bungee jump and paintball are available at Patong.

Ban Teelanka

Located on Bypass Road. The one and only *Upside Down House* in Thailand, including The Maze Garden, of which the exit changes every day. The 13 meters three-levels, completely upside down, fully furnished house: staircases, bedroom, kitchen and bathroom. Open daily 10.00 a.m. - 6.00 p.m.. For more information, Tel. +66 7637 6245, +66 8 4456 5279 or visit www.upsidedownhouse-phuket.com.

Flying Hanuman

in Soi Namtok Kathu, Amphoe Kathu. Flying

Hanuman is an eco-adventure. It provides travellers with exceptional service, enjoyment, excitement and memories without impacting the natural balance within the forest environment surrounding it. Open every day, operating hours are 08:00, 10:00, 13:00 and 15:00. Tel. +66 7632 3264, +66 8 1979 2332 or visit www.flyinghanuman.com for more information.

Tiger Kingdom

in Amphoe Krathu at the foot of Patong Hill. You can even get up close and pet the tigers. Open daily from 09:00-18:00. Tel.: +66 7632 3311 or visit www.tigerkingdom.com for more information.

SPECIAL EVENTS

Chinese New Year - The Old Phuket Festival

Held during the last three days of Chinese New Year. The Festival takes place on Thalang Road, Krabi Road, and Soi Rommani Which are Phuket's historical part of town. There will be all kinds of activities and performances revolving around Phuket's past, local foods and snacks, and Chinese opera performances from mainland China.

Thao Thep Krasattri & Thao Sisunthon Fair

Held annually on 13 March, the Fair commemorates the Two Heroines who rallied the people of Thalang to repel Burmese invaders in the 18th century.

Songkran Water Festival (Paradise on the Beach) at Patong Beach

The traditional gentle sprinkling of water in temples and homes is still practiced during

13-15 April yearly, however, overzealous Thais and tourists alike have resorted to throwing water at any passerby that dares to venture out of their hotel. It is a splashy affair for all on the day, and generally a good way to beat the heat in what is normally the hottest month of the year in Thailand. Website: www.songkran.net, www.tourismthailand.org

Seafood Festival

Held around May yearly, is designed to publicise the delicious seafood of Phuket and attract visitors during the rainy season. Activities include a marine Tourism Resources Parade, seafood stalls, demonstrations of regional cuisines and cultural shows.

Phuket International Marathon

Experience the real challenge with the doable course for all participants due to the hill, topography of Phuket that is rather difficult to find a flat marathon course as well as enjoy the wonderful scenery. Once a year to cheer and witness at Laguna Beach Resort in June. Website: www.tourismthailand.org, www.phuketmarathon.com

Loi Ruea Chao Le Tradition

In the middle of the 6th and 11th lunar months, Chao Le (Sea Gypsies) celebrates a time-honoured tradition in which they float model boats in a symbolic gesture of eliminating bad luck.

Phuket Vegetarian Festival

Around October every year, the Thai-Chinese in Phuket will partake in the annual vegetarian festival, that is organised at various Chinese shrines in the city. They have long passed on this event to purify mind and soul by refraining from meat consumption and meditating.

Symbolising the presence of the deities throughout the festival are 9 lanterns lit up and placed aloft on Ko Teng poles. On the 6th day of the festival, there will be religious processions and incredible displays of face-and-body piercing. On the last day, there will be a "Koi Han" ceremony to exorcise ill fortune and a farewell ceremony for the deities at night.

Website: www.tourismthailand.org

Tourist Season Opening Festival

First initiated in 1985 at Hat Patong to welcome the start of the tourism season, the Festival is staged on 1 November and features many colourful and interesting activities; such as, merit-making, water sports contests, and a "Miss Visitor" contest.

Phuket King's Cup Regatta

After first being launched in 1987 to celebrate His Majesty the King's 60th birthday, the King's Cup Regatta has been held annually in December and featured many international participants. See for yourself how these yachting people compete from Phuket to Phang-nga before moving on to Krabi on the Andaman Sea, where the enchanting scenic beauty will take your breath away. This is the biggest and most impressive regatta in Asia.

Website: www.tourismthailand.org, www.kingscup.com

Laguna Phuket Triathlon

The competition among the "iron men" from Thailand and international countries includes swimming, cycling and marathon racing will be held in December. Also, there are activities to encourage the participants to experience the adventure routes that is started at Hat Bang Tao, Thalang District along Phuket's tourist

attractions.

Website: www.challengelagunaphuket.com, www.tourismthailand.org

GETTING THERE

By Air

Several domestic airlines fly in and out of Phuket (www.thaiairways.com, www.thai smileair.com, www.bangkokair.com, www.airasia.com, www.nokair.com). Phuket is also served as an international airport, servicing flights from various destinations within the Asian region and further abroad.

By Bus

Air-conditioned and non air-conditioned coaches leave Bangkok's Southern Bus Terminal daily. Contact Tel. +66 2422 4444, or www.transport.co.th for more information.

By Car

It is 862 kms. by road from Bangkok, taking around 12 hours drive.

ACCOMMODATION

Phuket offers a huge range of accommodation, from super deluxe resorts to beach bungalows. A full list of hotels may be obtained from the TAT Phuket Office.

LOCAL PRODUCTS

Cultivated pearls, batiks, pewter ware, and tailor-made clothing are Phuket's best known buys. The widest range of shops, including department stores are found in Phuket town and at Hat Patong.



James Bond Island

Phang-nga

Situated immediately north of Phuket, from where it is an easy excursion option, Phang-nga covers an area of 4,170 sq. kms. and its provincial capital lies 788 kms. to the south of Bangkok. The province's main attractions stem primarily from the area's geological formations. This has produced an extraordinary number of islands, caves and rocky outcrops, the most notable being those preserved in the national marine parks of Ao Phang-nga, Muko Similan and Muko Surin.

Inland the major sights are caves, waterfalls, temples and the archaeological site of Ban Thung Tuek. With a remarkable geological site, Phang-nga is essentially a province to explore, as well as where to find some of the country's best scuba-diving spots. There are, however, beaches and a choice of resort accommodation, which allow for a tranquil vacation amid the most stunning natural scenery.

CLIMATE

The rainy season is from May through to October, yet most days are sunny. The best time to visit is between December and April.

ISLANDS

Ao Phang-nga National Park

Designated as a marine national park in 1981, Ao Phang-nga covers a coastal and offshore area. Mangrove forests are found along the shoreline. However, the most striking feature is the bay, which is dotted with more than 100 islands, weirdly shaped limestone outcrops swathed in tangles of creepers, shrubs, and mostly uninhabited. Some rise sheer from the water, others are humped or jagged, and



Ko Panyi, Ao Phang-nga National Park

all present a haunting aspect. Many have notable features; such as, Khao Khian, where prehistoric rock paintings can be seen on the cliffs; Ko Panyi where there is a Muslim fishing village built on stilts; Ko Phanak with beautiful caves, and "James Bond Island" which is famous for the location of the movie "The Man with the Golden Gun." Several tour companies organised excursions to these islands, departing either from the Customs Pier (Tha Dan) on the Phang-nga mainland, or from Phuket.

Muko Similan National Park

Like Ao Phang-nga, Muko Similan is also preserved as a national marine park, extending over an area of 128 sq. km. Set in the Andaman Sea about a 3-hour boat ride from the mainland, the nine islands of the archipelago are quite distinct from those of Phang-nga. The islands are of granite, not limestone which makes them a rare beauty. The formations are also uniquely different. Together with hiking trails and other onshore attractions, however, Similan's reputation is its 30 excellent and dissimilar

diving sites. Coral walls, huge sea fans and barrel sponges, rock reefs, swim-throughs and other underwater features offer a wide variety of opportunities for experiencing, while plenty of shallows afford excellent conditions for snorkelling.

Muko Surin National Park

This national marine park, comprising five islands and covering more than approximately 141.25 sq. km. is located north of the Similans. The islands are best reached from the Khura Buri Pier (125 kms. north of Phang-nga town), and takes 4 hours. Again the main attractions are scuba-diving and snorkelling, as the coral formations are spectacular. However, the two largest islands, Ko Surin Nuea and Ko Surin Tai (North and South islands, respectively) have good potential for exploring on land, with several hiking trails and a sea gypsy village on Ko Surin Tai.

Ko Phra Thong

Called the “Savannah of Thailand,” this large and tranquil island is covered with golden meadows and peat swamp forests. The island is a nesting ground of the Lesser Adjutant Stork, a rare bird of Thailand. By long-tail boat from Khuraburi Pier on the mainland, the trip to the island takes one hour.



Muko Similan National Park

OTHER ATTRACTIONS

Tham Phung Chang

This cave is located within the grounds of Wat Phra Phat Phra Chim Kaet behind the Provincial Hall. Inside are stalagmites, stalactites and a stream that runs all year round. Two-hour excursions on foot, kayak, or raft through the cave are available. Contact Thongthae Sea Canoe Tel. +66 8 6683 6844.

Khao Lampi-Hat Thai Mueang National Park

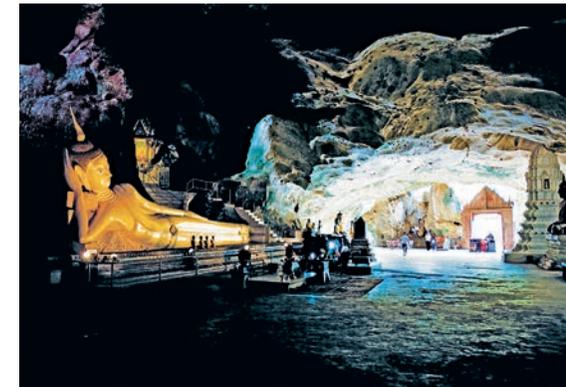
The National Park covers an area of 72 sq. km. The main features are Namtok Lampi (a medium-sized cascade with three levels reaching a height of about 100 metres) and Ton Phrai (a large waterfall with a powerful flow year-round.)



Muko Similan National Park

Wat Suwan Khuha

Located at Mu 2, Tambon Krasom, this is one of Phang-nga’s most important and most fascinating Buddhist temples. Located within the temple compound is a series of superb caves, the largest of which (Tham Yai), measuring more than 20 metres by 40 metres, enshrines Buddha images, the biggest being a magnificent 15-metre reclining Buddha.



Wat Suwan Khuha



Hat Khao Lak

Khao Lak-Lam Ru National Park

Extending over a vast area, the Park encompasses both mountain and coastal environments and includes a number of interesting features; such as, Hat Khao Lak, Hat Nang Thong, and Hat Bang Niang. Khao Lak Mountain is famous for the shrine of Chao Pho Khao Lak and also the 5-tier waterfall of Lam Ru.

Hat Khao Lak

Located 32 kilometres from Amphoe Takua Pa, Hat Khao Lak is popular for its long stretch of golden sand beach. Visitors can enjoy relaxing by the beach, swimming, and watching the beautiful sunset. Wide range of accommodations is available.

Old Town Takua Pa

Old Town Takua Pa is where visitors can explore the cultural background of Phang-nga through the beautiful Sino-Portuguese style buildings.

Ko Kho Khao

A small island that boasts natural beauty was once an ancient town that served as a port in which the ships from India stops by for trading. Nowadays, there are several resorts and restaurants on the island.

Tham Lot

Beautiful stalagmite and stalactite formations can be seen in this cave, which is located in the Ao Phang-nga area.

Ban Thung Tuek Ancient Town

Of interest to history buffs, the site of Ban Thung Tuek, in Amphoe Khura Buri, bears a few archaeological remains that attest to its ancient importance as a port of call for Arab, Indian, and Malay merchants engaged in the spice trade.

Tsunami Memorial Park

at Ban Nam Khem is constructed in an area of

approximately 5 rai. Two walls were built along the memorial walkway. One side features wave-like curves with a black terrazzo surface. Visitors can look through the holes to see the fishing boat damaged by the tsunami. The other side features a slanting brick wall interspersed with ceramic tiles and names of the deceased engraved on bronze plaques mounted on the ceramic tiles – there were approximately 1,400 casualties. Visitors will also find souvenir shops made by the local people, seafood restaurants, and the Ban Nam Khem tour service. The Memorial is open daily from 8.00 a.m. - 5.00 p.m.

Wat Rat Upatam

Also called Wat Bang Rieng, is an amazing hillside temple perched high on Khao Lan, in Amphoe Thap Put. The temple complex contains an elaborate bell-shaped pagoda called Phra Mahathat Chedi Phutthatham banlue, which is surrounded by niches with Buddha images. The hilltop chedi overlooks scenic mountains as well as a statue of the Chinese goddess Guan Yin, and an impressive large Buddha image in a seated position under the seven headed serpent Naga.

Ko Yao

covers an area of approximately 137.6 square kilometres. Most of its dwellers are Thai Muslim. Ko Yao comprises 2 main islands; namely, Ko Yao Noi and Ko Yao Yai. In addition, homestay accommodation is available both on Ko Yao Yai and Ko Yao Noi. Visitors can enjoy while learning the folk way of living and daily activities such as fishing, clam catching, and biking along a nature trail. For more information, please contact the Ko Yao Noi Ecotourism Club, Bang Rong Pier, Tel. +66 7659 7244, or Khun Samroeng Rakhiet, Tel. +66



Ko Phra Thong

8 1968 0877 or visit www.homestaykohyaonoi.com. Private run accommodation is also available.

SPORTING OPPORTUNITIES

Scuba-diving

Some of Thailand's very best dive sites are located off the shores of Phang-nga, especially around Muko Similan and Muko Surin. To visit these waters is by joining excursions organised by dive operators.

Snorkelling

Same as with scuba-diving, snorkelling conditions in the waters off Phang-nga are excellent.

Sea kayaking

Many of the islands in Phang-nga are riddled with marine grottos, to which Phuket-based sea kayak operators offer organised tours.

SPECIAL EVENT

Free the Turtles Fair

Usually held in March at Hat Thai Mueang, the

7-day festival is celebrated by the release of baby turtles into the sea.

Boat Floating Tradition

is a tradition of the Mogen seamen living around Ko Surin held annually during April – May at the seamen village on Ko Surin Tai. The purpose of the tradition is to celebrate the spiritual poles of their ancestors. During this period, the Mogen people will stop other daily activities so that everyone can take part in the tradition. There will be a medium ceremony, paying respect to their ancestors' spirits, fortune-telling, playing music, dancing, and floating of the 'Kabang', which is believed to represent the floating away of suffering and illness from the family and community. Mogen people from nearby areas will come to participate in this tradition in order to pay respect to the spirits of their ancestors and request them for protection.

Phang-nga Vegetarian Festival

is scheduled between the 1st – 9th days of the waxing moon of the 9th Chinese lunar month, which falls in September – October every year. During the festival, villagers clad in white will receive alms at Chinese shrines. Other activities include a fire-wading ceremony, a ceremony to pay respect to the stars for the 7 days of the week, ill fortune-dispelling ceremony, etc. There will be a procession of gods along the roads around the town as a token to give a blessing to the people.

GETTING THERE

By car

There are 2 routes:

Route 1: From Bangkok, take Highway No. 4 via Prachuap Khiri Khan, Chumphon, Ranong

and enter Phang-nga, a total distance of 788 kilometres, and taking 12 hours.

Route 2: From Bangkok, take Highway No. 4 to Chumphon and continue on Highway No. 41 via Amphoe Tha Chang, Surat Thani, turn right into Highway No. 401 to Amphoe Ban Ta Khun, Surat Thani, then, turn into Highway No. 415 via Amphoe Thap Put to Phang-nga.

By bus

The Transport Company Limited operates daily air – conditioned buses on the Bangkok – Phang-nga route from the Bangkok Southern Bus Terminal on Borommaratchachonnani Road, taking approximately 10 hours. For further details, please call Tel. +66 2894 6122 or call center 1490, www.transport.co.th. There are also buses operated by a private company which is Lignite Tour Company Limited, Tel. +66 7641 2300, +66 8 1255 9710. Phang-nga Bus Terminal, Phetkasem Road, Tel., +66 7641 2014.

By train

The State Railway of Thailand operates regular trains to Surat Thani Railway Station, Amphoe Phunphin, Surat Thani. Visitors have to connect to a bus for 2 hours to Phang-nga. For further information, please call the Bangkok Railway Station (Hua Lamphong) at Tel. 1690. (Reservations can be made on the phone at least 3 days in advance but not exceeding 60 days), or visit www.railway.co.th.

By Air

there is no direct flight to Phang-nga. Visitors may fly to Phuket and connect to a bus to Phang-nga, a distance of 58 kilometres. For further details, please contact the following airlines:

- Thai Airways International, Tel. +66 2356 1111;



Muko Similan National Park

Phuket Office: Tel. +66 7621 1195, or visit www.thaiairways.com.

- Bangkok Airways, Tel. 1771, +66 2265 5678, +66 2270 6699, +66 2134 3888-9, www.bangkokair.com.

- Thai Air Asia, Tel. +66 2575 9999, www.airasia.com.

- Nok Air, Tel. 1318, +66 2900 9955, www.nokair.co.th.

In addition, from Phang-nga, there are also buses to various places and provinces including Phuket, Krabi, Trang, Phatthalung, Amphoe Hat Yai, Songkhla, Pattani, Narathiwat, Amphoe Sungai Kolok, Amphoe Ban Ta Khun, and Amphoe Phunphin, Surat Thani. From Amphoe Mueang Phang-nga, there are regular buses running from the market to the Customs Office Pier where boats are available to Ao Phang-nga National Park.

ACCOMMODATION

A wide range of hotel and resort accommodations is available on the Phang-nga mainland, while basic accommodation such as bungalows or tents is provided on both Muko Similan and Muko Surin. Full details are available from the Tourism Coordination Centre, Phang-nga Province, Tourism Authority of Thailand. Tel. +66 7648 1900-2

LOCAL PRODUCTS

Phang-nga's most famous local buys are its artificial flowers made from rubber and fish scales. These quite exquisite products are sold at the Phang-nga Provincial Agricultural Office and the Farmers Housewives Group.