

KHAO LAK

Phang Nga province is blessed with two coastlines and hence a variety of outstanding natural attractions.

To the west, lies the tranquil sandy coast of Khao Lak, whilst the idyllic Mu Ko Surin and Mu Ko Similan marine parks - rated among the world's best scuba diving destinations - lie just a few hours off shore.

Phang Nga Bay, to the east, boasts over forty small islands including Ko Tapu, aka James Bond Island where the film The Man with the Golden Gun was shot, and Ko Yao Noi and Ko Yao Yai both providing a quieter alternative to the hustle and bustle of Phuket.



1. Khao Lak Beach 2. Khao Lak Lamru National Park 3. Ton Chong Fa Waterfall 4. James Bond Island 5. Ko Panyee 6. Mu Ko Similan National Marine Park 7. Ko Yao Islands

ATTRACTIONS

KHAO LAK BEACH AND KHAO LAK LAMRU NATIONAL PARK

One of Phang Nga's best known attractions is Khao Lak - a long sandy beach perfect for swimming and sunbathing with plenty of accommodation for families and couples. Khao Lak town has lots of bars and restaurants serving Thai and international dishes.

Khao Lak Lamru National Park is home to the several native animals including Malayan tapir, tiger, Sumatran serow, monkey, langur, deer, barking deer, great argus pheasant, hornbill, woodpecker, bulbul, and hill myna.

A great way to experience the Park is to hike one of the two trails to the Ton Chong Fa Waterfall - the 5km route takes about 2 hours and 7km about 5 hours. Though there are nature interpretive signs along these steep routes, an experienced guide is certainly required.



PHANG NGA BAY NATIONAL MARINE PARK

Phang Nga Bay covers an area of 400km² and is home to over forty small islands. Its highlight, Ko Tapu, aka James Bond Island, has been a major attraction ever since it was featured in the 1974 James Bond movie. It lies next to Ko Ping Ghan which has some sea small caves. The area is a popular destination for sailing and kayaking.

Most of the organised tours to James Bond Island include kayaking around Ko Hong and a stop for simple lunch at Ko Panyee - a Muslim fishing village built on stilts. Visitors who want to have more freedom can rent a private boat for a half or full day.

MU KO SIMILAN NATIONAL MARINE PARK

Located just over 80km northwest of Phuket, Mu Ko Similan, is one of the most picturesque island groups in the Andaman Sea. In addition to its above water beauty and its fertile flora and fauna, the area is rated among the world's ten best diving destinations. The islands are home to crab-eating monkeys, sea turtles, dusky langurs, squirrels, bats, lizards and birds.

While almost every local tour operators offer a day tour to Mu Ko Similan, the best way to explore the area is to spend a few days there, either staying on a liveaboard boat or at the national park camp site. The islands are open from November to April and closed May to October, though the actual dates vary slightly year to year dependent on the monsoon rains.

KO YAO ISLANDS

Ko Yao Noi and Ko Yao Yai are a pair of islands in Phang Nga Bay, equidistant from Phuket and the Krabi mainland. Home to resorts both big and small, the islands remain a quiet refuge for visitors looking to escape bustling Phuket. In 2002, Ko Yao Noi gained worldwide attention after receiving the World Legacy Award for Destination Stewardship from Conservation International and National Geographic Traveller magazine for the eco-friendly homestay programs offered by its local residents. Other activities available on the island include agricultural demonstrations (rubber tapping and fishing), kayaking, hiking, cycling, snorkelling and swimming.

Note that the islanders are mostly Muslim, so it's recommended to respect the local culture by dressing modestly and refraining from drinking alcohol outside the restaurants or resorts.

Ko Yao Islands are easily reached via long tail boat, speedboat or public ferry. From Phuket airport, a taxi to the pier will take 25 minutes. The public boat will make a short stop on Ko Yao Yai, then cross to Ko Yao Noi, which is less than 10 minutes away.

KO PHRA THONG

Located just 10km from the port town of Khuraburi which is less than an hour drive north of Khao Lak, Ko Phra Thong is a secluded island suitable for visitors who love nature and really want to get away from it all.

The middle area of the island is largely flat expanses of inland savannah, whilst the sandy beach surrounding the island is quiet with only a few small eco-resorts. The island has some interesting snorkelling sites on the west coast. Stronger swimmers can swim to them directly though many prefer to use a kayak get to these sites for snorkelling. To the north is Ko Ra, a long, mountainous island covered in ancient rainforest. Its terrain, which is quite inhospitable to humans, is home to a large number of animal species, making it an interesting trekking location.

For more information, visit www.kohphrathong.com



ACTIVITIES

SCUBA DIVING AND SNORKELLING

Scuba diving and snorkelling are among the most popular activities in the area. Mu Ko Similan, Ko Bon, Ko Tachai, Mu Ko Surin, and Richelieu Rock offer the best scuba diving and snorkelling sites in the region. There are day trips and multi-day trips available from Khao Lak.

BAMBOO RAFTING & KAYAKING

The interior of Phang Nga Province is a scarcely developed region featuring hills covered by rain forest and agriculture. The rivers and streams in the area offer many opportunities for activities such as bamboo rafting and kayaking. Please contact local tour operators for more information.



Khao Lak

THAI COOKING CLASSES

In Khao Lak, visitors can learn how to prepare Thailand's notable dishes at one of the local cooking schools. Many resorts also offer Thai cooking classes at reasonable rates.

GOLFING

There are two golf courses near Khao Lak in Phang Nga Province. The closest one is Tab Lamu Navy Golf Course, an 18-hole course located at the Royal Thai Navy Sport Development Centre in Tab Lamu, south of Khao Lak. Nestled in the heart of Phang Nga Province lies the Katathong Golf Course, an 18-hole championship course. Please contact Tablamu Navy Golf Course +66 76 443 288 or Katathong Golf Course +66 76 592 999 directly for more details.

