

## **Suggested attractions & activities for Phuket & Phang Nga**

Situated off the west coast of Thailand in the Andaman Sea, Phuket is Thailand's largest island which is connected by the Sarasin Bridge to Phang Nga Province to its north. The next nearest province is Krabi, to the east across Phang Nga Bay. Besides many beautiful beaches and off the coast attractions, Phuket has a lot of interesting in land attractions including its Old Town, Wat Chalong, Big Buddha, zipline parks, Muay Thai camps, Turtle sanctuaries, aquarium, wellness spas and cooking schools.

Phang Nga is blessed with a variety of outstanding natural attractions including the stunning Phang Nga Bay which contains over forty small islands/ islets including Ko Tapu (also known as James Bond Island) where the film *The Man with the Golden Gun* was shot, the idyllic Mu Ko Surin and Mu Ko Similan which have been rated among the world's best scuba diving sites, the tranquil sandy coast of Khao Lak as well as Ko Yao Noi and Ko Yao Yai.

The easiest way to get here is to fly to Phuket Airport and travel by car to Phang Nga. It takes about 1.5hr drive from Phuket Airport to Khao Lak Beach, where most of the resorts are located. Ko Yao Noi and Ko Yao Yai are a pair of islands in Phang Nga Bay, equidistant to Phuket and the Krabi mainland. Even with some big and small resorts, the islands remain a quiet refuge suitable for visitors looking to escape from the bustling Phuket. (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.) Getting to Ko Yao Islands can be done via a long tail boat, a speedboat or a 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.

The best time to enjoy outdoor and off the coast activities in this region is between November and April, when it normally has less rainfall and clear blue sea. Certain national marine parks including Mu Ko Similan only open during these months.

### **Recommended attractions and activities for beach lovers**

With over 20 beaches in Phuket, everyone should be able to find the ones with the right atmospheres, scenery and facilities to their likings. **Patong** is the most bustling beach with a lot of accommodations, shops, bars and restaurants. **Kata** is very popular with families, due to its sandy spectacular palm-lined beach, with clear waters, great restaurants, lively (but not as much as Patong) nightlife and plenty of accommodation options, all close to the beach. **Karon** has a fine coral reef great for snorkelling and a lively small centre where visitors can find a good choice of dining, shopping, and nightlife entertainment as well as a beautiful Buddhist temple hosting a weekly market. **Mai Khao, Panwa, Nai Harn** and **Surin** are relatively tranquil, as they are close to the national parks and quite remote from town.



Snorkelling off Kata Beach



Ao Po Marina

### Island hopping

If you don't have much time or don't want to spend so much, island hopping tour could be an option for you. Most of the tour operators offer a day tour to **Phang Nga Bay, Ko He (Coral Island), Ko Lon, Mu Ko Phi Phi** and **Mu Ko Similan**. The tours should be pre booked as some of the islands are located within the Marine National Park and only open on a seasonal basis. Most of these tours will make a few stops for snorkelling, kayaking, swimming or picnic on the beach.

Phang Nga Bay covers an area of 400 sq.km. and is home to over 40 small islands/ islets. Its highlight, Ko Tapu (James Bond Island), has been a major attraction ever since it was featured in the 1974 James Bond movie. Next to it lies Ko Ping Ghan which has some small caves. This 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 day or half day.



Ko Panyee in Phang Nga Bay



Mu Ko Similan

Scuba diving expeditions regularly leave Phuket for dives around neighbouring islands i.e. Ko He (Coral Island), Ko Lon, Mu Ko Phi Phi in Krabi province and Mu Ko

Similar in Phang-Nga province. There are options of day trips and liveaboard/ overnight trips.

Phuket is also one of Thailand's best spot to sail. There are several yacht or sailboat renting operators offering crewed, barefoot, and motor yacht or sailboat. Some of them offer luxury super yacht with full board services. Ao Po Grand Marina, north of Phuket, offers 24-hour access and zero tide restrictions. It is home to most of yacht service shops and facilities.

### **Other suggested activities**

Besides beaches and islands, other suggested activities in this region include:

- **Phuket Old Town:** The picturesque historical town of Phuket is where you will find beautiful old buildings, museums, boutique shops, street art and weekend night market.
- **Wat Chalong:** Wat Chalong is the most important and largest Buddhist temple in Phuket.
- **Big Buddha:** This 54 metres' tall marble Buddha statue can be seen from just about everywhere in the south of Phuket. It's a temple as well as a viewpoint.
- **Zipline parks:** Adventure lovers can climb, swing, fly, soar, and walk through rainforest at one of several zipline adventure parks in Phuket e.g. Flying Hanuman, Hanuman World, Tarzan Adventure Phuket, etc
- **The Little Amazon in Takua Pa district:** It is home of some really ancient Banyan Trees. It is sanctuary for exotic animals and abundant with flora and fauna. Discover ancient Banyan trees, exotic animals and other beauties the Thai rainforest has to offer.
- **Phuket Elephant Sanctuary:** This is a safe haven and retirement home for elephants. Here visitors can feed and bathe the injured, aged or traumatised elephants who are rescued from logging camps and circus – like attractions.
- **Phuket Aquarium:** Located at Panwa Cape, Phuket Aquarium and Phuket Marine Biological Centre run conservation project and nursery of sea creatures including sea turtles.
- **Cooking classes:** Many big hotels in Phuket offer cooking classes for their guests, but the best known cooking school in Phuket is probably Blue Elephant.
- **Muay Thai:** Visitors to this region can watch fights at Patong Boxing Stadium. For those who want to learn this arts of eight limbs, there are many camps offering English speaking classes e.g. Tiger Muay Thai Training Camp, Sinbi Muay Thai, Sumalee Boxing Gym. Many big hotels also offer Muay Thai classes for their guests.
- **Wellness spa and Thai massage:** While most big resorts in Phuket and Phang Nga have their own wellness spas, there are plenty of big and small wellness spas and massage shops near the popular beaches such as Patong, Kata, Karon and Khao Lak.





Little Amazon



Big Buddha



Phuket Old Town