

Phenomenal Phuket

Southern Thailand's Phuket sits in the Andaman Sea approximately 850 kilometres south of Bangkok. The island is 48 kilometres in length and 21 kilometres at its widest. The climate is balmy with heat and humidity throughout the year; the hot season is from March to May and monsoon season from May to October. The island has a rich seafaring history due to its location on one of the major trading routes between India and China. Nowadays it is one of the most popular tourist destinations in Asia and has become Thailand's wealthiest province. But Phuket and the surrounding area still have a great deal to offer guests and crew away from the crowds. There is world-class diving in the Andaman Sea, golf at championship courses, elephant rides and eco-adventures in tropical forests. TCR spoke to several locals about the best ways to enjoy this corner of Thailand.



How would you sum up Phuket in five words?

Extraordinary cruising with great weather. Nick Coombes (NC), Asia Pacific Superyachts
Exotic, alluring, spectacular, emphatic, magical. Zara Tremlett at Yacht Haven Marina Phuket and Gordon Fernandez, Asia Pacific Superyachts (ZT & GF)

Where is the best place in Phuket to enjoy a bit of local flavour or hospitality and why?

Nai Yang Beach. It's still undeveloped with a lot of local atmosphere. NC
Go to Phuket City (also still commonly known as Phuket Town) towards the end of the day and walk around the old quarter. There is a lot of Sino-Portuguese architecture, plus quaint shops, coffee shops, restaurants and bars. Then head to Ka Jok See restaurant (+66 76 217 903) for a great evening of Thai food, after which the tables are cleared and singing and dancing runs late into the night. Gareth Twist (GT), Yacht Solutions Co., Ltd



Where are the most popular places for people to go for nightlife, both for owners and crew?

Try Wat's Bar, close to Yacht Haven on Nai Yang Beach, or Ka Jok See in Phuket Town. Get locked in for food, drinks and dancing or cruise the many bars and clubs in Patong on Soi Bangla and even take in a show. Jung Ceylon, a huge mall complex in Patong offers vast selections of shops and entertainment, including [The Sound Club](#), one of Thailand's trendiest nightclubs. For food there is [Mom Tri Boat House](#), which offers gourmet dining on Kata Beach. The [Baan Rim Pa Restaurant](#) overlooks Kalim Beach. Many resorts have stunning Sunday brunch deals. ZT & GF
Patong is renowned for its crazy nightlife but for those looking for somewhere a little more sophisticated, head to Surin. There are lots of places to try but I would recommend the [Catch Beach Club](#) for sunset on the beach, Pla or [Taste Restaurant](#) for dinner then on to [Stereo Lab](#) for a late nightclub atmosphere on the beach. Also, two great restaurants not to miss in Cheung Talay are the [Siam Supper Club](#) and [Tatonka](#) restaurants. GT

Where do you go to escape from it all in Phuket and the surrounding region?

Stay on Koh Yao Noi at [Paradise Resort & Spa](#) with views of Phang Nga Bay, go kayaking in the Hongs or have a massage. There is also rock climbing in Krabi, diving in Similians, inner tubing in spectacular Koh Sok National Park where you can stay in a tree house at [Art's Riverview Lodge](#) or at one of several resorts in the area. Try an elephant trek in Kho Lak or head to the mountains in northern Thailand and experience the culture of Chang Rai or the hustle of Bangkok. Visiting the many spas is a definite must to treat oneself; they are incredibly affordable in Thailand. ZT & GF



Take the tender to Phang Nga Bay where there are no crowds on the northern beaches such as Mai Khao. GT

What is the one thing that people visiting Phuket simply have to do?

A boat trip round Phang Nga Bay. Get a private hire with a good group of friends. There is amazing scenery. GT

Are there any areas that are best avoided at night or if you are on your own?

Phuket is a typical holiday destination, crime is low but you still have to be careful and alert on the main beach areas, where there are lots of people. In recent years Phuket has undergone some transformations, making some of the notorious nightlife spots safer for women, couples and families. ZT & GF

Is there any produce made locally in the region you would recommend, and where can you buy it?

One Tambon One Product (OTOP) is a cooperative-type venture showcasing locally made products such as woven baskets, art and jewellery. You can find outlets scattered throughout Phuket. Remember that bargaining in the night markets is an expected practice when looking for gifts and trinkets. For woodcarvings and antiques there are many specialised stores varying in quality. If you purchase an antique religious artefact you must have an export certificate from the vendor. ZT & GF

The Thais are renowned for their woodcarving. NC

All Thai food is excellent. Try the [Natural Restaurant](#) (Thammachat) in Phuket City. GT

Are there any good cafes or internet cafes in Phuket you would recommend?

[The China Garden Inn](#) on Thalang Rd, Phuket Town is a beautiful antique and textile shop in a restored Sino-Portuguese house, with a courtyard serving as a boutique seating area for coffee or wine, snacks or meals. It is a true escape. Internet cafes are all over Phuket, speeds can be frustrating but they work. ZT & GF

For the internet try The Living Room and the [Yacht Haven Marina](#) or the bar at [Ao Po Marina](#). GT

Can you recommend any good places to stay in Phuket, both for lower budgets and for something more special?

[The Royal Phuket Yacht Club](#), a Puravarna Resort in Nai Harn (which used to be the Royal Meridien Yacht Club) is beautiful, as is the [Chedi](#) further north. There are hundreds of budget hotels from around €17 per night near Patong Beach. NC

For lower budgets try the [Nai Yang Beach Resort](#) or the many Patong guesthouses. Prices range from about THB800 (€17) per night to THB1,500 (€32). For something more luxurious try [Sala](#) on Maikhao Beach from about US\$200 (€141) per night; Indigo Pearl (indigo-pearl.com) on Nai Yang Beach; or [Amanpuri](#), which starts at US\$1,100 (€780) per night. ZT & GF

Where is the best anchorage or beach in the region?

The Surin Island group offers some spectacular beaches. Nothing comes close to the beaches in the Murgai region of Myanmar, just north of Thailand. [Read more about Murgai in issue TCR37 or on TheCrewReport.com.] But they are completely deserted, with no other yachts or shore infrastructure, which some owners like to have available to them. Within Phuket itself, probably Ko Racha Yai's northwestern bay is the most spectacular, but there are so many to choose from. NC

On Phuket there is the north end of Surin Beach off the Chedi and Amanpuri hotels and the north end of Bang Tao beach in Phuket. Ko Roi in Phang Nga Bay is perfect for stunning scenery. Then you must go to the Butang Group on the Malaysian border. GT

Useful Numbers:

International code for Thailand: +66

Police: 191 or 123

Fire Service: 199

Medical emergency: 1669

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