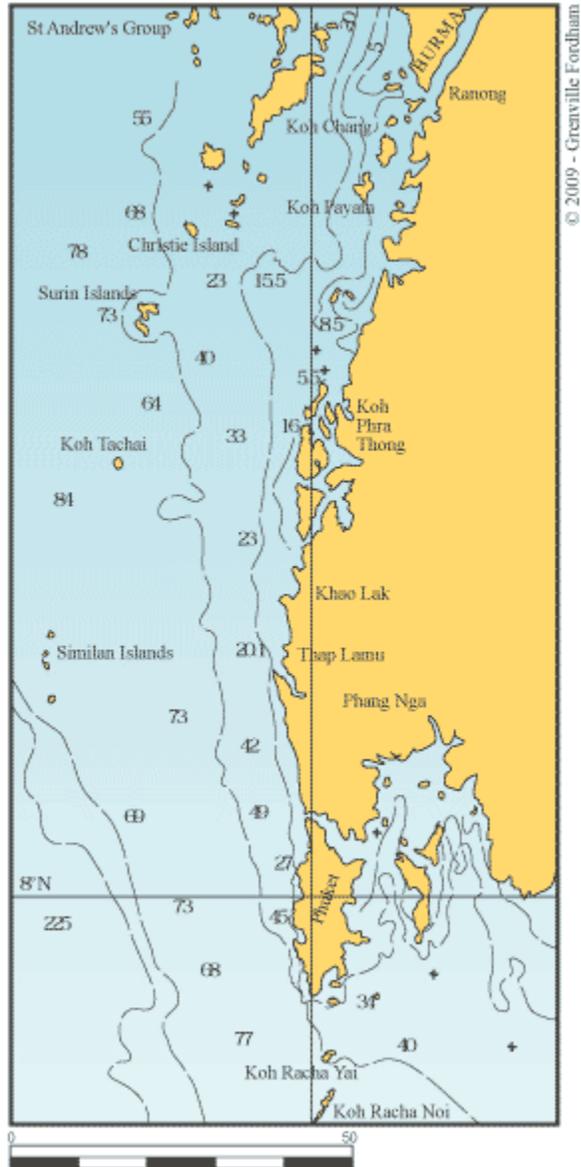


## THAILAND > PHUKET TO RANONG

[HTTP://WWW.SOUTHEASTASIAPILOT.COM/REGIONAL-CRUISE-GUIDE/PHUKET\\_TO\\_RANONG.HTM](http://www.southeastasiapilot.com/regional-cruising-guide/phuket_to_ranong.htm)

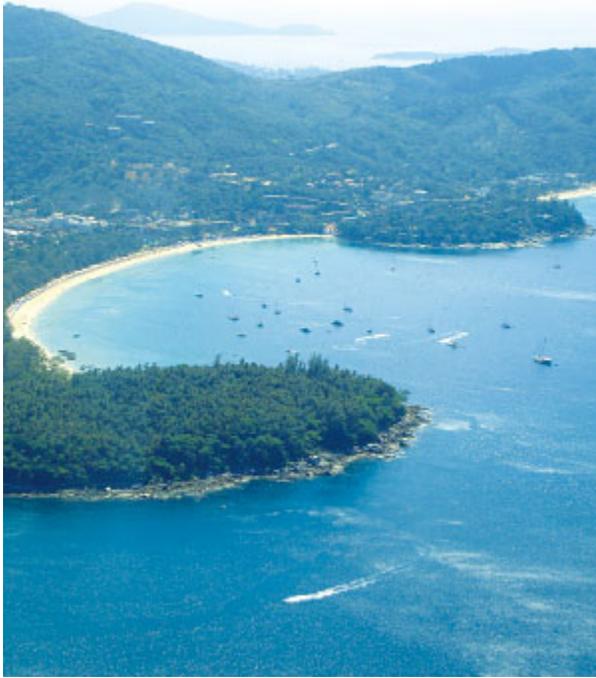
### PHUKET TO RANONG



[http://www.southeastasiapilot.com/regional-cruising-guide/phuket\\_to\\_ranong.htm](http://www.southeastasiapilot.com/regional-cruising-guide/phuket_to_ranong.htm)

This chapter covers the 2 degrees of latitude on the Thai coast from just south of Phuket to the border town of Ranong in the north. It encompasses the four west coast provinces of Phuket, Phang Nga, Takua Pa and Ranong.

Many diving companies use the port of Thap Lamu to service the offshore islands of the Similans and Surin. Ranong Town is the gateway to the Mergui Archipelago.



Kata & Kata Noi bays - Bill O'Leary

The west coast of Phuket offers some of the clearest water and most beautiful beaches in the region. Consequently, here you find the biggest concentration of hotels and beachside activity in the Andaman Sea. The advantages to any visiting yacht are obvious. But the lure of restaurants, nightlife, shopping, etc. may be offset by the buzzing jet skis and ski-boats.

In the southwest monsoon, the anchorages are totally exposed, with a short swell (as much as 3 metres), a beach break, and the occasional strong, onshore squall. There are no recommended anchorages on this coast during the southwest season.

Although the wind usually shifts to the northeast monsoon in late November, westerly squalls can come up as late as Christmas. In the northeast monsoon season, these anchorages offer perfect shelter in depths of 4-12 metres on a sandy bottom. (The best anchor is a Bruce or a Danforth, due to the harder sand lying just below the surface.)

The anchorages mentioned in this chapter are by no means the only ones on the west coast. Indeed, the entire west coast provides good shelter, generally speaking.

Later in the season, a low northwesterly ground swell can make the more open anchorages a little uncomfortable; though certainly not to the extent they become dangerous.

The northeast offshore breezes provide strong conditions in relatively calm seas, making for exhilarating sailing up and down the coast.

The waters between the southeast tip of Phuket and Koh Racha Yai are often confused in both seasons, particularly when you have the wind against the tide.





Silica white sand beaches – the Similans trademark photo by Bill O’Leary

The huge granite boulders that form the Similans are clear evidence of an entirely different geological process to that which left us with Phang Nga Bay.

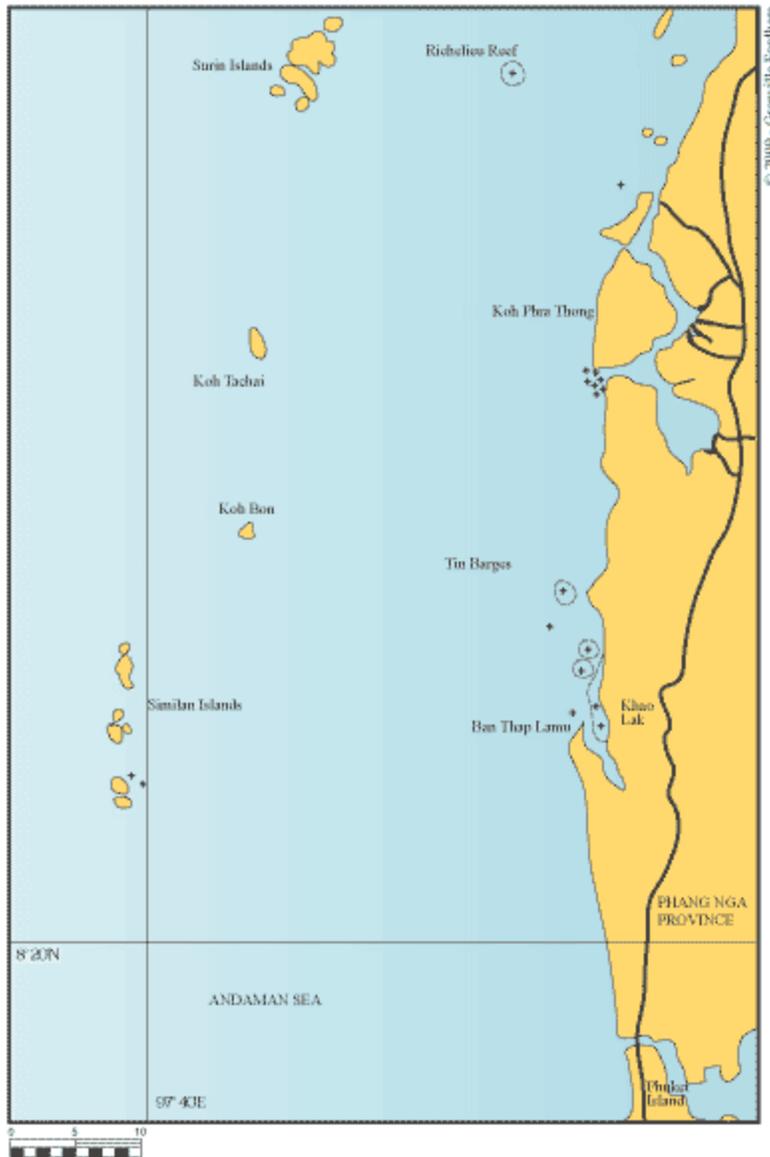
Smooth, weather-worn rocks the size of cars and houses tumble down the islands’ shorelines looking like some ancient giant’s left-behind marbles.

Continuing their interesting formations to the seabed, these rocks create a wondrous underwater world that helps support a sizeable liveaboard diving industry. Water clarity here is legendary, and the coral reefs are considered the most colourful and diverse in Thailand.

These offshore islands are therefore the first destination on the way to the Burmese dive sites and are constantly busy with liveaboard vessels during the high season.

- **BAN THAP LAMU & NORTH TO KHAO LAK**

## ISLANDS IN THE ANDAMAN N.W. OF PHUKET



### Koh Bon

Approximately 15 miles northeast of Koh Similan is Koh Bon. Surrounded by very deep water, anchoring is not possible.

On the southwest side, shelter can be found from the strong winds without dropping the pick. There is a cave that runs right through the island. Koh Bon is great spot for a swim to cool off.

### Similan Islands

This group of rocks and islands, 34 miles west of Thap Lamu and 60 miles northwest of Patong, was declared a marine National Park in 1982. Consequently it remains today largely undeveloped. The name is derived from the Malay 'sembilan', meaning 'nine', and refers to the nine main islands in the group. The islands are commonly named from 1 to 9, running south to north; Koh Similan itself, for example, is #8. Each also has a name, as we show on the charts, though even local fishermen might not recognise them. There are National Park ranger stations on islands #4 and #8.

The waters surrounding the Similans are teeming with tropical fish, colourful coral, and offer exceptional underwater visibility at most times of the year. The diving is certainly the best in Thailand, and compares favourably with some of the best in the world. The Similans, along with the islands and rocks to the north, are now a recognised feature on the world diving map, and are particularly noted for the regularity with which divers meet Whale Sharks and Mantas.

The submarine topography is especially interesting, due in part to huge granite boulders which not only litter the shorelines, but also lie in jumbled heaps beneath the waves to a depth of 35 metres plus. On the surface the boulders, together with the lush forest and silica white sand beaches, provide a peaceful refuge from the crowded beaches of Patong.

During the high season from November to April one can expect to find up to 50 dive boats seeking shelter in the bay at Koh Similan, and the mooring buoys are very difficult to obtain.

The continental drop-off is only a few kilometres west of the Similans. This attracts the occasional game fishing boat to venture out from Phuket, invariably seeking the legendary huge Black Marlin reputed to pass there.

The entire group is patrolled by National Park launches; officers collect 200 Baht per vessel and another 200 Baht for each passenger per day. Each SCUBA diver is charged 400 Baht per day.

*All commercial operators are required to purchase vouchers in advance for vessels and passengers, then report to National Park HQ at Koh Miang upon arrival to have them verified. This is currently not applied to independent yachts but may change in the future as Thailand becomes more eco-conscious of this tremendous tourist asset in the Andaman Sea. The rangers also check to ensure that no one is trolling, bottom fishing or spear fishing within a 5-mile limit of the islands. Hefty fines are levied for offenders.*

Basic accommodation is available at the HQ. For reservations, phone the Phang Nga Office (+66 0 76 959045 or +66 0 76 421365)

Cruising to and among the Similans is not recommended during the southwest monsoon season, due to heavy swells and squalls together with a scarcity of protected overnight anchorages.

The lighthouse on the main Similan Island is reliable and clearly visible for up to 15 miles when making an overnight passage to the islands.

- **KOH SIMILAN**
- **KOH PHRA THONG**
- **SURIN ISLANDS**
- **KOH TACHAI**
- **RANONG**