

PHUKET

ENCOUNTER

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Phuket Encounter

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Colour-Coding & Maps

Colour-coding is used for symbols on maps and in the text that they relate to (eg all eating venues on the maps and in the text are given a green knife and fork symbol). Each neighbourhood also gets its own colour, and this is used down the edge of the page and throughout that neighbourhood section.

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ADAMSKOL NICK

Adam Skolnick became travel obsessed while working as an environmental activist in the mid-'90s. A freelance journalist, he writes about travel, culture, health and the environment for Lonely Planet, *Men's Health*, *Travel + Leisure* and *Spa*. He has authored or coauthored 10 Lonely Planet guidebooks, including *Southeast Asia on a Shoestring*, *East Timor*, *Bali & Lombok, Indonesia*, *Thailand's Islands & Beaches* and the 1st edition of *Phuket Encounter*. Frequently visited, yet seldom understood, Phuket is one of his favourite destinations. But it isn't all about the beaches for him. It's the dusty sunset markets, narrow Old Town alleys, vibrant local communities and the Sultan of Breakfast. You can read more of his work at www.adamskolnick.com.



ADAM'ST HANKS

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PHOTOGRAPHER & CONTRIBUTING AUTHOR

After working several years at a stable job, Austin Bush made the questionable decision to pursue a career as a freelance photographer. This choice has since taken him as far as Pakistan's Karakoram Hwy and as near as Bangkok's Or Tor Kor Market. For samples of his work, check www.austinbushphotography.com. Austin also wrote the Gateway: Bangkok chapter for this edition of *Phuket Encounter*.

Our readers Many thanks to the travellers who wrote to us with helpful hints, useful advice and interesting anecdotes: Virginia Martinez, Varun Sood.

Cover photograph Beach in Phuket, Thailand, Jose Fuste Raga/Corbis **Internal photographs** p25 by Peter Charlesworth/OnAsia; p150 Yvan Cohen/OnAsia; p42 Richard Cracknell; p12 Paul Hampton/Dreamstime; p99 Mom Tri's Boathouse; p75, p122 Adam Skolnick; p146 Mike Thomas/iStockphoto; p89 Jim Wlech. All other photographs by Lonely Planet Images, and by Austin Bush except p143 Michael Aw; p133 Andrew Bain; p28 Paul Beinssen; p22 Anders Blomqvist; p21 Dominic Bonuccelli; p130 Sean Caffrey; p6, p135 Joe Cummings; p169 Greg Elms; p175 Dan Herrick; p137 Holger Leue; p26 Kraig Lieb.

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The diverse faces of Hat Karon (p68)

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Our authors are independent, dedicated travellers. They don't research using just the internet or phone, and they don't take freebies, so you can rely on their advice being well researched and impartial. They travel widely visiting thousands of places, taking great pride in getting all the details right and telling it how it is.



THIS IS PHUKET

Waking up with Phuket is glorious. Especially if you head to an out-of-the-way beach early enough to see the fishing boats return home. When the sun is just high enough to dance on the glassy Andaman Sea.

It's a scene that repeats itself up and down both coasts of this rather large tourist magnet. But it's the 17 west-coast beaches that lure 5.3 million tourists here annually. From the earthy, rocky coves on the south coast, to that wide web of lust that is pulsing Patong, to the gorgeous yet discreet north, Phuket's coastline contorts and twists into various shapes and sizes, giving each stretch of sand its own rhythm. But they all have one thing in common: their undeniable, soul-soothing beauty.

Phuket's rocky eastern shore is draped in thick mangroves and kissed by Ao Phang-Nga. With its luscious limestone islands guarding hidden lagoons fed by sea caves, and a network of underwater coral gardens where fluorescent schools of fish converge, this is Phuket's favourite aquatic playground.

The cultural heart is in Old Phuket, the stomping ground of the Baba people and a Sino-Portuguese treasure trove of mansions and shop houses, creaky teak shrines and local markets that unfurl alongside funky art galleries, hip restaurants, cafes and chic fashion boutiques. Elsewhere you can make offerings in Phuket's Buddhist temples and watch a white-robed flock stream into mosaic-domed mosques at sunset.

There's a lot to love about Phuket's appetite. With Thai curries and salads, a stunning selection of fresh seafood, upscale fusion kitchens and local roti and chicken stands, you have some eating to do. When the sun drops Phuket's wild side emerges. Think seedy go-go bars, stylish lounges, live rock and roll and slick nightclubs hosting international DJs.

And if you stay up all night, you may find your way back to that quiet beach. Where you can watch the sunrise until it's high enough to dance once more.

Top Make an offering at Wat Phra Thong (p115) **Bottom** Relax in the shade of a beach umbrella on Hat Kamala (p96)



Andaman Sea

