



Ko Samui & the Lower Gulf

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Why Go?

The Lower Gulf features Thailand's ultimate island trifecta: Ko Samui, Ko Pha-Ngan and Ko Tao. This family of spectacular islands lures millions of tourists every year with their powder-soft sands and emerald waters. Ko Samui is the oldest brother, with a business-minded attitude towards vacation. High-class resorts operate with Swiss efficiency as uniformed butlers cater to every whim. Ko Pha-Ngan is the slacker middle child with tangled dreadlocks and a penchant for hammock-lazing and all-night parties. Baby Ko Tao has plenty of spirit and spunk – offering high-adrenaline activities, including world-class diving and snorkelling.

Travellers seeking something a bit more off the radar than these island brethren will find a thin archipelago of pin-sized islets just beyond. Known as Ang Thong Marine National Park, this ethereal realm of greens and blues offers some of the most picture-perfect moments in the entire kingdom.

When To Go

From February to April celebrate endless sunshine after the monsoon rains have cleared. From June to August – which conveniently coincides with the Northern Hemisphere's summer holidays – are some of the most inviting months in the region, with relatively short drizzle spells.

From October to December torrential monsoon rains rattle hot-tin roofs like anxious fingernails, as room rates drop significantly to lure a few optimistic beach-goers

Best Places to Eat

- » Dining On The Rocks (p186)
- » Five Islands (p187)
- » The Whitening (p218)

Best Places to Stay

- » Six Senses Samui (p182)
- » Anantara Bo Phut (p183)
- » L'Hacienda (p183)
- » Sarikantang (p196)
- » The Sanctuary (p202)

Ko Samui & the Lower Gulf Highlights

- 1** Find Nemo in the technicolour kingdom off the coast of **Ko Tao** (p207).
- 2** Dimple virgin sands on the hidden bleach-blonde beaches of **Ang Thong Marine National Park**
- Thong Marine National Park** (p222).
- 3** String up a cotton hammock and toe the curline tide along a secluded beach on **Ko Pha-Ngan** (p192)
- 4** Purr like a kitten during a five-star massage session on **Ko Samui** (p174)
- 5** Join the masses of party pilgrims and trance the night away at the **Full Moon Party** (see boxed text, p194) in Hat Rin on Ko Pha-Ngan

