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Phuket & the Andaman Coast

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Best Places to Eat

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Best Places to Stay

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Why Go?

The Andaman is Thailand's turquoise coast; one of those places you see on a postcard that makes you want to quit your job and live in flip-flops...forever. For once, the beauty exceeds the hype. Pure-white beaches, some of the world's softest sand, cathedral-esque limestone cliffs and hundreds of jungle-covered isles extend down the Andaman Sea from the border of Myanmar to Malaysia. Phuket is the glitzy show-stealer, but head north and you'll uncover world-class dive sites, little-visited isles and Ranong's Thai-Myanmar flavour. To the south, you can lazily island-hop past karst towers down to the Malaysian border.

The catch? The Andaman Coast is no secret and its beaches are becoming increasingly crowded with backpackers, package tourists, high-end jet-setters and everyone in between. Flashy resorts are pushing out the bamboo shacks, and authenticity largely now hides in the backwaters. But your postcard dream is still here – if you're willing to look.

When to Go

➡ May to October is the rainy season. At this time, swells pick up, some islands become inaccessible, many resorts close and others slash their prices. In Phuket, Trang and other southern towns, the Vegetarian Festival is held in late September or October and involves parades of pierced-faced worshippers, endless firecrackers and fantastic meat-free food.

➡ December to January is the peak season for tourism and conditions are ideal for diving and snorkelling. Prices soar, transport links increase, and accommodation and transport must be booked well in advance.

Phuket & the Andaman Coast Highlights

1. Buzzing glassy waters between white-sand beaches in the **Trang Islands** (p684).
2. Exploring a heady mix of luxury lodgings and street-food treats on **Phuket** (p613).
3. Traipsing through the real-life Jurassic Park of **Khao Sok National Park** (p600).
4. Snorkelling over colourful corals off **Ko Lipe** (p697).
5. Scaling limestone cliffs above blissful jade waters in **Railay** (p655).
6. Blending into the laid-back beach scene on **Ko Lanta** (p670).
7. Floating in a cerulean sea, then