



# Ko Chang & Eastern Seaboard

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## Why Go?

Two islands – Ko Samet and Ko Chang – are the magnets that draw travellers to the eastern seaboard. The mainland has plenty of its own attractions, though, from international resorts like Pattaya to the charismatic, old-world charm of Chanthaburi.

Ko Samet, the nearest major island to Bangkok, is a flash-packer fave where visitors sip from vodka buckets and admire the fire jugglers or head for the quieter southern coves. Further down the coast is Ko Chang, Thailand's second-largest island. Spend your days diving, chilling on the west-coast beaches or hiking through dense jungle – then recover in time to experience the island's vibrant party scene.

Fewer travellers make it to Bang Saen, though its hip sea-front restaurants and long beach make it worth a stopover. Less serene is the raucous resort of Pattaya, with its hedonistic nightlife, numerous attractions and some of the best international cuisine in the kingdom.

## Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Relax (p101)
- ➔ Glass House (p110)
- ➔ Jep's Restaurant (p117)
- ➔ Chanthorn Phochana (p120)
- ➔ Pan & David Restaurant (p106)

## Best Places to Stay

- ➔ Bann Makok (p139)
- ➔ Rabbit Resort (p110)
- ➔ Samed Pavilion Resort (p115)
- ➔ Baan Luang Rajamaitri (p120)
- ➔ Koh Chang Sea Hut (p131)

## When to Go

- ➔ The best time to visit is the end of the rainy season (usually around November) but before the start of high season (December to March) when the weather is cool, the landscape green and rates reasonable. Peak season on Ko Chang is the Christmas and New Year holiday period. Crowds thin in March, the start of the hot season.

- ➔ The rainy season runs from May to October, though there are often days or weeks with no rain at all. A few businesses on Ko Chang close, and Ko Kut, Ko Mak and Ko Wai go into hibernation with many places shut. Your best bet during monsoon is Ko Samet, which enjoys its own microclimate and stays relatively dry.

## Bang Saen

POP 42, 843

As the closest beach to Bangkok, Bang Saen is a weekend favourite for those wanting to escape city life. Recent renovations to the beachfront and a slew of new boutique hotels have boosted its popularity. During the day, the 4km-long promenade is packed with tandem bicycles and seafood stalls. By night, the string of hip restaurants and bars facing the sea draw a student crowd.

## 👁 Sights & Activities

### Khao Sam Muk

HILL

(เขาสามมุก, Monkey Mountain) Hundreds of rhesus monkeys with greedy eyes and quick hands live on this small hill (avoid feeding them, as this just makes them more aggressive). Local folklore says the hill is named after a girl who took her life here after a doomed romance.

### Wang Saen Suk

BUDDHIST TEMPLE

(วังแสนสุข, Temple of Happiness; Soi 19, Sai 2; ☀ 8am-6pm) **FREE** Despite its name, this site contains gruesome Dante-esque statues of sinners being eternally punished. Half-human, half-animal creatures surround two huge figures by the entrance. On the flip side, there are statues depicting Thai fairy tales and more righteous behaviour. A nearby pond has giant catfish and turtles that can be fed (10B).

### Mangrove Forest

#### Conservation Centre

FOREST

(☎ 038 398268; Ang Sila; ☀ 8.30am-3.30pm) **FREE** This forest is such a well-kept secret, many locals don't even know it's here. A 2km-long wooden walkway gives access to the mangrove forest, which is mostly shaded. Look out for the crabs, cockles and mudfish. The forest is 3km north of Ang Sila's daily fish market, also worth exploring. Ang Sila is 6km north of Bang Saen.

### Wihahn Tepsatit Pra

#### Gitichairloem

CHINESE TEMPLE

(วิหารเทพสถิตพระกิตติเฉลิม; Ang Sila; ☀ 8am-5pm; **P**) **FREE** Created to mark the king's 72nd birthday, this four-storey Chinese temple is filled with intricate paintings and magnificent sculptures. Locals regularly come to make merit, and temple volunteers are happy to explain the rituals if you want to make your own offerings. The temple is on the main road in Ang Sila.

## Flight of the Gibbon

ZIPLINING

(☎ 089 970 5511; www.treetopasia.com; tours from 3000B) This zipline course extends 3km via 26 platforms through the forest canopy of Khao Kheow Open Zoo. It is an all-day tour with additional add-on activities, like a jungle obstacle course and a visit to the neighbouring zoo.

## 🛏 Sleeping

### Suk Jai Guesthouse

GUESTHOUSE \$

(☎ 086 839 1688; Soi 1, Bang Saen Sai 1; r 500B; **Ⓜ**) The rooms may be functional rather than fancy but you will be on the beach in only a few steps. There is no English sign so look for the red-and-white-tiled wall.

### Bangsaeen Heritage Hotel

HOTEL \$\$\$

(☎ 038 399899; www.bs-heritagehotel.com; 50 Sai 1; r incl breakfast 2942-11,181B; **Ⓜ** **Ⓜ** **Ⓜ**) A sign of Bang Saen's recent growth comes in the form of this beautiful resort, which fuses traditional Thai design with modern twists.

## 🍴 Eating & Drinking

### Summer's Corner

CAFE \$

(193/25 Th Long Had Bang Saen; dishes 100-150B; ☀ 10am-10pm; **Ⓜ** **Ⓜ**) Students from the local uni are regulars here thanks to cheery staff, creative dishes and cool decor.

### Relax

THAI \$\$

(Th Rob Khao Sum Muk; dishes 150-300B; ☀ 4pm-midnight) Aptly named, Relax lets its customers sit on the beach, sipping beer, listening to live music and snacking on grilled squid.

## 📍 Getting There & Away

Minivans and buses leave from either side of Th Sukhumvit, close to the main turn off into Bang Saen. Red *sǒng-tǎa-ou* (passenger pick-up trucks) go to Si Racha (15B, 20 minutes, 5.30am to 9pm).

DESTINATION	BUS	MINIVAN
<b>Bangkok's Eastern Bus Terminal (Ekamai)</b>	83B; 1hr; hourly	
<b>Bangkok's Northern Bus Terminal (Mo Chit)</b>	95B; 1½hr; hourly	120B; 1½hr; hourly; 5am-8.30pm
<b>Bangkok Suvarnabhumi International Airport</b>	110B; 1hr; hourly	
<b>Victory Monument (Bangkok)</b>	110B; 1½ hr; hourly	
<b>Ban Phe (for Ko Samet)</b>		180B; 2hr; 8am-5pm