

# Welcome to Thailand's Islands & Beaches

*Golden-sand bays, lazily swaying cotton hammocks, castle-like karsts emerging from sapphire seas: southern Thailand's coasts make your dreams of tropical paradise come true.*

## Seductive Beaches

Thailand's beaches are legendary. Slender palms angle over pearlescent sand, warm turquoise seas conceal technicolour coral gardens, and beach parties beckon revellers. With two long coastlines and jungle-topped islands anchored in azure waters, Thailand embraces the hedonist and the hermit, the luxury lover and the budget-savvy traveller. Scale Krabi's sheer sea cliffs, dive amid whale sharks off Ko Tao and the Surin Islands, toe the curling tide alongside Trang's gypsy fishermen, stroll Ko Lipe's dusty-white sands, feast at Hua Hin's sizzling seafood stalls or delight in unparalleled luxury Phuket digs.

## Hot & Spicy

Beaches may bring you to Thailand, but it's often the food that lures you back. Adored all over the world, Thai cuisine embodies Thai culture: generous and warm, outgoing and nuanced, refreshing and relaxed, delicate and colourful. With its tropical bounty, the varied national menu twirls around four fundamental flavours: spicy, sweet, salty, sour. And it's exquisitely hot and salty in the seafood-focused south. Dishes build on fresh local ingredients, from pungent lemongrass, juicy yellow mangoes and searing chillies to just-caught seafood, plump tofu and crispy fried chicken.

## Local Smiles

Whether it's the glimmering eye of the meditative *wai* (palms-together Thai greeting) or the joyful smirk of passers-by, it's hard not to be charmed by the Land of Smiles. Thailand has long been Southeast Asia's *mama-san*, inviting travellers from near and far to indulge in the kingdom's natural splendours. These days it isn't all perfectly paradisaical, but its original charm can still be found amid the islands and beaches, where a heady mix of sparkling seascapes, limestone towers and equatorial sunshine provides the perfect backdrop to welcoming family-run resorts.

## Outdoor Thrills

Thailand's natural beauty is even more intoxicating for the myriad ways it can be savoured. From white-knuckle jungle ziplines and river rafting to seaside horse rides and stand-up paddle boarding, Thailand's activities menu is as endlessly exhilarating as its culinary delights. Lovers of the outdoors can hike sultry jungles in Ko Chang and Khao Sok National Parks; kitesurf off Phuket, Krabi, Ko Samui and Hua Hin; yoga-up on Ko Lanta and Ko Samui; kayak past Ao Phang-Nga's limestone spires; rock climb Railay; and dive deep into the blue across the South. Post-adventure, let the region's brilliant massages twist and click you back into place.



## Why I Love Thailand's Islands & Beaches

By Isabella Noble, Writer

It's oh-so-obvious why Thailand's islands and beaches have superstar travel status, but what I really adore about this region is how it caters so well to all kinds. Flashpacking couple? Four-strong family? All-night partygoer? Off-the-beaten-track adventurer? Whatever your travel style, the glossy sands and heavenly waters of Thailand's islands and beaches have you covered. On every visit, I love exploring serene wát, admiring the Sino-Portuguese architecture of Phuket Town, eating my body weight in *kôw pàt pak* (veg fried rice) and remembering that there's nothing like soft sand, tropical breezes and friendly smiles to soothe the soul.

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