



Thailand's Islands & Beaches



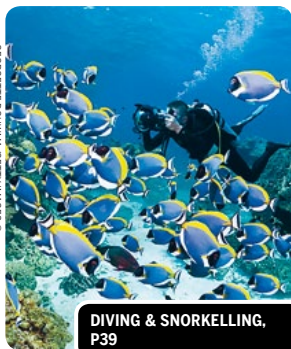
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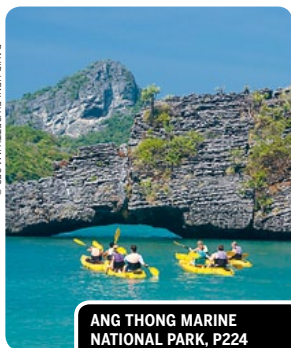
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PLAN YOUR TRIP

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Plan Your Trip

Itineraries



2
WEEKS

Essential Islands & Beaches

Consider this the itinerary for the uninitiated, and what a warm welcome you'll receive. Flying directly to the islands either internationally or from Bangkok will save you about a day's worth of travel at either end, so decide what's more valuable to you: beach time or money.

Do not pass 'Go', do not collect \$200, just head directly to **Phuket** and pick a beach from which to recover from jet lag for a day or two before starting your journey down one of the finest stretches of coast-

line in the world. Party-goers should base themselves in lively, sleaze-tinged Patong and lovers of quiet should consider the northern beaches, but there's a perfect seaside ambience for everyone on this huge island. For variety, Phuket Town brims with gorgeous, heritage Sino-Portuguese architecture. Once the first stages of relaxation have set in, hop on a boat over to **Ko Phi-Phi** and join the legions of bucket-wielding backpackers as they sit in the soft sands of the island's signature hourglass bays, or take a boat to the quieter east side of the island. Soak in the beauty of this place for two days until taking another





A woman on a long-tail boat, Ko Phi-Phi Leh (p327)

boat to **Ko Lanta**, with its flat vistas of tawny shoreline and lapping waves. Park yourself on the sand for a couple of days or rent a motorbike to tour the less toured parts of this Muslim fishing island. Take a bus and boat combo to **Krabi** where you'll enjoy the craggy spires of stone in **Railay**, a rock climber's paradise with some of the most awesome beaches and sea views on the planet.

Then it's time to switch coasts overland to choose one or two of the gulf's triad of idyllic islands – dive-centric **Ko Tao**, lazy, lie-in-the-sun **Ko Pha-Ngan** and luxury-focused **Ko Samui** – for around five days

before your flight out. If you're up for some serious partying, try to arrange your visit to coincide with Ko Pha-Ngan's notorious Full Moon Party, which comes roaring to life roughly once a month on the south-eastern shore.



4
WEEKS

The Full Monty

A month, you say? This is not just any old beach trip, but is enough time to really get to know southern Thailand's islands, beaches and jungle-clad parks.

Start your journey in Thailand's capital, **Bangkok**, before heading south. Your first stop is beach-laden **Ko Samet**, where Bangkokians and expats let loose on weekends. Follow the coast to sleepy **Trat** then hop on a boat for one of the Ko Chang archipelago's many islands. Ride elephants and hike the interior of jungle-topped **Ko Chang**, the largest and most developed island in the region. Hop over to flat but beachy **Ko Mak** or rugged **Ko Kut**. Next, backtrack by making your way to **Hua Hin**, the king's preferred holiday destination and home to a thriving local and expat scene with seafood markets and charming shanty piers. Hike the craggy hills of quiet **Khao Sam Roi Yot National Park** before making your way out to **Ko Tao**. Strap on your tank and dive with the fish below before moving over to **Ko Pha-Ngan** for some subdued beachside relaxing. **Ko Samui**, next door, offers a bit more variety and has a magical stash of holiday fodder to suit every budget and desire.

Swap coasts with a stop in **Khao Sok National Park**, known to be one of the oldest stretches of jungle in the world. Depending on how much time you have, take either a day trip or live-aboard diving excursion in **Khao Lak** to explore the diving treasures of the **Surin Islands** and **Similan Islands Marine National Parks**. Travel down the coast to **Phuket** and sample Thailand's finest iteration of luxury hospitality. Paddle around the majestic limestone islets of quiet **Phang-Nga** then sleep beneath the ethereal crags of **Ko Phi-Phi** after a spirited evening (no pun intended) of beach dancing and fire twirling. Scale the stone towers of **Railay** next door, zoom around the flat tracts of land on mellowed-out **Ko Lanta**, then hop on a boat bound for the **Trang Islands** – paradise found. One last archipelago awaits those who travel further south towards the Malaysian border – **Ko Lipe** is the island of choice for those looking for stunning beaches with a fun, social vibe.



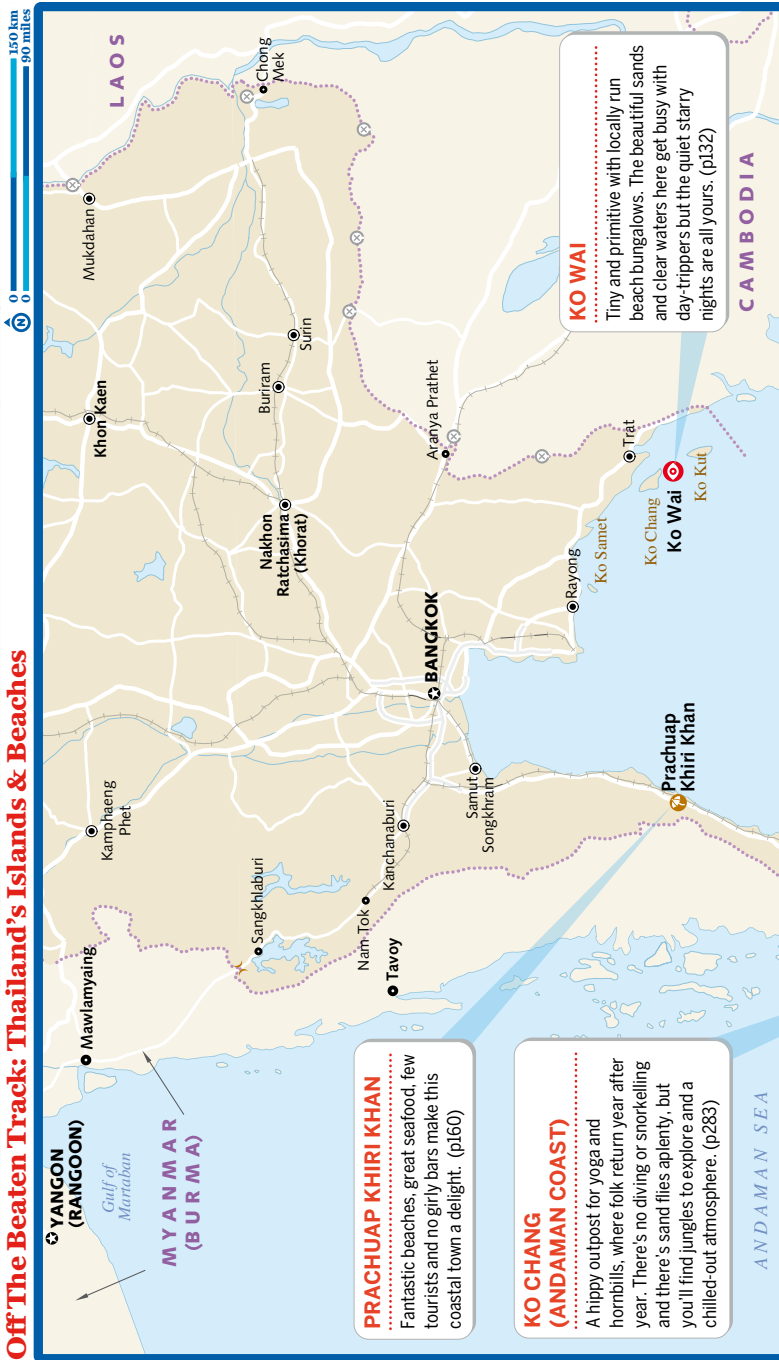
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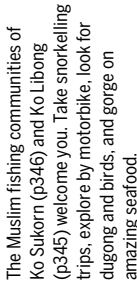


MATT COLOMBO GETTY IMAGES ©

Top: Khao Sok National Park (p288)
Bottom: Ko Ngai (p341), Trang Islands

Off The Beaten Track: Thailand's Islands & Beaches







OUR STORY

A beat-up old car, a few dollars in the pocket and a sense of adventure. In 1972 that's all Tony and Maureen Wheeler needed for the trip of a lifetime – across Europe and Asia overland to Australia. It took several months, and at the end – broke but inspired – they sat at their kitchen table writing and stapling together their first travel guide, *Across Asia on the Cheap*. Within a week they'd sold 1500 copies. Lonely Planet was born.

Today, Lonely Planet has offices in Franklin, London, Melbourne, Oakland, Beijing and Delhi, with more than 600 staff and writers. We share Tony's belief that 'a great guidebook should do three things: inform, educate and amuse'.

OUR WRITERS



Celeste Brash

Coordinating Author, *Ko Samui & the Lower Gulf* Celeste first arrived in Thailand as a student of Thai language, history and culture at Chiang Mai University. She's come back countless times since and has run the gamut from wild nights on Ko Pha-Ngan to weeks of silence at a Buddhist wát. Her writing has appeared in publications ranging from *Islands* magazine to newspapers and anthologies.

She's contributed to around 50 Lonely Planet guides but her heart is irrevocably stuck on Southeast Asia. When not in exotic places, she and her family live in Portland, Oregon. Find her on the web at www.celestebtrash.com.



Austin Bush

Bangkok, *Food & Drink*, *Food Spotter's Guide* Austin Bush came to Thailand in 1999 as part of a language study programme hosted by Chiang Mai University. The lure of city life, employment and spicy food eventually led Austin to Bangkok. City life, employment and spicy food have managed to keep him there since.

A native of Oregon, Austin is a writer and photographer who often focuses on food. Samples of his work can be seen at www.austimbushphotography.com.



David Eimer

Ko Chang & the Eastern Seaboard*, *Hua Hin & the Upper Gulf A decade of visiting Thailand in search of beaches and fine food prompted David to relocate to Bangkok in 2012. Since then, his work as a journalist for a variety of newspapers and magazines has taken him from the far south of Thailand to its northernmost extremities, with many stops in between. Originally from London, David spent seven years living in Beijing, and another five in LA, prior to moving to Bangkok.

He has contributed to 11 Lonely Planet books.



Adam Skolnick

Phuket & the Northern Andaman Coast*, *Ko Phi-Phi & the Southern Andaman Coast Adam Skolnick writes about travel, culture, health, sports, human rights and the environment for Lonely Planet, *Outside*, *Travel & Leisure*, Salon.com, BBC.com and ESPN.com. He has co-authored more than 20 Lonely Planet guidebooks, and on this research trip he drove more than 3000 kilometres and hopped on more than 50 long-tails. His debut novel, *Middle of Somewhere*, is set to be published in 2014. You can read more of his work at www.adamskolnick.com. Find him on Twitter and Instagram (@adamskolnick).

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