



Phuket & the Northern Andaman Coast

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Why Go?

Whether you've got designer-villa wishes, bamboo-hut desires or something in between, the northern Andaman coast serves it up hot with a shot of turquoise ocean to wash it down. Phuket, on the southern extremity, is the audacious starlet of the region, flaunting glitzy five-star hotels that grace ultrawhite beaches. Here, sleep is an afterthought to parties, water sports and spa pampering. Ranong, to the far north, is a mix of Burmese and Thais who eke out a living in an up-and-coming frontier that's opening more and more to tourism. Travel the 300km between, and you'll see it all: Muslim and Moken stilt villages and vertical limestone karsts, jaw-dropping resorts, and bays abuzz with jet skis, tangled mangrove swamps and skittish clouds of swallows.

Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Siam Indigo (p253)
- ➔ Suay (p252)
- ➔ Rum Jungle (p258)
- ➔ Ban Ra Tree (p276)
- ➔ Pad Thai Shop (p264)
- ➔ Kopitiam by Wilai (p251)

Best Places to Stay

- ➔ Six Senses Hideaway (p299)
- ➔ Elephant Hills (p289)
- ➔ Sabai Corner (p260)
- ➔ Pullman (p275)
- ➔ Dewa (p276)

When to Go

- ➔ May to October is the rainy season. That's when the surf kicks up, many resorts close and others slash their prices.
- ➔ The Vegetarian Festival is held in late September or October and involves parades of pierced, penitent worshippers, endless firecrackers and great meatless food.
- ➔ December to January is peak season for tourism. Prices soar, and accommodation and transport need to be booked well in advance.

Phuket & the Northern Andaman Coast Highlights

- 1 Staying at an over-the-top luxury spa resort on **Phuket** (p243)
- 2 Enjoying unmentionably wild nights in **Patong** (p264)
- 3 Searching for monkeys in the Jurassic Park of **Khao Sok** (p288)
- 4 Kayaking the surreal green waters of **Ao Phang-Nga** (p295) to empty coves
- 5 Catching up on your reading on a quiet **Ko Phayam beach** (p281)
- 6 Exploring the enchanting Sino-Portuguese architecture of the newly restored cafes, shops and galleries around **Phuket Town** (p249)
- 7 Snorkelling, diving or simply exploring the psychedelically green and blue **Surin** and **Similan Islands** (p285)
- 8 Beach-bumming, cycling and relaxing to the max on **Ko Yao Noi** (p298)

