

# KOH SAMUI

Ko Samui, Thailand's second most popular island destination, is located in the Gulf of Thailand roughly 700km south of Bangkok and 80km from Thailand's southern coast. Samui is the third largest island in Thailand and the largest in an archipelago of more than 80 islands that includes the Ang Thong National Marine Park, a kayaking paradise just a day trip from Ko Samui. The beaches of Chaweng and Lamai are bustling beach towns with fabulous beach resorts, internationally acclaimed restaurants, and world-class nightclubs. Activities around Ko Samui include cooking courses, yoga instruction, Muay Thai training, scuba diving and even golf. While there are a few quieter beaches that are ideal for relaxation, particularly those that feature some of the finest 5-star resorts in the world, and some that exude old world charm, such as Bo Phut, home to converted, old Chinese shop houses, Ko Samui has developed into its own style of island paradise, retaining much of its natural beauty while offering nearly every imaginable activity or service for the ultimate beach holiday.



1. Hat Chaweng
2. Hat Lamai
3. Hat Maenam, Hat Bophut and Hat Bang Rak
4. Laem
5. Hat Taling Ngarn
6. Hin Ta and Hin Yai
7. Namtok Na Mueang
8. Na Thon

## TOURIST ATTRACTIONS IN KO SAMUI



### BEACHES

#### HAT CHAWENG

Situated on Samui's east coast, this is the island's longest and most beautiful beach, a 6km strip of powder-soft sand fronted by crystal-clear water. At Hat Chaweng, there is plenty of accommodation, ranging from five-star resorts to simple bamboo bungalows. In the day time, Hat Chaweng is the centre for water sports such as windsurfing and jet-skiing but also a great social scene at night, when the dance clubs pulsate to the latest rhythms.

#### HAT LAMAI

Also on the east coast, just south of Hat Chaweng, the playful waters of Hat Lamai always attracts surfers, as they run a little deeper than any other beaches in Ko Samui. Behind the beach are several spas where visitors can treat themselves to an herbal sauna, a relaxing Thai massage, or even a mud facial.





### BEST TIME TO TRAVEL: DECEMBER TO AUGUST

**Koh Samui weather comes in three distinct seasons:** dry, hot and rainy. Thailand is situated between the Tropic of Cancer and the Equator, making its climate warm and humid all year round. The humidity level is generally between 70 and 85 per cent, and the temperatures averages at around 28°C. Located in the Gulf of Thailand, Koh Samui offers all that vacationers from cooler temperate countries could dream of regarding weather conditions. They are generally good year round, and the one thing visitors rarely feel is cold. The optimum weather conditions can be enjoyed between December and August.



#### HAT MAENAM, HAT BOPHUT AND HAT BANG RAK

These are all located along the north coast, and are ideal places for those who want to get away from it all. Bang Rak is often called 'Big Buddha Beach' because of the huge Buddha image at the eastern end of the beach which is particularly impressive at sunset.



#### SOUTH AND WEST COAST BEACHES

On the south and west coasts are very isolated beaches not linked by the island's ring road, yet access is easy enough for those in search of tranquillity. At Laem Set in the south, the sea is too shallow for swimming. However, the huge smooth boulders on the beach and the coconut palms leaning over at impossible angles make it look spectacular.

In the island's southwest, Hat Taling Ngarn may not be quite as perfect as Hat Chaweng, but it has a long strip of sand that is often deserted and makes an ideal spot for a beach ramble. At the northern end of the bay, the luxurious Ban Taling Ngarn Resort has several swimming pools and villas set on a hill with great views of the beach.



### SPORTS ACTIVITIES

With such clear waters and an abundance of marine life, water sports are very popular on Samui and the hottest one is diving. Around a dozen dive companies based on the island offer a chance for experienced divers to join them and for beginners to learn how to dive, all of which can be arranged through the hotels and bungalows. If diving sounds too challenging, then snorkelling is your second choice. Join a trip to one of the nearby coral reefs, put on a mask, snorkel and fins, then go floating above the reefs and discover colourful fish. For those who would rather keep their head above water, then maybe sea kayaking is the sport for them. Once they have mastered how to propel this small light craft, they can explore the shoreline in perfect peace. For more thrills, try windsurfing, jet-skiing or paragliding, and feel the tropical breeze. For those who are watershy, just hang around the beach in the evening and join in one of the spontaneous games of beach volleyball, or even Takro, a traditional Thai take on the game, using feet, elbows and shoulders. If exploring the island's interior sounds like fun, hire a 4WD vehicle and try off-road driving on the bumpy trails leading to the highlands.



## OTHER ATTRACTIONS

#### HIN TA AND HIN YAI

Meaning 'Grandfather and Grandmother Rocks', these unusual rock formations were named after their similarity to sexual organs, and they are located at the south end of Hat Lamai. The site is one of Ko Samui's most photographed features.

#### NA THON

Na Thon is the island's main town and port, situated on the west coast, and is constantly bustling with visitors arriving and departing. This is the place to go shopping for beach gear or simply watch the daily activity of the port from a street cafe.

## ATTRACTIONS

### MU KO ANGTHONG NATIONAL MARINE PARK

Situated about 35km west of Ko Samui, this archipelago of 42 islands fits everyone's image of a tropical paradise, with huge limestone rocks covered in virgin rainforest rising out of the aquamarine waters. Most people come here for a day trip tour from Ko Samui, which is easy to organise. There is a fantastic viewpoint on Ko Wua Talap, just above the park headquarters, looking out over the uninhabited, pristine islands. Trips around the park usually include a visit to a delightful concealed lagoon on Ko Mae Ko, as well as the opportunity to paddle a sea kayak around the strange limestone formations.



### KO TAO

'Tao' means turtle, and the island is named for its shape when seen from out in the waters of the Gulf. Smaller than Samui and Pha-ngan, Ko Tao lies about 40km northwest of Ko Pha-ngan, and is also easily accessible from Chumphon. The island is particularly popular among divers, and has a reputation for some of the most exciting underwater excursions in the entire Gulf. Several dive companies based at Mae Hat, the island's only town, can arrange underwater excursions for beginners and experienced divers.

There are many peaceful and idyllic beaches on the island such as Hat Sai Ri, the island's longest beach on its west coast, Hat Chalok Ban Kao and Hat Sai Daeng on the south coast. There is also a unique geological phenomenon at Ko Nang Yuan, a tiny cluster of islets just off the northwest coast of Ko Tao, where stunning causeways of sand join the islands, offering visitors the choice of two seas to swim in.

## POPULAR ACTIVITIES

### MUAY THAI OR 'THAI BOXING'

Muay Thai has become a very popular sport and hobby all over the world as people find it challenging and it is a sport that keeps you in shape. Samui has quite a handful of well-maintained gyms that are devoted to Muay Thai training. They offer training sessions for people of all ages (usually from about 10 years old up) and gender.



### SCUBA DIVING

Diving in Ko Samui is yet another reason to visit this tropical wonderland. With clear blue waters, warm waters and amazing marine life, it's no surprise that the area is an extremely popular destination for both experienced divers and those wanting to take up the sport. Short, accredited dive courses are readily available and prices are very reasonable compared to most countries. There's a wide range of dive shops offering all levels of instruction and if you look around, it's not difficult to find courses conducted in the language of your choice (except maybe Inuit). In addition to the affordable prices, one of the obvious reasons dive courses are so popular here is the great locations from which they are conducted -- your instruction is usually right by the beach in the shallow, calm waters off Chaweng, Coral Cove or several other places around the island. The water visibility is anywhere between 3-30m. The currents around Samui itself are variable, but usually not too strong except on the west coast during the monsoon months. Most diving for novices is only a short boat ride away, while world-class sites for more advanced divers can be found less than two hours away at places like Ang Thong National Marine Park and Sail Rock. Whether you're considering trying the sport for the first time or are a serious enthusiast, you won't be disappointed by either the quality or quantity of diving around Samui, aptly called a diver's paradise.

## ACTIVITIES

### ZIPLINING

For those unfamiliar with this thrilling activity and wonder what a zip line is, here's your chance to find out. Riders are hooked onto a line (a steel cable) that is attached to high trees and towers above the jungle, and then they get to zip along the line using nothing but the force of gravity. The ride can be fast or slow, depending on the position of the stations. At Ko Samui Canopy Adventures, visitors can get to glide speeds nearing 80kmph with breathtaking waterfall cable rides. Modern safety equipment ensures that this is both safe, and environmentally friendly. An activity suitable for all the family including kids aged 7 and up.

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