



◆ Surat Thani ◆

(Including Koh Samui, Koh Hengan and Koh Tao)



The largest province of the South located 685 kilometers from Bangkok is Surat Thani the province with a name that literally means "City of the Good People". A former capital of the Srivijaya Empire, the province covers an area of approximately 12,891 square kilometers. Surat Thani Province borders the Gulf of Thailand to the north and east, Chumphon Province to the north, Nakhon Si

Thammarat and Krabi Provinces to the south, Phang-Nga and Ranong Provinces to the west and Nakhon Si Thammarat Province to the east.



High plateaus and forested mountains are located to the west of the province, while there are low basins in the center and along the eastern coast. This topography has created 14 river basins including Tapee, Pum Daunt, Tha Thong, Tha Krajai, Chaiya, and Tha Chang which are the most important basins. All rivers in Surat Thani flow east of the province to the Gulf of Thailand



The numerous islands along the coast makes Surat Thani (often known as Surat in short) a perfect hideaway for vacationers from around the world. The ideal destination for many is the Penang-sized **Koh Samui**, Thailand's third largest island, and its neighbor **Koh Pha-ngan** a celebrated island that hosts the biggest beach full moon party. North of Koh Pha-ngan is **Koh Tao**, renowned for its excellent coral reefs. To top it all is the dazzling 250-square-kilometer Ang Thong Marine National Park, where a stunning archipelago awaits to greet visitors with their charming palm-fringed beaches, crystal clear

water and colorful coral reefs. The best time to enjoy one of these islands to the fullest is from April to November.



History of Surat Thani



Surat Thani is a city with a long history. Archeologists believe that it was once a community of prehistoric tribes of indigenous people including the Saemang and original Malays who built their communities on the Tapee River Basin and Ao Ban Don. Later on, the Indians migrated into the area and gradually spread out their culture, as evidenced in the discovery of ruins of ancient communities in Tha Chana and Chaiya Sub-districts



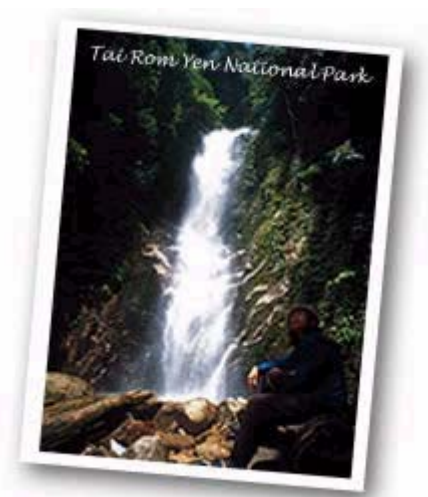
In the 13th century, the city became a part of and, as some historians might claim, a center of the glorious Srivijaya Empire the kingdom that dominated the whole Malay Peninsula and much of Java. It was during this period that Mahayana Buddhist reached its height of influence. The empires

Attractions in Surat Thani

❖ Amphoe Ban Na San

❖ Tai Rom Yen National Park

The park covers areas in Ban Na San, Kanchanadit and Wiang Sa Districts. With a total area of 265,625 rai of land, the zone was declared a national park on 31 December 1991. The park is covered by lush virgin forests where rare plants can be found. The mountain peak, covered by mist all year round, is the origin of the Tapi River. Wild animals such as elephants, mountain goats, tapirs, chevrotains, wild boars, etc. can also be spotted here. Interesting attractions include Tat Fa Waterfall, Muang Thuat Waterfall, Khamin Cave naturally decorated with stalactites and stalagmites, and Camp 180 as well as Camp 357, which once were the base of the Communist Party of Thailand.



❖ Amphoe Chaiya

❖ Ban Phumriang

A small handicraft village located approximately 6 kilometers east of Chaiya, Ban Phumriang is notable for its gold and silver brocade silk cloth and jute head gear.

❖ Chaiya National Museum

Adjacent to Phra Borom That Chaiya is a charming petite museum. Consisting of two buildings, the museum features prehistoric and historic artifacts in the vicinity, local handicrafts and a shadow puppet. In addition, artifacts from Dvaravati, Lop Buri, Sukhothai and Ayutthaya eras are also put on display. The museum is open from Tuesday to Friday from 9 a.m. until 4 p.m. Call 0-7743-1066 for more information. Admission fee is 30 baht / person.

❖ Folklore Museum

Located approximately 300 meters from Chaiya City, at the intersection of Highway No. 41 and the side road of Wat Kaew (or Wat Long), the museum features numerous interesting historical objects. They include Bone China, pottery, shadow puppets, old instruments and a ceramic opium pillow. Admission fee is by donation. The Museum is open daily from 8.00 a.m. until 9.00 p.m.

❖ Laem Pho

Located approximately 2 kilometers along Phumriang Beachside Road is Laem Pho a cape that is famous for its fresh and excellent seafood. Highly recommended is Hoi Kao (white mussel), a local delicacy which can only be found here. To get to Laem Pho by public transportation, either takes Surat Thani Ranong or Surat Thani Chumphon buses. From Chaiya City, take Chaiya Phumriang buses.

❖ Phra Borom That Chaiya

Located approximately 4 kilometers northeast of Suan Mokkh, or approximately 54 kilometers north of the provincial capital. This ancient chedi houses Buddha relics, which are highly revered by local residents. The restored Phra Borom That Chaiya serves as a fine example of Srivijaya's influence on religious architecture and is believed to have been built more than 1,200 years ago. Along the courtyard of the chedi are several sculptures and Buddha images.

❖ Wat Suan Mokkhaphalaram

Commonly known as Suan Mokkh (Garden of Liberation), the modern forest monastery was founded in 1959 by the late Ajahn Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, one of Thailand's most famous monks. This 150-acre forest temple is formerly called Wat Than Nam Lai, and is located beside Highway No. 41, approximately 50 kilometers north from the Surat City. (or at kilometer 134 marker). Suan Mokkh is set in a serene ambience conducive for meditation or contemplation of the philosophy of life. The temple itself is nothing but a combination of natural sandy grounds and rocks, dotted with trees. There are no elaborate stupas and chapels like other temples, only a place that keeps one in truly in tune with nature.



Buddhadasa Bhikkhus philosophy is universal in nature. It's the combination of Zen, Taoist and Christian elements with the Theravada Buddhism. That's why his teaching has attracted many Thais and foreigners, especially those who are eager to look inward and realign themselves with nature.

The 'Spiritual Theatre' is an interesting attraction for casual visitors. It features art objects, drawings and poems related to Buddhas' teachings in which

Buddhadhasa Bhikkhu describes a pictorial interpretation of Dharma. The building also exhibits a diverse mixture of Thai, Egyptian, Chinese, Indian, Japanese, Tibetan and European-style murals and sculptures.

❖ **Amphoe Don Sak**

❖ **Ferry Pier**

The Pier is located at Kula Cape, approximately 6 kilometers from the District Administrative Office. This big pier provides ferry services for visitors to Koh Samui.

❖ **Namtok Vibhavadi**

This medium-sized waterfall is the local residents socializing venue on weekends. With rustic surroundings, the waterfall is located 38 kilometers east of the provincial capital along Highway No. 401, approximately at the kilometer 60-61 markers before the Don Sak intersection. Visitors can take either Surat Thani Nakhon Si Thammarat or Surat Thani Don Sak buses to get to the waterfall.



to

❖ **Wat Khao Suwan Pradit**

Luang Pho Choi, one of southern Thailand's most revered Buddhist monks, founded this monastery. The 45-meter hilltop pagoda contains Buddha relics brought from Wat Phra Kiat, Hod District, Chiang Mai. From the pagoda, visitors can get a panoramic view of the coast. The temple is located approximately 1 kilometer from Don Sak District, along the Surat Thani Nakhon Si Thammarat (Highway No. 401).

❖ **Amphoe Kanchanadit**

❖ **Monkey School**

Mr. Somporn Saekow, a person who believes that monkeys can be trained in order to use their capacities to the fullest, established this training college for monkeys. Students are mostly local pig-tailed monkeys from the forests. Monkey owners must pay a tuition fee, which is inclusive of food and accommodation. Classes of 3-6 months are classified into three levels, beginners, intermediate and advance. Graduate monkeys are trained to pick only ripened coconuts from the trees. To get there, take Surat Thani Nakhon Si Thammarat (Highway No. 401) and drive for approximately 7 kilometers. Upon approaching a junction, turn right to the dirt road and proceed for approximately 2 kilometers. The college is located on the right side. Interested visitors are advised to check with local travel agents for full details. Alternatively, call the College at 0 7722 7351 for more details.



❖ Oyster Farms

Surat Thani is famous for oyster cultivation and the sizes of the oysters farmed here are substantially larger than those found elsewhere. Several medium to small-sized farms are located around the estuarine areas of the Kradae Canal and the Thong River. These farms can be reached by boat from the Tha Thong Quay side within 30 minutes.

❖ Amphoe Ko Pha-ngan

❖ Ao Si Thanu

Located at Moo 8, Pha-ngan District, approximately 10 kilometers from the District Office is the one of the most beautiful beach of Koh Pha-ngan. To reach this beach, take a Songthaew from Thong Sala Pier for a fare of 40 baht / trip / person.

❖ Ao Thian

Part of Koh Tao, Ao Thian can be seen from a viewing point located on the hilltop of Ta To Cape

❖ Ao Thong Nai Pan

Located at Moo 5, Ban Tai Sub-district, approximately 23 kilometers from the District Office is the second most beautiful beach on Koh Pha-ngan. To reach this beach, either takes a boat or Songthaew from Thong Sala Pier. The songthaew fare is 80 baht / trip / person while that of chartered boats is up to negotiation.

❖ Ban Chalok Lam

The village is situated along the bay to the north of Pha-ngan Island. The area is lined with shops selling merchandise and souvenirs with the most popular item being dried squid. There are Songthaew services from Thong Sala Pier with a fare of 50 baht / trip / person.

❖ Hat Rin

Located at Moo 4, Ban Tai Sub-district, approximately 12 kilometers from the District Office is the most beautiful and famous beach on Koh Pha-ngan Hat Rin. The white sandy beach stretching for 2 kilometers is accessible by a long-tailed boat from Thong Sala Pier and Ban Kai. The fare is approximately 30 baht and 20 baht respectively. The Full-moon Party, with over a thousand party lovers in attendance is held on this beach.

❖ Koh Nang Yuan

The island is nothing but a group of three small islands located to the north of Ko Tao. Offering stunning and breathtaking views, the islands are connected by a three-way stretch of pure white powdery beach.

The rich marine life at Koh Nang Yuan is similar to that of Koh Tao. With a wide variety of coral formations, the island is also an ideal diving and snorkeling spot. Accommodations and facilities are available with daily boat service to and from Koh Tao.

◆ Koh Pha-ngan

Another ideal destination for travelers who prefer less crowded, more private beaches set in a laid-back atmosphere. However, this is also a very hip place to be as the island hosts the world famous, and perhaps the biggest beach party on this planet the full moon party on Hat Rin.

Covering an area of 191 square kilometers, Koh Pha-ngan is located 20 kilometers directly north of Koh Samui, or approximately 100 kilometers from Surat. The best time to visit Koh Pha-ngan is from February to September. Interesting attractions include secluded and virgin beaches around the island, a hilltop temple called Wat Khao Tham which is ideal for meditation, Than Sadet Waterfall, and the Namtok Phaeng National Park. Renting a motorcycle to explore the island is recommended as there is a lot to see and do.



Boat Services to Koh Pha-ngan

From Koh Samui

There are approximately 10 daily transfers to Koh Pha-ngan. Boats depart between 7.30 a.m. and 4.30 p.m. The trip takes approximately 30 minutes to an hour, depending on weather conditions. Boats leave from Thong Sala Pier and Hat Rin on Koh Pha-ngan to Koh Samui Pier including Na Thon Pier, Mae Nam and the Big Buddha. The fare is approximately 115 baht to 250 baht / trip / person.

From Surat Thani

Surat Thani Pier operates a minimum of 6 daily departures to Koh Pha-ngan. Boats leave from 7.00 a.m. to 10.00 p.m. and arrive at Tha Sala Pier on Koh Pha-ngan. The fare ranges from 200 baht to 370 baht / trip / person.

From Koh Tao

Approximately 6 daily departures from Thong Sala Pier to Koh Tao are provided. They leave from 8.30 a.m. to 1.00 p.m. The fare ranges from 180 baht to 350 baht.

Getting around Koh Pha-ngan

Traveling around the island by rented motorcycle from bungalows is recommended. The cost is approximately 200 baht / day. For those who prefer truly Thai-style transportation, songthaew services are also available. The fare is 50 baht from Thong Sala Pier to any place on the island. Exceptions are on routes to Ban Khai (30 baht) and Ao Thong Nai Pan (80 baht). Car rental service is also available at approximately 1,000 baht / day.

◆ Koh Tae Nai

A charming island with jungle-covered hills, a long stretch of golden sandy beach and colorful coral reefs, Koh Tae Nai is located near Koh Pha-ngan, and can be reached just 5 minutes by chartered boats. Accommodations are available but are mostly middle to top-end.

◆ Koh Tao

A small isolated island situated 45 kilometers to the north of Koh Pha-ngan, Koh Tao was once used as a prison for instigators of the Bavordet coup. The island is famous for its rich sea coral reefs and inhabitants and secluded beaches set in a laid-back atmosphere. Ideal for snorkeling and diving, there are numerous diving schools scattered around the island that have always attracted diving students. With exceptional underwater visibility, Koh Tao is one of Thailand's finest offshore diving spots with main attractions such as White Rock, Shark Island, Chumphon Pinnacle, Green Rock, Sail Rock and Southwest Pinnacles. The stunning viewing point is a spot where visitors can see three connecting beaches stretching beautifully to the horizon.

Apart from Koh Pha-ngan, Ko Tao can be reached either from Surat Thani or Chumphon Provinces. Accommodations in the form of bungalows, at various price ranges, are available. The best time to visit Ko Tao is from February to April. Traveling on the island is possible by boat, car or motorcycle.

❖ **Wat Khao Tham**

Located on the hilltop of Khao Kao Haeng, Moo 1, Bang Tai Sub-district, the monastery is ideal for meditation amidst the unspoiled nature. Foreigners mostly visit the compound to learn how to practice meditation between September and November. To reach the monastery, take a chartered car or rent a motorcycle at Thong Sala Pier and drive for approximately 3 kilometers. From the entrance of the temple, drive approximately 1 kilometer up to the compound.

❖ **Wat Maduea Wan**

Apart from beaches, sand and sea, Koh Pha-ngan also has cultural attractions such as Wat Maduea Wan, located at Moo 3, where the replica of the Lord Buddha's Footprint is enshrined on the hilltop Mondop. To reach the temple, take a songthaew from for a total distance of approximately 3 kilometers for a fare of 20 baht / trip / person.

❖ **Amphoe Ko Samui**



❖ **Animal Farms and Shows**

Phang Ka Snake Farm: At Tambon Taling Ngam, has a daily show at 11 a.m. and 2 p.m., 250 baht per person, Tel: 0-7742-3247.

Samui Buffalo Village: At Tambon Na Mueang, has a daily show at 10 a.m. and 3 p.m., 350 baht per person, Tel: 0-7741-8680.

Butterfly Garden and Honey Farm: In the south of the island, open daily from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., 120 baht per person, Tel: 0-7742-4020-21.

Monkey Training Center : At Tambon Bo Phut, has daily shows at 10.30 a.m., 2 p.m. and 4 p.m., 150 baht per person, Tel: 0-7724 -5140.

Samui Aquarium and Tiger Zoo: At Ao Laem Set, opens daily from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., 250 baht per person, Tel: 0-7742-4017-8.

Crocodile Farm: Near Na Mueang Waterfall, daily shows at 11 a.m. and 2 p.m., 250 baht per person.

Buffalo fighting : This is an exciting bout that attracts a huge crowd, both local residents and tourists. Held monthly, it serves as a traditional festival on the island.

Monkey & Elephant Shows: At the show, it is actually possible to see how monkeys collect coconuts and present their other exceptional abilities. In addition, visitors will be impressed by the intelligence and loveliness of elephants that can perform many lovely tricks, or even play football. On Koh Samui, the coconut island, the monkey is considered man's best friend. Local people have used monkeys to climb up and pick the ripe coconuts for centuries. At present, monkeys are not just good at picking coconuts; they are also good at entertaining.

Snake show: A stunning show that is not suitable for a people with heart diseases. The show offers a thrilling experience especially when the poisonous reptiles are skillfully caught by a handler with bare hands. Shows feature snakes indigenous to Koh Samui as well as centipedes, scorpion and cock fighting shows.

Samui Crocodile Farm: Siam crocodiles, Caimans, Saltwater crocodiles, snakes, lizards, monkeys and many others are gathered here for entertainment.

◆ **Ban Lamai Cultural Hall**

Serving as a folk museum, the Hall houses many local ancient objects. Interesting objects on display include earthenware, household utensils, hunting weapons and equipment used in coconut planting.

◆ **Ban Thale**

This is the oldest house on the island which was built approximately 150 years ago of teakwood without any nails. In addition, there the house displays elaborative wood carvings.

◆ **Bungee jumping**

For adrenaline lovers who seek the thrill of facing their own fears, this is definitely a challenge. The site is located behind the Reggae Pub and the operation is under professional control of British Jumpmasters. This activity is guaranteed as safe.

◆ **Canopy Adventures**

For those interested in gliding from tree houses, Koh Samui provides visitors with this unique chance. No experience required. Visitors just glide from tree house to tree house above the magnificent jungle canopy.

◆ **Hat Chaweng (Chaweng Beach)**

The longest, most popular and developed beach on the east coast of Koh Samui, this 7 kilometer beach has clean white sand and sparkling water. In addition to numerous accommodations, this charming beach is packed with restaurants, spas, souvenir shops, bars and discos catering to all the needs of visitors. In addition, there are a number of dive shops on the beach, some of which also organize night dives.

◆ **Hat Na Thon**

This is the island's major settlement on the west coast offering a wide selection of souvenirs and handicrafts, silks and jewelry. In addition to being the shopping center of the island Na Thon Bay also provides visitors with the

necessary facilities - a post office, banks, a police station, telephone services, and a hospital. Moreover, this is where express and night ferries from the piers in Surat Thani dock.

◆ **Hin Lat Waterfall**

Located at the end of Route 4172, 3 kilometers south of Na Thon Bay, the waterfall is encircled by palms, ferns and creeping plants. Hin Lat Waterfall also provides a few natural pools for bathing. An enjoyable 2-kilometer walk to the top allows visitors to get a panoramic view of the waterfall.

◆ **Hin Ta - Hin Yai**

Strangely shaped rocks south of Lamai Beach are locally dubbed Hin Ta Hin Yai. According to legend, an old couple were shipwrecked in the bay and died and their bodies washed ashore creating the rocks.

◆ **Jungle tours**

Adventure lovers will enjoy the virgin forest on a mountain on the island. Please contact only certified guides and tour agencies.

◆ **Koh Samui**

Koh Samui is located in the Gulf of Thailand, approximately 84 kilometers east of Surat Thani Province, or approximately 700 kilometers south of Bangkok. Known as the Coconut Island, Koh Samui is one of the most famous and popular attractions of Thailand. With an area of 247 square kilometers, Koh Samui is the third largest island of Thailand after Phuket and Koh Chang (of Trat Province). The topography of the island is that of a plain with a mountain range in the middle and 7 important streams. In addition, there is a 50-kilometer paved road that encircles the island. Moreover, the area of the island stretches to a group of 48 surrounding islets.

Despite the fast pace of development, Koh Samui has been able to maintain its charm its classical image of a tropical beach resort fringed by coconut trees. Travelers to the island can enjoy a mixed blessing of vibrant day and nightlife along side with tranquility which can easily be found across different parts of Koh Samui as the archipelago is a peaceful home for fishermen and a natural den for seagulls and other rare birds.

Hat Chaweng and Hat Lamai are Koh Samuis most beautiful and most popular beaches. Both have a huge selection of accommodations suitable for every budget. Please note that room rates increase during the high season, from December to July, when Samui sparkles. The nightlife of each beach is different: Hat Chaweng is better for couples, women and families, while single men are drawn to the beer bar culture of Hat Lamai. These resorts, as well as Na Thon (Samui's main town), have communications, exchange and car/motorcycle hire facilities. Other beaches include Hat Choeng Mon, Hat Mae Nam in the north and Hat Na Thon, the island's major seafront settlement where shops, restaurants and tour agencies are concentrated.

Apart from its many lovely beaches and tranquil bays, Koh Samui is also noted for its high quality coconuts that grow densely everywhere. The best time to visit Koh Samui is from February to April when the sea is calm. The Southern dialect and the standard Thai language are spoken while English is widely understood in tourist areas.

Getting to Ko Samui

By air

Bangkok Airways flies from Bangkok to Koh Samui 13 times daily. The flight takes about one hour and 10 minutes. It also offers daily flights between

Phuket and Samui. For more information, call its Bangkok office, 0 2229 3456, 0 2229 3434, Samui office, 0 7742 2512 - 9 or Samui Airport Office 0 7724 5601-8.

By bus

Air-conditioned and non air-conditioned buses leave Bangkok's Southern Bus Terminal for Surat Thani several times daily. The trip takes about 11 hours. For further information, call 0 2435 1199, 0 2435 1200 (air-con), 0 2434 5557 - 8 (non-air-con).

By car

From Bangkok, take Highway 4 (Buddha Monthon Road) through Phetchaburi and Chumphon Provinces and then drive on to Highways 41 and 401 to Surat Thani Province. From Surat Thani, visitors can take their cars to Koh Samui through a vehicle ferry at Donsak Pier. The trip takes 1.30 hours.

By rail

Several trains leave Bangkok's Hualamphong Station for Surat Thani daily. The trip takes about 12 hours. Train / bus / ferry combination tickets are also available. For more information, call Hualamphong Railway Station, 0 2223 7010, 0 2223 7020.

From Surat Thani to Ko Samui

1. Express boat

1.1 An express ferry boat of Songserm Travel departs from Tha Thong Pier in Surat Thani at 8.00 a.m. and arrives at Na Thon Pier in Samui at 10.30 a.m. every day. For the return trip, the boat leaves Na Thon Pier at 2.00 p.m. and reaches Tha Thong at 4.30 p.m.

1.2 Express boats of Seatran Express operate three times a day between Ban Don and Koh Samui. Departure times are 7.00 a.m., 12.30 p.m. and 2.30 p.m. The trip takes two hours.

2. Ferry Boats of Seatran

Seatrain Ferry, which can accommodate 60 cars and 400 passengers, operates several trips per day between Don Sak (Surat Thani) and Koh Samui, from 5.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m. The trip takes about 1.30 hours.

3. Night ferry

A slow night ferry leaves Ban Don Pier nightly at 11 p.m. and reaches Na Thon Pier at Samui around 5 a.m. (6 hours). For the return trip, the boat leaves Na Thon Pier at 9.00 p.m. and arrives at Ban Don Pier at 4.00 a.m. (7 hours).

Getting around Ko Samui

Samui is an explorer's dream to discover something new. Offering a wealth of diversity of landscape, vistas, flora and fauna, and yet small enough to seek adventure in its many out-of-the-way places, Samui is best seen by taking songthaews (red local bus) which operate around the island. The fare starts at 20 baht, depending on the distance of the destination.

By Taxi

For many reasons, the least suitable for exploring, but the safest and easiest way to get to the destination is to go by taxi. The official taxi service time is until 9.00 p.m. Visitors are recommended to negotiate strongly for the fare and keep in mind that negotiation should always be done before boarding. Note that the fare at night will be escalated.

By a rented Jeep

Rented Jeep, 4WD, is available from many family-owned agencies and some well known large companies. The vehicle will serve as the basic means of transportation taking visitors around many hillside natural and man-made attractions which are easily accessible from the ring road. Some of these vehicles come with insurance, but the coverage is limited. Always ask for details first. The minimum price is from 800 baht.

By Motorcycle

A more flexible way to get around the island, rented motorcycle costs approximately 200 baht / day. Beware, as roads other than the main roads on Koh Samui are quite rough in some parts.

Getting to nearby Islands from Samui

1. Koh Pha-ngan

1.1 Na Thon Pier (Ko Samui) -- Thong Sala Pier (Ko Pha-ngan)

Songserm Travel Co. operates ferry boats and express boats between Na Thon Pier on Koh Samui and Thong Sala Pier on Koh Pha-ngan, four times a day. The trip takes about 45 minutes for express boats, and one hour for ordinary ferry boats.

1.2 Bo Phut (Koh Samui) -- Hat Rin (Koh Pha-ngan)

There is a ferry boat leaving Bo Phut for Koh Pha-ngan twice daily at 9.30 a.m. and 2.30 p.m. The return trips depart Hat Rin on Koh Pha-ngan at 10.30 a.m. and 3.30 p.m.

2. Ang Thong Islands

Visitors can hire a boat on Koh Samui to Ang Thong. The charge depends on the boat size and number of passengers. The trip takes 1.30 hours. It is also possible to join a full-day excursion organized by tour operators in Koh Samui.

3. Koh Tao

Boat services for Koh Tao are available at Na Thon Pier of Koh Samui.

◆ Moo Koh Ang Thong National Marine Park

Located 20 kilometers northwest of Koh Samui, the park is comprised of approximately 40 islands. Covering approximately 250 square kilometers, the park is full of fascinating beaches, caves and coral formations a sign of abundant marine resources. Many oddly shaped islands, sheer limestone cliffs and hidden lagoons can also be found here. The National Park does not allow over night visits. Individual tourists will have to join a group organized by a tour agency to visit the place.

◆ Na Muang 1 Waterfall

Located approximately 11 kilometers to the south of Na Thon Bay is the medium-sized waterfall that flows from a steep cliff, approximately 40 meters high and 20 meters wide. Activities such as elephant back riding are provided by nearby tour agents

◆ Na Muang 2 Waterfall

Located just 100 meters from Na Mueang 1, the waterfall is similar in size and beauty as its sister. The place is an ideal spot for trekking and elephant back riding, as it is surrounded by dense forest.

❖ **Na Thian Butterfly Garden**

Located at the bottom of the hill to the south of the island, the Garden offers a unique opportunity to observe numerous species of butterflies on the island. Other interesting features are the beautifully decorated garden, the bee house, a Thai style house which allows visitors to observe the activities of bees. The insect museum, in which rare insects from Thailand and other countries are displayed, is also worth visiting.

❖ **Samui Aquarium**

Located at Laem Set Bay, the Aquarium features a wide variety of tropical fish and marine fauna.

❖ **Samui Go Kart**

Looking for fast-paced action? Visit this site in Bophut, on the ring road opposite the Samui Euphoria Resort, and enjoy circling the track at over 100 kilometers. Call 077 425097 for more information.

❖ **Samui Golf & Country Club**

Koh Samui offers an absolutely overwhelming experience for golfers. This par 72 course was jointly designed by Edward Thiele and Pirapon Namartra. The challenge is its relentless, tumbling diversity and its degree of difficulty. The par-3s range from 155 to 214 yards, highlighted by the shortest (the audacious 6th, with a vertical drop and waterfall). The 10 par-4s are whimsical and attenuated and querulous and lengthy. The par-5s start at 458 and end at the signature 17th with 622 yards of downhill travel. The fairways are tilted and the greens are uniformly gyroscopic. For more details, contact Santiburi Dusit Resort at tel. 077 425031-38 or visit www.dusit.com.

❖ **Samui Nightlife**

It's never ending. Koh Samui offers spectacular evening entertainment for all ages. This includes traditional beach bars (popular with families), western-style pubs, which feature music, videos and satellite television, and free to enter nightclubs, which are more active after midnight and usually continue through the pre-dawn hours. Bars, cabarets shows and discos are mainly located in Chaweng and Lamai. Green Mango, Raggae Pub, and Full Circle and Bauhaus are the main discotheques, some open until sunrise.

The most vibrant nightlife activities can be found around the beaches of Chaweng and Lamai. Resorts also provide magnificent entertainment such as dinner cabarets, where professional singers and dancers display their talents in stylish surroundings.

❖ **Samui Paintball**

A non-water based activity worth trying, Samui paintball offers a unique opportunity to take a shot at families and friends without having to go to jail.

❖ **Scuba Diving**

There are many scuba diving schools located around Koh Samui, offering a wide range of dive facilities. There are also tours available for snorkeling, fishing and excursions. The area of Koh Samui, Koh Tao, Koh Pha-ngan and Angthong Marine National Park are very famous dive places.

❖ **Spa experience at Samui**

Samui now boasts many excellent, world-class spas set in a truly Samui ambience. From aromatic floral baths, steaming and body masque with Thai

herbs, to face and body massage, reflexology, and other well-being therapy, Samui has everything that caters to your needs rejuvenating, pampering and relaxing in utmost luxury and comfort.

❖ **Thale Nai (the Inner Sea)**

Encircled by mountains, Thale Nai is emerald in color and has a white powdery beach that is second to none. There are several underwater chambers connecting the Thale Nai to the outside sea. The best time to visit the place is from April to November. To get there from Samui, visitors can charter a boat from Na Thon Pier. The boat service hours are between 9.00 and 4.30 p.m. Travel time is approximately 1 hour. For more information, call 0 7742 0504 or 0 7742 0720-2.

❖ **Tham Bua Bok**

This is where visitors can marvel at spectacular stalactites and stalagmites. In addition, the top of a 400 meter mountain on the island overlooks the picturesque Ang Thong islands.

❖ **The Statue Garden**

The Garden features a number of Buddhist and Hindu statues recently made by Khun Nim, a local sculptor. Located near the highest point of Samui Island, the place can be reached by taking the track opposite Wat Khunaram.

❖ **Wat Phra Yai or Temple of the Big Buddha**

Established in 1972, the temple houses a 12-meter high Golden Buddha, which has recently become a spectacular landmark of Koh Samui. The monastery has become a meditation center for both local residents and foreigners.

❖ **Wat Pradoem**

Located approximately 12 kilometers on Route 4169 or 1 kilometer from Na Muang Waterfall is a monastery built at the end of Ayutthaya Era. The temple is believed to be the first temple on Koh Samui. At present, it is where an ancient wooden scripture hall used in storing Buddhist scriptures is located.

❖ **Wat Samret**

This relatively old temple houses a marble Buddha image brought from Burma and many other old Buddha images.

❖ **Wua Ta Lap**

This is the largest island of the group, the site of the park office and the location of a very beautiful cave.

❖ **Amphoe Mueang**

❖ **Khao Tha Phet Wildlife and Nature Education Center**

The Center is located approximately 6 kilometers from the Surat City. Covering an area of 2,906 rai or 4.65 square kilometers, the Center is home to numerous wild animals. Its headquarters is situated on a hilltop, which rises approximately 200 meters above sea level. At the peak of the hill is Phra That Si Surat, locally known as Khao Ta Phet. Built in 1957, this candle-like stupa contains Lord Buddha's relics donated by the Indian government. The hilltop is an ideal place to get a bird eyes view of the City and Tapi River, as well as Ban Don Bay.

An informative 800-meter, nature study trail is introduced by the Center with captions providing detailed information on each plant enabling visitors to learn on their own in an enjoyable manner. For those interested in staying overnight, it is recommended that they bring their own tents. Advanced reservations in writing are required and should be sent to Khao Tha Phet Wildlife and Nature Education Center, P.O. Box 29 Muang District, Surat Thani, 84000.

To get there from the provincial capital, drive along Highway No. 4009 (the Surat Thani-Na San route) for approximately 6 kilometers, then turn left at the sign of the Center and proceed approximately 1.5 kilometers along an access road to the Center.

❖ Pak Nam Tapi (Tapi River Estuary)

The Tapi River Mouth is located approximately 7 kilometers from Ban Don Municipality. The area is particularly well known for its excellent seafood restaurants. Apart from serving reasonably priced tasty dishes, they are located against a magnificent backdrop of the peaceful Tapi River. Getting to the place from the city is easy. Just use tuk-tuk services located opposite Chula Shopping Mall.



❖ Amphoe Phanom

❖ Khao Sok National Park

his virgin rainforest dotted by limestone mountain ranges and rugged high cliffs was established as a national park in 1980. The poised limestone mountains resemble to those in Guilin, China resulting in the local nickname of Thailand's Guilin. Covering an area of approximately 646 square kilometers, the park extends beyond Ban Ta Kun, Phanom and Khiri Ratniyom Districts.

The main attractions in the park include Namtok Mae Yai which can be reached by car and Namtok Sip Ed Chan (eleven-tiered waterfall), situated approximately 4 kilometers from the park office. There are also other magnificent waterfalls and caves, which are mostly accessible by foot.

Khao Sok is inhabited by rare wildlife such as wild elephants, leopards, serow, banteng, gaur, dusky languors, tigers and Malayan sun bears. Bird lovers will be enthralled visiting, as there are over 180 bird species to watch.

Rare floras are found along nature trails particularly to the south of the park where local plants such as lianas, bamboo, ferns and giant rattan, of over 10cm. in diameter, can be found. To top it all, the bua phut is perhaps what visitors to Khao Sok look forward to seeing most. Bua Phut or Rafflesia kerri meyer, a flower which can only be found in Khao Sok, is claimed as the largest flower in the world. When in full bloom, the Bua Phut is approximately 80 centimeters in diameter. The flower is a natural parasite without roots of its own, but relying on roots of a jungle vine to survive. The best time to see Bua Phut is from October to December, when they are in full bloom. Contact the parks headquarters for a local guide. Note that a 5-8 hour walk is required to see such a rare flower. However, there photographs of Bua Phut in the headquarters office, with information displayed on the ecological system of the park.

The park and other entrepreneurs provide bungalows, camping areas and raft-houses while accommodation owners normally provide food. Contact TAT Region 5 at 077 288818-9 for more details on a complete list of accommodations.

The park office is located 1.3 kilometers off of the Surat-Takua Pa Road at kilometer 109 marker. From Surat Thani City, take Highway No 401 to Takua Pa

District (in Phang-Nga province). Total distance is approximately 100 kilometers. The park is at its best from December to April.

♦ **Khuean Ratchapha**

Another name of this dam is Khuean Chieo Lan. The dam, built in 1982, is a rock with fat-clay core dam that is 94 meters in height and 761 in length. The reservoir (lake) covers an area of 185 square kilometers and boasts an electricity generating capacity of approximately 554 million kilowatt / hour. The lake offers an incomparably breathtaking view of Limestone Mountains and over 200 small islands. Accommodations near the dam are available from the Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand, Tel. 02 436-3179 or 77 311-364, 311-522. For those wishing to see the lake closer, boat rental service is also available. Contact 077 311522 or 02 2407405 ext. 5008 for more details.

The dam is located 70 kilometers west from Surat Thani on Highway No. 401. Travel along the Highway, turn right at the kilometer 52-53 marker and proceed for another 12 kilometers along an access road until you see the extensive lake beyond the Dam.