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10 things I love about Phuket

Don't worry, be happy: Patong is the most famous beach resort in Phuket. With a wide variety of activities and nightlife along its three-kilometer wide crescent bay.

MANILA, Philippines - Believe it or not, it was an episode of Bizarre Foods With Andrew Zimmern that piqued my interest on Phuket. Sure, the host had a buffet of fried grasshoppers, stir-fried stingray, red weaver ants and whatnot. But it was a plateful of bad boys — chili- and tom yum-flavored cashews — that got me so mouth-wateringly interested. It seemed to be a place that offers nutty, spicy pleasures — whether culinary, visually or anything touristic.

An island southwest of Thailand, Phuket is as large as Singapore and derives mostly its income from tourism. When Tiger Air Philippines invited The STAR to visit Phuket, images of nightlife and tourists sunning themselves on the beaches formed in my mind. On cue, my tongue almost began dreaming of chili and tom yum.

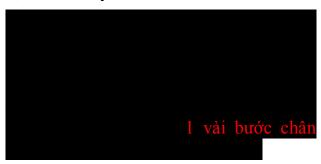
Our group recently left Manila for Phuket aboard Tiger Airways Airbus A320, and we were billeted for three days at Duangjitt Resort, a short walk from the famous Patong Beach and its strip of infinite delights.

10 điều khiến tôi yêu quý Phuket

Hãy quảng gánh lo đi và vui sống với Patong, khu nghỉ dưỡng bãi biển nổi tiếng nhất tại Phuket với hàng loạt các hoạt động cả ngày lẫn đêm diễn ra dọc theo vịnh biển hình lưỡi liềm rộng 3km này. checked

Manila, Philipines – Dù bạn có tin hay không, chính 1 tập của chương trình Các Món Ăn Kỳ Quái Với Andrew Zimmern đã khiến tôi hứng thú với Phuket. Người dẫn chương trình tất nhiên đã thưởng thức món châu chấu rang, cá đuối gai độc xào, kiến vàng đỏ và những món có chúa mới biết được. Tuy nhiên, chính món ăn độc đáo như hạt điều cay vị tom yum đã khiến tôi thèm đến chảy nước miếng. Phuket có vẻ như là nơi đưa đến cho ta những sự thích thú từ quả hạch và vị cay nồng trong các món ăn, hình ảnh hay bất cứ thứ gì liên quan đến du lịch.

Là một hòn đảo nằm phía tây nam Thái Lan, Phuket có diện tích rộng bằng Singapore và có nguồn thu nhập chủ yếu từ du lịch. Khi hãng hàng không Tiger Air mời tạp chí The Star đến tham quan Phuket, những hình ảnh cuộc sống về đêm và khách du lịch tắm nắng trên bãi biển hiện lên trong tâm trí tôi. Cùng lúc đó, lưỡi của tôi gần như cảm nhận được vị ớt và tom yum.

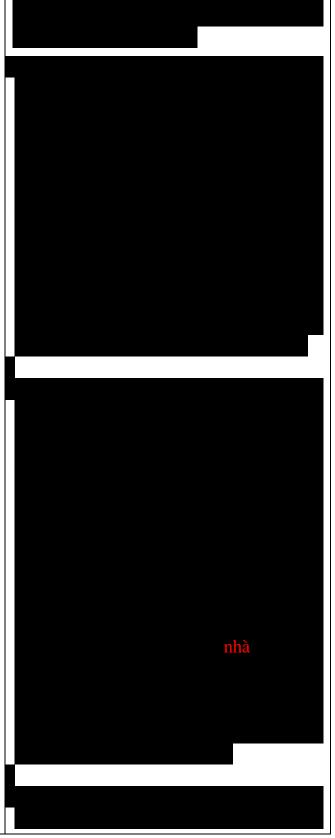


Let me do a David Letterman and present to you the top 10 things I love about the island.

1. Bond... James Bond Island. Koh Tapu, which means "Nail Island" in Thai, got its name from the 1974 James Bond movie. It is one of some hundred islands inside Phang Nga Bay. An hour by long-tail boat from Surakul Pier in Phang Nga, we had a smash and a taking splash photos of Mother Nature's work of art along the way. One can go kayaking, explore the rocky surroundings, or hunt for souvenirs in the stalls nestled on the island. I would say it's one of Phuket's must-sees.

2. Flag is up at Koh Panyee. Flag Island is a Muslim village built on stilts about 200 years ago upon the feet of a giant limestone cliff. It really is a complete village with a school, police station, a tiny health center and a mosque. People here are used so to being photographed that they barely acknowledge your presence as they press on with their daily lives. Lunchtime was a bit busy because of a phalanx of tourists. We settled at a seafood restaurant called Panyee Mutearra. Authentic Thai dishes were served. Occupying the center of the table is the spicy Tom Yum Goong. ("Aha... so we meet!")

3. Beach, blanket, Patong. is synonymous with party and



play. This is the ideal place to enjoy, relax, and did I say enjoy? Bikini-clad tourists stroll along the line of restaurants, shops and neon-lit bars on this beach-front street. After a day of island hopping we grabbed a drink, walked along the beach, tried the street foods and explored the area. Hash-tag that as feeling-happy.

4. The eye candy of Siam Niramit. It is a must-see show with state-of-the-art special effects. It deals with Thai arts and culture and is one of the two biggest stage productions in Phuket. For guests who wish to enjoy a meal before the show, there are restaurants offering delicious Thai and international cuisines, buffet-style just the way we like it. Within sight of the dining area are outdoor performances like Muay Thai matches, an elephant parade, light & water show, and cultural dances down the Village of Four Regions below. I would say that the food and the show are spicily awesome.

5. Thai massage high. Massage shops are within a few steps of each other and the prices start at 300 baht per hour. After a whole day of exploring, it's good to top everything off with a massage. Thai massage is more energizing and rigorous than more classic forms of massages. The

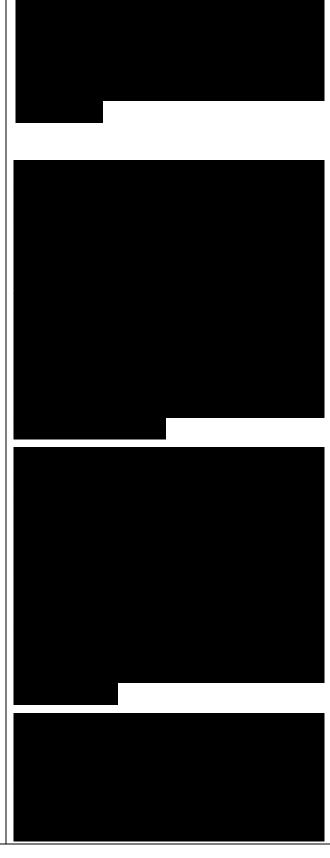


therapist used her hands, knees, legs, and feet to move me into a series of yoga-like stretches. After an hour of trampling on my back and more body stretches, I felt relieved and refreshed. I could almost climb into a Muay Thai ring.

6. White-water rafting. It was a Monday morning and raining so hard en route to Ton Pariwat Wildlife Sanctuary. We were ready to get wet, but our scheduled ATV and elephant ride got canceled on account of rain — but not the white-water rafting. I admit, it was the bottommost priority on my activity list, but I was glad I tried it. Yes, I survived the rapids of Song Praek River and live to tell the tale.

7. Life is a Simon Cabaret show. This where the lavish sets and brilliant costumes are amazing. Kathoeys or ladyboys perform and lip-synch popular songs from around the world. The show is three times daily, starting at 6 p.m. Taking pictures was not allowed during the show, but the girls, er, I mean the ladyboys lined up for photo opt right after.

8. Walk down Bangla Street. If you're into nightlife, this is the place for you. Soi Bangla or Bangla Street awakens when the sun starts to set. The whole street is closed to traffic with the line of bars competing with each other for



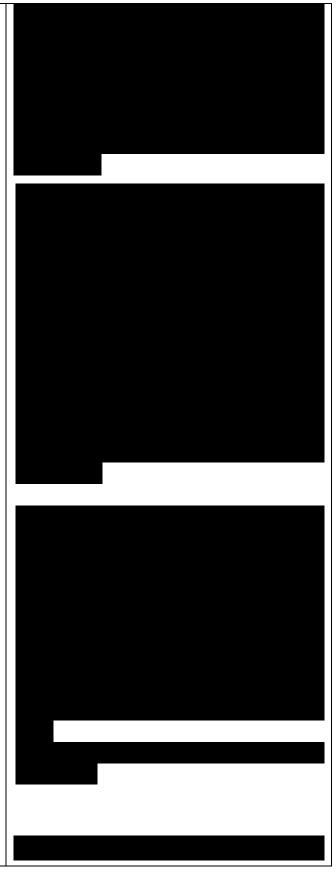
customers. Pretty girls, cold beer and loud music lure night owls or party people into this place. But if you don't want to intoxicated, you can still feel the festive atmosphere. Might as well try the local delicacies and street food.

9. To boldy go Elephant-trekking. There are a lot of elephant-ride tours in Phuket, easily one of the island's most popular activities. Since we missed the ride at Ton Pariwat and we were not going home without experiencing it, we asked our tour guide the nearest place where we can go for a ride. We hired a tuk-tuk, and of we went to Camp Chang Kalim. The camp had seven adult elephants and a baby. A 30-minute ride would cost you 900 baht (adults) and 600 baht (children 4 to 10 years old). Free for children under four years old.

10. Shop till you drop and then rise up to shop again. Trust me, it's so fun in Phuket — especially if you are equipped with a smile and fine bartering skills since you'd get away with a good bargains. You can find anything from jeans, T-shirts, antiques, and jewelry to snacks and more snacks from line of stalls along Patong Beach. This goes on from morning till nighttime. Oh, I finally got my taste of cashew nuts flavored with wasabi and tom yum.

Eat your heart out, Andrew Zimmern!

Fun things to do in Phuket



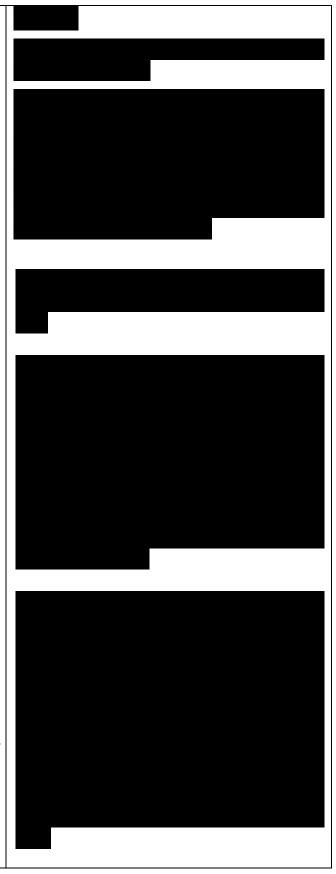
Phuket Sail Tours Speed Boat Tour

Over the years we have been on many sailing tours with Phuket Sail Tours which have always been at the top of our list of our favorite tours. However their Phang Nga by speedboat is also a fantastic day out and totally different.

Including us there were about 12 people on the tour and there was still plenty of room on the boat.

Some of the highlights of the day were canoeing through a mangrove forest, exploring some lagoons and caves (on foot which is amazing). We went into the Mangrove Hong and the Oyster Cave; once again this is so good with Marks tours as we were the only people there. We also stopped at beautiful Naka Island for swimming and relaxing. There is a lovely beach bar here as well.

The tour also takes you to Koh Panyi which is a Muslim fishing village on stilts over the water. You can explore the village and if you're interested there is lots of shopping which is very cheap! Everyone is so friendly here and they love to chat with you, it's also a bit of an eye opener to see how the villagers live etc. (You can do home stays here as well which would be fantastic).

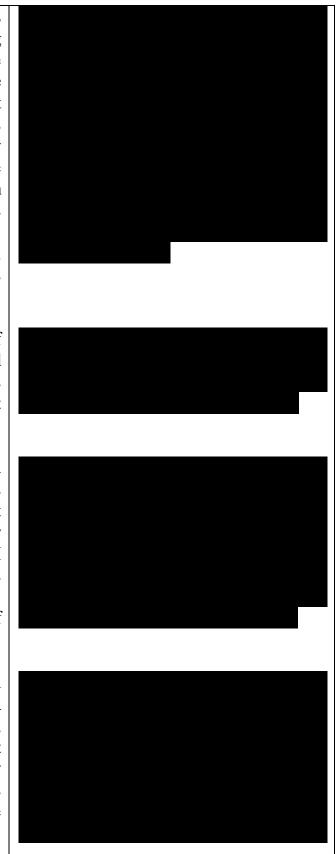


Lunch is on Koh Panyi and it is delicious, the food just keeps coming out, we had soups, chicken dishes, rice dishes, vegetables, omelet's, whole dishes. fish. seafood You most definitely will not go hungry on this tour. There is also an unlimited supply of food on the speedboat during the day, the famous crunchy chicken wings, Kanom (Thai snacks) which is my favorite treat of sticky rice, banana, black bean wrapped in banana leaf, fresh fruits, cheese & biscuits, plus water & soft drinks.

After lunch we went to a secret place of Mark's for swimming, it is a beautiful lagoon inside an island. This place was amazing, no one there except us, and it was perfect!

The speed boat tour also goes around Koh Tapu, which is better known as James Bond Island, I have to say that over the years we have never had any interest in going to this place but now I can say we have been and it really is beautiful, actually it is stunning. However it is ruined by the amount of hawkers on the beaches.

So what do we think of Phuket Sail Tours speedboat tour of Phang Nga Bay, well it is equal to his sailing tour, totally different but a fantastic day out and worth every cent! The company was great, the food fantastic, the views are spectacular, everyone enjoyed the tour.



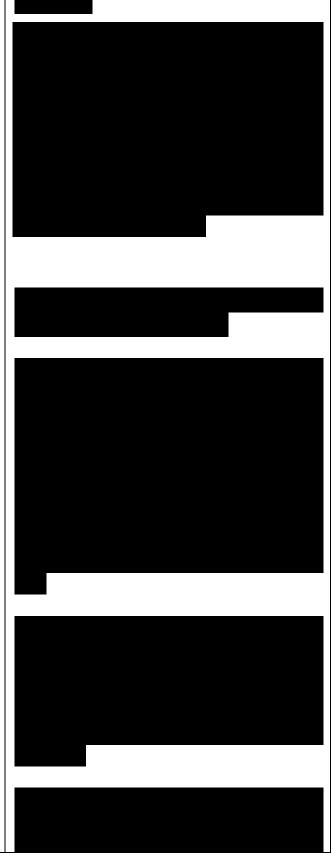
Mark and his team are the perfect hosts, nothing is to much trouble and they go out of their way to make sure everyone has an enjoyable day away from the hordes of big jam packed boats. So if your looking for a great value day out with a small group of people then look up Phuket Sail Tours. They also do Phi Phi Island tours which is another fantastic day out.

Phuket Helicopter Tours with HeliThai

Now a lot of people know that I am terrified of flying, I hate planes, even though we do at least 8 flights each trip I need to pop a few pills, it all started from watching Air Crash Investigation years ago, I was addicted to the show, I haven't watched it for 3 years now but I am still scared!

So what I did next is very weird, Gary and the boys were going on another Harley ride to Krabi and staying the night so I thought what can I do on my own that is different – So I booked in for a 30 minute tour of Phuket – by Helicopter with HeliThai.

I have no idea why I did this and I was only going to do the Joy Ride which was 10-12 minutes but then decided to



do the Magical Bays of Phuket which is 30 minutes at a cost of 7,900baht.

With the tours you can also do the doors of option, so I thought why not, at least the photos will be good. Waiting for this day I was terrified and honestly thought I would not be able to go through with it.

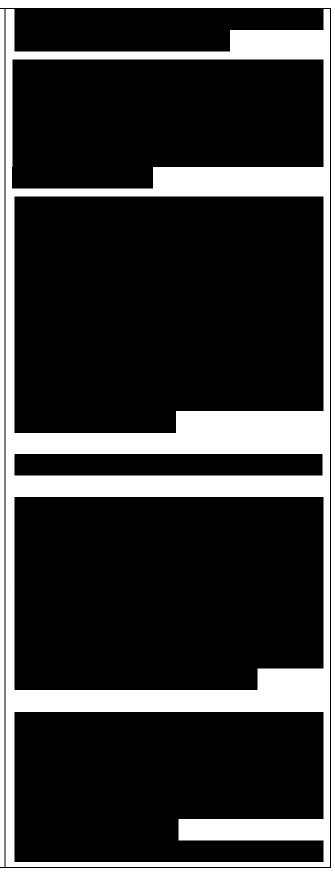
The morning of the tour I am on my own, Gary is in Krabi (he sent a message saying Good Luck) now I am nearly ready to cancel, its 9am so I made myself a good stiff vodka and coke, talked myself into being brave and went down to reception. The pilot (Andreas) picked me up from Swiss Palm and he looked the part – in a nice uniform & all that.

Hopefully he knows what he is doing!

We drive to the Helicopter Pad and there are 2 male passengers from the Indigo Pearl, they are from management and not scared at all! But they did not want their doors taken off. My door and the pilots are then taken off and in the front I go, oh god we have to wear life jackets. Yikes – up we go and that was the end of me.

I absolutely loved the whole experience, instantly I was not scared, the feeling of just sitting there with no door next to me was amazing, I could not stop saying — WOW — it is spectacular seeing Phuket this way.

Really not much more to say as the



photos say everything, it was just the most fantastic experience and maybe next trip I will even do their Phang Nga flight which is 50 minutes.

Warfare Victory Memorial Park Phuket

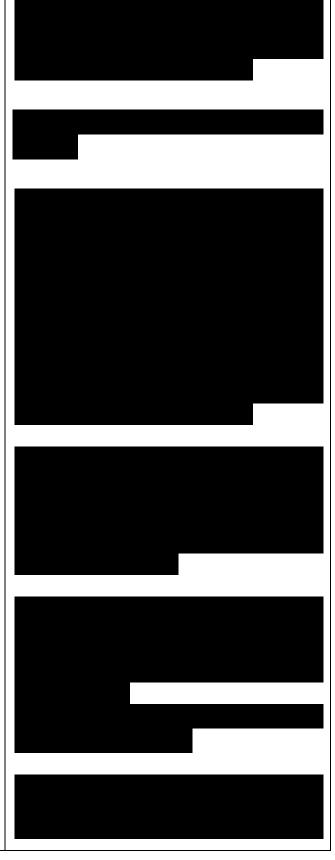
If you head north on Thepkasattri Road not far from the Heroines Monument roundabout at Thalang there is a sign saying Warfare Museum. Gary and I hadbeen meaning to go there but didn't get around to it, so Chaya from Phuket Heritage Trails and I went together. Once you turn left off the main road the signs say Warfare Victory Memorial

It is not really a museum but a nice park area with a Temple housing statues of the Heroines, who were two brave sisters Chan and Mook who helped defeat the Burmese army in 1785.

There are often festivals held in this park with the biggest being in March for the Phuket Heroines Festival which attracts thousands of visitors.

Wat Khun Chee - Buddhist Nuns Monastery Phuket

Wat Khun Chee which is a Buddhist Nuns Monastery, Meditation Retreat Centre and a training Monastery for lay women & nuns in the Thervada



Buddhist tradition.

It is a beautiful peaceful place which has been used by the nuns since 1924 and offers a peaceful monastic life and facilities for female guests to stay and practice with the resident nuns in a serene monastic atmosphere. One nun who made a lasting impression on me is in her late eighties, but she is such a character, we had many photos taken together and she made us tea from flowers she collects then crushes. She said she wants copies took of the photos I of her.

Then she went back into her room, came out and gave me a plastic hospital medicine bag, it was full of the crushed flowers, she wanted me to have it so I could make tea each day. So wonderful and I will be back next trip to visit her with copies of our photos.

Visiting guests are required to follow the daily routines of the resident nuns and join in with all communal meetings and work activities. To visit the monastery or any inquiries, email Chaya from Phuket Heritage Trails: kritchaya.nt@gmail.com

