



Photo: Phulay Bay, a Ritz-Carlton Reserve



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Krabi – Thailand's Seaside Paradise

To those who know Krabi, and even those who don't, there's a certain magic in its name, an embedded sense of something special that years of adulation – and constantly returning visitors – have delivered. Indeed, there's no hyperbole in saying Krabi is everything most foreigners imagine Thailand to be, but have difficulty finding in Phuket, Pattaya and larger, more densely populated coastal locations.

Krabi, on the south-west coast of the Thai/Malay peninsula, is known for its stunning beaches, adorned by sheer limestone cliffs that rise majestically to form perfect backdrops. Most visitors to Krabi arrive by air (there are international flights from Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Doha and Hong Kong) as well as frequent domestic services from Bangkok and other major centres. Once there, three broad destination choices await: in Krabi town itself, along the nearby coastline or on one of Krabi's myriad of some 200 islands, some of which have accommodation of various levels.

Krabi town is a scenic provincial capital of only 30,000 permanent inhabitants. It boasts funky bars, a huge array of restaurants, market shopping and a laid-back ambience against a backdrop of mangrove-lined rivers, longtail boats, jagged karsts and the Andaman Sea. There are some excellent religious edifices in and near the town and a wonderful riverside walk and park.

Krabi is the set-off point to well-known and not-so-well-known islands, such as Ko Lanta, the large island in the south of Krabi province, the Phi Phi islands, which also can be easily accessed from Phuket, and Ko Pu/Ko Jum where there are numerous resorts and accommodation options.

A wealthy province due to the palm oil, rubber and tourism industries, considerable investments have been made in recent years in infrastructure, including a new marina, riverside park and a cultural walk on Chao Fah Road with 28 bas reliefs depicting aspects of the area's notably long history.

Islands

There are many islands worth visiting, exploring and staying overnight.

The large island of Ko Pu/Ko Jum, just 25km south of Krabi town, can be easily accessed by boat and is perfect for short and long stays. Here you'll find long sandy beaches perfect for swimming and snorkelling, three towns and accommodation ranging from beach shacks and bungalows to mid-range resorts.

Ko Lanta, once the domain of backpackers, has become a popular tourist hotspot within easy reach of Krabi. Comprising several islands, it boasts beautiful white sand beaches in dramatic settings, and many iconic Thai seaside promotional photographs have been shot there. Ko Lanta Yai at the northern tip of the islands is a popular stepping off point to explore the region. There are numerous accommodation options on its western shoreline.

The twin islands of Ko Rok can be visited on a day-trip to enjoy the wonderful beaches, snorkelling and scuba diving. An admission fee applies. Nearby Ko Rok Nai boasts an excellent diving area.

Ko Poda, just six kilometres from the mainland, is one of a group of four islands that can be reached by long-tail boat in just 30 minutes. Almost entirely circled by a soft white sand beach and covered with pine and palm trees, it is an archetypical tropical island with a coral reef just 20 metres off the beach.

Ko Ha is a complex of five limestone islands near Ko Lanta, and only an hour's boat journey. One of the most attractive islands in the area, the group is popular for diving, snorkelling, sunbathing and soaking up the tropical atmosphere.



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