



EYEWITNESS TRAVEL

# TOP 10

# PHUKET



THE 10 BEST OF EVERYTHING

# How to Use this Top 10 Guide

This DK Top 10 guide is one of a new generation of illustrated travel-guide eBooks that guarantees you make the most of your visit – before, during and after your stay. Use this eBook both to plan your trip and explore your destination when visiting. So, before you depart, browse the city's highlights, check out the themed sightseeing lists or simply tap through the guide and be inspired.

The best way to explore this guide is to begin at the main **table of contents**. The first section of the eBook shows you, quite simply, the best sights in the destination. This is followed by: **Top 10 of Everything** – themed Top 10 lists that allow you to make the most of your time away; **Around the Destination** – must-see sights, area by area; **Streetsmart** – essential practical information; and the **General Index** (a great alternative to **Search** when you need to quickly look up a keyword or specific sight).

Shorter **contents** lists appear at the start of every section in the guide, and are designed to make chapter navigation quick and easy. You can jump back to these by clicking on the chapter-heading **links** that sit with an arrow icon at the top of every article.

There are dozens of useful, easy-to-use **maps** at the back of this eBook. Select the "View map" links throughout the guide to see larger-scale versions fill your screen.

As you use this guide, create a personalized itinerary by **bookmarking** the sights, venues and activities that are of most interest, giving you the quickest possible access to everything you'll need for your time away.

## Price guide

All price ranges quoted for hotels in this guide are based on a standard, double room per night (with breakfast if included), taxes and extra charges. Similarly, all price ranges quoted for restaurants are based on a three-course meal for two with half a bottle of wine (or equivalent meal), taxes and extra charges.

# PHUKET'S TOP 10

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**THE MUST-SEE  
SIGHTS AND  
EXPERIENCES**



# Phuket's Top 10

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## **Phuket's Highlights**

*Phuket's extraordinary tropical setting needs little introduction. The marvelous white sand beaches, rolling green hills, and tranquil emerald and turquoise waters have lure visitors for centuries. But the island boasts more than sublime beaches. Phuket and its surrounding areas are also home to pristine national parks, wildlife sanctuaries, and scuba diving sites, while cultural highlights include Buddhist temples, museums, shrines and historic architecture.*

[View map](#)

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# **TOP 10** Phuket Town

*The historical and administrative center of Phuket traces its roots back centuries – first to the early European traders and later to the Chinese immigrants who arrived here during the local tin mining boom of the 19th century. Today, Phuket Town continues to thrive as one of the island's most authentic cultural areas, punctuated by magnificent architectural treasures, Chinese shrines, colorful open-air markets, and restaurants that serve some of Phuket's most delicious local cuisines.*

## **Top 10 Features**

[View map](#)

### **1 Marvelous Architecture**

The distinctive architectural style found in many of Phuket Town's old mansions and shop houses derives from the British colonial style, once popular in Malaysia and Singapore (For further details see [Historic Buildings in Phuket Town](#)).



### **2 Phuket Vegetarian Festival**

This annual festival is held over nine days in late September/early October. Devotees perform shocking rituals of self-mutilation, as they plunge spears, swords, and more through their flesh.



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### **3 Phuket Cultural Centre**

Located on the Rajabhat University campus, this museum houses old Thai shadow puppets, tin miniatures, artifacts, historic photographs, and a range of books on Phuket's culture and history.

### **4 Chatuchak Weekend Market**

With a wide range of clothes, decorative items, trinkets, souvenirs, and delicious food, this open-air bazaar on the southern side of Phuket Town is definitely worth a visit.

### **5 Chinese Shrines**

Vibrant and colorful artwork can be seen at Chinese temples throughout the town. The shrines play an important role during the Chinese New Year and the annual Chinese Vegetarian Festival.



### **6 Monkey Hill**

Although the views from the summit of nearby Rang Hill are more impressive, Monkey Hill offers a somewhat more unique experience – curious hordes of macaque monkeys congregate near the hilltop. Watch your belongings – the monkeys may try to snatch them from you.

## 7 Ko Sirey

Linked to Phuket Town via a small bridge, Sirey Island features hilly forest trails that wind through rubber plantations. Along the coasts, you will find pristine views and restaurants serving delicious fresh seafood at very low prices. Located on a hill, Ko Sirey temple enjoys sea views and features a large reclining Buddha image in its main hall.

## 8 Suan Luang Park

Also known as King Rama IX Park, this pleasant garden comes alive in the early mornings, when people come to exercise and perform Tai Chi. The park boasts lotus ponds and a walking path.

## 9 Rang Hill

Wonderful views of Phuket Town can be enjoyed from the summit of Rang Hill, where a breezy, tree-shaded park also provides a relaxing venue for picnics, exercise, or reading a book.

## 10 Phuket Butterfly Garden and Insect World

This conservation and research facility breeds some 40 unique butterfly species, many of which are reintroduced into the wild. Visitors can also witness the stunning transformation of more than 6,000 larvae into butterflies each month.

**Tip:** Avoid walking tours at midday – the sun can make the streets unbearably warm.

**Tip:** Try the iced coffee at Thungkha Kafee atop Rang Hill.

### Origins of the Vegetarian Festival

In 1825, a traveling Chinese opera company performing in Kathu, Phuket, contracted malaria. According to legend, the afflicted nursed themselves back to health by observing a strict vegetarian diet to purify their minds and bodies, and to honor the nine Emperor Gods of Chinese Taoism. They recovered, and the first Vegetarian Festival was held to praise and thank the gods.

### Visitor Information

- Phuket Cultural Centre



- 21 Thepkasatri Road
- 07622 3616
- open 8:30am–4:30pm Mon–Fri
- closed weekends and public hols
- Adm free
- **Chatuchak Weekend Market**
- open 9am–6pm Sat & Sun
- **Phuket Butterfly Garden and Insect World**
- 71/6 Moo 5, Soi Paneung, Yaowarat Road
- 07621 0861
- open 9am–5pm daily
- Adm B300 (adults), B150 (children aged 4–10), free (children under 4)
- [www.phuketbutterfly.com](http://www.phuketbutterfly.com)

# Historic Buildings in Phuket Town

## 1 Chinpracha House

This 19th-century mansion has served as a backdrop for several Hollywood films including Oliver Stone's 1993 movie, *Heaven and Earth*, based on the Vietnam War. Today, open to the public as a museum, the house stands as a timeless reminder of an earlier era.

- 98 Krabi Road
- 07621 1167, 07621 1281
- Open 9am–4:30pm Mon–Sat
- Adm

## 2 Standard Chartered Bank

The country's oldest foreign bank was formerly housed inside this graceful two-story Straits Settlement building. Efforts are ongoing to convert it into a public museum.

- Corner of Phuket Road and Phang Nga Road

## 3 Dibuk Grill and Bar

Another fine example of century-old architecture, this building now serves as a relaxing eatery known for its delicious Thai and French cuisine. The old Chinese-style house features soft interior lighting and antique fans.

- 69 Dibuk Road
- 07621 8425
- Open 11am–11pm Mon–Sat

## 4 Phuket Thai Hua Museum

Built in the early 20th century, this distinctive building was once used as a schoolhouse. Today a museum, it continues to house student artifacts such as old books, desks, and photographs. It is also used for private functions and exhibitions.

- Thalang Road
- 07621 1224
- Open 9am–5pm daily
- closed public holidays
- Adm
- <http://thaihuamuseum.com>

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## 5 Phuket Provincial Hall

The first Phuket building to receive a national conservation award, the Provincial Hall was built in the early 1910s. It originally featured 99 doors and no windows, and is said to be the first reinforced concrete building in Thailand.

- Narisorn Road
- 07635 4875
- Open 9am–5pm daily



*Phuket Provincial Hall*

## 6 China Inn Café and Restaurant

Exquisite wooden doors, Chinese lanterns, and tiled floors decorate the entrance of this classic Straits Settlement style house. The interior showcases a wonderful collection of old Chinese artifacts, while the highly regarded dining space is set in the backyard.

- 20 Thalang Road
- 07635 6239
- Open 11am–7pm Mon–Sat



*Entrance to the China Inn Café and Restaurant*

## 7 House of the Beautiful Images

Located on Soi Rommani, a charming street lined with wonderful old architecture on both sides, the House of the Beautiful Images today serves as a café specializing in breakfast and coffee. The space also exhibits photography.

- Soi Rommani 12
- 07621 4207
- Open 10am–9pm Thu–Tue
- Closed Wed

## 8 Phuket Philatelic Museum

Also known as the Post Office Museum, this 20th-century building has displays detailing the history of the Thai postal service.

- Montri Road
- 07621 1020
- Open 9:30am–5:30pm Tue–Sat

## 9 Baan Klung Jinda Restaurant

Once the home of Phuket's provincial treasurer, this stately mansion now houses a fine dining venue.

- Yaowarat Road and Mae Lun Road
- 07622 1777

## 10 THAI Airways Office

The airline bought this mansion in 1947. The white, two-story building continues to serve as the THAI Airways Office in Phuket Town. It is believed to have been constructed in 1922.

- 78 Ranong Road
- 07636 0444
- Open 8am–5pm daily

### Architectural Legacy

During the tin boom of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, numerous Chinese immigrants descended on Phuket seeking to capitalize on the island's newfound economic opportunities. The most successful tin barons often built gorgeous colonial-style mansions. The architectural style, known as Straits Settlements style, was derived from the British colonies in Singapore, Malacca, and Penang. Examples of this style abound in old Phuket Town, particularly in the shop houses and mansions along Dibuk, Thalang, Phang Nga, Rassala, Yaowarat, and Phuket roads.



The 19th-century Chaipattana House

#### Top 10 Characteristics of Straits Settlement Architectural style

- 1 Romanesque arched colonnades (porticoes)
- 2 Inner courtyards (airwells)
- 3 Exterior windows with Romanesque arches

**4** Double doors and double shutters

**5** Terracotta tiled roofs

**6** Tiled floors

**7** Victorian ornamentation

**8** Chinese signage

**9** Ornamental wrought-iron gates

**10** Eaves decorated with ceramic shards

## **TOP 10** Wat Chalong

Although historical records are unclear, Wat Chalong was probably first constructed during the reign of King Rama II (r.1809–24). The temple moved locations at one point, and the original structure no longer remains. Today, this complex features sacred imagery, including sculptures and mural paintings that depict the Buddha's life. The holiest object is a bone fragment of the Lord Buddha, now housed inside the Grand Pagoda. The temple is known as Wat Chaitararam by royal decree, but everybody refers to it as Wat Chalong.



### **Top 10 Features**

#### **1 Buddha Image**

Known as Poh Than Jao Wat, the temple's principal Buddha image is found inside Wat Chalong's western hall. It is flanked by two statues, one of which supposedly depicts a local man who won several lotteries after praying to the Buddha image.

#### **2 Grand Pagoda**

This 197-ft (60-m) tall golden pagoda enshrines a bone splinter of the Buddha. Brought from Sri Lanka in 1999, the fragment is housed inside a *chedi* (stupa) on the third story of the pagoda.





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### **3 Gilded Statues**

Cast in bronze, these depictions of former temple abbots are covered in flecks of gold foil. Visitors offer donations and make merit by affixing small pieces of gold-colored foil onto the statues.

### **4 Architecture**

The temple's colorful multi-tiered sloping roofs, ornate exterior, and interior decorations are very picturesque and provide opportunities for great photographs. The towering golden spire of the Grand Pagoda and glittering window frames are among other visual highlights of Wat Chalong.

### **5 Wall Paintings**

Inside the Grand Pagoda, wall paintings depict events from the life of Siddhartha Gautama, who became the Buddha after gaining enlightenment. The Buddha is depicted teaching his disciples and receiving offerings, among other acts.

### **6 Merit-Making**

Thai Buddhists visit temples and pay respect to the Buddha, and other spiritual leaders, in order to accumulate merit, with the belief that meritorious deeds will benefit one's position in this life and future lives.

### **7 Firecrackers**

Devotees burst firecrackers to give thanks for answered prayers. The fireworks pop inside a beehive-shaped structure located outside, near the sermon hall.

### **8 Fortune Telling**

You can consult the fortune tellers who sit inside the temple's main hall. They shake two cans of numbered bamboo sticks until one stick falls on the floor. The number corresponds to a paper slip inside a wooden cabinet. Retrieve the fortune and ask someone to translate it for you.

### **9 Wax Figures**

Lifelike wax models of former temple abbots can be found inside a special exhibition space. Visitors pay tribute to these spiritual leaders to make merit.

## 📖 Temple History

During an uprising of Chinese tin workers in the late 19th century, many local Thais fled to Wat Chalong for protection. The temple's then abbot, Luang Pob Cham, provided shelter to the people and was later honoured by King Rama V (r. 1868–1910).

**Tip:** Remember to dress conservatively and remove your shoes before entering certain buildings.

**Tip:** A number of street food vendors, selling everything from fried grasshoppers to grilled chicken and pork skewers marinated in chili sauce, congregate outside the temple.

## Wat Chalong Fair

First held in 1954, the annual Wat Chalong Fair transforms the temple grounds into a bustling entertainment venue featuring live music performances, sermons, and an endless variety of delicious local cuisine. Vendors also set up carnival games, ferris wheels, and merry-go-rounds. The eight-day festival coincides with the Chinese New Year and historically marked the end of a local farm harvest.

## Visitor Information

- Chao Fah Nok Road
- 07621 1036
- 07621 2213
- open 7am–5pm daily

## **TOP 10 Patong**

*If you are dreaming of a sleepy tropical hideaway, you might want to look elsewhere – Patong is full of action. The most popular tourist area in Phuket, it features a great range of hotels, restaurants, and nightlife options. Many of the area's high-end resorts are sheltered enclaves with lush gardens and private swimming pools. The seemingly endless shopping options, coupled with wild entertainment venues, legendary nightlife, and a host of daytime activities make Patong a favorite destination for people who crave activity on their beach holidays.*



*Food on display at a roadside stall*

### **Top 10 Features**

#### **1 Patong Beach**

Phuket's most popular tourist beach teems with sun worshippers – lounge chairs and umbrellas stretch three-deep down the golden-sand beach. Roving vendors sell fresh coconuts, beachwear, and souvenirs. You can also enjoy a massage in the shade.

#### **2 Water Sports**

If you enjoy getting an adrenaline fix at the beach, Patong is the right place for you. From wave running and speedboats to parasailing and banana boats, Patong Bay offers all the most exhilarating marine activities.

#### **3 Discos**

Patong's awesome nightlife needs little introduction. Some of the area's most popular party spots include Tiger Disco, Banana Disco, and Seduction Discotheque. The discos draw in the hordes and dance floors are packed as DJs spin everything from house music to the latest pop favorites.



#### **4 Bangla Road**

The central vein of Patong is ablaze with neon lighting and has music blaring from every direction. There are also numerous open-air bars.

#### **5 Street Markets**

The night markets sell everything from T-shirts to wooden Buddha images, and prices are low. The markets near the beach road offer the widest selection.

#### **6 Bars**

As the island's bar capital, Patong boasts a variety of places for enjoying a cold beer or cocktail. From traditional Irish pubs to open-air beer bars, and from go-go bars to sports pubs, Patong has something for everyone.

#### **7 Fresh Seafood**

At sundown, restaurants along the beachfront promenade display the day's fresh catch packed on ice. Snapper, grouper, shrimp, crabs, lobster, and other delicious seafood can be individually selected and grilled and seasoned to your taste.

#### **8 Massage and Spa Treatments**

Thailand is renowned for its world-class hospitality, best experienced in its traditional massage treatments and spas. These facilities are ubiquitous in Patong.

#### **9 Cabaret Shows**

These colorful shows, starring transvestites, have been thrilling audiences for nearly 20 years. The most popular venue, Simon Cabaret, puts on two shows inside an extravagantly decorated theater.

## 📌 Muay Thai Fights

No trip to Thailand is complete without watching this Thai martial art. Five three-minute rounds, accompanied by romping music, are preceded by the pomp and ceremony of ancient pre-fight rituals.

**Tip:** Mos. prices are negotiable, so be sure to barter with vendors and other service providers.

**Tip:** Some of the most delicious Thai food is served up at the street-side food carts.

### A Matter of Perspective

Some foreign travelers who arrive in Patong are shocked by the extremely liberal sexual norms of the area, where transsexuals, prostitutes, and occasionally, transsexual prostitutes seem to represent such a large segment of the local population, particularly after the sun goes down. But while seeing the area's "red light" elements is probably unavoidable, it certainly does not mean that Patong only offers such venues. Indeed, there are also plenty of ways to have good, clean fun in Patong.

### Visitor Information

- **Patong Boxing Stadium (muay thai fights)**
- 2/59 Sai Nam Yen Road
- 07634 5185
- Adm B1,300 onward
- [www.boxingstadiumpatong.com](http://www.boxingstadiumpatong.com)
- **Bangla Boxing Stadium (muay thai fights)**
- Bangla Road
- 089 726 1112
- Adm B1,000 onward
- **Tiger Disco**
- 49 Bangla Road
- 07634 5112
- **Banana Disco**
- 124 Thaweewong Road
- 07632 0306
- **Seduction Discotheque**
- 39/1 Bangla Road
- 07634 0215

- [www.seductiondiscotheque.com](http://www.seductiondiscotheque.com)
- **Simon Cabaret**
- Sirirach Road, Patong Beach
- 07634 2011
- [www.phuket-simoncabaret.com](http://www.phuket-simoncabaret.com)



# **TOP 10** Khao Phra Thaeo National Park

*Spread across 9 sq miles (23 sq km) of virgin rain forest, this national park in northeast Phuket provides one of the last remaining natural habitats for exotic and endangered animal species on the island. This pristine forest offers a quiet place where visitors can immerse themselves in the jungles that once covered much of the island. Khao Phra Thaeo offers picturesque waterfalls, raw hiking trails, and a rehabilitation center where gibbons receive care and treatment. The park is also home to rare plants, flowers, and trees.*



*Khao Phra Thaeo National Park headquarters*

## **Top 10 Features**

### **1 Ton Sai Waterfall**

This scenic little waterfall in the center of the wildlife sanctuary is an enjoyable place to spend an afternoon. You can climb the rocky paths near the falls, but be careful, since the rocks can get slippery.

### **2 Gibbon Rehabilitation Project**

The calls of gibbons resonate through the forest surrounding the Rehabilitation Centre, which was established in 1992 to care for animals that had previously been living in captivity. The project reintroduces some gibbons into the wild.



### **3 Bang Pae Waterfall**

The bigger of the national park's two major waterfalls, Bang Pae plummets down and forms a pool ideal for a cool, refreshing dip. The easy walk from the parking lot to the waterfall takes around 10 minutes.

### **4 Wildlife Conservation Development and Extension Centre**

Located near the base of Ton Sai Waterfall, this visitor center offers lectures on the park's history and purpose, as well as trail guides, brochures, and limited, basic accommodations.

### **5 Flora**

One of Khao Phra Thaeo National Park's special highlights is a rare and endangered palm known as the white-backed palm, or langkow-palm. Discovered by a German botanist in the 1950s, the fan-shaped plant is unique to southern Thailand.

### **6 Trekking**

A scenic 5-mile (8-km) long jungle path links Ton Sai and Bang Pae waterfalls. Trekkers can hire guides at the visitor center near Ton Sai. Watch out for the park's numerous exotic animal and plant species.

### **7 Elephant Trekking**

An elephant village on the edge of Khao Phra Thaeo, not far from Bang Pae Waterfall, offers visitors the opportunity to go elephant trekking on jungle trails. The surprisingly nimble animal plods along steadily as you sit high atop its back.

## 8 Wildlife

The sanctuary's natural environment is home to a number of exotic species, including wild boar, macaque monkeys, gibbons, and various types of deer.

## 9 Virgin Rain Forest

Evergreen trees, bamboo forests, exotic orchids, ferns, and mosses can all be found in Khao Phra Thaeo. The forested area surrounding the sanctuary includes several large rubber tree plantations.

## 10 Bird-watching

Northern Phuket is a paradise for bird-watchers. Inside the sanctuary, you can spot flowerpeckers, bulbuls, and sunbirds, as well as Green Leafbirds, Red-billed Malkohas, Asian fairy-bluebirds, and brahminty kites.

**Tip:** Check the weather forecast before your visit to the park – remember that it can rain without much warning, particularly during the summer months.

**Tip:** Try the Bang Rong Floating Restaurant, not far from Bang Pae Water fall.

## Captive Gibbons

In many of Thailand's tourist areas, local touts carry baby gibbons around and try to lure foreigners into taking photographs with the cute little animals. In exchange, the touts ask for a little money. If you see these touts, remember that the gibbons are being kept illegally, and that many gibbons die when hunters try to capture them for the tourist trade. The Gibbon Rehabilitation Centre at Khao Phra Thaeo National Park works to protect these primates.

## Visitor Information

- **Visitor Center**
- 254 Moo 2, Thepkasatri Road, Thalang
- 07631 1998
- open 8:30am - 4:30pm daily
- Adm B200 (adults), B100 (children)
- **Gibbon Rehabilitation Centre**

- Bang Pae Waterfall, Pa Khlock, Thalang
- 07626 0491
- open 9am–4:30pm daily
- [www.gibbonproject.org](http://www.gibbonproject.org)
- **Wildlife Conservation Department and Extension Centre**
- Highway 4027
- 07621 1067
- open 9am–4pm daily

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