



# Escape to the land of the free

*Thailand has waived off visa fee for Indians and is offering tourist visas on arrival till October this year. Go ahead, pick a destination, choose your budget and explore*

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**T**hailand, this South East Asian country - famous and infamous in equal parts as a holiday destination - is so many things to so many people. With its glorious islands and beaches, its stunning temples and ancient cities steeped in history and culture jostling alongside its fun and vibrant modern cities, Thailand has a lot to offer. One could easily spend weeks here exploring the tropical kingdom end-to-end and never really run out of experiences. Adding to this country's numerous tourist attractions is also the lure of its currency, for spending in the Thai Baht, which is a little over two Indian Rupees, makes even the most luxurious holiday here pocket-friendly. Little wonder then that Thailand today has come to be the number one choice for so many backpackers and digital nomads from across the world.

Besides, Thailand has also waived off visa fee for Indians and is offering tourist visas on arrival till October this year. So go ahead, pick a destination, choose your budget and tailor-make your own itinerary to explore this tropical paradise using our quick introduction here for inspiration.



## Bangkok

**B**angkok, Thailand's capital city, should be your first stop to begin exploring the country. For it is just the right mix of modern and eclectic and the bustling streets of Bangkok are perfect to lose yourself in. Shop high-street fashion to your heart's content at prices that are a steal and stop often to try palate tingling sweet and sour Thai street food as you marvel at the opulent palaces and temples dotting the otherwise swanky cityscape of glass and steel. During the day, take a tuk tuk ride through Chinatown or take a long boat to the floating markets. Before the sun sets, be sure to catch a glimpse of the reclining Buddha resting in all his glory at the Wat Pho. As night falls, head to Khao San Road to get a taste of Bangkok's vibrant nightlife. And, if you are curious to see the notorious side of Thailand, then Pattaya is only two hours from here.



## Kanchanaburi

Kanchanaburi played a big role in the World War II, for it was the crossing point between Thailand and Burma and it was here that the 'death railway' was built. Since then, it has been the setting of many critically acclaimed books and movies. But with its war museums and the chance to ride the death railway now, it is only lately that it has caught the fancy of travellers. It might not be to everyone's taste, but it definitely makes for an unusual pit stop on a Thailand holiday.



## Chiang Mai

The Rose of the North, Chiang Mai is where you should begin your journey with if it is a dose of culture that you go seeking in Thailand. It could also serve as the perfect mid-tour stop to slow down. For in Chiang Mai, one can spend idyllic days cycling around ancient temples, indulging in conversations with monks, even taking Thai cooking classes, if one is so inclined. And if one tires of that too, there is the option of getting away from it all. Simply go further into the rural countryside of Northern Thailand.



## Phuket

Phuket is not just Thailand's largest island, it is also where the most luxurious resorts in the country are. Right from its fashionable beach clubs to lounge around in during the day, to extravagant shows like the FantaSea Show and the cabarets to revel in at night, Phuket is where there is something to do round the clock.

While Thailand's elephant sanctuaries have long been popular with families, they have begun to come under censure as more and more travellers everywhere are making ethically conscious decisions. Phuket has indeed managed to keep pace with the times and has made it possible for tourists to find their way to more ethical experiences.

One can get to the heavenly Ko Phi Phi islands from here too. And there are other smaller islands like the Similan Islands, which are considered to be amongst the finest dive spots that are ideal for snorkelling too.



## Krabi



Thailand's most popular beaches are in Krabi and more often than not, it is Krabi's coastline with its azure skies, crystal clear waters and limestone cliffs that features in those stunning postcards of Thailand. While Railay Beach and the islands Ko Phi Phi are the most sought after, the islands of Ko Lanta and Ko Hong are just as beautiful, if only less crowded. Just a few minutes from the town centre is also the Tiger Cave. Though it is the footprint of the Buddha that draws the crowds to this temple cave set inside a limestone cliff, it is the hike up which is truly rewarding. The panoramic views of the Andaman Sea and lush canopy of the rainforest surrounding it are unrivalled.



## Ko Samui

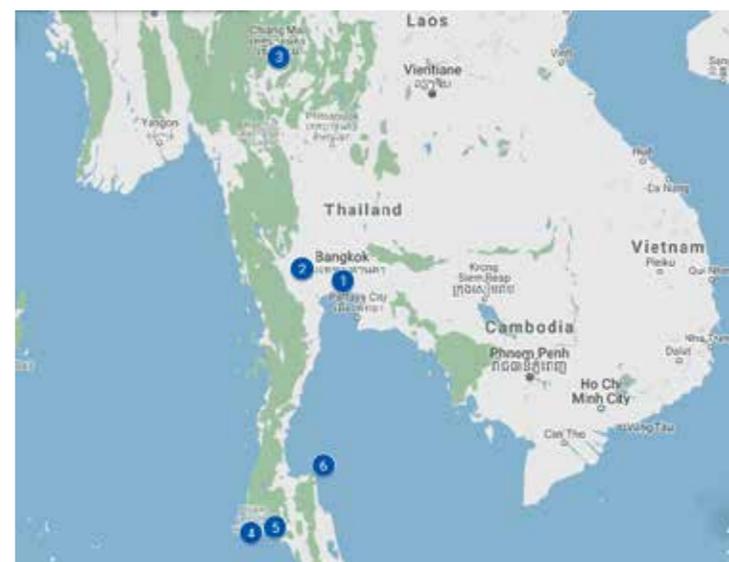
Ko Samui is the quieter alternative to Phuket and the perfect destination for those looking for all the trappings of a resort island, but minus the hype and the crowd. For here on this island, you will be able to rent a peaceful, low key airbnb just as easily as you can find a villa in the fanciest of resorts.

Be it Ko Samui's iconic Big Buddha Shrine or its historic fishing villages lined with chic boutiques and street markets, this island boasts of such a wide array of attractions - even the infamous kind, like lady boy cabarets - that it attracts the most diverse group of travellers.

Also, just a ferry ride away are the Khao Sok National Park - one of the oldest rainforests in the world; Ko Tao and Khao Lak islands - laid-back dive spots; and the Ang Thong National Marine Park - an archipelago of 42 islands in the Gulf of Thailand.



## Route & Itinerary Suggestions



- 1 Bangkok
- 2 Kanchanaburi
- 3 Chiang Mai
- 4 Phuket
- 5 Krabi
- 6 Ko Samui

Bangkok and Kanchanaburi can be visited together, in four days, with Bangkok as the base.

If it is Northern Thailand that one wants to explore, then fly to Bangkok, spend two to three days in the city, and then fly to Chiang Mai. Here, one can spend around three to four days depending on how much of the mountainous countryside one wants to explore.

If it is the tropical beach life that you crave, then head down South from Bangkok to the Islands. Or skip Bangkok and fly direct to Phuket from India. If you plan on going to any of the evening shows, stay in Phuket. But if you prefer being closer to the beach, stay in Krabi. One can take the ferry to Ko Phi Phi islands from either of the two, Phuket or Krabi.

To get to Ko Samui, one can either fly from Bangkok or take the bus and ferry from Phuket. ▼

Destination	Days	Budget (per Person per Day in INR)	
		Spend	Save
Bangkok	3	25000	5000
Kanchanaburi	1	5000	1000
Chiang Mai	2	9000	1000
Phuket	2	8000	3000
Krabi	3	9000	1500
Ko Samui	3	8000	1500