

## Koh Phangan – Thailand

Sitting a three hour boat ride from the mainland, Koh Phangan is the last unspoiled island of any major size left in Thailand. Differing from its sister Koh Samui in many ways. Where Koh Samui is brash and built up, Koh Phangan is laid back with a landscape. Large property developers have yet to begin exploiting this tropical paradise, most development is restricted to discrete bungalow resorts.

Koh Phangan is still a popular destination for backpackers and budget travellers, infamous for its [Full Moon Party](#) most young travellers see the island as one of the highlights of their trip to Thailand. The party takes place at the southern end of the island in the town of Haad Rin, a hedonistic party town made up of meandering side streets packed with bars, restaurants and gift shops, bungalow resorts to suit every pocket and above all else the stunning Haad Rin Nok beach. At the time of the full moon, Haad Rin is packed full of revellers and advanced booking is recommended if you wish to stay in this part of the island at this time of the month.

Moving north from Haad Rin we next encounter Ban Tai, home to both the [Half Moon Party](#) and the [Shiva Moon Party](#) both large events themselves. Ban Tai is also where you will find the 'horny mile', a stretch of road almost a mile long that is populated by lady bars on each side. These bars are a lot more laid back than their counterparts in either Bangkok or Pattaya and seem to be a solid favourite with the middle aged tourists who arrive upon Koh Phangan.

Further north still you will come to Thongsala, the only true town upon the island, a vibrant mix of Thai shops, western bars and restaurants along with traditional food markets at every turn. At night the main market square becomes an open air restaurant serviced by a couple of dozen street vendors who set up tables and ply their trade. Some of the best food on Koh Phangan can be found here after the sun sets. Thongsala also houses the main ferry pier for the island and forms a natural gateway to the mainland.

Once you leave Thongsala behind and head further north you will notice a drastic change in the pace of life, things are quieter here with only occasional houses built and small village settlements with local shops. The villages of Wok Tum and Hing Kong are particularly lazy; both wonderful places for somebody looking for a longer term stay on the island.

Further up the coast road you will find Haad Yao and Haad Salad, both excellent diving areas with a close in reef allowing easy access for beach dives, further north still you will find Mae Haad and the small island of Koh Ma sitting an easy wade across the sea from Koh Phangan. This is the premier snorkelling spot on the island offering sites usually only witnessed by scuba divers.

Up at the northern tip of Koh Phangan you will find Chaloklam, a squid fishing village with a beautiful crescent beach. The seafood here is exceptional, taken straight from the sea each morning. At night you can watch the lights of the dozens of squid boats that ply the waters in this area, and then watch them return with their catch and dry it in the sun whilst you eat breakfast at a beachside restaurant.

Over on the west side of the island you will find Tong Nai Pan, originally a secluded backpacker community now the site of the largest developments upon Koh Phangan. Luxury resorts cater for the sun worshipers who agree that the western beach is the most beautiful upon the island.

Although Koh Phangan is no longer the undeveloped rebellious sister to Koh Samui that it used to be it still retains much of its original charm due to the reduced development rate upon the island. If you wish to see Koh Phangan whilst it still maintains its reputation as an unspoiled paradise island then you really should visit soon, the large property developers are already starting to cast their eyes upon its golden shores.