

Travelling to Koh Phangan – What are the options?

So you have landed in Bangkok, probably spent a couple of days enjoying the crazy place and are now ready to head out to the islands? Great, but just how do you get there? Well you could consult your guide book, it will tell you how, but it won't give you a very good idea of which is the best option. I will try to do that here.

Train and boat

There are several trains each day travelling south from Bangkok to Surat Thani. It takes around 9 hours to complete the train journey, you must then get a coach from the station (don't worry they will be waiting for you to get off the train, not hard to find one) to pier in Donsak. From there you take a boat, approximately a 4 hour trip depending on the weather. Possibly the best way to do this journey is to take the overnight sleeper train, this gets you to Surat Thani early the next morning, you will arrive on Koh Phangan sometime in the afternoon. Be warned, the aircon is very cold should you take a 1st or 2nd class ticket, consider taking 3rd class, fan only, you really don't need aircon at 2am.

Bus

Taking a bus is the cheapest option; it is also the least comfortable. So called 'VIP' buses can be booked from most travel agents in Bangkok. The journey takes up to 19 hours, a long time to be trapped on a slow moving vehicle. I only recommend this option if you are on the kind of budget where you need to watch every penny.

Flying

Unfortunately, Bangkok Airways still maintain a monopoly over flights to Koh Samui airport. This makes the Bangkok-Samui route the most expensive in Thailand. If you choose to fly during the day you will be looking at a fee of around 4,000 Baht. There are two promotional flights each day, one at 6am the other at 10pm, and these can be booked for 2,000 Baht, but book well in advance as they fill up fast. Once on Koh Samui just ask a taxi driver to take you to the pier for the next boat leaving to Koh Phangan, it's a 20 minute crossing.

Once you arrive upon Koh Phangan you will be swamped by friendly taxi drivers asking you where you want to go, don't be alarmed they are just trying to make a living and they really are your only option for public travel on the island. Renting a scooter is the best way to get around.