

Ko Samui, Thailand — 90-Day Survival Guide

For The Lean Nomad — Built 2026-07-07

How to Use This Guide

Use this guide as a single reference document for a 90-day stay on Ko Samui. Every named place, beach, neighborhood, and category is individually profiled. Facts are sourced from Wikipedia, Wikivoyage, and verified POI data. This is encyclopedia-depth — not a starter checklist.

0. City Overview & Quick Facts

The Hard Numbers

Fact	Detail
Population	70,059 (2019), ~50,000 full-time residents
Area	228.7 km ² (88.3 sq mi) — Thailand's 2nd largest island
Coordinates	9°30'N 100°00'E
Highest Elevation	635m (2,083ft) — Khao Pom mountain
Language	Thai (official), English widely spoken in tourist areas
Currency	Thai baht (THB)
Timezone	UTC+7 (Indochina Time)
Calling Code	+66 (country); 077 (Samui area)
Climate Classification	Tropical monsoon
Municipal Status	City municipality (thesaban nakhon) since 2012

What This Island Actually Is

Ko Samui (often spelled Koh Samui, locally shortened to just “Samui”) is an island in the Gulf of Thailand, about 700km south of Bangkok and 80km from the eastern coastline of Southern Thailand. It's part of Surat Thani Province but has been self-governing since 2012 when it was granted city municipality status.

Samui is Thailand's second most popular island destination after Phuket, drawing 2.3–2.7 million visitors annually (pre-pandemic). The island features palm-fringed beaches, coconut plantations, jungle-covered mountains, waterfalls, and a full range of tourist infrastructure from backpacker hostels to luxury resorts.

The island was isolated until the 1970s — no roads existed, and crossing the 15km interior required a full-day jungle trek. The first backpackers arrived

on coconut boats in the early 1970s. Mass tourism began in the 1990s after the airport opened in 1989. Today, Samui has a ring road encircling the island (51km) and modern infrastructure, though the central mountains remain largely undeveloped jungle.

The vibe: More relaxed than Phuket, more developed than Koh Phangan or Koh Tao. You can party hard in Chaweng, find zen in Mae Nam, or disappear into a luxury villa in Taling Ngam. The island is big enough to explore seriously but small enough to circumnavigate in 2–3 hours by motorbike or car.

Named Places Profiled

Beaches & Areas

- **Chaweng** — The largest and most-developed beach. Longest stretch of sand on the island. Mix of luxury hotels and backpacker hostels. Hopping nightlife, shopping, restaurants. The tourist epicenter.
- **Lamai** — Samui’s “second” beach, south of Chaweng. Shifted toward biker bars, go-go venues, and beach lounges. Still lively but slightly cheaper than Chaweng.
- **Bophut (Fisherman’s Village)** — Known for its preserved wooden shophouses and Friday walking street. Laid-back but growing fast. Popular with expats and families.
- **Mae Nam** — Quiet, beautiful beach on the northern coast. Long stretch of sand, fewer crowds. Good for long stays, remote workers, families.
- **Bang Rak (Big Buddha)** — At the northeastern tip, home of the famous 12-meter Big Buddha statue. Ferry pier to Koh Phangan. Mix of local life and tourism.
- **Choeng Mon** — Quiet, family-friendly north shore beach. Small, sheltered bay. Upscale resorts, peaceful vibe.
- **Nathon** — Samui’s port and administrative center on the west coast. Main ferry terminal, government offices, local markets. Less touristy, more authentic.
- **Lipa Noi** — Upcoming beach area south of Nathon. Quieter, developing. Car ferry pier to mainland.
- **Taling Ngam** — Southwest coast. Secluded, upscale resorts. Sunset views toward Ang Thong Marine Park.

1. Landing — First 72 Hours

Airport Options

Samui International Airport (USM)

The only airport on the island, located near Chaweng on the northeast coast. Built and operated by Bangkok Airways (private airport).

Airlines: Bangkok Airways (dominant), Thai Airways (codeshare), Scoot (Singapore), limited international flights (Chengdu, Chongqing, Hong Kong, Singapore).

Flights from Bangkok: Near-hourly from Suvarnabhumi (BKK) and Don Mueang (DMK). Advance booking: THB 3,000–5,000 one-way. Walk-up fares higher.

Ground transport from airport: - **Minibus:** THB 200/person to Chaweng (20 minutes, may stop at multiple hotels) - **Taxi:** THB 500+ direct to your hotel (negotiate before boarding) - **Hotel transfer:** Many resorts include free airport pickup — book in advance - **Grab/NaviGo:** Available, fixed pricing

Visa-on-arrival: Available at Samui Airport for eligible nationalities.

Alternative: Fly + Ferry (Cheaper)

Option 1: Via Surat Thani (URT) - Fly to Surat Thani Airport (frequent from Bangkok, cheaper than direct to Samui) - Seatran Ferry bus + ferry combo: THB 400 - Travel time: ~3 hours total - Bus leaves airport 6x daily

Option 2: Via Chumphon (CJM) - Fly to Chumphon from Don Mueang (Nok Air) - Lomprayah high-speed catamaran (stops at Koh Tao, Koh Phangan, then Samui) - Good for island-hopping itineraries

Option 3: Via Nakhon Si Thammarat (NST) - Fly from Don Mueang (Nok Air) - Bus + catamaran with Lomprayah

Money Out of the Gate

Currency is the **Thai baht (THB)**. Exchange counters at Samui Airport offer poor rates — change only enough for immediate transport (THB 500–1,000), then hit proper ATMs or exchange booths in Chaweng/Bophut.

ATMs: Everywhere in tourist areas. Foreign card withdrawal fee: THB 220 per transaction. Withdraw maximum amounts (THB 20,000–30,000) to minimize fee impact.

Banks: Bangkok Bank, Kasikorn (K-Bank), Siam Commercial Bank (SCB), Krung Thai Bank — all have branches/ATMs in Chaweng, Bophut, Lamai, Nathon.

Where to Plant Yourself First

For first-timers: Stay in **Chaweng** or **Bophut** for your first 72 hours. Both put you within walking distance of restaurants, shops, and transport. Use this time to scout other beaches before committing to a monthly rental.

For long-stay reconnaissance: Ride the ring road. Rent a motorbike (THB 200–350/day) or hire a taxi for a half-day tour. Visit Mae Nam, Bophut, Choeng Mon, Lamai, Nathon, Lipa Noi, and Taling Ngam. Talk to expats at cafes and coworking spaces. Facebook groups (“Samui Expats,” “Ko Samui Long Stay”) have rental listings that never hit Agoda.

Getting Around Immediately

Mode	Fare	Availability	What to Know
Songthaew (shared pickup)	THB 50–150	07:00–20:00	Fixed routes, less common than mainland. Ask locally.
Taxi	THB 200–800+	Sporadic	Rarely use meter. Negotiate before boarding. Airport rates inflated.
Grab	App-priced	Limited	Works in tourist areas. Not as ubiquitous as Bangkok/Pattaya.
Motorbike rental	THB 200–350/day	Everywhere	Requires passport deposit or cash bond. IDP legally required.
Car rental	THB 1,000–2,500/day	Agencies at airport	Safer than motorbikes. Full insurance from major companies.

Reality check: Samui is a motorbike island. Most long-stay visitors rent or buy a scooter. Cars are expensive and parking is tight in Chaweng. Songthaews exist but are less organized than Pattaya/Bangkok.

2. Visa & Immigration

Visa-Free Entry

Most Western passport holders receive **30 days visa-free** when arriving by air. Land/sea entries grant 15 days. This can be extended once for 30 days at the local immigration office.

Visa Extension Process

Ko Samui Immigration Office - **Address:** Na Thon, Ko Samui, Surat Thani 84320 - **Phone:** +66 77 421 230 (check locally for immigration-specific line) - **Hours:** Monday–Friday 08:30–11:30, 13:00–16:30 (closed weekends and Thai holidays) - **Cost:** THB 1,900 for 30-day extension

Documents required: - Passport (valid 6+ months) - Copy of passport bio page and visa stamp - TM.7 application form (available at immigration) - One 4×6cm photo (taken within 6 months) - Proof of address (rental contract or hotel booking) - Flight ticket (sometimes requested)

Process: Arrive early (07:30–08:00) to avoid crowds. Take a number. Fill out TM.7 form at the counter. Submit documents. Pay fee. Return in 5–7 days for passport with extension stamp.

Note: Samui's immigration office is smaller than mainland offices. Expect queues during peak season (December–February).

Long-Stay Visa Options

Tourist Visa (TR): Apply at Thai embassy before travel. Grants 60 days, extendable by 30 days. Cost varies by country (~\$40–80 USD).

Elite Visa: 5–20 year membership program. Costs THB 600,000–2,000,000+. Includes airport fast-track, concierge services. Overkill for 90-day stays.

Education Visa: Thai language schools offer 6–12 month student visas. Costs THB 30,000–60,000/year. Requires regular class attendance. Crackdowns have increased — ensure school is legitimate.

Retirement Visa (Non-O): For ages 50+. Requires THB 800,000 in Thai bank account or THB 65,000/month income. Convertible from tourist visa inside Thailand.

Work Permit: Requires Thai employer sponsorship. Most digital nomads work remotely on tourist entries — technically gray area but widely practiced.

Overstay Penalties

- **THB 500 per day** up to 90 days
- **Arrest and deportation** for overstays over 90 days
- **Re-entry ban** possible for extended overstays

Do not overstay. Immigration systems are computerized and track entries/exits.

3. Money & Banking

ATM Networks

All major Thai banks operate ATMs on Samui. Foreign cards work universally.

Bank	ATM Locations	Notes
Bangkok Bank	Chaweng, Bophut, Lamai, Nathon	Largest network, English menus
Kasikorn Bank (K-Bank)	Everywhere in tourist areas	Green branding, reliable
Siam Commercial Bank (SCB)	Malls, tourist areas	Purple branding
Krung Thai Bank	Government areas, Nathon	Blue branding

Fee: THB 220 per withdrawal (all banks). Withdraw maximum amounts (usually THB 20,000–30,000 per transaction) to minimize fee impact.

Card Acceptance

Venue Type	Card Acceptance	Cash Needed
7-Eleven / FamilyMart	Yes (THB 50+ purchases)	Small purchases
Supermarkets (Tesco, Big C)	Yes	None
Shopping malls	Yes	None
Restaurants (mid-range+)	Yes	Street food/local markets only
Street food / markets	No	Always
Songthaews / motorbike taxis	No	Always
Hotels / resorts	Yes (most)	Some budget bungalows cash-only

Wise / Revolut: Both work at Thai ATMs. Wise offers better exchange rates than direct bank withdrawals. Load baht into Wise app before arrival for instant ATM access.

Opening a Local Account

Possible but requires documentation:

- **Tourist visa:** Generally not allowed
- **Non-Immigrant visa:** Possible with work permit or retirement visa
- **Elite visa:** Yes, with membership card

Bangkok Bank is most foreigner-friendly. Minimum deposit: THB 1,000–5,000. ATM card issued same-day or within 1 week.

Currency Exchange

Avoid: Airport booths, hotel exchange counters (poor rates)

Use: SuperRich (if available), exchange booths in Central Festival/Chaweng, bank branches

Current rates (2026): ~THB 35–36 per USD, ~THB 40–42 per EUR. Check SuperRich website before exchanging.

4. Neighborhoods & Housing

Beach/Area Profiles

Chaweng

Vibe: Tourist central, chaotic, convenient, nightlife hub **Rent range:** THB 15,000–40,000/month (1-bed condo/villa) **Best for:** First-time visitors, nightlife access, walkable lifestyle, shopping **Not ideal for:** Quiet seekers, families, long-term budget stays

Chaweng has the longest beach on the island (7km). Everything is walkable — malls, restaurants, bars, the beach itself. Accommodation ranges from THB 500/night hostels to THB 20,000/night luxury villas. Noise is constant; request units away from main road for better sleep.

Lamai

Vibe: Lively, slightly cheaper than Chaweng, biker-friendly **Rent range:** THB 12,000–30,000/month (1-bed) **Best for:** Budget-conscious visitors, nightlife without Chaweng chaos **Not ideal for:** Quiet seekers, families with young children

Lamai is Chaweng’s “little sister” — similar vibe but smaller, slightly cheaper. The southern end is quieter. Famous for Hin Ta/Hin Yai (Grandfather/Grandmother rocks).

Bophut (Fisherman's Village)

Vibe: Expat-friendly, laid-back, charming, growing fast **Rent range:** THB 18,000–45,000/month (1–2 bed) **Best for:** Long-stay expats, families, remote workers, couples **Not ideal for:** Nightlife seekers (quieter than Chaweng)

Bophut's Fisherman's Village has preserved wooden shophouses, now housing restaurants, bars, and boutiques. Friday walking street is a weekly highlight. Popular with European and Australian expats.

Mae Nam

Vibe: Quiet, residential, long-stay expat hub **Rent range:** THB 10,000–25,000/month (1-bed bungalow/condo) **Best for:** Remote workers, families, long-term stays, budget-conscious **Not ideal for:** Nightlife, walkable access to Chaweng

Mae Nam has a long, quiet beach. Less developed than Chaweng/Bophut. Good infrastructure (supermarkets, cafes, clinics) without the tourist chaos. Popular with Russian and European long-stayers.

Choeng Mon

Vibe: Upscale, peaceful, family-friendly **Rent range:** THB 20,000–50,000/month (1–2 bed villa/condo) **Best for:** Couples, families, luxury seekers **Not ideal for:** Budget travelers, nightlife

Small, sheltered bay on the northeast tip. Upscale resorts dominate. Quiet, clean beach. Requires motorbike/taxi for Chaweng access (10 minutes).

Nathon

Vibe: Local town, administrative center, authentic **Rent range:** THB 8,000–20,000/month (1-bed) **Best for:** Long-term expats, authentic Thai life, budget stays **Not ideal for:** Beach lovers, nightlife, tourists

Nathon is the island's capital and main ferry port. Government offices, local markets, hospitals. Less touristy, more authentic Thai life. Beaches nearby are functional, not spectacular.

Lipa Noi

Vibe: Developing, quiet, sunset views **Rent range:** THB 10,000–25,000/month **Best for:** Long stays, families, sunset lovers **Not ideal for:** Nightlife, walkable amenities

Southwest coast, facing Ang Thong Marine Park. Spectacular sunsets. Still developing — fewer restaurants/shops than north coast. Car ferry pier to mainland.

Taling Ngam

Vibe: Secluded, upscale, remote **Rent range:** THB 25,000–70,000+/month (villas) **Best for:** Luxury seekers, privacy, honeymooners **Not ideal for:** Budget travelers, social scene, walkable lifestyle

Southwest coast, the island’s quietest area. Luxury resorts and private villas dominate. Spectacular sunsets. Requires motorbike/car for everything.

Finding Monthly Housing

Online platforms: - Agoda Homes (verified listings, booking protection) - Booking.com (some monthly options) - Airbnb (varies by host) - Facebook: “Samui Expats,” “Ko Samui Long Stay,” “Samui Property For Rent”

Walk-in method: 1. Pick beach/area 2. Walk streets looking for “For Rent” signs (Thai: iheecha) 3. Call numbers on signs (many landlords don’t list online) 4. Negotiate directly (no platform fees)

Contract norms: - 6-month or 1-year leases standard - 1–2 months deposit + 1 month advance rent - Utilities separate (electricity ~THB 7–8/unit, water ~THB 100–500/month) - Internet often included in condos/villas

Red flags: - Landlord refuses written contract - Deposit exceeds 2 months - Utility rates far above government rates (electricity should be ~THB 7–8/unit) - No inventory list at move-in

5. Transport

Getting Around Samui

Motorbike/Scooter Rental

Daily rate: THB 200–350 **Monthly rate:** THB 4,000–7,000 **Requirements:** Passport deposit or cash bond (THB 2,000–5,000)

Legal reality: - International Driving Permit (IDP) required with motorcycle endorsement - Police checkpoints target foreigners without IDP - Fines: THB 500–1,000 (sometimes negotiable on-spot) - Travel insurance void if riding without valid license

Safety: - Wear helmet (required by law, THB 500 fine if caught) - Avoid driving under influence (checkpoints common, especially at night) - Park in designated areas (towing common for sidewalk parking) - Roads are hazardous — potholes, drunk drivers, stray dogs

Reality: Most long-stay visitors use motorbikes. It’s the island’s primary transport. But it’s risky — accidents are common. Consider a car if you’re inexperienced.

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Car Rental

Daily rate: THB 1,000–2,500 **Monthly rate:** THB 20,000–40,000 **Requirements:** Valid driver's license, credit card deposit

Agencies: Airport has major brands (Avis, Hertz, local operators). Book in advance during peak season.

Insurance: Major companies include full insurance. Local budget operators may offer only compulsory coverage (read the fine print).

Taxi

Fare: Negotiated, starting ~THB 200 for short trips **Availability:** Sporadic outside tourist areas

Metered taxis are rare on Samui. Most drivers quote flat rates. Use for airport transfers or when Grab isn't available.

Grab

Fare: App-priced, typically THB 150–500 for cross-island trips **Availability:** Limited to tourist areas (Chaweng, Bophut, Lamai, airport)

Download Grab before arrival. Works in main tourist zones but less ubiquitous than Bangkok/Pattaya. No haggling, GPS-tracked routes.

Songthaew (Shared Pickup Truck)

Fare: THB 50–150 depending on distance **Hours:** 07:00–20:00 (reduced frequency evenings)

Songthaews exist but are less organized than mainland Thailand. Fixed routes in some areas, but often function as shared taxis. Ask locally for routes.

Intercity Connections

To/From Bangkok

Direct flight: Bangkok Airways from Samui Airport (USM) to Suvarnabhumi (BKK) or Don Mueang (DMK). Near-hourly. THB 3,000–5,000 one-way (advance booking).

Flight + ferry: Fly to Surat Thani (URT), then Seatran/Lomprayah bus+ferry combo. THB 400–600 total. ~3 hours travel time.

To/From Koh Phangan

Ferry from Bang Rak Pier (Big Buddha Pier): - Seatran: THB 200–300, 30 minutes, multiple daily departures - Lomprayah: THB 300–400, 30 minutes, fewer departures - Songserm: THB 150–200, 45 minutes, basic service

Ferry from Mae Nam Pier: - Seatran: THB 200–300, 30 minutes

Ferry from Nathon Pier: - Multiple operators, THB 150–300, 30–60 minutes

To/From Koh Tao

Lomprayah catamaran: From Nathon Pier, THB 800–1,200, ~2 hours. Stops at Koh Phangan en route.

Seatran: From Nathon or Mae Nam, THB 600–900, ~2 hours.

To/From Mainland (Surat Thani)

Car ferry: Raja Ferry from Lipa Noi Pier to Don Sak. THB 200–400 per person + vehicle fee. 90 minutes.

Passenger ferry: Seatran/Songserm from Nathon Pier to Don Sak. THB 150–250, 90 minutes.

Bus + ferry combo: From Surat Thani town or airport. THB 200–400, ~3 hours total.

6. Food & Dining

Street Food & Local Eats

Samui's street food scene is widespread and cheap. Expect THB 50–100 per meal.

Where to find it: - **Chaweng Night Market** — Street food and cheap Thai plates near Chaweng Lake. Evening crowds. - **Lamai Night Market** — Sunday night market with Thai street food and souvenirs. - **Fisherman's Village Walking Street (Bophut)** — Friday evenings. Food stalls, live music, crafts. More tourist-oriented but fun. - **Nathon Market** — Local market, less touristy. Best prices, requires Thai language or pointing.

Must-try dishes: - Pad Thai (THB 50–80) - Som Tam (papaya salad, THB 40–60) - Moo Ping (grilled pork skewers, THB 10–20 each) - Khao Pad (fried rice, THB 50–70) - Grilled seafood (prawns, squid, fish — market price) - Massaman curry (THB 80–120)

Sit-Down Thai Restaurants

Price range: THB 200–500 per person

Named places from POI file:

- **Nam Restaurants** — Thai restaurant in Mae Nam. 4.8 stars, 323 reviews. THB 200–400. Open until 22:30. Address: 28/5 Mae Nam.
- **Krua Bophut Thai Restaurant** — Popular Thai restaurant right on the sand in Fisherman’s Village. Address: 74 Bophut Beach Road.
- **Baan Pla Siew Restaurant** — Local Thai restaurant in Mae Nam area, near Nam Restaurants.
- **Khaw Glong Thai Restaurant** — Thai curries and local dishes in Chaweng.
- **Phensiri Thai Restaurant** — Authentic Thai food in Fisherman’s Village area, Bophut.
- **Green Bird** — Thai restaurant popular with long-stay visitors in Chaweng.
- **Yum Thai** — Casual Thai eatery in Chaweng.

Western/International Restaurants

Price range: THB 300–1,000+ per person

- **The Shack Steakhouse** — Long-standing steakhouse in Fisherman’s Village, Bophut.
- **2 Fishes** — Sunset dinners and special occasions near Fisherman’s Village, Bophut.
- **Dining on the Rocks** — Fine dining with panoramic sea views at Six Senses Samui, Baan Plai Laem, Bophut.
- **Saffron at Banyan Tree** — Upscale Thai fine dining. Address: 99/9 Moo 4, Maret (Lamai area).
- **Kitchen Table** — Beachfront all-day dining at W resort, Mae Nam.
- **Bondi Aus Café** — Australian café and breakfast in Chaweng.
- **Cafe Uno** — Popular café and breakfast spot in Lamai.
- **La Fabrique Pizza** — Wood-fired pizza and Italian in Lamai.

Coffee Shops

The Coffee Club: Bophut (Fisherman’s Village), Australian-style café with sea views. THB 100–180 per drink.

Black Canyon Coffee: Chaweng and other locations. Thai coffee chain; reliable Wi-Fi. THB 60–120 per drink.

Local cafés: Chaweng, Bophut, and Mae Nam have independent cafés charging THB 60–120 for decent coffee. Many cater to remote workers.

7. Remote Work & Coworking

Internet Reality

Fiber availability: Widespread in Chaweng, Bophut, Mae Nam, Lamai. Spotty in remote areas (Taling Ngam, southern beaches).

Typical speeds: 50–100 Mbps download, 10–30 Mbps upload in tourist areas.

Mobile data: 4G widely available (AIS, True, dtac). 5G limited to main tourist zones.

Power reliability: Generally stable. Occasional brief outages (5–15 minutes) during storms. Upscale resorts/villas often have backup generators.

Coworking Spaces

Samui’s coworking scene is smaller than Bangkok/Chiang Mai but growing.

Hubs: - **Samui Coworking Space** — Chaweng area. Day passes, monthly memberships. - **Digital Nomad Samui** — Bophut/Mae Nam. Community-focused. - **Resort-based coworking** — Some resorts offer coworking packages (desk + Wi-Fi + coffee).

Verify locally: Coworking spaces open/close frequently. Check Facebook groups for current options.

Café Work Options

The Coffee Club (Bophut): Sea views, reliable Wi-Fi, buy food/drink every 2–3 hours.

Black Canyon Coffee (Chaweng): Thai chain, consistent Wi-Fi, power outlets.

Cafe Uno (Lamai): Popular breakfast spot, laptop-friendly.

Beach clubs: Some beach clubs (Beach Republic, Elephant Beach Club) welcome laptop workers during off-peak hours. Buy food/drink to justify occupancy.

Hotel lobbies: Upscale resorts (W, Conrad, Sala) have lobby seating with Wi-Fi. Buy coffee or lunch to justify occupancy.

8. Healthcare

Hospitals

Samui has excellent private hospitals catering to medical tourists. Quality is high, prices are 10–20% of Western equivalents.

Bangkok Hospital Samui

Address: 90/9 Moo 2, Chaweng, Bophut, Koh Samui, Surat Thani 84320
Phone: +66 77 429 500 **Tier:** Private hospital, 24/7 ER **Best for:** Serious conditions, surgery, specialist care

Part of Bangkok Hospital Group (Thailand's largest private hospital chain). JCI-accredited. English-speaking staff. Full diagnostic facilities. Prices higher than local hospitals but still fraction of Western costs.

Samui International Hospital

Address: 90 Moo 2, Chaweng, Bophut, Koh Samui, Surat Thani 84320 **Phone:** +66 77 230 781 **Tier:** Private hospital with English-speaking staff **Best for:** Emergency care, general treatment, inpatient stays

Central Chaweng location. Multilingual staff. Well-equipped for most conditions.

Bandon International Hospital Samui

Address: 123/1 Moo 1, Samui Ring Road, Bophut, Koh Samui, Surat Thani 84320 **Phone:** +66 77 332 706-7 **Tier:** Private hospital in Bophut **Best for:** General treatment, outpatient care

Near Big C on Ring Road. Mid-range private hospital. Good for non-emergency consultations, lab work, minor procedures.

Thai International Hospital Samui

Address: Samui Ring Road, Bophut (opposite Tesco/Lotus) **Phone:** +66 77 245 271-6 **Tier:** Private hospital **Best for:** General treatment, emergency care

Ring Road location, easy access from Chaweng/Bophut.

What's Treatable Locally

Can handle: - Fever, infections, respiratory illness - Minor injuries, cuts, sprains - Gastrointestinal issues - Routine check-ups, lab work - Dental emergencies - Dermatology issues

Evacuation recommended for: - Major trauma (car/motorbike accidents, serious falls) - Complex surgery (heart, brain, major orthopedic) - Advanced cancer treatment - Specialized pediatric care

Nearest evacuation destinations: - Bangkok (Bumrungrad, Bangkok Hospital, Samitivej) — 1-hour flight - Singapore (Mount Elizabeth, Gleneagles) — 2-hour flight

Pharmacies

Boots, Watsons, local pharmacies: Everywhere in tourist areas. No prescription required for many medications that require Rx in West (antibiotics, some painkillers).

Common medications: - Antibiotics (amoxicillin, azithromycin): ~THB 200–600/course - Pain relievers (paracetamol, ibuprofen): ~THB 50–150 - Antidiarrheals: ~THB 100–200 - Antihistamines: ~THB 100–200

Pharmacist consultation: Free at major chains. Most speak basic English.

Emergency Services

Samui Rescue Foundation: 077 421 444 (ambulance, rescue) **Tourist Police:** 1155 (English-speaking) **General Emergency:** 191 (police), 1669 (ambulance)

9. Dental

Dental Clinics

Samui has numerous dental clinics catering to medical tourists. Quality is high, prices are 10–20% of Western equivalents.

Named clinics (verify locally for current status): - Multiple clinics in Chaweng and Bophut areas - Many advertise “international standards” and English-speaking staff

Common Procedure Costs

Procedure	Samui (THB)	Samui (USD)	US Average
Cleaning	800–1,500	\$25–45	\$100–200
Filling (composite)	1,500–3,000	\$45–90	\$200–400
Root canal	5,000–10,000	\$150–300	\$800–1,500
Crown (porcelain)	12,000–20,000	\$360–600	\$1,000–2,000
Implant (per tooth)	40,000–70,000	\$1,200–2,100	\$3,000–5,000

Procedure	Samui (THB)	Samui (USD)	US Average
Extraction (simple)	800–2,000	\$25–60	\$150–300

Insurance: Most travel insurance covers dental emergencies only (accidents, sudden pain). Routine work not covered. Some clinics offer direct billing — ask before treatment.

Verify locally: Dental clinics open/close frequently on Samui. Check recent reviews before booking.

10. Safety & Emergency

Where It's Genuinely Safe

Mae Nam: Residential, quiet, family-oriented. Minimal street crime.

Bophut (Fisherman's Village): Expat area, well-lit, safe for evening walks.

Choeng Mon: Upscale, quiet, safe.

Shopping malls: Central Festival — secure, air-con, well-lit.

Where to Be More Careful

Chaweng (evenings): Crowded, alcohol-fueled, pickpocketing common. Keep phone in front pocket, bag zipped and in front.

Lamai (late night): Bar area, similar risks to Chaweng but less intense.

Beaches at night: Crimes sometimes occur on beaches after dark. Avoid isolated stretches.

ATM areas at night: Be aware of surroundings when withdrawing cash after dark.

What Actually Happens Here

Most common risks:

1. **Petty theft** — Pickpocketing in crowded areas, bag snatching from motorbikes (rare but happens)
2. **Scams** — Jet ski rental damage claims, gem scams, taxi overcharging
3. **Bar fights** — Alcohol + nightlife = occasional altercations. Walk away.
4. **Traffic accidents** — The real danger. Motorbike accidents kill more visitors than crime.

Violent crime against tourists: Rare. Most violence is between locals or within nightlife industry. Random attacks on foreigners are uncommon.

Common Scams

Jet ski rental: Rent jet ski, return with “damage” claim. Demand THB 10,000+ for pre-existing scratches. - **Prevention:** Photograph jet ski before rental, use reputable operators, avoid beach vendors.

Gem scam: Friendly stranger tells you about “one-day gem sale” at temple. Buy worthless stones at 10× value. - **Prevention:** No gem deals from strangers. Real gem stores have fixed locations and reputations.

Taxi/tuk-tuk “today only”: Driver says attraction is closed, offers alternative (gem shop, tailor). You get commission-driven detours. - **Prevention:** Use Grab or insist on your destination. Attractions rarely close unexpectedly.

Motorbike rental damage: Rental agency claims you damaged bike, demands high repair fees. - **Prevention:** Photograph bike before rental, note existing damage on contract, use reputable agencies.

Emergency Numbers

- **Tourist Police:** 1155 (English-speaking)
- **General Emergency:** 191 (police), 1669 (ambulance)
- **Samui Rescue Foundation:** 077 421 444
- **Bangkok Hospital Samui:** +66 77 429 500
- **Samui International Hospital:** +66 77 230 781

Police Responsiveness

Tourist Police (1155): Generally helpful, English-speaking. Handle tourist-specific issues (scams, theft, disputes).

Local police: Variable English ability. For serious issues, request Tourist Police or bring Thai-speaking friend.

Reality check: Police prioritize serious crimes. Petty theft under THB 10,000 often goes uninvestigated. File report for insurance, but don’t expect recovery.

Swimming Conditions

Chaweng Beach: Generally good for swimming, but can have strong currents during monsoon. Lifeguards at main sections.

Lamai Beach: Similar to Chaweng. Watch for rocks at southern end (near Hin Ta/Hin Yai).

Bophut Beach: Water often murky, especially around December. Not ideal for swimming.

Mae Nam Beach: Generally calm, good for swimming. Some seaweed during certain seasons.

Choeng Mon Beach: Sheltered bay, calm water. Good for families.

Taling Ngam/Lipa Noi: Rocky in places, check locally. Spectacular sunsets but not always swimmable.

Ang Thong Marine Park: Excellent snorkeling/diving. Book tours with reputable operators.

Rip currents: Possible during monsoon season (October–December). Ask lifeguards before swimming.

Jellyfish: Occasional presence, especially rainy season. Vinegar neutralizes stings.

Road Safety

Traffic density: Moderate in Chaweng/Bophut, light elsewhere. Rush hours (07:00–09:00, 17:00–19:00) can be busy.

Driving standards: Chaotic by Western standards. Lane discipline optional. Motorbikes filter through traffic.

Road conditions: Main ring road is paved but has potholes. Side roads vary from paved to dirt. Hazardous after rain.

Pedestrian safety: Poor. Sidewalks often blocked or non-existent. Cross carefully, make eye contact with drivers.

Motorbike accidents: The #1 cause of serious injury/death for visitors. Wear helmet, avoid driving under influence, don't rent if inexperienced.

Natural Disaster Risks

Flooding: Possible during heavy monsoon rains (October–December). Low-lying areas (parts of Chaweng, Mae Nam) can flood. Usually drains within hours.

Earthquakes: Rare. Thailand is seismically stable.

Typhoons: Samui rarely hit directly, but tropical storms can bring heavy rain and wind (October–December).

Tsunamis: Low risk. Gulf of Thailand is sheltered. 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami did not significantly impact Samui.

Air Quality

Dry season (January–April): Generally good.

Burning season (February–April): Northern Thailand agricultural burning can cause haze. Samui less affected than Chiang Mai but AQI can reach 100–150 (moderate).

Monitoring: AirVisual app, Thailand Pollution Control Department website.

11. Weather by Month

Samui has a tropical monsoon climate with different weather patterns than the rest of Thailand. The island's wettest months are October–December, when most of Thailand is dry.

Month	Avg High	Avg Low	Rainfall	Notes
January	29°C (84°F)	24°C (75°F)	127mm	Dry, pleasant, peak tourist season
February	29°C (85°F)	25°C (76°F)	64mm	Dry, warm, still peak season
March	30°C (87°F)	25°C (78°F)	116mm	Heating up, some rain
April	32°C (89°F)	26°C (79°F)	83mm	Hot, Songkran festival (mid-April)
May	33°C (91°F)	26°C (79°F)	132mm	Transition to wetter period
June	33°C (91°F)	25°C (78°F)	134mm	Fairly dry (unlike rest of Thailand)
July	32°C (90°F)	25°C (77°F)	117mm	Continued fair weather
August	32°C (90°F)	25°C (77°F)	102mm	Still relatively dry

Month	Avg High	Avg Low	Rainfall	Notes
September	32°C (89°F)	25°C (77°F)	118mm	Rain increasing
October	31°C (87°F)	24°C (76°F)	295mm	Wet season begins
November	30°C (86°F)	24°C (75°F)	445mm	Wettest month
December	29°C (85°F)	24°C (74°F)	263mm	Still wet, improving late month

Best time to visit: January–February (dry, cooler, but most expensive)

Budget season: October–November (wettest, cheapest accommodation, fewer crowds)

Samui’s unique pattern: While Phuket and the Andaman coast are wet May–October, Samui is driest June–August. Samui’s wet season is October–December, when Phuket is dry.

12. Shopping & Daily Life

Central Festival Samui

Address: 209/122 Moo 2, Chaweng Beach Road, Bophut **Best for:** Everything — shopping, dining, cinema, supermarket, bowling

The largest mall on Samui. Four floors of shops, restaurants, cinema, Tops supermarket, food court. Air-con refuge from heat. Tourist prices in some shops, local prices in others. Bowling alley on upper floor.

Chaweng Shopping Areas

Chaweng Center — Strip mall with boutiques, souvenir shops, tailors. Tourist-focused.

Regent Street (Chaweng) — Shopping street with clothing, souvenirs, pharmacies.

Fisherman’s Village (Bophut)

Not a mall, but a shopping destination. Wooden shophouses house boutiques, art galleries, tailor shops, home decor stores. Friday walking street adds temporary stalls.

13. Groceries, Markets & Meat

Supermarkets

Tesco Lotus Samui

Location: Chaweng (Ring Road) **Best for:** Weekly groceries, Western products, household goods

Large hypermarket with wide aisles, English signage, competitive prices. Own-brand products are cheapest. Food court outside serves THB 50–80 meals.

Big C Supercenter Samui

Location: Chaweng (Ring Road, near Tesco) **Best for:** Bulk buying, Thai ingredients, household goods

Similar to Tesco, slightly more Thai-focused. Competitive prices. Good wine selection.

Makro Food Service Samui

Location: Chaweng **Best for:** Wholesale groceries, bulk staples, Western imports, restaurant supplies

Membership required (free for foreigners with passport). Bulk sizes, wholesale prices. Good for long-stay visitors stocking up.

Tops Market Samui

Location: Central Festival Samui, Chaweng **Best for:** Premium imported goods, specialty items

Upscale supermarket inside Central Festival mall. Imported cheese, wine, cereals, frozen goods. Prices 2–3× Big C/Tesco.

Local markets

Nathon Market — Local fresh market. Seafood, meat, vegetables, prepared food. Open mornings (05:00–12:00). Best prices, requires Thai language or pointing.

Chaweng Market — Tourist-oriented but convenient. Higher prices than Nathon.

Meat Sourcing

Supermarkets: Sell packaged chicken, pork, beef. Quality is reliable, prices fair. Tesco/Big C have butchery counters.

Wet markets: Fresh meat daily, often cheaper than supermarkets. Chicken: ~THB 80–120/kg. Pork: ~THB 100–150/kg. Beef: ~THB 200–400/kg.

Butcher shops: Rare on Samui. Most locals buy from supermarkets or wet markets.

Seafood: Wet markets and beachfront restaurants. Price varies by catch. Squid, prawns, fish widely available. Ask for “today’s catch.”

14. Language & Local Etiquette

Survival Thai Phrases

Thai	Pronunciation	Meaning
sawatdii	sa-wat-dii	Hello / Goodbye
khop khun	kòp kun	Thank you
krup / ka	kráp / kê	Polite particle (male / female)
thao rai	tào rài	How much?
paeng	paeng	Expensive
tuk	tùuk	Cheap
mai aroi	mái à-ròi	Not delicious
naam	nám	Water
khao	káo	Rice / Food
he naam	hông nám	Toilet
chuai duai	chûai dúi	Help!
rong-payaa-baan	rong-payaa-baan	Hospital
tam-ruat	dtam-rùat	Police

Pronunciation tip: Thai is tonal. The same syllable said with different tones means different things. Locals appreciate effort even if tones are wrong.

Etiquette Norms

Temple Visits

- **Dress code:** Shoulders and knees covered. No sleeveless tops, short shorts, or mini-skirts.
- **Behavior:** Remove shoes before entering buildings. Sit with feet tucked behind you (never point feet at Buddha images).
- **Photography:** Allowed, but be respectful. No climbing on structures.

Tipping Culture

- **Restaurants:** 10% service charge often included. Extra THB 20–50 for good service.
- **Taxis/songthaews:** Not expected, but rounding up appreciated.
- **Hotels:** THB 20–50 per day for housekeeping.
- **Massage:** THB 50–100 for 1–2 hour sessions.

Bargaining

- **Markets:** Expected (except food). Start at 50–60% of asking price, meet in middle.
- **Malls:** Fixed prices (no bargaining).
- **Taxis/tuk-tuks:** Negotiate before boarding.

Gestures to Avoid

- **Pointing feet:** Feet are considered low/dirty. Don't point them at people or Buddha images.
- **Touching heads:** Head is sacred. Don't touch anyone's head (including children).
- **Public anger:** Losing your temper ("losing face") is deeply embarrassing. Stay calm, smile, negotiate.

Table Manners

- **Fork and spoon:** Spoon is primary utensil (right hand), fork pushes food onto spoon (left hand).
 - **Chopsticks:** Used for noodle dishes only.
 - **Sharing:** Dishes shared family-style. Take small portions from communal plates.
 - **Finishing food:** Clean plate = you're still hungry. Leave a bite to signal you're full.
-

15. History & Culture Snapshot

Brief History

Early period (6th–13th centuries): Samui was first inhabited around the 6th century by fishermen from the Malay Peninsula and visited by passing traders from southern China. Some historians suggest it served as a safe haven during storm seasons. Archaeological evidence (bronze ritual drums with etchings of birds, boats, and spirits) suggests human presence over 2,000 years ago.

Trade era (13th–19th centuries): Samui became part of Siam's feudal system through Nakorn Si Thammarat. The island acted as a crucial intermediary

for trade between China and India. Thai people constituted the ethnic majority, moving the island toward agrarian society. Chinese immigrants (mostly from Hainan) began arriving in the 19th century, establishing cotton and coconut plantations.

Coconut era (19th–mid-20th centuries): Chinese immigrants established coconut plantations, transporting copra to the mainland on boats known as “panuk lang si.” Samui appears on Chinese maps dating to 1687 under the name “Pulo Cornam.” The island remained largely self-sufficient and isolated.

World War II: Japan used Samui as a base of operations in conjunction with Thailand’s Navy. Locals reported a large explosion around 1945, possibly a Japanese tanker being bombed.

Tourism era (1970s–present): The first backpackers arrived on coconut boats in the early 1970s. The island had no roads until the early 1970s — crossing the 15km interior required a full-day jungle trek. The first bungalows appeared in the 1970s. Mass tourism began in the 1990s after Samui Airport opened in 1989. Thailand’s Fifth National Economic and Social Development Plan (1982–1986) drove development. The Tourism Authority of Thailand launched a Master Plan for Samui/Surat Thani in 1985.

Municipal status: Samui was granted city municipality (thesaban nakhon) status in 2012, becoming locally self-governing within Surat Thani Province.

Cultural Touchpoints

Songkran (Thai New Year) — Mid-April

Three-day water festival. Streets become water fight zones. Buckets, water guns, hoses — everyone is fair game. Protect electronics in waterproof bags.

Loy Krathong — November

Festival of lights. Float krathongs (banana leaf baskets with candles) on water. Samui beaches host celebrations.

Thai Royal Family

Deeply revered. Stand for national anthem (played before movies, at some public events). Don’t speak disrespectfully about royalty (lèse-majesté laws are severe).

Buddhism

Predominant religion (90% of residents). Temples (wats) everywhere. Monks in saffron robes receive morning alms. Women must not touch monks or hand objects directly to them.

Coconut Industry

Samui was famous for coconut plantations. You'll still see coconut palms everywhere. Coconut picking shows (trained monkeys) are a tourist attraction but ethically controversial.

Muay Thai

National sport. Fights held at stadiums in Chaweng/Lamai. Tourist shows (with cultural performance) vs. real fights — know which you're booking.

16. Tourism & Day Trips

Top Day Trips

Ang Thong National Marine Park

Distance: Archipelago off Samui's west coast **Transport:** Speedboat tours from Nathon, Bophut, or Chaweng piers **Cost:** THB 2,500–4,500/day (includes lunch, snorkeling gear, park fees) **Worth it:** Yes — Samui's premier day trip

42 islands with limestone karsts, emerald lagoons, kayaking, snorkeling, hiking. Tours depart early morning (07:00–08:00), return late afternoon (16:00–17:00). Book with reputable operators — cheap tours cut corners on safety and equipment.

Koh Phangan

Distance: 15km northeast **Transport:** Ferry from Bang Rak Pier (Big Buddha), Mae Nam, or Nathon **Cost:** THB 200–400 one-way, 30 minutes **Worth it:** Yes — especially for Full Moon Party (Haad Rin) or Thong Sala market

Famous for Full Moon Party (monthly, Haad Rin Beach). Also has quiet beaches, waterfalls, yoga retreats, and detox centers. Day trip viable — multiple daily ferries.

Koh Tao

Distance: 70km northeast **Transport:** Lomprayah catamaran or Seatran ferry from Nathon Pier **Cost:** THB 600–1,200 one-way, ~2 hours **Worth it:** Yes — among Thailand's best diving

Premier diving destination. Crystal-clear water, abundant marine life. Day trip possible but better as overnight. Combine with Koh Phangan.

Big Buddha Temple (Wat Phra Yai)

Address: Koh Fan, Bophut (connected by causeway) **Entry:** Free (donations welcome) **Worth it:** Yes — iconic Samui landmark

12-meter golden Buddha on a small island connected by causeway. Remove shoes, dress respectfully (shoulders/knees covered). Combine with Wat Plai Laem nearby.

Wat Plai Laem

Address: Plai Laem, Bophut **Entry:** Free (donations welcome) **Worth it:** Yes — ornate temple complex

18-arm Guanyin statue, ornate temple buildings, water setting. One of Samui's most photogenic temples.

Hin Ta and Hin Yai Rocks (Grandfather-Grandmother Rocks)

Address: Lamai (southern end of beach) **Entry:** Free **Worth it:** Quick stop (15–30 minutes)

Famous rock formations resembling genitalia. Natural curiosity. Combine with Lamai Beach time.

Na Muang Waterfalls

Address: Na Muang, inland Samui **Entry:** Free (small parking fee) **Worth it:** Yes — jungle swimming

Two jungle waterfalls with natural pools. Na Muang 1 is easiest to access (short walk from parking). Na Muang 2 requires 45-minute jungle trek. Bring swimwear, water shoes.

Secret Buddha Garden (Magic Garden)

Address: Ban Saket, Taling Ngam (inland mountains) **Entry:** THB 100–200 **Worth it:** If you're already in Taling Ngam

Hidden hilltop garden with statues and jungle views. Requires motorbike/car. Spectacular views but touristy.

Wat Khunaram (Mummified Monk)

Address: Near Nathon **Entry:** Free (donations welcome) **Worth it:** Quick stop (15 minutes)

Temple housing the mummified monk Luang Pho Daeng (died 1973, body preserved). Macabre but culturally significant.

Beach-Hopping

Chaweng: Longest beach, most developed. Water sports, beach clubs, nightlife.

Lamai: Second-largest beach. Rocks at southern end (Hin Ta/Hin Yai). Slightly cheaper than Chaweng.

Bophut: Murky water (especially December) but charming Fisherman's Village. Friday walking street.

Mae Nam: Long, quiet beach. Good for swimming. Popular with long-stay expats.

Choeng Mon: Small, sheltered bay. Upscale resorts. Family-friendly.

Lipa Noi: Sunset views toward Ang Thong. Car ferry pier. Developing area.

Taling Ngam: Secluded, upscale. Spectacular sunsets. Not easily swimmable in places.

Tourist Trap vs. Worth It

Tourist traps: - **Monkey shows:** Ethically questionable (trained monkeys pick coconuts) - **Gem shops:** Commission-driven, overpriced stones. Avoid. - **"Today only" tour deals:** Always available tomorrow. Don't be pressured.

Actually worth it: - **Ang Thong Marine Park:** Best day trip from Samui. - **Koh Tao:** Best diving/snorkeling near Samui. - **Fisherman's Village Walking Street (Friday):** Fun, food, crafts. - **Na Muang Waterfalls:** Jungle swimming, free.

DIY vs. Booked Tour

DIY advantages: Cheaper, flexible schedule, no shopping detours. **Booked tour advantages:** Transport handled, guide commentary, no planning needed.

For Ang Thong: Booked tour recommended (logistics complex for DIY). **For Koh Phangan/Koh Tao:** DIY is easy (ferries are straightforward). **For inland temples/waterfalls:** Rent motorbike/car for DIY.

17. Master Links

Official Sources

- **Ko Samui City Municipality:** kohsamuicity.go.th
- **Tourism Authority of Thailand:** www.tourismthailand.org
- **Thai Immigration Bureau:** www.immigration.go.th (visa information, extensions)

- **US Embassy Thailand:** th.usembassy.gov (US citizen services)
- **UK FCDO Travel Advice:** www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/thailand

Emergency

- **Tourist Police:** 1155 (English-speaking, 24/7)
- **General Emergency:** 191 (police), 1669 (ambulance)
- **Samui Rescue Foundation:** 077 421 444
- **Bangkok Hospital Samui:** +66 77 429 500
- **Samui International Hospital:** +66 77 230 781
- **Bandon Hospital Samui:** +66 77 332 706-7

Transport

- **Samui Airport:** www.samuiairport.com
- **Bangkok Airways:** www.bangkokair.com
- **Seatran Ferry:** www.seatrandiscovery.com
- **Lomprayah Catamaran:** www.lomprayah.com
- **Raja Ferry:** www.rajaferryport.com

Community

- **Samui Expats (Facebook):** Active community, rental listings, advice
- **Ko Samui Long Stay (Facebook):** Long-term visitor community
- **Samui Times:** www.samuitimes.net (English-language news)

18. Final Budget Table

Monthly and 90-day cost-of-stay estimates for Ko Samui, in USD, assuming **35 THB per USD**. Figures trace back to the neighborhood rent ranges, transport notes, Numbeo Ko Samui baseline, and the city-specific notes earlier in this guide. Ko Samui is significantly more expensive than mainland Thailand because everything is shipped to the island.

Category	Lean Nomad	Comfortable Nomad	Premium Nomad
Room	\$270 (studio/bungalow in Mae Nam/Lamai, fan or basic A/C)	\$500 (1BR condo in Chaweng/Bophut with pool)	\$1,170 (beachfront villa, luxury resort, sea view)

Category	Lean Nomad	Comfortable Nomad	Premium Nomad
Food	\$170 (street food, local restaurants, home cooking)	\$335 (mix of street food and sit-down restaurants, coffee shops)	\$735 (restaurant most meals, Western cafés, beach clubs)
Transport	\$70 (songthaews, occasional Grab, motorbike rental part-time)	\$135 (regular Grab/taxi, motorbike rental full-time)	\$335 (daily taxi or car rental full-time)
Coworking	\$0 (café Wi-Fi, no membership)	\$65 (café spend + occasional coworking day)	\$200 (dedicated desk / premium space + home fiber)
Insurance	\$50 (basic travel medical cover)	\$115 (solid travel health insurance)	\$265 (comprehensive international health + evacuation cover)
Visa	\$20 (one 30-day extension)	\$20 (same extension path)	\$65 (tourist visa from embassy + extension buffer)
Entertainment	\$65 (beach days, free attractions, occasional beer)	\$200 (bars, tours to Koh Phangan/Koh Tao, massage, some beach clubs)	\$500 (nightlife, tours, golf, regular massage, fine dining, shows)
Buffer	\$65 (utilities + small contingency)	\$135 (utilities + contingency)	\$270 (utilities + contingency)
TOTAL / month	\$710	\$1,505	\$3,540
90-Day total	\$2,130	\$4,515	\$10,620
Daily average	~\$24/day	~\$50/day	~\$118/day

Budget Notes

Lean Nomad (~\$24/day / \$710/month): - Budget studio or bungalow in Mae Nam or Lamai - Street food, local restaurants, some home cooking - Songthaews, walking, part-time motorbike rental - Free or low-cost beach activities - Minimal nightlife

Comfortable Nomad (~\$50/day / \$1,505/month): - 1BR condo in Chaweng or Bophut with pool - Mix of street food and mid-range restaurants - Motorbike rental full-time, some Grab/taxi - Paid tours (Koh Phangan, Koh Tao), massage, occasional beach club

Premium Nomad (~\$118/day / \$3,540/month): - Beachfront villa or luxury resort with sea view - Restaurants most meals, Western cafés, regular beach clubs - Daily taxi or car rental - Golf, frequent massage, fine dining, nightlife, shows

Cost-Saving Tips

Accommodation: - Negotiate monthly rates; low season (October–November) can be 30–40% cheaper - Mae Nam and Lamai are much cheaper than Chaweng or Bophut beachfront - Avoid high season (December–February) unless budget allows; prices spike 30–50%

Food: - Street food and local Thai restaurants: THB 60–150/meal - Night markets (Fisherman’s Village, Lamai) are good value - 7-Eleven and Tesco Lotus for basics; imported goods cost island premium

Transport: - Songthaews are cheapest but infrequent on back roads - Motorbike rental is the most practical; always wear a helmet - Grab exists but is more limited and expensive than on the mainland

Activities: - Beaches are free - Many temples and viewpoints are free or low-cost - Boat tours to Ang Thong, Koh Phangan, or Koh Tao can be negotiated in groups

19. Glossary of Local Terms

Term	Meaning
Baht (THB, THB)	Thai currency
Ko/Koh	Island (e a)
Songthaew	Shared pickup truck taxi
Soi	Side street/alley
Wat	Buddhist temple
Farang	Foreigner (neutral term, not offensive)
Mai pen rai	“No problem” / “Never mind”
Sabai sabai	Relaxed, comfortable, no worries
Aroi	Delicious
Phu Ying / Phu Chai	Woman / Man
Khun	Polite title (Mr./Ms.)
Wai	Traditional Thai greeting (palms together)

Term	Meaning
Krup / Ka	Polite particles (male / female)
Tuk-tuk	Three-wheeled motorized taxi
Moo	Village/subdistrict (used in addresses)
Tambon	Subdistrict
Amphoe	District
Changwat	Province
Chaweng/Lamai/Bophut/etc.	Beach/area names on Samui

20. Sources & Credits

Primary Sources

- **Wikipedia** — **Ko Samui**: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ko_Samui (CC BY-SA 4.0)
- **Wikivoyage** — **Ko Samui**: https://en.wikivoyage.org/wiki/Koh_Samui (CC BY-SA 4.0)

POI Data

- **Ko Samui POI file**: `/home/jason/workspaces/theleannomad.com/cities/koh-samui/koh-samui-poi` (~80+ verified locations)

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- **Wikipedia contributors**: See edit history
- **Wikivoyage contributors**: See edit history

Named places (hospitals, hotels, restaurants, attractions) verified against POI file and source materials. Addresses, phone numbers, and websites current as of 2026-07-07.

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