

Phuket, Thailand — 90-Day Survival Guide

For The Lean Nomad — Built 2026-07-07

Use this guide as a single reference document for a 90-day stay on Phuket. 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	432,464 (2025)
Area	547 km ² (211 sq mi) — Thailand’s largest island
Coordinates	7°53 24 N 98°23 54 E
Highest Elevation	635m (2,083ft) — internal mountains
Language	Thai (official), English widely spoken in tourist areas
Currency	Thai baht (THB)
Timezone	UTC+7 (Indochina Time)
Calling Code	+66 (country); 076 (Phuket area)
Climate Classification	Tropical monsoon
Province Code	TH-83

What This Island Actually Is

Phuket is Thailand’s largest island and one of the country’s 76 provinces. It sits in the Andaman Sea off Thailand’s southwest coast, connected to the mainland by the Sarasin Bridge to the north. The island is 48km long and 21km at its widest.

Phuket used to derive its wealth from tin and rubber, but transitioned to tourism as its primary economy starting in the 1970s–80s. More than 100,000 foreigners have settled here long-term. It’s not a backpacker stopover — it’s a place where people come for months or years, with the infrastructure to support it: international hospitals, coworking spaces, monthly rentals, and expat communities in every major beach town.

The west coast was hit severely by the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, but almost no evidence of the damage remains today. The island has fully recovered and is now Thailand’s wealthiest province.

The vibe: More developed than Ko Samui, with better infrastructure and more international amenities. You can party hard in Patong, find zen in Kata/Karon, or disappear into a luxury villa in Surin. The island is big enough to explore seriously but small enough to circumnavigate in 2–3 hours by car.

Named Places Profiled

Beaches & Areas

- **Patong** — The largest and most-developed beach resort. Known for its nightlife, shopping, and dense tourist infrastructure. Walking Street is the nightlife epicenter.
 - **Kata** — Busy, clean tourist beach with good surf. Includes Kata Noi, its quieter sister. Family-friendly, popular with surfers.
 - **Karon** — Second most-developed beach after Patong. Split into Karon Yai and Karon Noi. Long stretch of sand, more relaxed than Patong.
 - **Rawai** — Jumping off point for lots of local islands. Popular with locals for eating on the beach. Expat hub, sailor community.
 - **Phuket Town** — The administrative centre with the cheapest accommodation. Sino-Portuguese architecture, local culture, foodie destination.
 - **Kamala** — Quieter beach to the north of Patong. Upscale, family-friendly.
 - **Surin** — Up-and-coming upmarket destination. “Millionaire’s Row,” posh resorts.
 - **Mai Khao** — Near the airport. Many posh resorts, Thai villages, very quiet.
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1. Landing — First 72 Hours

Airport Arrival (Phuket International — HKT)

Phuket International Airport is in the north of the island, in Mai Khao. It handles both international and domestic flights. After landing:

Step 1 — SIM Card (Airport Arrivals Hall) - AIS, TrueMove, dtac counters in arrivals - Tourist SIM: THB 299–399 (~\$8–11) with unlimited data for 7–15 days - Long-stay SIM: THB 600–900 (~\$17–25) for 30 days with 30GB+ data - Staff will install and test before you leave the counter

Step 2 — Money (If You Didn’t Exchange Before Landing) - Airport exchange booths: Acceptable rates, open 24/7 - ATMs: THB 20,000–30,000 per withdrawal, THB 220 (~\$6) fee per transaction - Better rates in Phuket Town or Patong — change only enough for Day 1 at the airport

Step 3 — Transport to Your Accommodation - Airport Bus: THB 100–200 to Phuket Town or Patong (cheapest, limited schedule) - **Shared Minivan:**

THB 200–300 per person to major beaches - **Private Taxi:** THB 600–1,000 to Patong, THB 400–600 to Phuket Town - **Grab:** Available, often cheaper than airport taxis (THB 400–700 to Patong)

First Night Recommendations: - **Patong:** If you want nightlife, restaurants, and beach access immediately - **Phuket Town:** If you want cheap accommodation, local food, and a quieter first night - **Kata/Karon:** If you want a family-friendly beach area with good infrastructure

Day 1–2: Get Oriented

Morning: Walk the neighborhood, find the nearest 7-Eleven, ATM, and food stalls **Afternoon:** Visit a local market or mall to understand price levels **Evening:** Test the nightlife or beach scene in your area — decide if you want to stay or move

Day 3: Settle In

- Buy a local SIM if the airport one isn't enough
- Open a Wise/Revolut account if you haven't (works well in Thailand)
- Scout coworking spaces or cafés if you're working remotely
- Start looking at monthly rentals if you're not staying in your first hotel

2. Visa & Immigration

Visa Exemption (Most Passport Holders)

Most Western passport holders get **30 days visa-free** on arrival by air. By land, it's 15 days. This can be extended once for 30 days at an immigration office.

Visa Type	Duration	Cost	Extension Possible
Visa Exemption	30 days (air) / 15 days (land)	Free	Yes, +30 days
Tourist Visa (TR)	60 days	THB 2,000 (~\$56)	Yes, +30 days
Special Tourist Visa (STV)	90 days	THB 3,000 (~\$84)	Yes, +90 days
Elite Visa	5–20 years	THB 900,000+ (~\$25,000+)	N/A

Visa Type	Duration	Cost	Extension Possible
LTR Visa	10 years	THB 50,000 (~\$1,400)	N/A

Extension Process

Where: Phuket Immigration Office (Talad Nuea, Phuket Town) **When:** Monday–Friday, 8:30 AM–4:30 PM (arrive early) **Cost:** THB 1,900 (~\$53) for 30-day extension **Documents Needed:** - Passport (original + copies of photo page, visa stamp, arrival card) - Passport photos (4×6 cm, 2–4 copies) - TM.7 form (available at immigration) - Proof of address (hotel booking or rental contract) - Flight ticket out (sometimes requested)

Overstay Penalty: THB 500 per day, maximum THB 20,000. Overstaying more than 90 days results in a ban from re-entering Thailand (1 year for 90+ days, 3 years for 1 year+, 5 years for 3 years+).

90-Day Reporting

If you stay in Thailand more than 90 consecutive days on any visa, you must report your address to immigration every 90 days. This can be done: - **In person:** At Phuket Immigration (free) - **By mail:** Send form TM.47 with copies to immigration office - **Online:** Via the immigration e-reporting system (when available)

Penalty for Missing Report: THB 2,000 fine, possible visa complications.

3. Money & Banking

Currency

Thai Baht (THB) — cash is still king in many places, though cards are widely accepted in tourist areas.

Denomination	Notes	Coins
Notes	20 (green), 50 (blue), 100 (red), 500 (purple), 1,000 (brown-gray)	—

Denomination	Notes	Coins
Coins	—	25 satang (bronze), 50 satang (bronze), 1 (silver), 2 (silver), 5 (silver), 10 (silver)

Exchange Rates (2026 approx.): - \$1 USD THB 35–37 - €1 EUR THB 38–40 - £1 GBP THB 44–47

ATMs & Cards

ATM Availability: Everywhere — airports, malls, 7-Eleven, tourist streets
Withdrawal Limit: THB 20,000–30,000 per transaction **ATM Fee:** THB 220 (~\$6) per withdrawal for foreign cards **Best Practice:** Withdraw large amounts less often to minimize fees

Card Acceptance: - **Hotels, malls, restaurants, supermarkets:** Visa/Mastercard widely accepted - **Street vendors, markets, local shops:** Cash only - **Grab, Bolt:** Card payment available in app

Wise / Revolut

Both work well in Thailand: - **Wise:** Can withdraw from ATMs (subject to THB 220 ATM fee), pay by card where accepted - **Revolut:** Same as Wise, good exchange rates - **Tip:** Keep a backup card — some ATMs don't accept certain foreign cards

Local Bank Accounts

Opening a local account as a foreigner is possible but requires: - Long-term visa (non-immigrant, not tourist) - Proof of address (rental contract, sometimes utility bill) - Sometimes a work permit or letter from embassy - Minimum deposit: THB 500–1,000

Banks to Try: Bangkok Bank, Kasikornbank (KBank), Siam Commercial Bank (SCB)

4. Neighborhoods & Housing

Where to Stay

Area	Vibe	Monthly Rent (1-bed)	Best For
Patong	Nightlife central, touristy, busy	THB 15,000–35,000	First-timers, party access, beach
Kata	Family- friendly, surf, quieter than Patong	THB 18,000–40,000	Families, surfers, beach lovers
Karon	Long beach, relaxed, mid- range	THB 16,000–35,000	Couples, long-stay, beach access
Rawai	Expat hub, local vibe, boat access	THB 12,000–28,000	Long-stay, sailors, budget- conscious
Phuket Town	Local culture, cheap, no beach	THB 10,000–25,000	Budget, culture, foodies, remote work
Kamala	Quiet, upscale, north of Patong	THB 20,000–45,000	Quiet luxury, families
Surin	Upscale, “Million- aire’s Row,” posh	THB 25,000–60,000	Luxury, privacy, high-end dining
Mai Khao	Near airport, resort area, quiet	THB 20,000–50,000	Airport proximity, resort living
Chalong	Boat hub, practical, local	THB 12,000–30,000	Sailors, divers, long-stay

Housing Types

Condos: Most common for long-stay. Usually furnished, pool, gym, security. Monthly rates include water; electricity extra (THB 4–8/unit).

Houses/Villas: More space, private pool options. THB 30,000–100,000+/month depending on size and location.

Serviced Apartments: Hotel-like amenities, monthly rates. Good for first month while you search.

Finding Housing

Online: - Facebook Groups: “Phuket Long Term Rentals,” “Phuket Condos for Rent” - Websites: DDproperty, Hipflat, FazWaz - Agoda/Airbnb: Good for first week, negotiate monthly rate after arrival

Walk-In: - Look for “For Rent” signs with phone numbers - Talk to condo juristic offices directly - Local agents (usually 1 month commission)

Tips: - Visit in person before committing — photos can be misleading - Check water pressure, AC, wifi, and noise levels - Negotiate — monthly rates are often flexible, especially in low season (May–October) - Get everything in writing — contract should specify deposit (usually 1–2 months), utilities, and maintenance responsibilities

5. Transport

Getting Around Phuket

Mode	Cost	Pros	Cons
Songthaew (Blue Truck)	THB 30–100 per ride	Cheap, local experience	Limited routes, confusing for newcomers
Tuk-Tuk	THB 200–600 short trips	Iconic, door-to-door	Expensive, drivers overcharge tourists
Grab	THB 100–500 depending on distance	App-based, fixed price, cash or card	Surge pricing, not always available in remote areas
Bolt	THB 80–400	Cheaper than Grab, same concept	Smaller driver base, less reliable

Mode	Cost	Pros	Cons
Motorbike Taxi	THB 50–200 short trips	Fast, cheap, beats traffic	Risky, no helmet often provided
Meter Taxi	THB 50 flagfall + THB 8–12/km	Fair pricing if meter used	Many drivers refuse meter, insist on fixed price
Motorbike Rental	THB 200–350/day, THB 4,000–7,000/month	Freedom, cheap, easy parking	Dangerous, police checkpoints, license required
Car Rental	THB 800–1,500/day, THB 15,000–30,000/month	Comfort, AC, storage	Expensive, parking difficult, traffic
Smart Bus	THB 100–200 per ride	Airport to beaches, AC, reliable	Limited routes, schedule-based

Motorbike Rental — Important Notes

Requirements: - Passport + deposit (THB 3,000–5,000 or passport copy) - International Driving Permit (IDP) with motorcycle endorsement — police checkpoints fine tourists without one (THB 500–1,000 “fine” on the spot) - Helmet (required by law, often not provided — bring your own)

Insurance: Most rental agreements void insurance if you don’t have a valid motorcycle license. Accidents are common — hospitals will treat you, but you’ll pay out of pocket.

Tip: If you’re not an experienced rider, don’t learn on Phuket’s roads. Traffic is chaotic, roads are steep and winding, and accidents are frequent.

Airport Transfer

From HKT Airport: - **Airport Bus:** THB 100–200 to Phuket Town or Patong (limited schedule) - **Shared Minivan:** THB 200–300 per person - **Private Taxi:** THB 400–1,000 depending on destination - **Grab:** THB 400–700 to most areas - **Hotel Pickup:** Many hotels offer free or paid airport pickup — ask in advance

Ferries & Boat Transport

From Phuket to Nearby Islands: - **Ko Phi Phi:** THB 600–1,200 by ferry (2 hours), THB 1,500–2,500 by speedboat (45 min) - **Ko Racha:** THB 1,000–2,000 day trip including snorkeling - **Ko Yao Noi/Yai:** THB 300–500 by local

ferry - **Krabi/Ao Nang:** THB 600–1,000 by ferry (2–3 hours)

Piers: - **Chalong Pier:** Main hub for island ferries and dive boats - **Rassada Pier:** Local ferries to Phang Nga, Krabi - **Bang Rong Pier:** Ferries to Ko Yao, Phang Nga

6. Food & Dining

Local Dishes You Must Try

Dish	Description	Spice Level	Price Range
Tom Yum Goong	Spicy shrimp soup with lemongrass, galangal, lime	Hot	THB 80–150
Pad Thai	Stir-fried rice noodles with tamarind, peanuts, shrimp or chicken	Mild	THB 50–100
Gaeng Keow Wan Som Tum	Green curry with coconut milk, Thai basil, eggplant Green papaya salad with chili, lime, fish sauce, peanuts	Hot Very Hot	THB 80–150 THB 40–80
Khao Soi	Northern Thai curry noodle soup with crispy noodles	Medium	THB 60–120
Moo Hong	Braised pork belly in soy sauce, garlic, pepper — Phuket specialty	Mild	THB 80–150
Hokkien Noodles	Thick noodles stir-fried with seafood, egg, vegetables — Phuket Chinese influence	Mild	THB 60–120
Gaeng Som	Sour curry with fish, tamarind, vegetables	Hot	THB 80–150

Dish	Description	Spice Level	Price Range
Satay	Grilled skewers with peanut sauce, cucumber relish	Mild	THB 30–60 (5 skewers)
Mango Sticky Rice	Sweet sticky rice with fresh mango, coconut cream	Sweet	THB 50–100

Legend: spicy | contains peanuts | contains shellfish | noodle dish | pork

Food by Price Point

Category	Price per Meal	Where
Street Food	THB 40–80 (~\$1–2)	Roadside stalls, markets, 7-Eleven hot food
Food Court	THB 50–100 (~\$1.50–3)	Malls, Central Festival, Big C
Fast Food	THB 100–200 (~\$3–6)	McDonald's, KFC, Burger King
Local Restaurant	THB 100–250 (~\$3–7)	Thai restaurants, seafood shacks
Mid-Range	THB 250–500 (~\$7–14)	Tourist restaurants, beachfront
Fine Dining	THB 800–2,000+ (~\$22–55+)	Hotel restaurants, upscale venues

Named Restaurants & Food Spots

- **Mee Ao Gea** — Talat Nuea, Mueang Phuket District, Phuket 83000 — Hokkien-style noodles with pork and egg.
- **Mee Hoon Gaeng Pae Sa** — Old Phuket Town food court / Dibuk Road area, Phuket 83000 — Curry soup with rice vermicelli, local breakfast.
- **Go Benz Rice Porridge Phuket** — Vichitsongkram Road, Talat Yai, Phuket 83000, Thailand — Michelin Bib Gourmand rice porridge and soup.
- **O Cha Rot Beef Ball Noodle** — 72/1 Yaowarat Road, Talat Yai, Mueang Phuket, Phuket 83000 — Famous beef-ball noodle shop. +66 76 213 347

- **Lock Tien Food Court** — Wongwat Road, Talat Nuea, Mueang Phuket, Phuket 83000, Thailand — Old-town food court with local Phuket dishes.
- **Roti Taew Nam** — 6 Thep Krasattri Road, Talat Yai, Mueang Phuket, Phuket 83000 — Breakfast roti and curries.
- **Boonrat Dim Sum** — 26/41 Bangkok Road, Talat Nuea, Mueang Phuket, Phuket 83000 — Morning dim sum in Old Phuket Town. +66 76 212 034
- **One Chun Cafe and Restaurant** — 48/1 Thepkrasattri Road, Talat Yai, Mueang Phuket, Phuket 83000, Thailand — Phuket-style Thai food in a heritage house.
- **Raya Restaurant** — New Dibuk Road, Talat Nuea, Mueang Phuket, Phuket 83000, Thailand — Traditional Phuket Peranakan cuisine.
- **Tu Kab Khao** — 8 Phang Nga Road, Talat Yai, Mueang Phuket, Phuket 83000, Thailand — Popular Old Town restaurant in a colourful shophouse.

Water & Beverages

Tap Water: NOT potable. Use bottled water for drinking and brushing teeth.
Bottled Water: THB 7–20 for 1.5L at 7-Eleven, supermarkets **Ice:** Generally safe — commercially made from purified water **Coffee:** Thai iced coffee (Oliang) THB 40–80, café lattes THB 80–150 **Beer:** Chang, Singha, Leo — THB 50–100 at 7-Eleven, THB 80–150 at bars **7-Eleven:** Your friend — open 24/7, sells everything from SIM cards to hot food

7. Remote Work & Coworking

Internet Reality

Fiber Speeds: 50–500 Mbps common in populated areas **Mobile Data:** 4G/5G widely available, 20–100 Mbps typical **Reliability:** Generally good, occasional outages during storms **Power:** Stable in most areas, some neighborhoods experience brief outages

Coworking Spaces

- **The Office Co-working Space** (Phuket Town) — THB 200–400/day, THB 4,000–7,000/month
- **HUBBA Phuket** (Patong) — THB 300–500/day, THB 5,000–9,000/month
- **Co-Working Space Kata** — THB 250–400/day, THB 4,500–8,000/month

Amenities: High-speed wifi, AC, printing, meeting rooms, coffee/tea, sometimes showers **Vibe:** Mix of digital nomads, local entrepreneurs, remote employees

Café Work Options

Many cafés are laptop-friendly: - **Starbucks:** Multiple locations, reliable wifi, AC, power outlets - **Local Cafés:** Often better vibes, cheaper coffee (THB 60–120), varying wifi quality - **Hotel Lobbies:** Upscale hotels often allow laptop work with a coffee purchase

Best Working Rhythm

Morning (6 AM–12 PM): Coolest part of day, cafés less crowded, best focus time **Afternoon (12 PM–4 PM):** Hot, many businesses close for siesta, good for errands or beach **Evening (5 PM–9 PM):** Second wind, good for socializing or light work

8. Healthcare

Hospitals

Phuket has excellent private hospitals with English-speaking staff. Public hospitals are cheaper but less comfortable.

Bangkok Hospital Phuket

Address: 2/1 Hongyok Utis Road, Talat Nuea, Mueang Phuket, Phuket 83000 **Phone:** +66 76 354 062 **Tier:** Private hospital, English-speaking staff **Best for:** Serious conditions, surgery, specialist care

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

Phuket International Hospital

Address: 44 Chalermprakiat Ror 9 Road, Phuket Town, Phuket 83000 **Phone:** +66 76 249 400 **Tier:** Private hospital with international department **Best for:** Emergency care, general treatment, inpatient stays

Central Phuket Town location. Multilingual staff. Well-equipped for most conditions.

Mission Hospital Phuket

Address: 4/1 Thepkrasattri Road, Ratsada, Mueang Phuket, Phuket 83000 **Phone:** +66 76 237 220 **Tier:** Private Christian hospital **Best for:** General treatment, outpatient care

East of Phuket Town. Mid-range private hospital. Good for non-emergency consultations.

Vachira Phuket Hospital

Address: 353 Yaowarat Road, Talat Yai, Mueang Phuket, Phuket 83000
Phone: +66 76 361 234 **Tier:** Major public hospital **Best for:** Budget care, emergency services

Government hospital in Phuket Town. Cheaper than private options but less comfortable.

Patong Hospital

Address: 57 Sainamyen Road, Patong, Kathu, Phuket 83150 **Phone:** +66 76 340 444 **Tier:** Public hospital **Best for:** Emergency care, basic treatment

Serving the west coast tourist areas. Public facility with emergency services.

Thalang Hospital

Address: 358 Moo 1, Thepkrasattri Road, Thepkrasattri, Thalang, Phuket 83110 **Phone:** +66 76 311 033 **Tier:** Public hospital **Best for:** Northern Phuket residents, basic care

North of the airport. Local public hospital.

Emergency Numbers

- **1669:** National emergency medical hotline (free, 24/7, English-speaking)
- **191:** Police emergency
- **1155:** Tourist police (English-speaking)

What's Treatable Locally

Can Handle: Most emergencies, surgeries, specialist consultations, dental work, maternity care **May Require Evacuation:** Highly specialized treatments, certain cancers, major trauma requiring ICU beyond local capacity

Pharmacies

Availability: Everywhere — standalone pharmacies, Boots, Watsons, hospital pharmacies **Prescription Requirements:** Varies — some antibiotics available without prescription, controlled substances require Rx **Common Brands:** Panadol (paracetamol), Ibuprofen, antihistamines, antidiarrheals all available OTC **Cost:** THB 50–300 for common medications

Health Insurance

Travel Insurance: Essential — covers accidents, emergency treatment, evacuation
Local Insurance: Available for long-stay residents, more affordable than Western insurance
Hospital Billing: Private hospitals often bill insurance directly — keep your policy details handy

9. Dental

Dental Clinics

Phuket has numerous dental clinics catering to foreigners. Quality is generally high, prices 50–70% lower than Western countries.

- **Phuket International Dental Center** — Phuket Town — Full service, English-speaking
- **Smile Signature Dental Clinic** — Patong — Cosmetic and general dentistry
- **Chalong Dental Clinic** — Chalong — Affordable, local favorite

Common Procedures & Prices (2026 approx.)

Procedure	Phuket Price	US/EU Equivalent
Cleaning	THB 800–1,500 (~\$22–42)	\$100–200
Filling	THB 1,000–2,500 (~\$28–70)	\$150–400
Root Canal	THB 4,000–8,000 (~\$110–225)	\$800–1,500
Crown	THB 8,000–15,000 (~\$225–420)	\$1,000–2,000
Implant	THB 25,000–45,000 (~\$700–1,250)	\$3,000–5,000
Teeth Whitening	THB 5,000–10,000 (~\$140–280)	\$400–800
Extraction	THB 1,000–3,000 (~\$28–84)	\$200–500

Tips

- **Consultations:** Often free or low-cost (THB 300–500)
 - **Appointments:** Recommended, but walk-ins often accepted
 - **Payment:** Cash preferred, cards accepted at larger clinics
 - **Insurance:** Most travel insurance doesn't cover routine dental — check your policy
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10. Safety & Emergency

Where It's Genuinely Safe

- **Resort Areas:** Patong, Kata, Karon, Surin — heavy tourist presence, regular police patrols
- **Phuket Town:** Generally safe, local community feel
- **Gated Communities:** 24/7 security, very low crime rates

Where to Be More Careful

- **Patong Beach at Night:** Pickpocketing, bag snatching, drink spiking in certain bars
- **Soi Bangla (Patong):** Tourist scams, overcharging, occasional confrontations
- **ATMs at Night:** Isolated machines — use inside malls or 7-Eleven when possible
- **Motorbike Parking:** Theft is common — always lock, park in attended lots when available

What Actually Happens Here

Most Common: 1. **Petty Theft:** Bags, phones, wallets left unattended on beaches or in cafés 2. **Tourist Scams:** Tuk-tuk overcharging, gem scams, timeshare presentations 3. **Motorbike Accidents:** The #1 cause of serious injury to tourists 4. **Drink Spiking:** Rare but happens — never leave your drink unattended

Violent Crime: Rare against tourists. Most incidents involve: - Disputes over money or relationships - Alcohol-fueled altercations - Rare random attacks (statistically much lower than Western cities)

Emergency Contacts

Service	Number	Notes
Medical Emergency	1669	Free, 24/7, English-speaking
Police	191	General emergency
Tourist Police	1155	English-speaking, handle tourist issues
Hospital (Bangkok Phuket)	+66 76 354 062	24/7 emergency line

Scams to Know

Jet Ski Rental: Damage claims after return — take photos before and after, use reputable operators **Gem Scam:** “Special deal” on gems to resell at home — almost always worthless **Tuk-Tuk Meter:** “Meter is broken” — agree on price before getting in, or use Grab **Bar Tab Inflation:** Check your bill, count

your drinks — some bars add extras **Too-Good-to-Be-True Drink Offers:** “Ladies drink free” — men get charged double, confrontation when you leave

Tsunami Risk

Phuket was hit hard by the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami. The risk remains, though warning systems are now in place.

Warning Signs: - Strong earthquake felt (especially if you’re near the coast) - Unusual wave retreat (water pulls back dramatically from shore) - Official sirens (tested monthly in some areas)

What to Do: - Move to high ground immediately — don’t wait for official warning - Know your evacuation route — most coastal areas have marked tsunami evacuation signs - Stay away from the coast until official all-clear

Monsoon Season

Wet Season: May–October - Heavy rainfall, especially September–October - Some ferry services suspended during rough seas - Beaches may have red flags (no swimming) due to rip currents - Lower prices, fewer crowds, lush greenery

Dry Season: November–April - Best weather, peak tourist season - Higher prices, crowded beaches - Calm seas, good diving conditions

Rip Currents & Drowning

Risk: High on west coast beaches during monsoon season (May–October) **Red**

Flags: Mean no swimming — heed them **Safe Swimming:** East coast beaches (Rawai, Chalong) are calmer year-round **Lifeguards:** Present at major beaches during peak season, not guaranteed

Other Hazards

Jellyfish: Box jellyfish present in some areas, especially during monsoon. Vinegar is the antidote — many beaches have stations. **Sea Urchins:** Common on rocky shores — wear water shoes when snorkeling **Sun Exposure:** Tropical sun is intense — SPF 50+, hat, shade during midday **Mosquitoes:** Dengue fever risk — use repellent, especially during rainy season

11. Weather by Month

Month	Avg High	Avg Low	Rainfall	Season	Notes
January	32°C (90°F)	23°C (73°F)	36 mm	Dry	Peak season, best weather
February	33°C (91°F)	23°C (73°F)	27 mm	Dry	Peak season, dry and sunny
March	34°C (93°F)	23°C (73°F)	100 mm	Dry→Wet	Hot, some rain late month
April	33°C (91°F)	24°C (75°F)	154 mm	Wet	Songkran (Thai New Year), hot
May	32°C (90°F)	25°C (77°F)	282 mm	Wet	Monsoon begins, rough seas
June	32°C (90°F)	25°C (77°F)	257 mm	Wet	Rainy, fewer tourists
July	31°C (88°F)	25°C (77°F)	262 mm	Wet	Rainy, good deals
August	31°C (88°F)	25°C (77°F)	330 mm	Wet	Peak rainfall
September	31°C (88°F)	24°C (75°F)	399 mm	Wet	Wettest month, some closures
October	31°C (88°F)	24°C (75°F)	353 mm	Wet	Rain continues, transitioning
November	31°C (88°F)	24°C (75°F)	208 mm	Wet→Dry	Rain decreases, improving

Month	Avg High	Avg Low	Rainfall	Season	Notes
December	31°C (88°F)	23°C (73°F)	67 mm	Dry	Peak season begins, ideal

Best Time to Visit: November–February (dry, comfortable temperatures)
Best Deals: May–October (lower prices, fewer crowds, but expect rain)
Hottest: March–April (up to 35°C/95°F) **Wettest:** September–October (daily downpours common)

12. Shopping & Daily Life

Major Malls

Mall	Location	Highlights	Worth a Trip?
Central Festival Phuket	Phuket Town	Largest mall, department stores, cinema, food court, IKEA	Yes — one-stop shopping
Central Floresta	Patong	Newer, upscale, rooftop bar, good restaurants	Yes — Patong residents
Jungceylon	Patong	Tourist-focused, souvenirs, massage, cinema, Big C	Yes — Patong central
Robinson Lifestyle	Phuket Town	Mid-range, family-friendly, food court	Maybe — if nearby
Lotus's Shopping Center	Kathu	Local mall, Big C, cinemas	Maybe — Kathu residents
Premium Outlet Phuket	Near airport	Brand-name discounts, open-air	Maybe — outlet shoppers

What's Inside

Department Stores: Central, Robinson, Emporium — clothing, cosmetics, home goods **Electronics:** Power Buy, Banana IT, Jaymart — phones, laptops,

appliances **Home Goods:** IKEA (Central Festival), HomePro, Index Living Mall **Cinemas:** Major Cineplex, SF Cinema — THB 150–250 per ticket **Food Courts:** THB 50–100 per meal, clean, AC, variety **Supermarkets:** Big C, Tesco Lotus, Gourmet Market

Shopping Tips

- **Air Conditioning:** Malls are a great escape from midday heat
- **Prices:** Fixed in malls, no bargaining
- **Tax Refund:** VAT refund available for purchases over THB 2,000 at participating stores (bring passport)
- **Hours:** Most malls open 10 AM–10 PM daily

13. Groceries, Markets & Meat

Supermarkets

Chain	Locations	Price Level	Notes
Big C	Multiple (Patong, Kathu, Phuket Town)	Budget	Large hypermarkets, good for bulk shopping
Tesco Lotus	Multiple island-wide	Budget–Mid	Wide selection, own-brand products
Makro	Phuket Town, Kathu	Bulk/Wholesale	Membership required (free for foreigners with passport)
Gourmet Market	Central Festival, upscale malls	Premium	Imported goods, expensive
Villa Market	Upscale areas	Premium	Imported products, high prices
Local Mini Marts	Everywhere	Mid	Convenient, slightly higher prices

Wet Markets (Talad)

Talad Thai (Phuket Town): Largest fresh market on the island. Open early morning (4 AM–2 PM). Fresh produce, meat, seafood, dry goods. Prices 30–50% lower than supermarkets.

Banzaan Market (Patong): Tourist-friendly wet market + food court. Upper floor is fresh market, lower floor has cooked food. Can be pricier than local markets but convenient for Patong residents.

Fresh Market (Karon/Kata): Smaller local markets serving the beach areas. Good for daily fresh purchases.

Meat & Protein

Supermarkets: Sell chicken, pork, beef, and some seafood. Quality is good, prices reasonable. Imported beef is expensive.

Wet Markets: Fresh meat daily, often cheaper than supermarkets. Chicken THB 60–90/kg, pork THB 80–120/kg, beef THB 200–400/kg depending on cut.

Seafood: Buy fresh at wet markets or beachside fish markets. Prices vary by season and catch. Common fish: snapper, grouper, mackerel, squid, prawns.

Butcher Shops: Exist but less common than wet market stalls. Some supermarkets have in-store butchers.

Specialty & Imported Goods

Where: Gourmet Market (Central Festival), Villa Market, Makro (some imported items) **What:** Cheese, wine, cereals, condiments, gluten-free products, organic options **Price:** 2–3× local product prices

14. Language & Local Etiquette

Survival Thai Phrases

Thai	Pronunciation	Meaning
/	sà-wàt-dii khráp/kâ	Hello (male/female speaker)
/	kòp khun khráp/kâ	Thank you
/	châi / mâi châi	Yes / No
	thào-rài	How much?
	phaeng pai	Too expensive
	mâi ao	No thanks / I don't want it
	hông-nám yùu thîi nãi	Where is the bathroom?
	chék bin	Check, please

Thai	Pronunciation	Meaning
	a-ròi	Delicious
	chûay dûay	Help!

Tone: Thai is tonal — the same word with different tones means different things. Don't worry about perfect tones; locals appreciate the effort.

Politeness Particles: Men add “ ” (khráp), women add “ ” (kâ) to sentences to be polite.

Etiquette Norms

The Wai: Traditional greeting — palms together, slight bow. Return a wai from service workers with a nod or smile (you don't need to wai back unless they're significantly older or higher status).

Temples: Dress modestly (shoulders and knees covered), remove shoes before entering, don't point feet at Buddha images.

Royalty: Deeply respected. Never criticize or joke about the royal family — it's illegal (lèse-majesté laws).

Feet: Considered dirty. Don't point feet at people or Buddha images. Remove shoes when entering homes and some shops.

Head: Considered sacred. Don't touch people's heads, even children.

Public Displays of Affection: Modest PDA is okay, but excessive kissing/making out is frowned upon.

Tipping: Not mandatory but appreciated. THB 20–50 at restaurants, THB 20–100 for massage, THB 20–50 for taxi/tuk-tuk if service was good.

Bargaining: Expected at markets, not in malls or restaurants. Start at 50–60% of asking price, meet in the middle. Keep it friendly — it's a game, not a confrontation.

15. History & Culture Snapshot

Brief History

Pre-16th Century: Inhabited by Austronesian Malays, then settled by Thais during southward expansion of Siamese kingdoms.

16th–18th Century: Major trading port on India–China route. Portuguese, Dutch, English, and French traders all competed for tin trading rights.

King Narai appointed a French missionary as governor in 1680s to counter Dutch/English influence.

19th Century: Tin mining boom brought Chinese immigrants, creating the Sino-Portuguese architectural style seen in Phuket Town today. Two local heroines (Thao Thep Krasattri and Thao Si Sunthon) led defense against Burmese invasion in 1785 — still celebrated today.

20th Century: Tin and rubber dominated economy until tourism took off in 1970s–80s. 2004 tsunami caused massive damage but island has fully recovered.

Today: Thailand’s wealthiest province, economy based on tourism with over 100,000 long-term foreign residents.

Cultural Touchpoints

Songkran (Thai New Year): April 13–15. Water fights nationwide — Phuket goes all out. Expect to get wet, even if you’re just walking to 7-Eleven.

Loy Krathong: November. Float decorated baskets (krathongs) on water to honor the water goddess. Beautiful at beaches and lakes.

Vegetarian Festival: September/October (9th lunar month of Chinese calendar). Unique to Phuket — participants undergo extreme rituals (piercing, fire-walking) to cleanse the community. Not for the faint of heart to watch.

Chinese Influence: Large Chinese-Thai population, especially in Phuket Town. Celebrations for Chinese New Year, ancestral shrines, Sino-Portuguese architecture.

16. Tourism & Day Trips

Top Day Trips

Destination	Travel Time	Cost	Worth It?
Phang Nga Bay (James Bond Island)	1–2 hours by boat	THB 1,500– 3,500	Yes — iconic limestone karsts
Ko Phi Phi	2 hours by ferry	THB 600–1,200 ferry, THB 2,000– 4,000 tour	Yes — stunning beaches, Maya Bay

Destination	Travel Time	Cost	Worth It?
Similan Islands	1.5 hours by speedboat	THB 3,500–6,000 (day trip)	Yes — world-class diving, seasonal (Nov–May only)
Ko Racha	1–2 hours by boat	THB 1,000–2,500	Yes — great snorkeling, less crowded
Ao Phang Nga National Park	1 hour by car + boat	THB 500–1,500	Yes — caves, mangroves, sea gypsies
Khao Sok National Park	2–3 hours by car	THB 2,000–4,000 tour	Yes — ancient rainforest, Cheow Lan Lake
Ko Yao Noi/Yai	30 min by ferry	THB 300–500	Maybe — quiet island life, good for overnight
Coral Island (Ko Hae)	15 min by speedboat	THB 500–1,000	Maybe — close, crowded, good for quick trip
Promthep Cape	30 min by car	THB 200–400 taxi/Grab	Yes — best sunset view on island, free
Big Buddha	30 min by car	THB 200–400 taxi/Grab	Yes — 45m marble statue, panoramic views

DIY vs. Booked Tours

Book a Tour If: - You want hassle-free transport, guide, equipment included
- You're going to multiple stops (island hopping) - You want to meet other travelers - Activities require permits or specialized equipment (diving)

DIY If: - You're comfortable with local transport - You want flexibility in timing - You're on a tight budget - You're revisiting a place you've been before

Tourist Traps vs. Genuine Experiences

Tourist Traps: - **Phuket FantaSea:** Expensive cultural show, very commercialized - **Tiger Kingdom:** Ethical concerns about animal treatment - **Snake Shows:** Gimmicky, not educational - **Overpriced Sunset Cruises:** THB 3,000+ for basic boat with open bar — read reviews

Genuine Experiences: - **Local Markets:** Talad Thai, weekend markets — authentic food and shopping - **Old Phuket Town:** Walk the Sino-Portuguese

streets, cafés, shrines - **Local Temples:** Wat Chalong, Big Buddha — free, culturally significant - **Fishermen’s Villages:** Rawai, Chalong — watch boats come in, fresh seafood

17. Master Links

Official Resources

Resource	URL	Notes
Tourism Authority of Thailand	tourismthailand.org	Official tourism info
Phuket Provincial Office	phuket.go.th	Government info (Thai)
Immigration Bureau	immigration.go.th	Visa info, 90-day reporting
Phuket Immigration TMD Weather	phuketimmigration.com tmd.go.th	Local office info Official Thai weather forecasts
Tourist Police	touristpolice.go.th	1155 hotline, English support

Expat Resources

- **Phuket Gazette:** phuketgazette.net — Local news in English
- **The Thaiger:** thethaiger.com — National news, Phuket section
- **Facebook Groups:** “Phuket Long Term Rentals,” “Phuket Expats,” “Phuket Digital Nomads”

18. Final Budget Table

Monthly and 90-day cost-of-stay estimates for Phuket, in USD, assuming **35 THB per USD**. Figures trace back to the neighborhood rent ranges, transport notes, Numbeo Phuket baseline, and the city-specific notes earlier in this guide.

Category	Lean Nomad	Comfortable Nomad	Premium Nomad
Room	\$250 (budget studio/1BR in local neighborhoods)	\$1,000 (mid-range 1BR condo near beach / central)	\$2,200 (luxury 1–2BR beachfront condo or hotel)

Category	Lean Nomad	Comfortable Nomad	Premium Nomad
Food	\$190 (street food, local restaurants, home cooking)	\$750 (mix of street food and mid-range restaurants)	\$1,650 (upscale restaurants, international cuisine)
Transport	\$60 (songthaews, walking, bicycle rental)	\$250 (mix of public transport and Grab/taxi)	\$550 (private taxi, car rental, regular Grab)
Coworking	\$0 (café Wi-Fi, no membership)	\$50 (café spend + occasional coworking day)	\$150 (dedicated desk / premium space + home fiber)
Insurance	\$50 (basic travel medical cover)	\$100 (solid travel health insurance)	\$200 (comprehensive + evacuation cover)
Visa	\$60 (one 30-day extension)	\$80 (visa extension + reporting buffer)	\$150 (visa support / Elite long-stay path)
Entertainment	\$95 (free/low-cost activities, local beer, minimal nightlife)	\$375 (paid attractions, occasional tours, mid-range bars)	\$825 (premium activities, private tours, upscale bars/clubs)
Buffer	\$50 (utilities + small contingency)	\$120 (utilities + contingency)	\$200 (utilities + contingency)
TOTAL / month	\$755	\$2,725	\$5,925
90-Day total	\$2,265	\$8,175	\$17,775
Daily average	~\$25/day	~\$91/day	~\$198/day

Budget Notes

Lean Nomad (~\$25/day / \$755/month): - Budget studio or 1BR in local neighborhoods away from the main beaches - Street food, local restaurants, some home cooking - Songthaews, walking, bicycle rental - Free or low-cost beach and daytime activities - Minimal nightlife

Comfortable Nomad (~\$91/day / \$2,725/month): - Mid-range 1BR condo near a popular beach or in Phuket Town - Mix of street food and mid-range restaurants - Songthaews + Grab/taxi for errands and nights out - Paid attractions, occasional tours, regular nightlife

Premium Nomad (~\$198/day / \$5,925/month): - Luxury 1–2BR beachfront condo or hotel - Upscale restaurants and international cuisine - Private taxi or car rental - Premium activities, private tours, upscale bars and clubs

Cost-Saving Tips

Accommodation: - Negotiate monthly condo rates (30–50% off nightly rates for 3+ months) - Stay in Phuket Town or inland for much cheaper rent than Patong/Kata/Karon beachfront - Facebook groups like “Phuket Condos” often beat booking-site prices

Food: - Street food and local Thai restaurants: THB 60–150/meal - Phuket Town has the best-value local food - Cook at home: markets have cheap fresh produce and seafood

Transport: - Songthaews (blue open trucks) are the cheapest way between towns - Motorbike rental is popular but wear a helmet and carry an IDP - Grab is more expensive than songthaews but easier at night

Activities: - Beaches are free - Many viewpoints and temples are free or low-cost - Combine day trips (Phi Phi, James Bond Island, Phang Nga) to split transport costs

19. Glossary of Local Terms

Term	Meaning
Baht (฿)	Thai currency — written as THB or ฿
Farang	Foreigner (not offensive, just descriptive)
Khráp/Kâ	Politeness particles (male/female) — add to end of sentences
Wai	Traditional Thai greeting with palms together
Songthaew	Shared pickup truck taxi (blue trucks in Phuket)
Tuk-Tuk	Three-wheeled motorized rickshaw
Grab	Southeast Asian Uber — app-based ride-hailing
7-Eleven	Your lifeline — open 24/7, sells everything
Farang price	Tourist price — higher than local price
Mai pen rai	“No worries” — Thai national motto
Sabai sabai	Relaxed, comfortable, easy-going
Aroi	Delicious
Phet	Spicy
Mai phet	Not spicy

Term	Meaning
Check bin	Check, please (bill)
Hong nam	Bathroom/toilet
Tham arai?	What are you doing? (common greeting)
Kin khao reu yang?	Have you eaten yet? (common greeting)
Lek noi	A little bit
Phaw diaw	One moment / wait a minute

20. Sources & Credits

Sources

Wikipedia: - Phuket province: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phuket> - Used for: Geography, history, demographics, climate data, quick facts

Wikivoyage: - Phuket: <https://en.wikivoyage.org/wiki/Phuket> - Used for: Neighborhoods, transport, food, activities, practical travel info, hospital listings

POI Data: - `/home/jason/workspaces/theleannomad.com/cities/phuket/phuket-pois.js`
- Used for: Named hospitals, hotels, restaurants, coworking spaces, and other verified locations

Credits

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POI Data: Compiled from Wikidata and verified sources. All named places are real, verifiable entities.

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Next Update: Costs and POIs verified quarterly
