

# Thailand

*January 10th - 24th,  
2010*

Come join us as we set sail from the “Yacht Haven Marina” in Phuket, Thailand on a 2-week discovery voyage of Phang Nga Bay and the surrounding provinces.

Phang Nga Bay is 30 miles NE of Phuket with 220sq miles of breathtaking surroundings. Here you will find numerous limestone formations rising vertically up from the seabed to as high as 1150 ft. These formations are some of the most unique in the world. Several of the pinnacles shaped islands feature hongs (Thai for room). A Hong is a large space inside, such an island with a chimney-like opening to the sky. Try to imagine being inside the crater of a long-dead volcano. Access to hongs is mostly by kayak or dinghy at certain heights of the tide. The atmosphere inside a Hong is one of a strange tranquility and sheer beauty. Phang Nga Bay's limestone islands and cliffs are riddled with caves, many of which can be safely explored on foot or again by kayak or dinghy.

On the shores you'll find prolific flora and fauna. In the late afternoons we may see and hear crab-eating macaques (monkeys) on the beaches hunting their favorite prey.

Our adventure will be aboard a 43' Fountain Pajot Catamaran that was totally refitted two years ago. The vessel is equipped with the usual charter items including; linens, towels, GPS, autopilot, navigation equipment, radio/CD player, dingy with outboard and snorkeling gear. The boat will sleep 10 in 4 staterooms, however, I have limited the crew to eight because the two forward single berths are tight and only accessible from the forward cabins.

The reason this date was selected is because this time of year is the most popular. The average temperature during this period is approximately 75°F to 89°F. Usually there is little chance of rain in January and the winds and seas are ideal for sailing. The Fall Season is typically their Monsoon Season and after March things begin to heat up pretty rapidly along with strong winds.

Like other sailing trips that I have conducted over the years, I hope to create an experience that will fulfill everyone's desires and expectations. Some of the activities we may decide to engage in may be riding elephants or ATV's in the jungle. Other activities could include a guided tour on bamboo rafts through the jungle or white water rafting. One option would be to visit a pearl farm where we can observe how they grow, harvest and set the pearls. Maybe this would be the time to pick up that necklace for yourself or that special someone. Of course there will be opportunities to snorkel, scuba dive and go ashore to hike. We may opt to take a guided tour in kayaks where we could visit “hongs”, caves, or secluded lagoons. I'm sure there will be plenty of activities for the adventure seekers in our group. Sorry gang, I couldn't find mud baths or paragliding in this area like we did in Turkey. If your desire is to take a more leisurely approach to this vacation there are plenty of white sand beaches where you can spend the day relaxing and working on your tan.

At this time I only have a rough idea of our itinerary. After conducting our safety and systems briefing we will get underway and head to Koh Phanak. During our sail we will refresh our man-overboard skills and allow everyone to settle in. After arriving at our destination there will be time to explore the island or snorkel. Hopefully we will be able to find the hong and tunnels and enjoy an evening dinner at the restaurant overlooking the bay. The next day we will set sail for Koi Tapu” or James Bond Island. This is the location where they filmed “The Man With the Golden Gun”. Depending on the time we may elect to spend the night there. Continuing in a clockwise direction we will visit Ko Panyi where the floating fishing village is located. From the northern end of the bay we will begin our southerly trek for a stop at Koa Yao Noi. A short distance to the east of Koa Yao Noi is the island of Koh Hong. Located at this island is an internal lagoon accessible by dingy with high sheer cliffs fringing the banks. Continuing southeast towards the mainland we will stop at Rai Lei Beach. There is no road access to this area due to the enclosing rock walls. A reef extends from the southern end of the beach and is a magnet for snorkelers. To the south of Ao Nang is the island of Koh Dam Khwan (Chicken Island) where we can spend the day walking on the beach and sand bar that connects it with two other small islands. The diving and snorkeling are said to be pretty good in this area.. Our next stop will be at Koh Phi Phi Lea where the filming of the “Beach” took place starring Leonardo DiCaprio. If you ever saw the movie then you will know why this location should be an interesting stop. Proceeding South we will direct our course to Koh Muk. The three islands in this area are located in the Hat Chao Mai National Park. This area was once part of Malaya and its ancient Muslim culture migrated north with mosque temples still dominating the fishing villages. The beaches are pristine and the Tham Morakot (Emerald Cave) is a must-see in the region. We may venture further south towards the Malaysian border but we will have to play it by ear.

I would like to suggest, if you haven't done so already, that you install “Google Earth” on your computer. You can see actual satellite imagery of the area and zoom in for some pretty close detail. Once you zoom in, if you click on the blue squares a picture will pop up that may have been taken in that area.

The approximate cost for the trip will be \$1800 to \$1900 per person. It is difficult to determine exact cost at this time due to our insurance option, National Park or transit fees and the exchange rate of the Euro at the time of final deposit. To secure a spot on the trip requires a \$900 deposit. The charter company requires a 50% deposit with the remainder due 3 months prior to sailing.

I have found reasonable airfare from MSP for about \$1050 through [www.cheapoair.com](http://www.cheapoair.com) Make sure to click on Asiana Airlines as an option. United and Northwest are considerably higher. Once you reach Bangkok you have several options for getting to Phuket which include; flying, overnight train service or bus.