

Recharge

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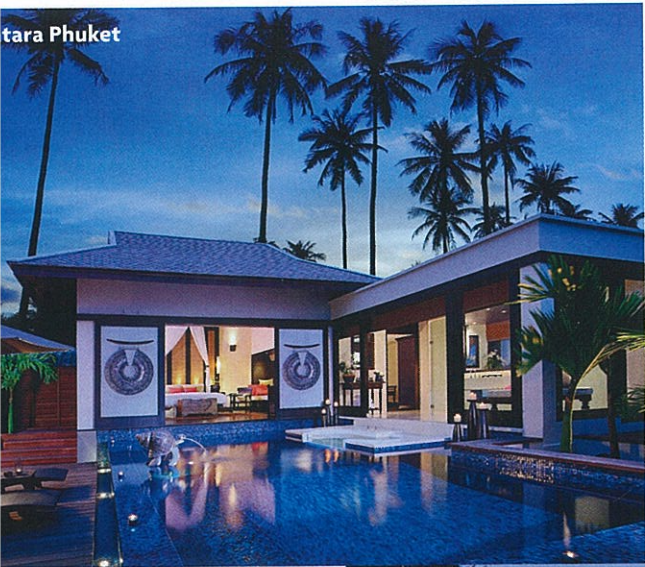
WORDS ANNA ROBINSON & NATALIE DOHERTY

THE THAI IS CAST

Thailand offers exotic sights, fine food, luxury accommodation and peerless pampering.

Australians Anna Robinson and Natalie Doherty first visited Thailand in 2004. It was the beginning of a love affair that led to the formation of Take Us To Thailand (www.takeustothailand.com), a boutique operation that enabled the two to share their local friendships and expertise. From Bangkok to Phuket and the islands beyond, here is their insider selection of where to stay.

Anantara Phuket



Sri Panwa Estate



The Peninsula



BANGKOK

The Peninsula

133 Charoennakorn Road,
Klongton-sai, Klongsan,
Bangkok. (02) 861 2888.
www.peninsula.com

With its superb service, smart rooms and quality furnishings, The Peninsula is the ultimate city escape, with TVs on the wall above the bath and lounge areas in every room with views over the busy Chao Phraya River. The best poolside service in Thailand is complemented by the Chinese cuisine at Mei Jiang restaurant. Enjoy breakfast outdoors watching the cargo boat parade on the river and spend a lazy afternoon in a sala (pavilion) by the pool. From THB8600 (\$295) with breakfast.

Sukhothai

13/3 South Sathorn Road,
Bangkok. (02) 344 8888.
www.sukhothaihotel.com

Sukhothai, a serene haven in Bangkok's bustling heart, embodies classic Thai design in spacious grounds. Step out of your tuk-tuk, car or taxi to white-suited Thai staff welcoming you by name, fully briefed on the day's agenda. Soak in the sumptuous interiors swathed in Jim Thompson silk drapes and enjoy silver-service room service or Sukhothai's Sunday brunch.

Duck out for curry and chilled beer at nearby Suan Lum night bazaar or defy gravity at Vertigo bar, an open-air hot spot on the 61st floor of the neighbouring Banyan Tree Hotel. From THB6900 (\$237) with breakfast.

Dream

10 Sukhumvit Soi 15,
Bangkok. (02) 254 8500.
www.dreambkk.com

Located in Sukhumvit, Bangkok's urban epicentre, Dream is perfect as an affordable option that doesn't compromise style or service. Well connected to the rest of the city via sky train, steps away from beauty salons, food courts and great street shopping, Dream is a good base from which to explore Bangkok. From (THB2170) \$75 with breakfast.

AND BEYOND...

Sri Panwa Estate

88 Moo 8 Sakdidej Road,
Tambon Vichit, Phuket.
(07) 637 1000.
www.sripanwa.com

Along with spectacular views, all villas have spacious infinity pools, king-sized day beds and outdoor jacuzzis – absolute privacy with superb service. Picnic on a nearby island or book in for a Thai massage. Then, perhaps, a sunset swim at Baba Pool Club followed by a lycheetini cocktail. From THB15,750 (\$541) with breakfast.

Anantara Phuket

888 Moo 3, Tumbon Mai Khao,
Phuket. (07) 633 6100.
www.phuket.anantara.com
Anantara Phuket is a five-star

resort on the northern Mai Khao beach with the best beachfront pool on Phuket. Enjoy barefoot cocktails and gourmet canapes in the pool's lounge area – with day beds, underwater music, a sunken pool bar, huge jacuzzi and cool Kenkoon furniture. From THB20,000 (\$687) with breakfast.

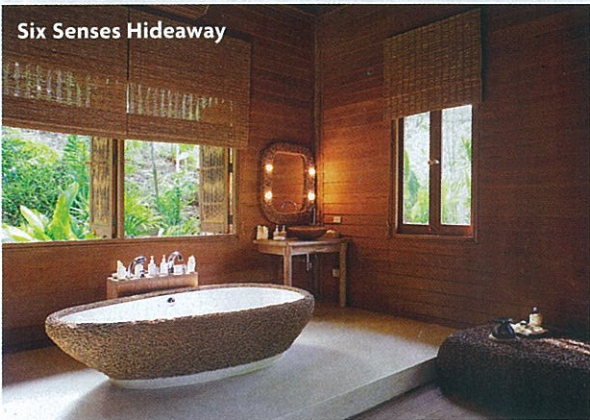
The Sarojin

60 Moo 2, Kukkak,
Takuapa, Phang Nga.
(07) 642 7900. thesarojin.com

To relax in seclusion (no children under 12) on a perfect beach year-round, head to The Sarojin at Khao Lak, 90 minutes' drive north from Phuket airport. Sarojin's luxury tours to the Similan Islands – Thailand's best diving and snorkelling spot – include an open bar and gourmet lunch. ➤



The Library: gaze at the horizon from the vermillion-tiled pool or relax amid elegant minimalism (left and below)



ake cooking classes at the
ocal market or visit the nearby
ainforest. From THB13,500 (\$463).

**Sala Samui
Resort & Spa**
0/9 Moo 5, Baan Plai Lam Bo
hut, Koh Samui Suratthani.
(07) 724 5888.
www.salasamui.com

**Sala Phuket
Resort & Spa**
33 Moo 3, Mai Khao Beach,
halang District, Phuket.
(07) 633 8888.
www.salaphuket.com

ala Samui and Sala Phuket are
tylish boutique resorts in the
orth of Koh Samui and Phuket.
oth have Australian managers
nd offer personalised Thai
ospitality in relaxed beachfront
ettings, including massage
herapists at their Sala Spas,
reat international cuisine at
eachfront restaurants and
car fleet to transfer you

anywhere on the island.
From THB6300 (\$216).

The Library
14/1 Moo 2, Bo Phut, Koh
Samui, Suratthani.
(07) 742 2767. thelibrary.co.th

A boutique hotel set between
busy Chaweng Road and the best
stretch of Chaweng Beach, The
Library is a quiet haven with only
26 suites in the heart of Samui.
It's all about the fabulous
swimming pool overlooking the
beach and surrounded by
oversized beanbags. The Page
beachfront restaurant is one of
the best on Samui, often hosting
guest chefs. From THB11,340
(\$389) with breakfast in bed.

Rayavadee
214 Moo 2, Tambon Ao-Nang,
Amphoe Muang, Krabi. (07)
562 0740. www.rayavadee.com

You can't reach this resort on the
tip of Krabi's Railway Bay by road.

Six Senses Hideaway

Staff in sailor suits will collect
you in a speedboat for the trip to
Railay Beach, where picturesque
limestone islands jut out of the
green ocean. Rayavadee's grounds
are impeccably landscaped and
the property is set on three idyllic
beaches. The beachside swimming
pool is at the foot of high
limestone cliffs, and you can play
tennis on the jungle-side court.
From THB19,400 (\$666) with
breakfast and airport transfers.

**Six Senses Hideaway
Yao Noi**
56 Moo 5, Tambol Koh Yao
Noi, Amphur Koh Yao,
Phang Nga. (07) 641 8500.
www.sixsenses.com

Only 90 minutes west of Phuket

Airport, this resort is hidden in
lush forest with some of the best
views you'll ever see from bed
— or from a yoga deck. All villas
have private pools and the Six
Senses Spa is on site. And, if the
international chef's creations and
view of limestone islands in the
distance aren't enough, there's
also an in-house deli, bakery and
ice-cream shop. From THB21,440
(\$736) with breakfast.

**Six Senses Destination
Spa Phuket**
32 Moo 5, Tambol Paklok,
Amphur Thalang, Phuket.
(07) 637 1400.
www.sixsenses.com

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boot camps — head to Thailand ➤



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THAILAND



to do mind, body and soul a favour in a luxurious tropical setting with knockout, health-giving food on secluded Naka Yai Island, 30 minutes west of Phuket airport. Destination Spa combines beachfront pool villas with wellness featuring customised Chinese/Thai/Indian/Indonesian spa treatments, jungle gym, resident health experts and innovative "fishetarian" and raw-food cuisine. From THB21,440 (\$736) per night.

Rasananda

5/5 Moo 5, Thong Nai Pan Noi Beach, Baan Tai, Koh Phangan, Suratthani. (07) 723 9555.

www.rasananda.com

Koh Phangan, a half-hour speedboat ride north from Koh Samui, has stepped up in the luxury game since this all pool-villa resort arrived. There's a beautiful clear-

water beach with fine white sand and great surf, a yoga platform and day spa in the jungle behind the resort, and speedboat tours to nearby islands for snorkelling. Bernd from popular Koh Samui restaurant Ocean 11 (www.o11s.com) oversees the resort, so expect excellent food. From THB19,800 (\$680) with breakfast.

Ultimate beach houses

Holiday at a private luxury beach villa complete with a Thai chef. Take the family to **Ban Suriya** (fabulouslocations.com) and **The Cove** on Koh Samui (www.thecovesamui.com), with children's playrooms, pools, tree houses and outdoor cinemas. **Baan Kilee** (chaitalay.com) on Samui and **Villa Chan Grajang** (villachangrajang.com) on Phuket offer upscale luxury with great views. To enjoy the **Fisherman's Village** in Bophut, Samui, try Elle Macpherson's home away from home at **Villa M** (villamsamui.com). **The Headland** (www.theheadlandsamui.com) on Samui is the ideal secluded getaway, or gather a group and rent all eight houses at **Miskawaan** (miskawaan.com) on Maenam Beach for the privacy of home, service of a five-star resort and meals prepared fresh from the market daily. 

 For airfares call **Qantas on 13 13 13** or visit qantas.com

For holiday packages to Thailand call **Qantas Holidays on 13 14 15.**

THIS STORY & OTHER ESCAPES ONLINE AT
QANTAS.COM/TRAVELINSIDER 