INSIGHT GUIDES

THAILAND'S BEACHES & ISLANDS



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Inside front cover Thailand's beaches and islands
Inside back cover Bangkok

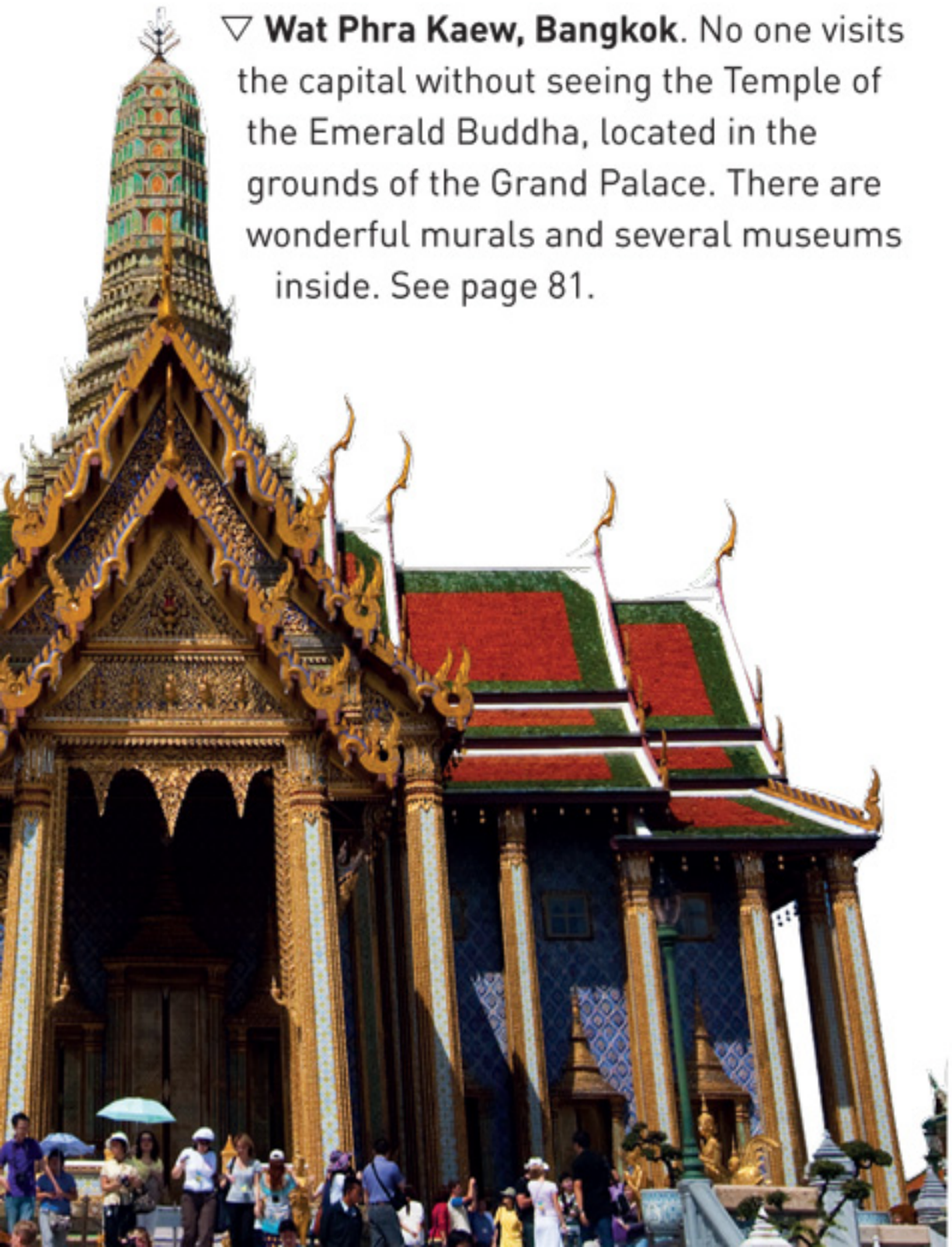
LEGEND

Insight on
Photo story

THE BEST OF THAILAND'S BEACHES AND ISLANDS: TOP ATTRACTIONS



△ **Chinatown, Bangkok**. One of the most authentic Chinatowns outside of China. The narrow alleyways are full of temples and shrines, and stalls selling wonderful foods, spices and anything else you can imagine. See page 94.



▽ **Wat Phra Kaew, Bangkok**. No one visits the capital without seeing the Temple of the Emerald Buddha, located in the grounds of the Grand Palace. There are wonderful murals and several museums inside. See page 81.



△ **Full Moon Parties, Ko Phangan**. Anything goes at these wild all-night raves on the beaches of Phangan. They draw thousands of visitors every month from all over the world. See page 146.

▽ **Vegetarian Festival, Phuket**. In this annual Chinese Taoist event, people abstain from meat and sex and perform acts of self-mutilation that are only for the robust of heart. See page 37.





△ **Ko Tarutao National Park, Satun**. This island chain, a former penal colony, mixes isolated and party destinations, and is one of only a few places in the world to see the manatee. See page 207.



△ **Ao Phang Nga, Northern Andaman Coast**. A surreal seascape of limestone pinnacles rising out of the water invites exploration by sea canoe. Pass through underwater caves to hidden lagoons. See page 162.



△ **Chatuchak, Bangkok**. Touted as the world's biggest flea market, with 8,000 stalls and an estimated 400,000 shoppers every weekend. You can buy whatever you want here, from local crafts to snakes and violins. See page 103.



△ **Khao Sok National Park**. Good for trekking, caves, lakes and waterfalls, the amazing variety of flora and fauna here includes the world's second-largest flower. See page 163.

▽ **Surin Islands**. One of a clutch of dive havens off the Andaman coast, it includes the famous Richelieu Rock. Other class diving areas such as the Burma Banks are close by. See page 159.



▽ **Railay Bay, Krabi**. These three beaches are among Thailand's most beautiful. The surrounding area has hundreds of sheer limestone cliffs that attract rock climbers from across the world. See page 190.



THE BEST OF THAILAND'S BEACHES AND ISLANDS: EDITOR'S CHOICE

BEST FOR FAMILIES

Dino Park and Mini Golf: Phuket. An 18-hole mini-golf course that trails over rocks and across rivers and waterfalls, past dinosaurs with smoking nostrils. See page 178.

Elephant trek: Pattaya. See elephants bathing and feeding, then take a trek on one's back into the forest. See page 119.

National Discovery Museum: Bangkok. Explore Thailand's history and culture at the country's best interactive museum. See page 88.

Phuket Fantasea: Phuket. An exciting stage extravaganza combining dance, drama and acrobatics with pyrotechnics and performing elephants. See page 176.

Siam Ocean World: Bangkok. See more than 30,000 marine animals in a giant Oceanarium, observe different marine -species on a glass-bottomed boat ride and go diving with the sharks. See page 98.

Underwater World: Pattaya. Explore the varied wonders of the briny depths without ever getting wet. See page 113.

Monkey Theatre: Ko Samui. Watch monkeys scamper up trees at lightning speed to pluck coconuts from the palms. See page 139.

Kitsch Dino Park.





Red Thai curry.

FOOD AND DRINK

Cookery Schools: Bangkok, Hua Hin and Ko Samui. There's nothing like learning how to cook Thai food while you're in Thailand and these are some of the best schools on offer.

Night Markets: Trang and Songkhla. For some of the best southern-style streetfood, plus local colour and a great atmosphere. See page 203.

Nahm: Bangkok. Voted one of the world's best restaurants, it produces sensational traditional Thai flavours.

Sirocco: Bangkok. The stupendous city views are the main attraction at this famous alfresco rooftop restaurant and bar.

Sra Bua: Bangkok. Modern Thai cuisine by Copenhagen's Michelin-starred restaurant Kiin Kiin includes dishes like red curry ice cream.

TEMPLES



Wat Chalong – the most important of Phuket's 29 Buddhist temples.

Khao Luang Cave: Petchaburi. More than 100 Buddha images fill this cave temple in several underground chambers. See page 125.
Wat Chalong: Phuket. The island's largest and most important Buddhist temple contains a relic of the Buddha's bones. See page 180.
Wat Mahathat: Petchaburi. A 14th-century temple, Petchaburi's most important and known for its fine carvings and murals. See page 125.
Wat Matchimawat: Songkhla. The town's most famous temple, with paintings that are over 200 years old. See page 209.
Wat Pho: Bangkok. The capital's largest temple is best known for the gigantic statue of the reclining Buddha found here. See page 86.
Wat Tham Suea: Krabi. "Tiger Cave Temple" is surrounded by forests and cliffs with truly fantastic views of the neighbouring area. See page 186.

CULTURAL SIGHTS

Bangkok Art & Culture Centre. Eleven storeys high and featuring some of Bangkok's best art and multimedia shows. See page 97.
Khao Wang: Petchaburi. A vast hilltop complex of temples, pagodas and the winter palace buildings of King Rama IV. See page 124.
Sanctuary of Truth: Pattaya. This awe-inspiring all-wood edifice pays homage to traditional Thai and Asian religious imagery. See page 113.
Thaksin Folklore Museum: Songkhla. This regional museum highlights the culture, traditions and handicrafts of South Thailand. See page 210.
Vimanmek Mansion: Bangkok. Billed as the world's largest golden teak structure, this former 19th-century royal summer home has lots of period artefacts. See page 93.



Revellers watch a Muay Thai boxing Match.

HOTTEST NIGHTLIFE

Ku De Ta: Bangkok. A huge entertainment complex with several restaurants, a club with top DJs and live music areas.
Moov: Ko Tao. Chilled-out club-bar with a tree house that caters to the island's diving crowd.
'Lady-boy' cabarets: Bangkok, Pattaya, Ko Samui and Phuket. Men in various stages of cross-dressing and sex change perform Vegas-style cabaret. See page 177.
Seduction Beach Club & Disco: Phuket. A hot club on three floors with good house DJs and international imports.
Reggae Bar: Ko Phi Phi. The island's biggest and best party venue has its own Thai boxing ring.

Detail of the Sanctuary of Truth, Pattaya.

