

# MAKING SAMUI MOVES

AMBLING THE SINGLE ROUTE AROUND KOH SAMUI, ABSORBING  
THE PLENTIFUL PLEASURES OF THE POPULAR GETAWAY.

เกาะสมุยเป็นจุดหมายปลายทางในดวงใจที่ผสมผสานความงาม  
ทางธรรมชาติและความสะดวกสบายและบริการระดับห้าดาว

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**K**oh Samui is an island of plenty; between locals and tourists, every taste is catered to by the thousands of restaurants, coffee shops, jungle safaris, boutiques, retreats, and even extreme sports operators.

It is an island which gives the impression that every card in its hand has been revealed at once, but which hides a quiet, proud and storied life behind the bold and obvious which inhabit the beaches, mountains and cliff faces of the place. Between these two distinct personalities lies the beautiful holiday sweet spot – a home away from home which feels remote without ever being far from familiar comforts.

For Samui locals, seemingly everything is measured by your history on the island – how long a family has resided on the roughly 200 sq km between golden coastlines says a lot about who you are and what you enjoy most about living in paradise. Everyone is either local or becoming local, whether from Bophut, Bangkok, or Budapest, and every business from high-end cliff-top eateries to local hole-in-the-wall restaurants wear their localness with great pride.

Local still means something to this popular destination brimming with visitors from every corner of the globe, and it is this sense of who makes up the fabric of Samui that gives the Southern Thai island its unique, relaxed, mixed identity.

For three days, we sought to uncover as many facets of the island's personality as possible – a laid-back island which offers relaxation in spades without asking for anything in return; a proud Southern landmark with its own rich culture and cuisine; a wild escape from the urban landscape and humdrum of everyday life. This is the essence of what Samui can be – whatever you need it to be.

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เกาะเล็ก ๆ แห่งนี้นอกจากจะมีชายหาดขาวบริสุทธิ์  
ท้องทะเลสีครามสดใส และอากาศที่สดชื่นแล้ว ยังเป็นที่  
ตั้งของโรงแรมและรีสอร์ทชั้นนำมากมาย รวมไปถึงร้านอาหาร  
ร้านค้า และคาเฟ่ เก๋ ๆ ไม่ว่าจะเป็นมองหาความสงบเงียบ  
หรือความสนุกสนานก็สามารถเลือกได้ดังใจต้องการ







A local Choeng Mon Beach fisherman-in-training.



Colourful temple statues at Wat Plai Laem.



Hire a boat at Choeng Mon Beach.



Coco Tam's Barby night



Catamaran off the coast of Koh Fahn.



Traditional Lantana Carvings.



Rock pools to explore at Choeng Mon Beach.



Relax on the sand on Choeng Mon Beach.



## DAY ONE

## Unwind on Island Time

ผ่อนคลายเป็นเวลาสายลม

**10am:** It's hard to ignore the pace at which the island operates. Local businesses come to life long after the sun has awoken, and there is no sense of urgency or deadline to the way of the Samui world. We began our day - a little after 10am - with breakfast at Cape Fah private islands, before making the short trip across Choeng Mon beach to **Aroma Boutique Café**, a roadside stop tucked away from the main strip and a short walk from the white sand of the water's edge. A smattering of cute and careful homewares and trinkets keep visitors occupied while the friendly, knowledgeable staff prepare your choices from their extensive morning menu. Delightfully refreshing verbena herbal tea from TWG, rich ice creams from Rossini, and a menu of fresh café fare put us in the right gear for a day of doing very little.

saunter around the temple grounds reveals more than initially meets the eye, with intricate Buddhist stories painted inside the main worship areas and fat-bellied fish following visitors around the lake's edge, hoping for a handful of fish food.

**3pm:** Continuing our turn about the temple gardens, we made our way outside the grounds to the nearby **Mystical Leather Carvings** gallery, located in the home of master craftsman Chaowalit Champatip. Chaowalit is the third in his family to pursue and preserve the art of traditional leather carvings, learning the old ways from his father and grandfather and transferring the skills passed to him to his own unique style. The intricate artworks are the result of hundreds of hours of studying, drying, designing, punching, carving, and painting of tough buffalo and

of day in Samui, and it's no secret to the myriad bars and restaurants along the Northwest coastline of Bophut. Instagram darling and Bangkok export **Charm Eatery and Bar** is in on the act, bringing together a menu of faultless Thai favourites, sunset-appropriate cocktails, and breathtaking bay views. The kitchen at Charm has perfected the Thai-style sharing menu, with a range of small bite classics like *larb moo tod* (deep-fried spicy pork balls), *yum hoi* (spicy salad with fresh shallot, red chillies, and New Zealand greenshell mussels), and *hoi jor puu* (fried crab meat roll with plum sauce), as well as moreish banquet dishes like *goong mae nam* (river prawns with tamarind sauce). Arrive before 6pm for a seat on the patio or the adjacent nets and watch the evening chase the day through a spectrum of blue, purple, orange and gold.

**10pm:** At the far end of the Fisherman's



Charm Eatery and Bar



Choeng Mon Beach

**11am:** Choeng Mon Beach is best-known for solitude. Far enough from the crowds of Chaweng and Bophut, and minutes from Cape Fah private islands, Choeng Mon beach caters perfectly to the relax-and-do-little crowd. Kick back under a palm tree, sample fresh *som tam* in the sand, or stretch out on a paddleboard - the beach will let you do you. A favourite with families due to its friendly crowd and pristine rockpools.

**1pm:** A staple feature of island life in Thailand is the myths and legends passed down throughout history and incorporated into modern stories. For the best chance to absorb how the island filters through to its sights and sounds, we visited nearby **Wat Plai Laem Temple**. The vast temple grounds are home to a series of brightly-coloured and imposing statues of Buddhist figures in Chinese and Thai styles. The largest of the sculptures are visible from around the area, and depict a seated Chinese Buddha over the temple lake and an 18-armed Guanyin alongside it. An early-afternoon

cattle hides. Leather carvings are a traditional Southern Thailand art form, and are the material of choice for Southern Thai shadow puppetry. At Mystical Leather, framed elephants, Ramayana tales, and Buddhist figures line the walls of the open gallery and showroom, mounted on Thai silk and framed at impressive scale. During the summer months, the studio presents free outdoor shadow puppetry in both Thai and English language from a makeshift puppet theatre on the driveway. Chaowalit accepts commissions, but be prepared to wait for the finished art to adorn your home - not only is the process completed entirely by hand, but the artist is in hot demand around the world for his deep knowledge and infectious passion.

**5pm:** Appreciating the beauty of the sun is a twice-daily affair on any island, offering two coastlines from which to see the golden bead appear and depart at either end of your schedule. Sunsets bring a particular magic to the close

Village lies **Coco Tam's**, Bophut's wildly popular new beachfront bar. Perched on a swing, lounging in a beanbag, crowded around a pool table, or sitting on the beach with your toes dug into the sand, the choice of four bars will keep you well-refreshed and energised as the evening builds. Tourists and locals have been pleasantly surprised by the new opening, a bar which takes the customer experience seriously; a bar which offers special evening events featuring guest bartenders from across Asia; a bar which screens free films on the beach. Its sprawling areas remain intimate and comfortable, with every guest taken care of while the scale serves to ensure more can have the Coco Tam's experience across its four areas: the roadside Thai-style beach shack is low-key and upbeat; the wide beachfront is mellow and separate; the upstairs lounge is social and quiet; the restaurant houses the only island outpost of Bangkok pizza upstarts Peppina. Coco Tam's never turns off - once the bar is open, all are welcome and none wish to leave.



## DAY TWO

## The Pride of the South in a Thousand Plates

ลิ้มรสความสดใหม่จากท้องทะเล

**11am:** There is so much that can be said about a region or district: its history, people, culture, and customs – or it can be explained in one sitting over a table laden with the same locale's celebrated cuisine. Southern Thai food has a reputation throughout the country, and further abroad, for its richness, spice, and fresh flavours. Nowhere is this more clear to outsiders than **Takho Bang Por Seafood**, an institution built into the sands of Bang Po beach, a short drive to the other side of the island. Seated under cover or facing the waves, diners at both ends of Takho Bang Por Seafood are treated to the

with blackened beans) rounded out the meal. Everything bursts with coconut, shrimp paste and fresh seafood – the island on a plate.

**1pm:** Following our tastebud-awakening experience we headed to the opposite coast to visit a famous beachfront establishment, **Khrua Chao Ban**, the poster child for foreign-friendly local food. Khrua Chao Ban started as a typical Samui restaurant on Lamai beach in the style of many across the island, but quickly found favour amongst the visiting crowd. Following recommendations from Samui locals, we skipped the English-language menu items and dove blindly into the Thai menu. While our attempts at ordering brought a chuckle from our friendly waiter, the fruits of our embarrassment were

taught their craft, learning under the wing of a passionate and determined woman. We discovered the third generation of Tum Rub Mui in an unassuming side road near **Maret** neighbourhood, a modern twist on the classic roadside restaurant with stark white furnishings and raw iron walls. Away from the beach and attracting only the most loyal of followers, the new-look Tum Rub Mui retains the menu that generated queues when it first opened decades ago, but allows the humble owner to take her foot off the gas and pack love into her Southern-style comfort food. During our brief stay, piles of perfect plates were rushed from the kitchen to our table to fill our already-bursting stomachs. Grated coconut dry curry, clay pot coconut rice, hairy-fruited eggplant salad, grilled pork with shrimp paste – the humble names of our selections do no favours to the masterfully-balanced range of flavours contained within, and certainly omit the creative flair with which these Samui staples are processed. Freshness is the order of the day, and love is the flavour that brings the menu of Tum Rub Mui together.

**5pm:** Before an evening of local entertainment, we chanced upon a barely-there bar and eatery high on the rocks surrounding Hin Ta Hin Yai, Holiday Beach Club. Spread across two cosy areas, **Holiday Beach Club** is the unpolished gem of the neighbourhood, attracting tourists to beanbags perched on rocks over the lapping tide and locals into the conversation and atmosphere of a backyard barbecue under the eaves. A small but perfectly-formed menu of cheap beers, Australian wines, and no-fuss mixed drinks rounds out the experience, and the top-shelf bartender chat more than makes up for the lack of an actual top shelf.

**9pm:** Four nights a week, Samui's visitors are treated to an accessible live edition of explosive local martial arts at **Petchbuncha Stadium**, the undisputed home of Muay Thai on the island. With just over 500 seats available for each bout, the stadium fills up every night with encouraging travellers and noisy locals. Petchbuncha is the perfect location for a first-time fight watching experience, as every seat gets you close enough to the action to understand the reverence Muay Thai and its fighters enjoy around the world. Tickets are available at the door starting from 1,500 Baht for a standard seat, which is more than adequate for a night of rowdy local-style entertainment. Muay Thai is a unique sport in the way its competitors respect one another; the bouts may be all bravado but the atmosphere is one of brotherhood and uplifting sportsmanship. If Petchbuncha isn't your vibe, Bophut beach's **Samui International Muay Thai Stadium** offers a more back-alley, bareknuckle environment for punters and boxers alike.



same family recipes in a no-frills setting. Arriving for lunch or dinner, all meals start with a plate of Samui's much-lauded *khoei jii*, a heavenly appetiser comprising coconut, garlic, chilli, and shrimp paste, smoked over hot coals and served in a coconut shell. *Khoei jii* has become synonymous with dining on Koh Samui, though its life began here at Takho Bang Por Seafood in 1992, when Grandpa Kho first started slinging his dedicated Southern seafood to locals and lucky visitors alike. We took our seats in the typically island-style eatery, observing small wooden fishing vessels and long tail boats setting out over the reef, and keeping one eye on the kitchen as plate after plate was presented with pride. Each dish is the sum of all the parts that makes Southern cuisine something to sing about: rich, fresh, flavourful, and spicy. After a khey chi starter paired with fresh greens and herbs, coconut-stewed *wai kua* (baby octopus braised in coconut cream), fried sea anemone in rich Southern curry, and *khao mun* (coconut-milk steamed rice

nothing to laugh at: sour soup with tender pork bones, braised river snail in yellow curry, spicy seaweed salad, and sea urchin in a rich blend of fresh spices. From start to finish this was a banquet of the sensational, all washed down with ice cold *nam daeng* soda. To our unfamiliar palates, the breadth of seafood available was a joy to discover – *hoi kom* (river snails) are moreish nuggets of intense flavour balanced by spicy freshness from a thick yellow curry, while our plate of *hoi men yam* (sea urchin in spicy herb salad) danced its way between gamey brine and garden fresh.

**3pm:** Every kitchen on Koh Samui had spoken of another restaurant on the island, once a mainstay of the culinary scene run by the matriarch of Samui cuisine, but which had since fallen off the radar of plate-hopping locals. **Tum Rub Mui** began its life as a classic oceanside restaurant, creating unpolished portions of go-to Southern fare for hungry locals. This was the place where many of the island's favourite cooks were





Decades of menu perfection at **Takho Bang Por Seafood**.



Creamy sea anemone curry at **Takho Bang Por Seafood**.



**Holiday Beach Club** hugs the rocky cliffside.



*Khao mun* with a special twist at **Tum Rub Mui**.



Live crabs await their fate at **Khrua Chao Ban**.



Grilled squid in its own ink at **Tum Rub Mui**.



A fighter celebrates success at **Petchbuncha Stadium**.



Baby squid in rich sauce at **Takho Bang Por Seafood**.



The rustic climb to **Holiday Beach Club**.





Organic chia seed pancakes at Sweet Sisters Café.



A Buddha image stands guard in the Magic Garden.



Magic Alambic Distillery's old-fashioned methods.



Views reward all who venture to Na Mueang Waterfalls.



Asian pennywort salad at Sweet Sisters Café.



An abstract outdoor sculpture at Magic Garden.



The interiors of Sweet Sisters Café.



Na Mueang Waterfalls fill the mountainside.



Bottled brews at Magic Alambic Distillery.



## DAY THREE

## Venture Further

ท่องไปในธรรมชาติ

**9am:** We left the comforts of Samui's built environment for the raw scenery of the island's natural landscapes. To prepare for a day outdoors, and to help our systems recover from overeating in local haunts, we headed for a morning meal at **Sweet Sisters Café Organic** near Bang Kao. The sisters' menu highlights Thai recipes, treating the dishes to a home-grown and healthy update with unexpected additions like avocado laab, pineapple crispy duck curry wrap, and organic *yam bai bua bok* (spicy asian pennywort salad with shrimp). Sweet Sisters Café also produces some of the island's tastiest, healthiest breakfast fare in chia seed pancakes with garden fruit, and green smoothies made with the spoils of the café's own vegetable patch. Add to that a natural chocolate kitchen and ayurvedic herb selection, and the busy roadside eatery soon proves its worth among the adventurous souls

outdoors will be more than rewarded by the immense beauty of the many cascading waterfalls tucked into a network of natural walkways an hour's return trip from the base of the waterfall.

**3pm:** While Na Mueang Waterfall is Samui's most popular example of unspoiled natural beauty, **Secret Buddha Garden, or Magic Garden**, is its most popular example of manmade natural intervention. The park is a short ride from the waterfalls in a taxi or safari tour, and houses an unrivalled collection of Buddhist artworks. The park was built in 1976 by Mr. Nim Thongsuk who, at age 77, decided to transform a portion of his farmland into something of a mystical theme park dedicated to spirit houses, waterways, and Buddhist mythological imagery. The fair weather attraction is an unusual combination of natural rainforest, exquisite tropical plants, and long-abandoned concrete statues.

**5pm:** After a hot and weary wander through the rainforest, we made our way back to civilisation for a stop at the island's only bottling distillery, **Magic**



Sweet Sisters Café

fuelling up for a day in the outdoors.

**11am:** If the beaches are Samui's main claim to fame, its mountains are a hidden gem. Spanning the central region of the island, lush rainforests remain largely untouched as the altitude increases, playing host to a broad diversity of waterfalls, streams, hiking trails, local wildlife and outdoor activities. **Na Mueang Waterfalls** are two adjacent waterfalls that border Na Mueang and Lipa Noi mountain ranges, each offering spectacular views, refreshing pools and dense forest cover. **Na Mueang Waterfall #2** was our choice, and can be accessed by taxi via a steep and pothole-plagued mountain road. From the carpark, bypass the awaiting tourist activities and head straight to the base of the waterfall, a twenty minute walk or five minute 4x4 journey up another steep and poorly-surfaced roadway. The second waterfall remains significantly less visited than the first due mostly to this difficulty of access, but anyone willing to spend their time

**Alambic Rum Distillery.** Immaculately landscaped and groomed to resemble more of a country club than a jungle distillery, Magic Alambic is the passion project of a determined French-Martinique businesswoman. Amongst the tall palm trees and dramatic ferns of the gardens, a small distillery operates from a shed near the rear of the property, turning locally-sourced natural sugarcane into refined, buttery, smooth white rum. The charming onsite bar and restaurant **La Route du Rum** speaks loudly of the owner's French heritage with a thoroughly fantastic menu comprising typical French countryside fare and Belgian beers, as well as the distillery's own K&S branded rum. For 60 Baht, a generous sample shot is served paired with a housemade syrup of raw sugar, cinnamon, nutmeg and vanilla. The rum is sold only to the island and its visitors, and is a fantastic treat for those coming down from a day's hiking in the tropical heat.

จุดประสงค์ของการมาเยือนเกาะสมุยของแต่ละคนนั้นอาจแตกต่างกันไป บางคนอาจต้องการการพักผ่อนที่สงบเพื่อผ่อนคลายจิตใจ บางคนอาจมองหาสถานที่เล่นกีฬาทางน้ำและสำรวจธรรมชาติ หรือบางคนอาจจะอยากมาลิ้มรสเครื่องดื่มสุดหรูท่ามกลางบรรยากาศที่สวยงามดังสวรรค์

เกาะสมุยเป็นสถานที่ที่มีความหลากหลายทั้งในแง่ของธรรมชาติและประสบการณ์ที่มอบให้ เริ่มต้นกันที่อาหาร นอกจากจะมีร้านอาหารทะเลท้องถิ่นให้เลือกชิมความสดใหม่จากทะเลแล้ว ยังมีคาเฟ่ และร้านอาหารสุดหรู สองแคว่มาที่ Aroma Boutique Café ที่ตกแต่งด้วยของใช้ในบ้านสุดเก๋ และมีน้ำชาและของว่างยามบ่ายให้เลือก ไม่ว่าจะเป็นชา TWG หรือโอคริบจาก Rossini ส่วนใครที่อยากได้ร้านอาหารที่มาร่วมกับวิวสวย ๆ ต้องไปพลาด Charm Eatery and Bar ร้านอาหารไทยที่มีจุดเด่นอยู่ที่ทิวทัศน์ของท้องทะเล ขอแนะนำว่าให้ไปดื่มน้ำที่พระอาทิตย์กำลังตกดิน รับรองว่าจะได้ประสบการณ์ที่สวยงามประทับใจไม่รู้ลืม ใครอยากชิมอาหารพื้นบ้านภาคใต้ต้องลองแคว่ร้านบางป่อซิฟู้ด (ครัวตาโพ) ร้านอาหารเก่าแก่ที่เสิร์ฟอาหารรสเด็ดในบรรยากาศที่เป็นกันเอง สายออร์แกนิกก็มีร้านอาหารให้เลือกเช่นกัน Sweet Sisters Café Organic เป็นร้านอาหารไทยสไตล์ออร์แกนิก ใช้วัตถุดิบสดใหม่ที่ดีต่อสุขภาพ หากต้องการดื่มด่ำบรรยากาศความงามของเกาะสมุยคู่กับเครื่องดื่มสักแก้ว สองไปก็ Magic Alambic Rum Distillery เพื่อชิมเหล้ารัมที่ทำจากน้ำตาลอ้อย ท่ามกลางบรรยากาศเงียบสงบและอากาศที่บริสุทธิ์ หรือถ้าอยากได้บรรยากาศสนุก ๆ ต้องไปที่ Holiday Beach Club และสนุกสนานไปกับอาหารสไตล์บาร์บีคิวและเครื่องดื่มรสดี

เมื่ออิ่มอร่อยเต็มที่แล้ว มาหาความบันเทิงกันที่สนามมวยเพชรปัญญา เพื่อชมการแข่งขันมวยไทยอันดุเดือด และคนที่ชอบศิลปะก็ควรแวะไป Mystical Leather Carvings เพื่อชมผลงานการแกะสลักหนังสุดวิจิตร หากต้องการสัมผัสธรรมชาติก็สามารถเดินทางไปตามน้ำตกได้ที่น้ำตกหน้าเมือง ซึ่งเป็นน้ำตกที่มีชื่อเสียงแห่งหนึ่งของเกาะสมุย

สุดท้ายก่อนเดินทางกลับ แวะสักการะสิ่งศักดิ์สิทธิ์ที่วัดแหลมสุวรรณารามหรือวัดปลายแหลม เป็นหนึ่งในวัดบนเกาะสมุยที่ได้รับความนิยมจากนักท่องเที่ยวจำนวนมาก มีลาคาปัตยกรรมที่สวยงาม มีโบสถ์ และพระพุทธรูปใหญ่กล่าวน้ำ