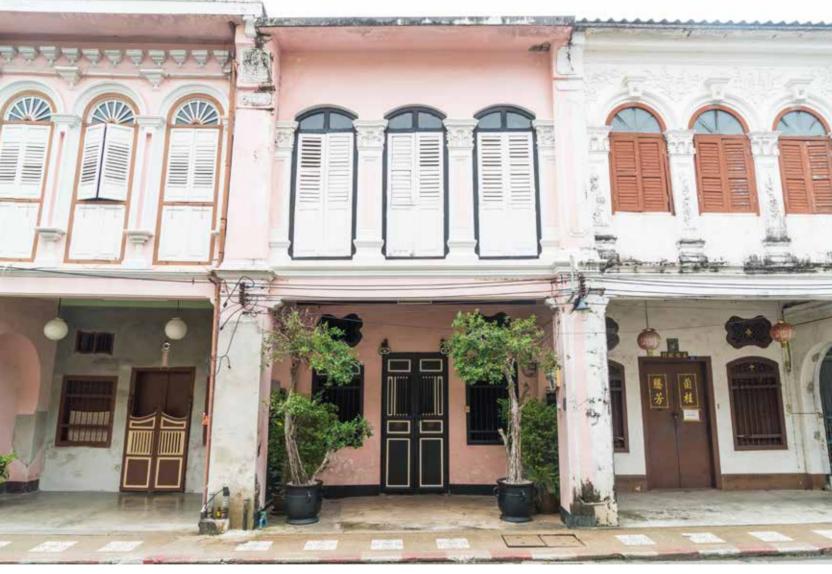
Hours in PHUKET



Thailand's largest island has something for everyone: from the heritage charm of the Old Town to the beautiful beaches that line the west coast. However, as **Simon N. Ostheimer** reveals, beyond the tourist traps lies an exciting destination that's full of surprising secrets

huket has come a long way in a very short time. Historically an important regional trading post attracting merchants from Arabia, India and China, it became a centre of the global tin and rubber industries, before being discovered by travellers in the 1970s. Today, now firmly on the global tourism map, it combines pristine stretches of sand with amazing culinary experiences and exciting attractions. Here's how to make the most of Phuket in 48 hours. →

2pm >

After arriving and checking in to your hotel, make a beeline for the beach. With dozens to choose from, there's a perfect stretch of sand in Phuket for everyone, however we recommend Bang Tao on the west coast, where the coastline stretches for miles and the calm waters are perfect for swimming. If you're feeling a bit energetic, venture offshore for a leisurely stand-up paddle with the team at Skyla's Surf & SUP Club (surf-sup.asia).

√ 5pm

Once a thriving entrepôt of commerce, Phuket's historic Old Town has since simmered down into a guiet backwater. However, in the last few years it's been given a shot of life as the charming century-old Chinese shophouses have undergone a glamorous makeover. The narrow streets now house a hip mix of art galleries, cafés, restaurants, and bars, alongside more traditional occupants, such as a Chinese medicine store and temples. Take a stroll and soak up the culture.



7pm ▼

Once you've finished strolling around the Old Town, making friends with the locals and picking up a souvenir or two, head to the **Blue Elephant** (blueelephant.com/phuket) on Krabi Road. This landmark mansion was formerly one of Phuket's grandest residences, home to a Chinese family who made their money from tin mining. Now, it's the perfect showcase for a menu of royal Thai cuisine, dishes once served in Bangkok's palaces.

For a nightcap, head to **Crafts & Co.** (facebook.com/ craftsnco) back in the Old Town on Yaowarat Road. A pioneer of the island's growing craft beer scene, this trendy bar inhabits an old shophouse that's been given an industrial-chic overhaul, with the original white wooden ceiling offset by black metal and light timber. Take a seat at the bar and order from their long list of imported beers. Our top pick? Rogue's Hazelnut Brown Nectar.

9am 🔻

Since it opened, the Phuket **Elephant Sanctuary** (phuketelephantsanctuary. org) has been changing minds on how elephants should be treated in regards to tourism. Rather than being ridden, at the sanctuary, retired animals are given a safe home where they can just be themselves while visitors observe them. Watching the elephants splash in the lake, forage in the trees, bathe in mud and playfully trumpet to each other is a sheer joy.



Instead of sharing the sand with the crowds on your second day, make your way over to **Catch** (catchbeachclub.com), the island's chicest beach club. Here, a DJ spins cool beats all day while a fashionable mix of locals and tourists enjoy Mediterraneaninspired bites and classy cocktails in a top-notch setting. Relax on one of the sun loungers or book a shaded sala by the pool, and soak up a little slice of St Tropez in the tropics.

9pm ▼

To finish off the evening, enjoy a drink at classy lakeside restaurant and bar Skve Lake Club (skvelakeclub.com). Accessed via an inviting curved wooden staircase. the venue enjoys incredible views from floor to ceiling glass walls on three sides. while an outdoor terrace floats over the water. Ease vourself into a seat and order one of their signature cocktails such as the Skye Spice – a fresh blend of rum, ginger and lime. →

6pm 🤻

By now you've probably built up an appetite, so change into something a little more smartcasual and make the short taxi trip over to **Bampot** (bampot.co), set in a restored traditional residence. Chef Jamie Wakeford has been turning heads on the island with his inventive combination of local ingredients and contemporary European recipes - make sure you order the Thai-style fried cauliflower and divine slow-cooked wagyu beef cheeks.



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