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ISLAND IDYLLS

While the Thai islands of Koh Samui, Phuket and Koh Pha-Ngan are known for their party life, it's easy to add luxury to your next holiday.

PHUKET

The lowdown: Off the south-east coast of the mainland, Phuket Island is famous for its beaches and a heady mix of history and modernity, with old shophouses sitting alongside modern beach bars, resorts and spas.

Where to eat: Old Town, the island's main hub, has excellent street food markets, but if you want to sit while you eat, head straight for Blue Elephant, set in a gracious colonial mansion, and try the seafood.

Good for drinks: Get to Baba Nest – the rooftop bar at Sri Panwa is ringed by an infinity pool and 360-degree views over ocean and jungle.

Luxury digs: Trisara (pictured) has private villas that perch on terraced, tropical hillsides and look straight out to the Andaman Sea. trisara.com



KOH SAMUI

The lowdown: In the Gulf of Thailand, this island of Koh Samui is known for its palm-fringed beaches.

Where to eat: The Fisherman's Village in Bophut is a row of old narrow shophouses transformed into beachside eateries and bars – many spill onto the sand.

Good for drinks: On the sand in Bophut, Coco Tam's has swings for bar chairs and cushions for lounging. Watch the sunset at Coast Beach Club, Chaweng Beach.

Luxury digs: Six Senses Samui (pictured) has massive multi-level villas – most with a plunge pool. sixsenses.com



KOH PHA-NGAN

The lowdown: A 30-minute speedboat ride from Koh Samui, Pha-Ngan hosts one of the most popular Full Moon parties in the country. There are endless palm-fringed white beaches and bays, hugging an interior of dense jungle and waterfalls. The real allure, however, is what lies under the surface of Mu Ko Ang Thong National Marine Park.

Where to eat: Dine with sand between your toes for the full Pha-Ngan experience. Head to Fisherman's Restaurant and pull up a 'table' in one of the modified longtail boats, steps from the water.

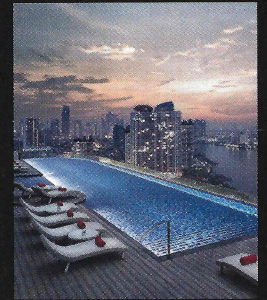
Good for drinks: Coral Bar attracts crowds to its remote stretch of sand. During the day, borrow a stand-up paddleboard while your cocktail is prepared. In the evening, enjoy beverages on the beach with chilled-out tunes as your sunset soundtrack.

Luxury digs: Five-star Anantara Rasananda Koh Phangan Villas (pictured above) is tucked between coconut palms on Thong Nai Pan Noi Beach. All villas and suites come with plunge pools. phangan-rasananda.anantara.com

ONE NIGHT

BUSTLING BANGKOK

Stop in Thailand's capital to soak up the atmosphere.



Most holidaymakers from Australia spend at least one night in Bangkok, the country's frenetic capital, before venturing to the islands. And while there are plenty of places to check into with stunning views, AVANI Riverside Bangkok Hotel may pip them all. Sleek rooms overlooking the Chao Phraya aside, the hotel's perch south of the CBD has stellar vistas of the city skyline. Head to the rooftop restaurant/lounge and soak up the city from the infinity pool or a bar stool. minorhotels.com

There's plenty to do in Bangkok: head to the Yodpiman shopping district, take a tuk-tuk tour, or go on a longtail boat through floating markets, for starters. For more details on travelling to Thailand, visit tourismthailand.org.