

koh SAMET

Care for a slice of tropical beach pie with a filling of party flavours? Samet is a great place for multi-basking in the sun and ocean spray by mega-watt daylight, or gorging and revelry under a chandelier of stars by night. The 3.5-hour bus trip from Bangkok is worth it for the island's bracing sea breezes and vast expanse

of blue sky. Koh Samet is popular with both Thais and Westerners, so it's the best of both worlds, if you subtract a few neo-Neanderthals who can't hold their booze, and some locals who can't tune their guitars. Jump the bus from the Eastern Bus Terminal in noxious Bangkok, or one of the minibuses from Victory Monument, and you're well on your way to the bliss of tropical amnesia.

HAT SAI KAEW

If you like herds of people then you'll find many of them here. In general, it's a crowded beach with lots

of places to stay and to eat, and a plethora of jet-skis and speedboats for all your watersporting indulgences. At night, most places set up tables on the beach for drinking and dining under the stars. **Haad Sai Kaew Villa** and **Ploy Talay** have clean and affordable rooms for Bt500-1,000. Also, Ploy Talay has opened up a hi-tech, indoor disco on the beach for people who like it trendy and aircon, rather than beachy and sweaty.

AO HIN KHON

Naga Bungalows have reasonably priced rooms without much of a view, but the **Naga Pub** has reopened under new management. There's also **Jep's Bungalows** with a good restaurant, but chill out and don't check your watch after you ordered - it can take a while. The lodgings here are away from the beach and have a nice view but be careful crossing the street at night.

AO PHAI

Home to **Silversand** disco, an alfresco affair on the beach that is staggeringly popular with the bucket brigade, who get the sand flying until late in the night. **Sea Breeze** resort has cool bungalows from around Bt600-1,500, however, the beach is quite small and can get overcrowded when the sun is beaming.

AO PUDSA & AO TUBTIM

Ao Tubtim has a small lovely beach with plenty of bungalows, but gets busy on weekends. Ao Pudsas has bungalows close to the beach for whitecap-watchers. Prices range from Bt600-1,500.

AO VONGDUAN

This lovely bay is blessed with a long stretch of white sand and a calm sea due to its shape and a wide range of bungalow operations. **Seahorse Bungalows** is the cheapest at Bt500-1,500. At night check out the many seafood restaurants and barbeques or kick back with an exotic fruit cocktail at one of the bars. The **Baywatch Bar** is located in the middle of the beach and has a chilled atmosphere, cool cocktails and good music. For those seeking a slower pace, on both sides of the bay you have Ao Chao and Ao Thian within walking distance. Great places to unwind or enjoy a book. **Vongduan Resort** and **Vongduan Villas** drip with luxury at a reasonable Bt1,000-3,500. Get there via regular ferries departing from Ban Phe. If you want your beach idyll to be as quiet as a monk, head further south, just a hop, skip and skedaddle from Ao Vongduan, where you'll find Ao Thian, and even further along, Ao Lung Dam.

WAY TO GO

BUS

Departures from the Eastern Bus Station on Sukhumvit Soi 63 hit the tarmac every hour until 8.00pm and take around 3.5 hours to get to Ban Phe, setting you back the pauper's ransom of Bt150. You can also take minibuses from Victory Monument, which cost about Bt30 more, but machete an hour off the journey.

FERRIES

Keep in mind that the last ferry from Ban Phe to Koh Samet departs around 6pm. Ticket start at Bt50, depending on your destination. You can also spear through the waves on a speedboat at any time for around Bt1,000.

COVER CHARGE

Being a national park, you have to pay Bt200 to land on the island. If this seems a little stiff, take a boat after 5pm to avoid the charge. Works best if you're in a group.



BayWatch Bar @ Vong Duan Beach
Koh Samet, Thailand

Ohh Yes!

SEE YA WHEN WE MEET YA!