

Local hangouts

SECRET GARDEN – SUNDAY SESSIONS

Ban Rak's family-friendly beach bar serves up tender, barbecued favourites along with chunky breads and tasty salads every Sunday. Dutch owner Rik brings in local and international acoustic, jazz and reggae acts to provide the live soundtrack for an unforgettable evening. (secretgarden.co.th)

MAENAM WALKING STREET

Choose from a near-comprehensive range of Thai dishes on Maenam Walking Street every Thursday. Alongside favourites like barbecued squid, spicy pork, mango and sticky rice, and Thai *khanom* (sweets), there's always a good selection of deep-fried insects to try.



FINE DINING
in Samui has improved by leaps and bounds in recent years

ISLAND BITES

Koh Samui

Top Tables

THE LARDER
This popular Chaweng eatery offers down-to-earth dining. Menu classics include the soft-yolk Scotch duck egg and king scallops with Serrano ham. At The Larder, you'll find tasty and creative dishes without the pretension and spin typical of fine-dining venues. Choose from its ever-changing list of specials or stick with trusty favourites created by executive chef Martin Selby. (thelardersamui.com)

NADIMOS
Located at Prana Beach Villas, Nadimos offers diners the chance to drink in gorgeous

views over the Big Buddha and Ban Rak Bay while grazing on everything from Lebanese classics such as succulent grilled *halal* meats and kebabs to delicious vegetarian *tabouleh*. There's also a decent Lebanese wine list. (pranaresorts.com/koh-samui-beach-villas/dining)

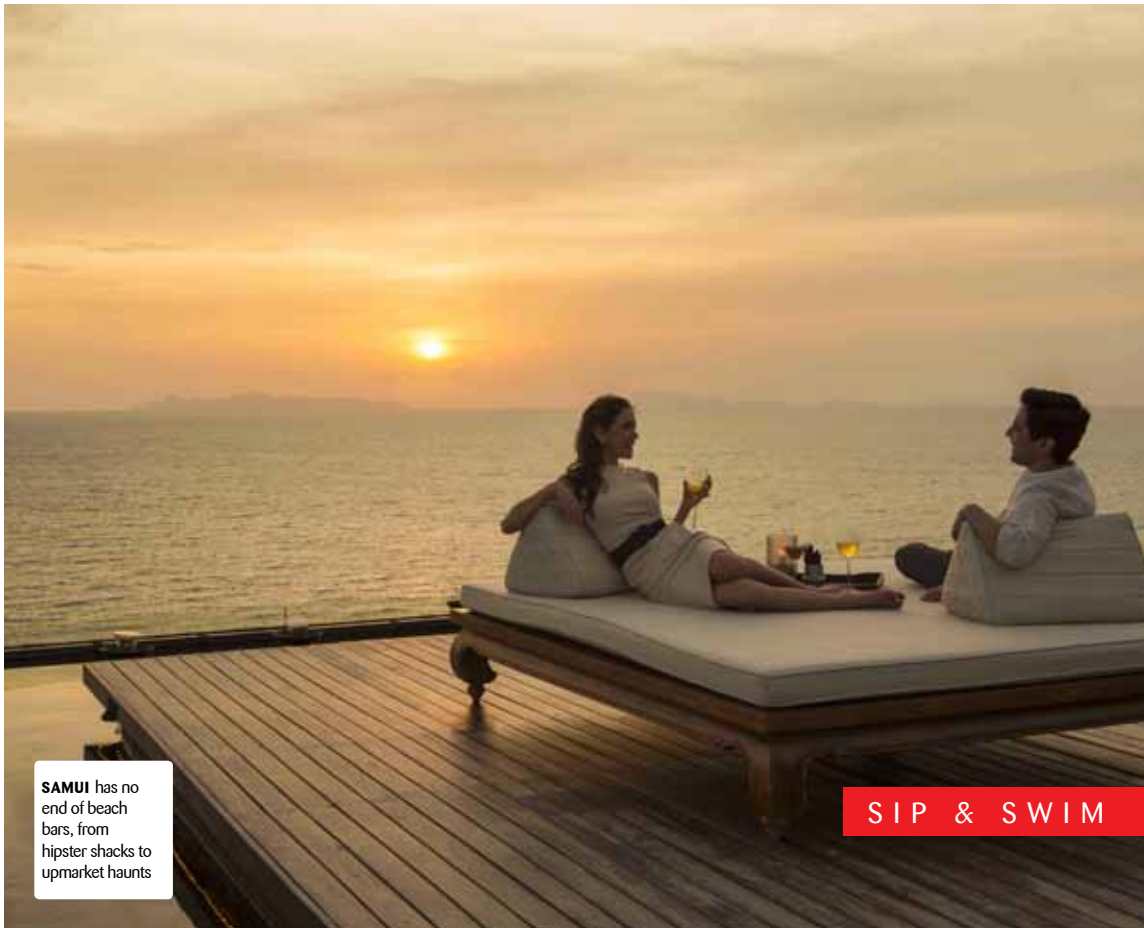
THE SHACK
Book ahead, as The Shack bar and grill is always busy, regardless of the season. This casual eatery is famed for its barbecued cuts and seafood, served to a jazz-and-blues soundtrack. There's also an extensive menu of New and Old World wines. (theshackgrillsamui.com)

KRUA BOPHUT
Enjoy southern Thai food at this eatery located in a vintage house in Fisherman's Village. Eat inside or choose from the small selection tables on the beach. The sound of the lapping waves makes for a memorable dining experience. (kruabophut.com)

ORGASMIC
As the name suggests, this smart, East-meets-West eatery – helmed by Chef Wally Andreini – aims to serve up sensory overload. Located on a private beach with gorgeous sea views at sunset, Orgasmic is an unforgettable spot for a meal. (orgasmic-samui.com)

COUNTRY CODE +66
EXCHANGE RATE
THB30 = US\$1
FREQUENCY
Numerous flights every day to a variety of destinations

TEXT: AMY SHARPEE; IMAGE: BEACH REPUBLIC



SAMUI has no end of beach bars, from hipster shacks to upmarket haunts

SIP & SWIM

Island
odysseys

VISIT KOH NANGUAN

Visit one of the most photographed beaches in the Gulf of Thailand. Koh Nangan is a tiny island off Koh Tao made up of three even tinier islands linked by a sandbar. A haven for snorkellers, it's home to thousands of fish tanks and offers stellar visibility. Ask at your hotel about speedboat tours.

100 DEGREES EAST

Discover the best dive sites in the region with the award-winning 100 Degrees East Samui Dive Team, which is renowned for its excellent service, environmental awareness and for avoiding the crowds. Whether you're new to diving, a seasoned veteran or prefer to give snorkelling a go, all are welcome. (100degreeseast.com)

Koh Samui

Rest Your Head

THE BANYAN TREE

Traditional Thai architecture blends with natural hillside scenery at this top-notch resort. A favourite with honeymooners, The Royal Banyan Pool Villas offer unparalleled comfort, space and style, while also offering panoramic views over sparkling Lamai Bay. (banyantree.com/en/samui)

Top Tables

KARMA SUTRA

Grab a mojito and watch the world go by at Bophut's funky Karma Sutra restaurant and lounge. Enjoy chill-out tunes, tasty cocktails and all the colourful bustle of Bophut's

walking street from the comfort of this boho-chic hangout.

(facebook.com/pages/Karma-Sutra-Samui)

SOI GREEN MANGO

Packed with lively bars and clubs that sell cheap drinks and attract an international party crowd, Soi Green Mango is your classic holiday nightspot. Things start to get really lively around midnight and there's a constant flow of taxis to get you home to your hotel before the sun comes up. The liveliest clubs include Green Mango and the Sweet Soul Café.

AIR BAR

Get some perspective at the

InterContinental Hotel's Air Bar in Baan Taling Ngam. The ideal place to enjoy a sundowner, this open-air watering hole in one of the island's most picturesque locales serves up expansive ocean and mountain views.

(samui.intercontinental.com/air-bar)

CHA CHA MOON

Get your groove on at Cha Cha Moon, where international DJs get the whole place jumping at regular dance bashes. This Bali-style beach club in the heart of Chaweng Beach hosts monthly full-moon parties and boasts a heaving atmosphere every night of the week.

(Chaweng Beach)



ESCAPE from prying eyes with your very own beach cabana at Lamai Beach

SECLUSION

World-class wellness

KAMALAYA

This groundbreaking resort has become a sanctuary for guests looking for more than just a relaxing beach holiday. Combining wellness, detox, holistic and Western medicine, it's a magnet for people looking to recharge, find healing and peace. From weight control to stress relief, sleep issues to health complaints, there's a full team of naturopaths and doctors available to support each individual's programme. Built into a hillside overlooking its own peaceful beach, Kamalaya enjoys an international reputation as an authentic wellness sanctuary with a luxury edge. (kamalaya.com)

Koh Samui

For Kids

COCO SPLASH

Kids of all ages regularly brave the dizzying heights of the water slides at Coco Splash in Lamai. Samui's first waterpark promises a fantastic day out for the entire family, with a mini splash area designed for younger children.

(samuiwaterpark.com)

Stop to Shop

CENTRAL FESTIVAL SAMUI

Following in the footsteps of Thailand's major cities and tourist hubs, Samui sees the grand opening of its first large-scale mall on 29 March. Expect over 200 stores, including Tops Market and Central Department

Store. "Reminiscence of a Southern Lifestyle" is the architectural theme, which draws on influences ranging from the island's Sino-Portuguese heritage to its port and Fisherman's Village.

(centralfestival.co.th)

ORIENTAL LIVING

Planning to take home some Asian antiques? The experts at Oriental Living in Maenam have what it takes to help you find the perfect pieces, whether you'll be displaying them indoors or out. The shop, which works closely with several of the island's luxury hotels, can arrange door-to-door shipping.

(oriental-living.net)

Treat Yourself

SIX SENSES SPA

Step into a peaceful hideaway at Six Senses Spa. The Thai Healing Massage takes aim at the energy lines of the body, known as "sen". Focusing on pressure points allows life energy or "prana" to travel through the body. The private treatment rooms here overlook the ocean. (sixsenses.com/resorts/samui/spa)

MAGNOLIA SPA

Scrub up clean with Magnolia's Total Mineral Package - a 60-minute Dead Sea mineral cream body scrub followed by an exfoliating mud mask.

(magnolia-spa-samui.com)



OCEAN VISTAS
Every villa at Samujana offers uninterrupted sea views

SLEEK RETREAT

Koh Samui

Rest Your Head

SAMUJANA

With his love of hospitality and passion for creating memorable experiences, South African Kurt Berman is a perfect fit as general manager of Samujana luxury villas and residences. Offering guests seclusion, space and a stylish escape in Chong Mon, Samujana has already garnered awards for best villa development in Thailand and South-East Asia. Here, Kurt introduces the project.

HOW DID SAMUJANA COME ABOUT?

It's been an ongoing project for eight years. The owner-developer is an expat in Hong

Kong who was looking for a weekend escape and found land in Samui to build a villa. As more and more friends came, it grew organically into a development of private villas. Samujana wasn't built with a masterplan and only last year was it properly branded.

WHAT MAKES SAMUJANA DIFFERENT?

There are very good five-star resorts and stand-alone villas in Samui but Samujana combines both. For me, Samujana is true luxury. Our guests have the choice, freedom and space to do exactly what they want; they feel like they have their own kingdom. Each villa is unique in

design, character and layout to cater for different experiences and different people.

WHO'S YOUR TYPICAL GUEST?

Most of our guests are expats living in other major Asian cities. We also get a few long-haul guests from the UK and Australia. Samujana is very popular with families and groups of friends or couples as our villas are so spacious and affordable - though we don't allow bachelor parties! We're hosting more weddings and special events and recently opened The Big Lawn - 5 *rai* (8,000m²) of beachfront. (samujana.com)

Top 3
insider
travel tips

1_ WALKING STREET

On Friday nights, head to Fisherman's Village Walking Street. There's great food, shopping and the chance to rub elbows with a veritable who's who of island residents.

2_ SET SAIL

Take a boat trip to Koh Phangan to the north of Samui or to the Five Islands. Ao Thong National Marine Park is a highlight - we're lucky to have it on our doorstep.

3_ EAT & DRINK

Samui is home to everything from quirky beach joints to glamorous cocktail bars. There are more and more quality restaurants opening up.