

The Best of Thailand

Overview

The standard 10 nights Best of Thailand itinerary combines our 6 nights [Similan & Surin Islands itinerary](#) and 4 nights [Southern Thailand itinerary](#) enabling guests to experience the highlights of Thailand scuba diving in the Andaman Sea on a single liveboard trip.

7 or 8 nights itineraries will cover the same general areas but spend less time in the Similans & Surin Islands and *may exclude Koh Lipe*.

Occasionally a 10 nights itinerary may be changed on our schedules to run as consecutive 4 nights Southern Thailand and 6 nights Similan & Surin Islands (or vice versa) to accommodate guests who are unable to do the full 10 nights. ***This does not impact the areas visited or the number of dives*** that are normally possible on the full 10 nights itinerary; it simply means that guests can embark or disembark in Chalong while others can relax on board or go ashore for an organised tour of some of Phuket's attractions.

All Safety and dive briefings are conducted in English. If you, or any of your group, do not speak or fully understand English, please let us know before you travel.

Embarkation & Disembarkation Transfers

There are different embarkation and disembarkation times and locations for this itinerary which alternate from one trip to the next and determine the route the vessel takes. Please check your specific departure dates and booking details and the [itinerary details](#) below to confirm the applicable start and end points and times for your trip.

A shared transfer from local hotels to the pier is provided free of charge on embarkation day.

Additionally, we offer a complimentary transfer from Phuket Airport on embarkation day with one pick-up time only, which depends on the embarkation location. Transfer is also provided free of charge upon disembarkation to local hotels or Phuket Airport.

Diving Information

Diving conditions in the Andaman Sea around Thailand are generally suitable for all levels of divers. However, due to depths and changeable currents, some of the dives offered on this itinerary may be challenging or unsuitable for inexperienced divers or those with entry-level certifications.

Minimum dive certification and experience:

We recommend divers have **PADI Advanced Open Water certification* or equivalent**, with a **minimum of 10 logged dives and experience in strong currents**.

*PADI Advanced Open Water Course can usually be completed on board but needs to be pre-booked, and requires students to complete PADI e-learning before their trip starts.

- All diving guests must dive with a guide.
- Gloves, pointers and selfie sticks are prohibited at some dive sites.
- **To dive [Hin Daeng](#) or [King Cruiser Wreck](#) divers must have Advanced certification or show proof of Deep Diver training** otherwise, they must participate in an Adventure Deep Dive as part of the trip.
- Divers participating in **Deep dives** (beyond 18 metres) or **Sunset/Night dives must have Advanced Certification and show proof of logged dives** within that field, *or participate in an Adventure Deep Dive or Adventure Night dive* as part of the trip.

Guests who do not fulfil the minimum certification and experience requirements, or who the crew feel do not have sufficient skills or experience to dive safely in certain conditions may be denied participation in some or all dives.

All divers must have insurance which covers scuba diving activities and depths beyond 18 metres as well as emergency evacuation, recompression treatment and hospital costs.

Itinerary Details

Participation in this liveaboard itinerary is subject to acceptance of our Terms & Conditions as outlined here: www.masterliveboards.com/terms-conditions.

Marine & Port Fees: (to be paid on board)

- Divers: 115 USD per person
- Non-divers: 70 USD per person

This itinerary involves some long-distance travel and, whilst we endeavour to ensure the number of scheduled dives is fulfilled, weather and sea conditions can affect the boat's ability to reach or remain at a specific area and may impact the number of dives possible.

Number of scheduled dives:

- 10 nights: Up to 33
- 8 nights: Up to 26

The day-to-day itinerary and diving schedule depend on the itinerary route, as outlined on the following page. Typically, each full diving day is scheduled as follows:

- Light Breakfast followed by a briefing and dive 1
- Full Breakfast, relaxation followed by a briefing and dive 2
- Lunch, relaxation followed by a briefing and dive 3
- Snacks and relaxation followed by a briefing and dive 4 (where possible)
- Dinner

10 night Itineraries

The disembarkation time for 10 night itineraries depends on the itinerary route, as detailed below.

PLEASE NOTE: On the day when the vessel transitions between North and South, the vessel will stop for a few hours at Chalong to restock. This is a normal part of the 10 night itinerary and does not affect the total number of dives on either route.

While the boat is in Chalong, guests will be offered the opportunity to go ashore and visit some of the local attractions, or are welcome to stay on board and relax.

Chalong to Thap Lamu (South-North)

Itineraries starting from Chalong and ending at Thap Lamu will do 4 nights Southern Thailand followed by 6 nights Similans and Surin Islands, as follows:

- **Embarkation:** Chalong Pier, Phuket at 19:00
- **Disembarkation:** Thap Lamu Pier, Khao Lak at 10:00
- **Day 1: Embarkation** is followed by introductions, safety briefings, dinner and overnight cruising to Koh Haa.
Days 2-4: South Andamans - Up to 4 dives per day
- **Day 5:** Two morning dives then **transition** north via Chalong
Days 6-9: Similan & Surin Islands - Up to 4 dives per day
- **Day 10:** Two morning and one afternoon dive** before commencing the cruise to Thap Lamu port.
- **Day 11:** Breakfast on board followed by **disembarkation between 09:30 and 10:00**

Thap Lamu to Chalong (North-South)

Itineraries starting from Thap Lamu and ending in Chalong will do 6 nights Similans & Surin Islands before heading South for 4 nights, as follows.

- **Embarkation:** Thap Lamu Pier, Khao Lak at 19:00
- **Disembarkation:** Chalong Pier, Phuket at 14:00
- **Day 1: Embarkation** is followed by introductions, safety briefings, dinner and cruising overnight to Similans National Park.
- **Days 2-6:** Similan and Surin Islands - Up to 4 dives per day.
- **Day 7:** No diving - **transition** south via Chalong
- **Days 8-10:** South Andamans - Up to 4 dives per day
- **Day 11:** Two morning dives** before cruising to Chalong for **disembarkation at 14:00**

** We kindly request guests departing on flights from Phuket on the day of disembarkation, or the day after ensure they leave 24 hours between their final dive and flight departure.

8 nights Itineraries

- **Embarkation Time: 19:00**
- **Disembarkation Time: 10:00** *irrespective of disembarkation location*

The vessel does not stop in Chalong as it transitions between North and South on 8 nights itineraries.

Chalong to Thap Lamu (South-North)

Itineraries starting from Chalong and ending at Thap Lamu will do 4 nights Southern Thailand followed by 4 nights Similans and Surin Islands, as follows:

- **Embarkation:** Chalong Pier, Phuket at 19:00
- **Disembarkation:** Thap Lamu Pier, Khao Lak at 10:00
- **Day 1: Embarkation** is followed by introductions, safety briefings, dinner and overnight cruising to Koh Haa.
- **Days 2-4:** South Andamans - Up to 4 dives per day
- **Day 5-7:** Similan & Surin Islands - Up to 4 dives
- **Day 8:** Two morning and one afternoon dive before cruising to Thap Lamu.
- **Day 9:** Breakfast on board followed by **disembarkation between 09:30 and 10:00**

Thap Lamu to Chalong (North-South)

Itineraries starting from Thap Lamu and ending in Chalong will do 4 nights Similans & Surin Islands before heading South for 4 nights, as follows.

- **Embarkation:** Thap Lamu Pier, Khao Lak at 19:00
- **Disembarkation:** Chalong Pier, Phuket at 10:00
- **Day 1: Embarkation** is followed by introductions, safety briefings, dinner and cruising overnight to Similans National Park.
- **Days 2-5:** Similan and Surin Islands - Up to 4 dives per day
- **Days 6-7:** South Andamans - Up to 4 dives per day
- **Day 8:** Two morning and one afternoon dive before commencing the cruise to Chalong.
- **Day 9:** Breakfast on board, followed by **disembarkation between 09:30 and 10:00**

We kindly request that guests departing on flights from Phuket on the day of disembarkation ensure they leave 24 hours between their final dive and flight departure.

While we wish to show you the very best diving possible, the safety of all on board remains paramount throughout each itinerary. The following is an overview of dive sites we may visit during the Best of Thailand liveaboard itinerary.

Disclaimer: This information is only a general indication of the areas covered and some of the possible dive sites; *the inclusion of specifically named sites is not guaranteed.* Various factors determine which sites are selected to dive on each trip, including itinerary duration, sea and weather conditions and restrictions that may be imposed, at short notice, by the Thai Marine Park authorities.

Where itinerary duration and logistics permit, we may offer diving at alternative sites if we are unable to reach or remain at some of the locations mentioned below.

South Andamans

Shark Point and Anemone Reef

30 kilometres to the east of Chalong, these pinnacles are part of the same reef system and are only a very short distance apart from each other. Both sites are covered with colourful soft corals and anemones with a variety of fish to suit all divers; from barracuda to seahorses and, for the lucky ones, the iconic leopard shark.

King Cruiser

Susceptible to strong currents and reduced visibility, this can be a challenging dive at times and is only suitable for those with advanced, or deep diver training and experience in similar conditions.

'The Cruiser' was a car ferry that used to travel between Phi Phi and Phuket until, in 1997, 'she' hit Anemone Reef and sank a short distance away. No lives were lost, but divers were left with a great wreck dive! Although now largely broken up, she is covered with soft corals and hosts abundant marine life including several large schools of snapper. The wreck ranges in depth from the wheelhouse at 16 metres to the seabed at 30-33 metres, with the most interesting locations being between 20 and 26 metres.

Koh Doc Mai

To the west of Shark Point, Koh Doc Mai is a small limestone island located 20 kilometres east of Chalong Bay. Normally diving here will be focused along one side of the island depending on currents and waves although, if conditions are right, it is possible to circumnavigate the entire island in a single dive. The east side forms a steep wall from 5 metres to just over 25 metres, covered in soft corals, whip corals and sea fans, and features caves and overhangs where a host of delights can be discovered. The western side is a sloping reef with large beds of hard corals and anemones.

Koh Haa National Park

Possibly some of the most underrated diving in the whole of Thailand, Moo Koh Haa (meaning Five Islands) is part of Ko Lanta National Marine Park. Sitting almost halfway between Hin Daeng and Mu Ko Phi Phi, while they may not be much to look at above water, beneath the surface these amazing islands offer pinnacles, walls, boulders, caverns, and swim-throughs. There are a variety of dive sites around Ko Haa but the highlights are **Ko Haa Lagoon**, **Ko Haa Neua (north island)** and **Ko Haa Yai (large island)**.

Ko Haa Lagoon is ideal for night dives, courses, and snorkelling, while the areas known as **The Chimney** and **The Cathedral** offer things you cannot see on other Thailand liveaboard itineraries with caverns, swim-throughs and chambers being some of the features of the sites. Ko Haa has varied marine life too, with ornate ghost pipefish, moray eels, octopus, hawksbill turtles, sea horses, marble rays, and sometimes even leopard sharks.

Hin Daeng & Hin Muang

Translating as Red Rock and Purple Rock, with their names derived from the colour of the corals they host, these two sites are isolated pinnacles in open ocean reaching down to over 70 metres and are best known for manta rays and whale shark encounters. Regardless of whether these behemoths put in an appearance, the sites offer plenty of other marine life, including schooling rainbow runners and snappers, barracudas, groupers, fusiliers, bluefin trevally, giant moray eels and pharaoh cuttlefish as well as fields of Magnificent Anemones, walls of Hemprics soft corals and huge Gorgonian sea fans.

Koh Lipe

This beautiful, pristine island near Langkawi Island and the Malaysian border harbours some amazing dive sites such as **Stonehenge** and **8 Mile Rock**. As these locations are very exposed, **strong currents are common** and should be expected which means diving either site depends on weather and sea conditions and is not always possible. However, there are plenty of other equally stunning ones to choose from around Koh Lipe.

Stonehenge is a vibrant and lively pinnacle densely covered in soft corals. Giant granite stones protruding from the sandy seabed are what earned this site its name and add to the overall appeal of this colourful dive. Amongst the crevices and channels created by the rock formations, you can find a variety of moray eels, shrimps, crabs and nudibranchs as well as the masters of disguise - stonefish and scorpionfish. Look into the blue and you are likely to see schools of barracudas, trevallies and yellow snappers.

8 Mile Rock is a world-class dive site consisting of several submerged pinnacles located about 8 nautical miles (15 kilometres) south of Koh Lipe. Many large pelagics can usually be spotted cruising by - devil rays, mantas and eagle rays are among the usual suspects; others include tuna, mackerel, barracuda and trevallies.

Rising from the 45+ metres deep ocean floor to 15 metres below the surface, the pinnacles are a soft coral paradise, densely covered with soft coral trees in an array of colours. A variety of reef fish species can be found in large numbers including fusiliers and snappers. Other highlights include leopard sharks, big groupers and, if you are really lucky, you may even see a whale shark (or several).

Similan Islands National Park

Established as a national park in 1982 and originally comprising nine islands which, more often than not, are referred to as Islands 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9 rather than their Thai names, Mu Koh Similan National Park boundaries were extended in 2014 to encompass Koh Bon and Koh Tachai creating a protected area which covers over 140 square kilometres.

Above water, the islands offer stunningly beautiful white sandy beaches with small forested areas and interesting rock formations. Under the surface, the coral gardens, bommies and overall topography are just as stunning and wonderful to dive. You may see Leopard sharks, blue spotted stingrays, giant morays, clown triggerfish, rabbit fish, scorpion fish, snappers, emperor fish, giant trevally and angelfish. As we cruise through the Similans, we will dive some of the following sites; **Boulder City, Sharkfin Reef, Anita's Reef and Three Trees**.

Elephant Head Rock, visible from the surface, is the biggest pinnacle in the Similans and has some fantastic swim-throughs. White tip reef sharks, batfish, trevally and barracuda can often be seen on the perimeter of the boulders. If you look closely in the cracks and amongst the rubble you can see smashing mantis shrimp, porcelain crab, moray eels and cleaner shrimp.

There are also sites dominated by huge granite boulders such as **Deep Six**, **Christmas Point**, and **North Point** where you can see white tip reef sharks, schooling giant trevally, and schools of neon fusiliers.

Koh Bon

Koh Bon is usually the most likely place to see manta rays although their presence is never guaranteed. However, common sightings include bluefin trevally, great barracudas, Napoleon wrasse, sweetlips, octopus, giant moray eels, fire dart gobies, spiny lobsters and many types of nudibranchs. The dive sites at Koh Bon vary from pinnacles and walls to gently sloping reefs featuring submerged boulders and beautiful coral gardens. The **West Ridge** can be an adrenaline-filled drift dive with amazing views, while the **North Ridge** is a gentler experience over expanses of hard corals.

Koh Tachai

This island is famous for its pinnacle dive site, known by many as **Twin Peaks**, as well as more relaxed reef diving on the **North Reef** and **South Reef**. Normally, turtles, barracuda, pipefish, and nudibranchs can be found here. There is also a chance to see bigger species in this area like manta rays and whale sharks, especially from late January until April.

Surin Islands National Park

Located 100 kilometres north of the Similan Islands, and covering an area of roughly 135 square kilometres, Mu Koh Surin National Park encompasses a cluster of 5 islands: Koh Surin Nuea, Koh Surin Tai, Koh Ri, Koh Kai (Ko Torinla) and Koh Klang.

The topside scenery of Koh Surin, with evergreen forests, mangroves, and small beaches, surpasses even that of the picturesque Similan Islands. Underwater, the reefs of Surin have some of the greatest hard coral diversity in Thailand. Across sites like **Torinla Pinnacle**, **Hin Kong**, and **Turtle Ledges** you are likely to see Napoleon wrasse, yellow-masked angelfish, bumphead parrotfish, tomato anemonefish and barramundi, as well as lots of turtles that still come ashore in this area to lay their eggs.

[Richelieu Rock](#)

Many people believe this limestone pinnacle was discovered by Jacques Cousteau and named by him after Cardinal Richelieu due to the similarity in the colour of his gown and the gorgeous reddish-purple soft corals which cover much of it. However, the pinnacle is mentioned in official early 1900s Navy maps, so it is far more likely that it was named after Danish-born Andreas du Plessis de Richelieu, a late nineteenth-century Royal Thai Navy commander. Barely breaking the surface at low tide, this horseshoe-shaped outcropping slopes steeply to a sandy bottom at 18 to 35 metres (60-120 ft) and offers great diversity for such a small and isolated spot. The topography offers excellent multi-level diving and, because it's a high-profile reef, there are always sheltered areas to hide from currents.

The marine life is prolific and includes amongst, many other things, pharaoh cuttlefish, large octopi, all 5 varieties of Andaman Sea anemone fish, a variety of moray eels, ornate ghost pipefish, smashing mantis shrimps, harlequin shrimps, tiger tail seahorses, Spanish mackerel, frogfish, many schooling snappers and occasional sightings of manta rays and whale sharks.

Khao Lak Wrecks

If conditions and timing are favourable there is a choice of easily diveable wrecks between the Similan Islands and the port of Tap Lamu. **The Boonsung** and **The Premchai** are old tin miners that were sunk in the 1990s and are a treat for underwater photographers as well as lovers of life of all kinds. Sitting at a depth of 18 metres, the wrecks are covered in nudibranchs and various kinds of shrimps. Many honeycomb morays have also made these wrecks their home and there are usually vast numbers of schooling fish as well as occasional sightings of rays and sharks.

Sea Chart 1 is a slightly more challenging dive and, with her starboard side resting on the seabed at a depth of 40 metres and her port side at 24 metres, is only suitable for divers with Advanced Open Water certification. Sunk during a storm in 2009 with a full load of teak, she is relatively new but already hosts an abundance of schooling fish.

Top Side

Along the route, there are some incredible views from the boat including verdant forests, deserted beaches, and limestone karsts rising majestically from the ocean. There will be several opportunities to leave the boat and take a walk on some of the islands.

A walk up the trail to Sail Rock on Koh Similan (Similans National Park Island #8) is definitely time well spent! You can even be entertained by marine life while relaxing on board Thailand Master as dolphins cruising along with the boat are not unusual and, occasionally, pilot whales are also seen.

In the Surin Islands, you may also have the opportunity to visit a Moken village. Often referred to as sea gypsies, The Moken people are a remarkable indigenous group who have taken up permanent residence on one of the islands. Originating from Myanmar's Mergui Archipelago, and traditionally living a mostly nomadic existence on their Kabang houseboats, the Mokens' deep-rooted knowledge and respect of the sea allow them a simplistic way of life sustained by the flora and fauna of their surroundings.

Should you have any questions concerning the dive sites or whether this itinerary is suitable for your experience level, please contact our reservations team dive@masterliveboards.com.