

# The Similan and Surin Islands, Thailand

## Overview

Located in the Andaman Sea off the west coast of Southern Thailand, The Similan and Surin Islands offer some of the finest diving the country has to offer. Both groups of islands are national marine parks and, as such, are protected areas which boast world-renowned stunning reefs and abundant marine life.

### Embarkation & Disembarkation & Transfers

There are different embarkation and disembarkation locations and times for this itinerary which alternate from one trip to the next and are also dictated by the itinerary duration. Please check your specific departure dates when you make your booking to confirm the applicable start and end points and times.

#### 4 Nights Itinerary

- **Embarkation Point:** Thap Lamu Pier, Khao Lak
- **Disembarkation Point:** Thap Lamu Pier, Khao Lak

#### 6 Nights Itinerary

- **Embarkation Point:** Chalong Pier, Phuket
- **Disembarkation Point:** Thap Lamu Pier, Khao Lak

**OR**

- **Embarkation Point:** Thap Lamu Pier, Khao Lak
- **Disembarkation Point:** Chalong Pier, Phuket

**Embarkation time:** 19:00 for all itineraries

**Disembarkation times:**

4 night itinerary - 14:00

6 night itinerary - 10:00

**PLEASE NOTE:** Some itineraries may embark or disembark at different locations or times than the ones noted above. *Please check schedules and booking details carefully for your specific departure dates.*

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 to local hotels or Phuket Airport at the designated disembarkation time only.

Transfers from and to hotels and resorts outside of the local area or at other times can usually be arranged for an additional charge.

## Diving Information

Diving conditions in and around the Similan and Surin Islands are mostly suitable for all diver certification levels. However, due to depths and changeable currents, some of the dives offered may be challenging or unsuitable for divers with entry-level certifications and those who have not dived in similar conditions before.

### Minimum dive certification and experience:

To get the most out of diving in The Similans, 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.

*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 advised not to participate in some or all dives.*

It is mandatory for all divers to 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.masterliveaboards.com/terms-conditions](http://www.masterliveaboards.com/terms-conditions).

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

- 4 nights: 50 USD per person
- 6 nights: 65 USD per person
- Non-divers 35 USD per person, regardless of itinerary duration.

This itinerary involves some long-distance travel and, while we endeavour to ensure the number of planned dives is fulfilled, bad weather and sea conditions can affect the vessel's ability to reach some locations in good time and may impact the number of dives possible.

The following is an example of the typical day-to-day planning.

*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 at the time of booking.*

## 4 Night itinerary

**Number of scheduled dives:** Up to 14

**Day 1:** Embarkation at 19:00 followed by briefings and dinner.

**Days 2-4:** Your Cruise Director will schedule up to 4 dives per day; 3 day dives and a sunset or night dive. A typical diving day is scheduled as follows:

- Light Breakfast followed by a briefing and Dive 1
- Full Breakfast, relaxation followed by briefing and Dive 2
- Lunch, relaxation followed by briefing and Dive 3
- Snack
- Briefing for Dive 4
- Dinner

**Day 5:** Two morning dives before the vessel commences the cruise to port for disembarkation no later than 14:00. (Guests who are flying out of Phuket on the day of disembarkation will not be permitted to dive)

## 6 night itinerary

**Number of scheduled dives:** Up to 19

**Day 1:** Embarkation at 19:00 followed by briefings and dinner.

**Days 2-5:** Your Cruise Director will schedule up to 4 dives per day; 3 day dives and a sunset or night dive. A typical diving day is scheduled as follows:

- Light Breakfast followed by a briefing and Dive 1
- Full Breakfast, relaxation followed by briefing and Dive 2
- Lunch, relaxation followed by briefing and Dive 3
- Snack
- Briefing for Dive 4
- Dinner

**Day 6:** Up to 3 dives\* (Two morning dives and one after lunch) before the vessel commences its cruise to the disembarkation harbour.

**Day 7:** Breakfast on board followed by disembarkation at 10:00.

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

Guests looking to experience the absolute '[Best of Thailand](#)' can combine a 6 night Similan and Surin Islands itinerary on Thailand Master with a 4 night [Southern Thailand itinerary](#) which allows up to 33 dives while spending 10 nights on board.

While we wish to show you the 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 Similan & Surin Islands liveboard 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 sea and weather conditions, how many other vessels are at a particular location, and restrictions that may be imposed, at short notice, by the Thai Marine Park authorities. In the unlikely event we are unable to reach a specified area we will offer diving at alternative locations.

## 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, with evergreen forests, mangroves, and small beaches, surpasses even that of the picturesque Similan Islands. Underwater, the reefs of the Surin Islands have some of the greatest hard coral diversity in Thailand. Across sites like **Torinla Pinnacle**, **Hin Kong**, and **Turtle Ledge** 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. Because of the remoteness, not many day boats visit these islands so you will usually be able to enjoy the dive sites without sharing them with hordes of day trippers.

### [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 (4 night itineraries only)

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 giant granite boulders 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.

On 6 night itineraries, we usually also visit one of the Moken villages in the Surin Islands, although this depends on weather and sea conditions, and therefore not guaranteed.

Known locally as Chao Lay, or sea gypsies, the Moken people are an ethnic minority originating from the Mergui Archipelago in Myanmar. Traditionally living nomadic, sea-faring lives, small groups have settled on various islands in the region but continue to maintain their culture and traditions.

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](mailto:dive@masterliveboards.com) who will be pleased to assist and advise you.