



# Qantas The Australian Way June, 2010

Page: 91  
Section: General News  
Region: National, AU  
Circulation: 130000  
Type: Magazines Lifestyle  
Size: 2,242.95 sq.cms.



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THAILAND

**Recharge** Health, fitness & the latest short breaks.

WORDS ANNA ROBINSON & NATALIE DOHERTY

# THE THAI IS CAST

Thailand offers exotic sights, fine food, luxury accommodation and peerless pampering.

Australians Anna Robinson and Natalie Doherty first visited Thailand in 2004. It was the beginning of a love affair that led to the formation of Take Us To Thailand ([www.takeustothailand.com](http://www.takeustothailand.com)), a boutique operation that enabled the two to share their local friendships and expertise. From Bangkok to Phuket and the islands beyond, here is their insider selection of where to stay.

The Edge Restaurant,  
The Sarojin, Phang Nga

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Anantara Phuket



Sri Panwa Estate



The Peninsula

## BANGKOK

### The Peninsula

333 Charoennakorn Road,  
Klongton-sai, Klongsaan,  
Bangkok. (02) 861 2888.  
[www.peninsula.com](http://www.peninsula.com)

With its superb service, smart rooms and quality furnishings, The Peninsula is the ultimate city escape, with TVs on the wall above the bath and lounge areas in every room with views over the busy Chao Phraya River. The best poolside service in Thailand is complemented by the Chinese cuisine at Mei Jiang restaurant. Enjoy breakfast outdoors watching the cargo boat parade on the river and spend a lazy afternoon in a sala (pavilion) by the pool. From THB8600 (\$295) with breakfast.

### Sukhothai

13/3 South Sathorn Road,  
Bangkok. (02) 344 8888.  
[www.sukhothaihotel.com](http://www.sukhothaihotel.com)

Sukhothai, a serene haven in Bangkok's bustling heart, embodies classic Thai design in spacious grounds. Step out of your tuk-tuk, car or taxi to white-suited Thai staff welcoming you by name, fully briefed on the day's agenda. Soak in the sumptuous interiors swathed in Jim Thompson silk drapes and enjoy silver-service room service or Sukhothai's Sunday brunch.

Duck out for curry and chilled beer at nearby Suan Lum night bazaar or defy gravity at Vertigo bar, an open-air hot spot on the 61st floor of the neighbouring Banyan Tree Hotel. From THB6900 (\$237) with breakfast.

### Dream

10 Sukhumvit Soi 15,  
Bangkok. (02) 254 8500.  
[www.dreamblkk.com](http://www.dreamblkk.com)

Located in Sukhumvit, Bangkok's urban epicentre, Dream is perfect as an affordable option that doesn't compromise style or service. Well connected to the rest of the city via sky train, steps away from beauty salons, food courts and great street shopping, Dream is a good base from which to explore Bangkok. From (THB2170) \$75 with breakfast.

## AND BEYOND...

### Sri Panwa Estate

88 Moo 8 Sakdidej Road,  
Tambon Vichit, Phuket.  
(07) 637 1000.  
[www.sripanwa.com](http://www.sripanwa.com)

Along with spectacular views, all villas have spacious infinity pools, king-sized day beds and outdoor jacuzzis – absolute privacy with superb service. Picnic on a nearby island or book in for a Thai massage. Then, perhaps, a sunset swim at Baba Pool Club followed by a lycheetini cocktail. From THB15,750 (\$541) with breakfast.

### Anantara Phuket

888 Moo 3, Tumbon Mai Khao,  
Phuket. (07) 633 6100.  
[www.phuket.anantara.com](http://www.phuket.anantara.com)  
Anantara Phuket is a five-star

resort on the northern Mai Khao beach with the best beachfront pool on Phuket. Enjoy barefoot cocktails and gourmet canapes in the pool's lounge area – with day beds, underwater music, a sunken pool bar, huge jacuzzi and cool Kenkon furniture. From THB20,000 (\$687) with breakfast.

### The Sarojin

60 Moo 2, Kuikak,  
Takuapa, Phang Nga.  
(07) 642 7900. [thesarojin.com](http://thesarojin.com)

To relax in seclusion (no children under 12) on a perfect beach year-round, head to The Sarojin at Khao Lak, 90 minutes' drive north from Phuket airport. Sarojin's luxury tours to the Similan Islands – Thailand's best diving and snorkelling spot – include an open bar and gourmet lunch. >

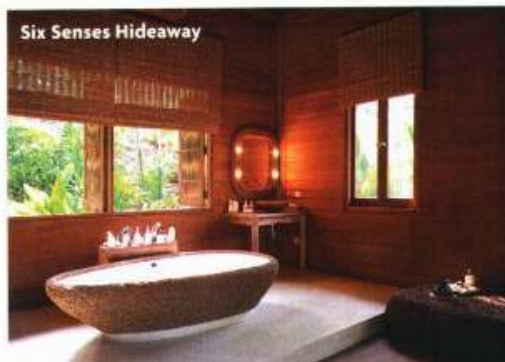
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**The Library: gaze at the horizon from the vermillion-tiled pool or relax amid elegant minimalism (left and below)**



Take cooking classes at the local market or visit the nearby rainforest. From THB13,500 (\$463).

**Sala Samui Resort & Spa**

10/9 Moo 5, Baan Plai Lam Bo Phut, Koh Samui Suratthani. (07) 724 5888.

[www.salasamui.com](http://www.salasamui.com)

**Sala Phuket Resort & Spa**

333 Moo 3, Mai Khao Beach, Thalang District, Phuket. (07) 633 8888.

[www.salaphuket.com](http://www.salaphuket.com)

Sala Samui and Sala Phuket are stylish boutique resorts in the north of Koh Samui and Phuket. Both have Australian managers and offer personalised Thai hospitality in relaxed beachfront settings, including massage therapists at their Sala Spas, great international cuisine at beachfront restaurants and a car fleet to transfer you

anywhere on the island. From THB6300 (\$216).

**The Library**

14/1 Moo 2, Bo Phut, Koh Samui, Suratthani. (07) 742 2767. [thelibrary.co.th](http://thelibrary.co.th)

A boutique hotel set between busy Chaweng Road and the best stretch of Chaweng Beach, The Library is a quiet haven with only 26 suites in the heart of Samui. It's all about the fabulous swimming pool overlooking the beach and surrounded by oversized beanbags. The Page beachfront restaurant is one of the best on Samui, often hosting guest chefs. From THB11,340 (\$389) with breakfast in bed.

**Rayavadee**

214 Moo 2, Tambon Ao-Nang, Amphoe Muang, Krabi. (07) 562 0740. [www.rayavadee.com](http://www.rayavadee.com)  
You can't reach this resort on the tip of Krabi's Railay Bay by road.

Staff in sailor suits will collect you in a speedboat for the trip to Railay Beach, where picturesque limestone islands jut out of the green ocean. Rayavadee's grounds are impeccably landscaped and the property is set on three idyllic beaches. The beachside swimming pool is at the foot of high limestone cliffs, and you can play tennis on the jungle-side court. From THB19,400 (\$666) with breakfast and airport transfers.

**Six Senses Hideaway Yao Noi**

56 Moo 5, Tambol Koh Yao Noi, Amphur Koh Yao, Phang Nga. (07) 641 8500. [www.sixsenses.com](http://www.sixsenses.com)  
Only 90 minutes west of Phuket

Airport, this resort is hidden in lush forest with some of the best views you'll ever see from bed – or from a yoga deck. All villas have private pools and the Six Senses Spa is on site. And, if the international chef's creations and view of limestone islands in the distance aren't enough, there's also an in-house deli, bakery and ice-cream shop. From THB21,440 (\$736) with breakfast.

**Six Senses Destination Spa Phuket**

32 Moo 5, Tambol Paklok, Amphur Thalang, Phuket. (07) 637 1400. [www.sixsenses.com](http://www.sixsenses.com)  
Forget bland diets and winter boot camps – head to Thailand >

PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY: KAITIPONG PANCHEE/SIX SENSES RESORTS & SPA; THE LIBRARY



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to do mind, body and soul a favour in a luxurious tropical setting with knockout, health-giving food on secluded Naka Yai Island, 30 minutes west of Phuket airport. Destination Spa combines beachfront pool villas with wellness featuring customised Chinese/Thai/Indian/Indonesian spa treatments, jungle gym, resident health experts and innovative "fishetarian" and raw-food cuisine. From THB21,440 (\$736) per night.

#### **Rasananda**

5/5 Moo 5, Thong Nai Pan Noi Beach, Baan Tai, Koh Phangan, Suratthani. (07) 723 9555. [www.rasananda.com](http://www.rasananda.com)  
Koh Phangan, a half-hour speedboat ride north from Koh Samui, has stepped up in the luxury game since this all pool-villa resort arrived. There's a beautiful clear-

water beach with fine white sand and great surf, a yoga platform and day spa in the jungle behind the resort, and speedboat tours to nearby islands for snorkelling. Bernd from popular Koh Samui restaurant Ocean 11 ([www.o11s.com](http://www.o11s.com)) oversees the resort, so expect excellent food. From THB19,800 (\$680) with breakfast.

#### **Ultimate beach houses**

Holiday at a private luxury beach villa complete with a Thai chef. Take the family to **Ban Suriya** ([fabulouslocations.com](http://fabulouslocations.com)) and **The Cove** on Koh Samui ([www.thecovesamui.com](http://www.thecovesamui.com)), with children's playrooms, pools, tree houses and outdoor cinemas. **Baan Kilee** ([chaitalay.com](http://chaitalay.com)) on Samui and **Villa Chan Grajang** ([villachangrajang.com](http://villachangrajang.com)) on Phuket offer upscale luxury with great views. To enjoy the **Fisherman's Village** in Bophut, Samui, try Elle Macpherson's home away from home at **Villa M** ([villamsamui.com](http://villamsamui.com)). **The Headland** ([www.theheadlandsamui.com](http://www.theheadlandsamui.com)) on Samui is the ideal secluded getaway, or gather a group and rent all eight houses at **Miskawaan** ([miskawaan.com](http://miskawaan.com)) on Maenam Beach for the privacy of home, service of a five-star resort and meals prepared fresh from the market daily. 

 For airfares call **Qantas on 13 13 13** or visit [qantas.com](http://qantas.com)  
For holiday packages to Thailand call **Qantas Holidays on 13 14 15.**

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[QANTAS.COM/TRAVELINSIDER](http://QANTAS.COM/TRAVELINSIDER) 