



# THE SAROJIN

## PRESS ARTICLES

FEBRUARY 2014



# VACATIONS & TRAVEL February 2014



## getaway WITH A "K"

— BY JOHN BORTHWICK —

*Thailand's Krabi, Khanom and Khao Lak. If you're "over" mass tourism magnets like Koh Samui, Phuket and Pattaya, try this trio of impeccable Thai hideaways — coincidentally, all commencing with "K".*

Some eight million tourists descend on Phuket each year, so it's no surprise that when I find myself stuck there in a Patong traffic jam that could rival one of Bangkok's best, and with the local transport mafia charging me an arm, leg and toe for the privilege, I reach for the map. Goodbye, Paradise-gone-parking-lot and hello to a trio of fine Thai beach retreats - Khao Lak, Khanom and Krabi.

### KHAO LAK, LACKING NOTHING

"Hotel years are like dog years," jokes David Koegelenberg, manager of Khao Lak's Sarojin Resort, as we sample his wine cellar - awarded "Thailand's Best Wine List" in 2012. "One hotel year equates to seven human ones," Dawid explains, but somehow he doesn't look at all stressed about having spent 21 hotel years beside this balmy, untrammeled stretch of

Andaman beachfront, some 100 km north of Phuket in Phang Nga Province.

"Think of The Sarojin as though you're in a friend's estate," he says next day as we breakfast beside the rolling lawns of the 56-room resort. I take his advice but eventually have to tear myself away from the Sarojin's scrumptious "all-day breakfast" before I spend, well, all day at it. A dip in the warm Andaman waves follows. Then a massage and, much later, a feast of marinated prawns, chilli beef and pomelo salad, plus a rare Argentine Torrontes white wine.

"We explain to new resort developers that our success here at Khao Lak is based on peace and quiet, nature and relaxation," says Praprut Khorpetch, managing director of Khao Lak's seafront Laguna Resort. The policy has worked well and, as a result, when I travel Khao Lak's 25-km shoreline I find no hooning jet-skis, parasailing speedboats or hectares of



sit just 60 km offshore. With superb snorkelling and diving, plus prolific sea-life and stunning visibility, a day-trip to at least one of them is a must.

The tsunami of 2004 hit Khao Lak hard but, other than a large patrol boat that washed-up two kilometres inland (and remains there as a monument), there is little evidence of the disaster. The township is an unremarkable work-in-progress of mini-marts, tailors ("Johnny Armani" and the like), small restaurants and dive shops. Meanwhile, Khao Lak's shoreline still looks much as it did a decade ago - a slumbering zone of palms, sea-pines and low-rise resorts. It remains a favourite with honeymooners, long-stay Scandinavians and others like me, getting away from all the others who are getting away from it all.



### BEACH BREAKS

Clockwise from above: Rayaverdee charm; Khanom River; Private dining at Sarojin; Raitaly Villa at Rayavadee  
Opening spread: Aava Resort & Spa on Khanom

## ON THE ROCKS

Below: View over Nammao and Railay beaches

Right: Pool service at Aava Resort



formidable phalli have been left as hopeful offerings to this local fertility deity.

Rayavadee is a well-established retreat – “mature luxury” might be the term – that has been on this spectacular shore since the 1980s, and is ever evolving. Today its tropical gardens are a maze of (sometimes baffling) paths that lead to 102 pavilion suites and villas. My two-storey deluxe pavilion is so well endowed with sofas, a desk, screens, wireless, a vast tub, cloud-size pillows, a huge bed, coffee, tranquil decor and other indolence-inducing features that I’m tempted to just stay indoors, hanging loose, sloth-style.

But this is not to be. I am summoned to a cooking class where our instructor, chef Salma bin Roheem succeeds in instructing me, a culinary troglodyte, in producing chicken and prawn cakes, tom yam gung and pad thai – all of which are even edible. Sensing that I might not be able to repeat the performance without ongoing tuition, Salma assures me, “Even if you forget the recipe, the fun remains, right?”

Banyans, frangipani and cascading jungle overshadows the pavilions. Langurs and hornbills hide and hoot among them. Monsoon rains arrive and unload on the eaves and leaves and squirrels, and it’s all alright. Umbrellas, standard issue in every room, get us to sunset cocktails on time. As the green lure-lights of distant squid boats define the darkening horizon and fireflies flicker in the garden groves I try to figure if there’s a way I can stay a month?

Next day, between the lime green shallows and lunchtime, a spa session is de rigueur. My treatment, a combination of oil and Thai techniques, is so good that I can barely remember a thing, such is the magic dust that the masseuse sprinkles about. By night we dine in a high, open cave, The Grotto, on tuna tartare and extraordinarily tender white snapper. A fruit salad dessert topped with palm sugar and coconut pandan cream rounds out this sybaritic day. \*

Photography by John Borthwick and respected establishments



## travel facts

### GETTING THERE

Thai Airways, Qantas and other carriers fly direct from select Australian ports to Bangkok and/or Phuket. To get to Khao Lak, fly Bangkok Airways to Phuket ([bangkokair.com](http://bangkokair.com)). For Khanom, fly with Thai Smile from Bangkok to Surat Thani ([thaismileair.com](http://thaismileair.com)) then book a road transfer for the 90 minute journey. For Krabi, Bangkok Airways flies from Bangkok to Krabi then transfer to Rayavadee by the resort shuttle boat.

### WHEN TO GO

Thailand is a year-round destination. In general the hottest months are April-August and the coolest (relatively) November-February. Regional variations are significant, especially with rainfall. See [travelfish.org/weather/thailand](http://travelfish.org/weather/thailand)

### WHERE TO STAY:

- The Sarojin, Khao Lak, [sarojin.com](http://sarojin.com)
- Le Meridien Khao Lak Resort, [lemeridienkhaoлак.com](http://lemeridienkhaoлак.com)
- Khao Lak Laguna Resort, [khaolaklaguna.com](http://khaolaklaguna.com)
- Aava Resort, Khanom, [aavaresort.com](http://aavaresort.com)
- Rayavadee Resort, Krabi, [rayavadee.com](http://rayavadee.com)
- Bangkok – If you want to stopover in Bangkok The Rembrandt hotel on Soi 18, Sukhumvit is a central and stylish city base. [rembrandtbkk.com](http://rembrandtbkk.com)

### FURTHER INFORMATION

Tourism Authority of Thailand, [tourismthailand.org](http://tourismthailand.org)