

Sublime Samui

STORY | NICK WALTON

It's one of the world's favourite Thai islands and one which is reinvented itself with the opening of some of the region's most luxurious resorts. Nick Walton checks out his favourite villa properties on Koh Samui.



BANYAN TREE SAMUI

Another much anticipated opening this year was the Banyan Tree Samui, an all-pool villa property on the east coast of the island. Nestled around a private beach, rooms range in size from 130sqm to 316sqm for the Sanctuary Pool Villas, located high on the ridge overlooking the Gulf of Thailand.

Banyan Tree is best known for its wellness and the spa culture can be found in every facet of the property. Make a bee-line for one of the resort's Spa Pool Villas, which come with their own in-villa treatment room and stellar views to boot.

The resort's indulgent spa features ten spacious indoor spa pavilions and an extensive menu of Asian-inspired body and beauty treatments. Be sure to make time for the Rainforest, Samui's only hydrotherapy spa. Here, a hydrothermal circuit comprising of alternating hot and cold thermal treatments, including the rain walk, bucket drench and vitality pool, complements the main spas massages and facials.

Dining also plays an important role at Banyan Tree Samui. You can enjoy authentic Thai cuisine at Saffron, opt for a beach-side char-grill or, for something a bit more special, try the destination dining options, including dining on a solitary rocky outcrop or on a deserted beach.

From US\$990 per night, twin share;
Tel: +66 77 915 333;
www.banyantree.com





CONRAD KOH SAMUI

The newest resort to open on the island of 'safe haven', the Conrad offers a new twist on contemporary five star service and luxury. Located at Phang Ka at the island's southwest tip, the resort, which is scheduled to open at the end of summer, offers access to a secluded private beach, and 80 free standing pool villas in one and two bedroom configurations.

Villas include modern Thai décor - think tropical hardwood floors and Thai silk furnishings, local artworks and unique artefacts - as well as spa-style bathrooms, infinity pools, private balconies and dramatic hillside views across the 'five islands' and Angthong National Park. Rooms also come fully wired with LCD televisions, high speed wireless, iPod docking stations and secure virtual private networks.

Tel: +66 77-915-888;
www.conradkohsamui.com



AKATSUKI RESORT

Another newbie on Samui is the Japanese-Thai inspired Akatsuki, the latest luxury property to open on Samui's idyllic west coast. Tucked away on Lipa Noi Beach, the Riccardo Tossani-designed Akatsuki takes only one booking per day, meaning you have a luxurious tropical home away from home for a group of up to 15.

Built entirely from recycled wood, and utilising natural ventilation design, the villa is as green as it is luxurious. Even with a big group, you'll find plenty of little corners in which to hide away, including three swimming pools, an on-site spa and a near-deserted beach complete with private salas.

Accommodation is in five individually-styled suites, while dining - with dishes created by a personal chef - takes place in one of three 'pavilions'.

Tel: +667 748 5704;
www.akatsuki-resort.com



W SAMUI

Located in Samui's north, the W Samui was another much-anticipated opening, with Starwood bringing their chic, distinctly urban brand to the white sand beaches of Thailand. The resort's 75 private pool villas offer a design savvy retreat, combined with world-class dining and one of the island's best stretches of beach.

All villas boast custom-designed furniture, private patios and spa-style bathrooms. Created by Carl Almeida of P49 studios, the villas feature clean lines, earthy elements and a distinctly funky W persona throughout.

From US\$559 per night, twin share;
 Tel: +66 77 915999;
www.starwoodhotels.com



FOUR SEASONS RESORT KOH SAMUI

Still regarded as one of the most luxurious resorts in Thailand, the Four Seasons Samui boasts lavish hillside villas nestled amongst coconut palms and manicured gardens, and a discrete location in the island's northwest. Situated in a natural amphitheater-shaped bay, the resort boasts its own private beach, and makes for a perfect seclusion for the amour-inclined.

The Four Seasons Samui consists of 60 one-bedroom villas as well as 14 lavish residences, ranging from two to five bedrooms each. All accommodation is contemporary with a distinctive Thai influence in the design and décor. Make for one of the resort's Premier One-Bedroom Villas, which offer stunning views across Laem Yai Bay the Gulf of Thailand, as well as private 29sqm infinity plunge pools, spacious sun decks and opulent bathrooms, complete with terrazzo shell-shaped bathtubs and rain showers.

Tel: +66 77 243 000;
www.fourseasons.com/kohsamui



MISKAWAAN RESORT

One of Samui's best kept secrets, Miskawaan is a series of nine lavish, individually-designed beach-front villas located in the island's north. Perfectly suited for families looking to travel together and stay in their own home away from home, the resort's villas are spacious and contemporary, and range from three to six-bedrooms.

While some villas offer different amenities – including pool tables, swimming pools and outdoor pavilions, all come with modern décor, state of the art kitchens and direct beach access.

All bookings include continental breakfast and round trip airport transfers, and with the private nature of these beautiful villa properties, Miskawaan is especially popular with wedding and honeymoon groups, you'll have your own slice of Samui all to yourself.

Tel: +66 7733 2271;
www.miskawaan.com



SURALAI

In the hills above Bhoput, one of the island's best kept secrets can be found. Located at the end of a long, steep winding path, Suralai is one of those unique retreats that once you've found it, you'll need a very compelling reason to leave. The villa may technically cater for children, but in our books it's best kept as an adult Disneyland, a citadel of serenity, where the wine flows, the music plays and there is nary a sun-burnt backpacker in sight. Boasting a 20-metre infinity pool wreathed by three villa wings and an open-air sala – perfect for home-made Mojitos - Suralai translates as Home of the Angels, and in this instance those heavenly vessels have great taste.

Interiors are modern and refined, without the shiver you get from minimalism in the tropics. The expansive living spaces of the main building feature floor-to-ceiling glass which open to the cool mountain breezes in the afternoon, and Bose speakers located throughout the property make it easy to create whatever ambiance you're looking for. Each of the six spacious guest rooms feature ensuites and private balconies, while two master suites and a twin room also boast lavish terrazzo soak tubs

www.suralai.com

