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Koh Tao Travel Guide

A complete Travel Guide
about Koh Tao - A Beautiful
island in Thailand also known
as the Diver's paradise

made with
Beacon

Koh Tao Travel Guide

Your complete Travel guide to the Diver's paradise in Thailand

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I have already been to Koh Tao, Thailand in October 2015 and given another chance, I would still want to go there just because I fell in love with this island called **diver's paradise**. The serenity, the clean beaches, the marine life and the peaceful ambiance are a few things which are not found on all the tourist places.

However, planning to go to Koh Tao needs a perfect itinerary and a perfect plan in advance. There could be many factors which can affect your plan like weather, availability of the **International Flights**, tourist peak time, your budget and finally, availability of the rooms or your choice of stay there. Well,

these factors depend upon your choices as well after all.

In the following Koh Tao island travel guide, I am going to talk about the weather, ferries, airplanes, medical facilities, vehicle renting, money exchange points, ATMs etc.

Koh Tao weather Guide:

Well, Koh Tao weather is mostly affected by the monsoon which rises in the Bay of Bengal and the Andaman sea. Below is a monsoon map just for your reference purpose.



Koh Tao island geographical location on Map

So the monsoon starts mostly in the Bay of Bengal and Andaman sea and it rises up to the eastern part of India as well as towards Thailand as well.

Since Koh Tao island is situated in the Gulf of Thailand and a land mass lies in between the monsoon route and the Gulf of Thailand, Koh Tao is not so much disturbed by the monsoon for a longer time. However, on the Western Coasts of Thailand towards Andaman sea, monsoon plays a major role in deciding the weather of the islands on the western of Thailand.

One of the experiences that I would like to share with you. In October 2015, when I was in Thailand, we had taken our flight from Bangkok to Surat Thani but the weather was so bad in Surat Thani that the flight was diverted to Krabi. From Krabi, we had to take an overnight bus to Surat Thani again to reach Koh Tao island. When we came out of the

airport, it was raining so heavily that even visibility was restricted to a few feet.

The moral of this incident is that during monsoon or just after the monsoon, a bad weather may hit any part of the Thailand. For example, Surat Thani, in above case, lies on the east coast and while Krabi on the west coast but still, Surat Thani was hit by the bad weather while Krabi on the Eastern side was safe.



Raining outside the Krabi airport Thailand

The ideal solution would be to check [Google weather](#) before planning. But still, I sum up the weather according to their months below:

January & February: Peak season, girls in bikini, a lot of diving, water temperature around 29-degree celsius.

March to May: Very hot, tropical thunderstorms, nice summer sunsets, the best water clarity

June to August: Frequent Bigger waves, Occasional afternoon storms, the diving shifts from the western side to the eastern side.

September & October: Quiet & beautiful season with lesser tourists, marked by a few thunderstorms in a month

November & December: Monsoon and low water temperature.

International flights to Koh Tao, Thailand:

Chumphon and Surat Thani are the two nearest airports for Koh Tao island. I will be talking about taking ferries to Koh Tao later.

To get a better shield from the monsoon, choose Chumphon airport over Surat Thani airport if your budget permits. As shared my experience earlier, heavy rain can change the course of landing from one airport to another and then your entire plan might get jeopardized.

Also, expect to experience some in-flight turbulence during monsoon which might often scare you. In these critical cases, If you are traveling by the Thai airways, [Thai Airways Web check-in](#) can help you save time.

Also, at the famous terminals like the airport and railway station, there are counters which offer you ticket and information service to different islands including Koh Tao. You can also use those services.

On the last day of our trip, we were to catch the flight from Bangkok. One mistake we did was we took the taxi to the airport. It was so crowded that we were almost on the brink of losing our flight. So, please be careful in these things.

Ferries to Koh Tao island Thailand:

Most of the islands in Thailand are connected by the ferries. There are three famous ferries companies which operate to Koh Tao. There might be others as well, but I am not aware of that.

- [Lomprayah](#)
- [SeaTran Ferry](#)
- [SongSerm](#)

They have transfer service to Koh Tao from different places like Surat Thani, Chumphon etc. every day. Also, they offer pickup service from hotel (inside the town mostly), bus station, railway station and tour offices as well.



Koh Tao island ferry

You often those options while booking the ticket. In the case, you do not want to take risk then, after you land there in Thailand, you can ask the hotel guy to arrange a ticket for you to Koh Tao and they should be able to book a ticket to Koh Tao island the very next day most probably, just that the ferry timing might not be as per your choice.

Here is an approximation of the ferry traveling time to Koh Tao from different places:

- **Surat Thani (4 hours day boat, 9 hours on overnight boat)**
- **Chumphon (1.5–3 hours)**
- **Koh Samui island (approximately 2.5 hours)**
- **Koh PhaNgan island (approximately 1 hour)**

So reaching Koh Tao from Chumphon is easier and cheaper than via Surat Thani.

Here is an approximation of the ferry cost to Koh Tao from different places:

- **Surat Thani 1300 THB**
- **Chumphon 500 THB**

- Koh Samui island 700 THB
- Koh Phangan island 500 THB

Also, note that ferries start from different departure locations called 'Piers' so be sure about which pier is closer to your place.

Koh Tao Guide on Diving & Snorkeling:

Also known as the divers' paradise, Koh Tao is open for diving almost throughout the year. Moreover, it has most of the certified diving schools. You can also take courses, do snorkeling and other water activities. I would prefer you to read this section of Wikitravel about [diving in Koh Tao](#).



Koh Tao five island snorkeling tour

Some of the personal snorkeling experiences I had are:

- Snorkel in the morning. During the morning, the water is more silent than in the afternoon.
- Keep yourself hydrated with snorkeling
- Ask locals or the hotel guys about the low tide timings. Snorkeling in low tides can take you far and you can see more underwater.

Koh Tao island snorkeling tour

Forget not to take the snorkeling tour of the five islands on the Koh tao. On the snorkeling tour, they take you to different locations around the island off the shore and you can snorkel at each of these locations for around half an hour to one hour. You are provided with the lunch, tea, coffee, snacks and you can also drink beer.

- Forget not to go to the Koh Nang Yuan island. If you are taking the snorkeling tour then they finally stop at this island. The snorkeling tour starts from the Mae Haad or the main ferry dock and the boat revolves around the island.



Koh Nang Yuan island

Vehicle renting Guide on Koh Tao:

There are many kinds of vehicle renting options are there including bikes and four by four. However, charges for the four by four vehicles are much higher than a bike. Looking at the area of the Koh Tao island, I think, renting a bike is a better option than renting a four wheeler.

Also, road conditions in the Koh Tao island are not so good. The slopes are

steep and somewhere you find no road but just the gravels. So you need to be careful while driving bikes.

Here is another instance from my Koh Tao trip which will give you an idea of how tough is it to drive a bike on Koh Tao:

I and my friend, Sam from Germany, hired a bike and put our luggage (Just two small luggage) and began driving towards the hotel. At a few point of times, I had to get down on the slopes with luggage so that he could drive carefully.

Owing to these situations, road accidents rate is very high on this island. Also, if you meet a severe accident, you will have to bear double expenses, hospital cost plus the bike cost.

Also, if you break a part of the rented bike, according to the bike renters, the damaged parts can only be replaced, NOT REPAIRED. And, serious medical facilities are miles away from this island. So, be careful while driving.



A vehicle renting shop in Koh tao just near the Main ferry dock

Another instance is:

When we were returning from our hotel to the ferry, we hired a Toyota Hilux to drop us at the ferry point. But believe me, the driver seemed quite experienced but at a few points, he struggled as well while going up on the slopes.

Also, taking taxis to reach the hotel and pay 100 THB just for that does not make sense just for the one time. The better option would be to rent a scooter or a bike and have freedom of exploration on your own with around 200-300 THB per day.

Before renting a scooter, forget not to take pictures of the bike from all angles. If something happens with the bike, at least the renting guys would not be able to cheat you. **Bikes can be hired near the main Pier at the Koh Tao island.**

Here are more tips to [stay safe on Koh Tao island](#) which might be helpful to you in planning your perfect vacation.

Staying Guide on Koh Tao Island:

Well, different people have the different budget but you might have to search a bit more if you want to find a budget place for yourself (*asking from a hotel to hotel and also doing different combinations of rooms if you are in a group*).



Snorkeling in Koh Tao island thailand

We stayed at the Tanote beach in Koh Tao. Just search for '**Tanote beach, Thailand**' and you will see the beach. There was a reason behind why we chose to stay at the Tanote beach.

But before I explain the reason behind it, I would like you to take a look at the [360-degree panoramic photosphere of Tanote beach](#). Try to figure out the big rock off the beach.

Now the reason was, the rock that you see off the shore is around hundred feet off shore. And, it makes a perfect snorkeling spot. We used to snorkel from beach to the rock. Take a break there and snorkel to another rock from there and take a break there (Zoom in and try to find a small rock ahead of the big rock towards the left)

However, if you are not looking for something like that, you can choose some other staying option as well. But the Tanote beach is also serene, not so crowded. However, the road till Tanote beach is little bad and you need to know off-roading for that.

Other beaches where I would recommend staying is:

- Tanote Beach
- Ao Thian Og beach
- Chalok Baan Kao beach and,
- Aow Leuk Beach

I have marked these beaches in the image below and if you see carefully, the water is shallow near the beach and it makes a perfect snorkeling point for the visitors if you want to spend some leisure time there.



Koh Tao map

Packing for the Koh Tao tour:

I have another dedicated article on [what to carry for Thailand trip](#). You can take some cues from this blog post to know what should you all pack for the trip.

Money exchange, Cards, and ATMs at Koh Tao island, Thailand:

Credit cards are accepted at almost all the points like diving schools, hotels etc. However, they might extra 3-4 percent surcharge on that. Near the main ferry dock at the Mae Haad, there are ATMs and 7/11 as well.

Here is an article on [Thailand Traveling tips](#) and I recommend you reading it before leaving for Thailand.

Medical facility on Koh Tao island:

It would be good if your traveler's insurance also covers scuba diving. Once you reach on the Koh Tao island, a medical consultation might cost you around 300 THB. There are many medical clinics near the main ferry dock, Ma Haad and in Sairee. But remember that serious injuries have to be dealt on Koh Samui which is nearest from there.

More about Koh Tao island:

Koh Tao is also known as the "Diver's paradise". The main source of income for this island is the tourism which happens throughout the year. Because of being famous as the diver's paradise, there are more than a hundred diving schools on the Koh Tao island.

If you are planning to stay for longer, you can also take a diving course and certification here. There are some famous viewpoints on Koh Tao island as well. Forget not to visit those viewpoints.

More helpful related links:

- [How to fill Thai immigration form? Thai immigration card guide](#)
- [Thai visa on arrival application form guide for Tourist visa](#)

Food and drinks Guide on Koh Tao Island:

Thailand has a lot to offer in terms of food and drinks. There are a variety of options like coconut shake, coconut water, Thai beer and much more. Most of these drinks and foods are available on the Koh Tao island. Besides authentic Thai dish, you can also get western foods like Pizza and burger.

The main market for these foods (cheap and best) is near the main town near main ferry dock. Also, know that foods in Thailand are spicy and might not suit your food habit and result in indigestion. To counter that you can increase the intake of coconut water and yoghurt to balance down the spicy effect. Here are [top five Thai drinks](#).

If you feel that I have missed out some important information, then forget not to write down in the comments below. I hope I had been informative for you.



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