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AREA GUIDE

Rawai, Phuket

An Advisor's Guide

50 min	20 min	20 min	3 km	Nov 2026
AIRPORT	PHUKET TOWN	CENTRAL PHUKET	NAI HARN BEACH	UPDATED

Rawai is the southern end of Phuket, a residential area around a working fishing beach and pier. Beside the pier sit a long-established sea gypsy village and a seafood market, with villa estates in the hills behind. The Thaiger describes a large long-term foreign population, and rents and property prices more accessible than in Cherng Talay. The trade is distance. The airport is 47 km away, and the beach in front of you is for boats, not swimming.

The lifestyle

Rawai Beach is poor for swimming. The water is shallow, and longtail boats and speedboats line the shore. At low tide the rocks and mudflats come out. For a swim, Nai Harn is about 3 km by road, and the small cove of Ya Nui is close by. Rawai's draw is the pier, with longtails out to Coral Island, Koh Bon and the Racha islands.

Beside the pier is the Chao Ley village, home to an Urak Lawoi sea gypsy community, among the island's oldest inhabitants. Next to it is the seafood market. You buy fish, prawns or crab at the stalls, and nearby restaurants cook it for a set charge per kilo. It is a living community, and I would treat it as one.

Promthep Cape is under 3 km along Viset Road, at the southern tip of the island between Rawai and Nai Harn. Phuket101 calls it the most popular sunset viewpoint on the island. From the lighthouse you look out over the Andaman Sea towards Koh Racha Yai and Koh Kaew.

Away from the beach, Rawai is residential. The Thaiger describes many long-term residents as self-employed or working online, and a life that is slower and more self-contained. Daily life runs along Viset Road, from Chalong down to the pier and round to the cape.

Rawai is also the name of the subdistrict, which takes in Nai Harn and runs north to Chalong pier. Listings often file all of it as Rawai. This guide covers Rawai village, the beach and the hills behind it.

Who it suits

Rawai suits people who spend most of the year in Phuket. Full-time residents and remote workers will find an established long-stay community. It suits anyone who wants the water by boat: the pier is on the doorstep and Chalong pier is 7 km north. It also suits a buyer who wants a villa and garden for less than Cherng Talay prices.

It suits less well the buyer who flies often. The airport run is 47 km, about 50 minutes outside peak hours. Families with children at school in the north of the island face a long daily drive. And if you want to walk from the villa into clear water, Nai Harn will serve you better than Rawai Beach.

The first thing I would ask is how many months a year you will be here. The longer the stay, the better Rawai suits it.

The property landscape

Rawai is mostly houses and villas. Pool villa estates sit in the hills behind the beach and along the lanes off Viset Road, with plots of land among them. It is low-rise and largely residential.

Rawai also takes a real share of new condo supply. Knight Frank's year-end 2025 report puts it at 15.6 percent of new condos launched on the island in 2025. Bang Tao led with 30.8 percent. Island-wide, Knight Frank puts average condo prices generally between ฿125,000 and ฿160,000 per square metre (approx USD 3,700 to 4,800). It gives no Rawai-only price. I would treat any portal average for Rawai with care, because it can blend in Nai Harn and Chalong.

For villas, Knight Frank reports island-wide villa sales up 12.9 percent in 2025. It names neighbouring Nai Harn as a key location in the high-end villa market. Rawai's hills are where I would look for a villa buyer whose brief is space and a long stay.

Building in the hills is regulated. Rules in force since 14 December 2024 allow construction between 80 and 140 metres above sea level, within limits. The Phuket News reports single structures only, on title issued before 2017, up to 6 metres high on 90 square metres of ground. The plot must also keep 70 percent open. Before you pay for a hillside view, have your lawyer and an engineer confirm what can be built.

On the beachfront, title history matters. Land around the Chao Ley village has been disputed for years. The Bangkok Post has reported a Supreme Court ruling that a beachfront title there was invalid, because it exceeded the original land document. Have your lawyer trace any title back to its origin. My due diligence checklist sets out what to ask for.

Renting in Rawai

Rawai's rental market runs on residents. With a large long-stay community, I would expect twelve-month villa and house lets to be its core. The Thaiger notes that rents here are more accessible than in Cherng Talay. I have not found a published Rawai rent figure I would stand behind, so I will not quote a range.

For an owner, I would plan around the twelve-month tenant. Letting for under 30 days needs a hotel licence, and many condo buildings ban short lets outright. More on how long-term letting works in Renting Long-Term in Phuket.

Getting around

By road from Rawai Beach, Phuket International Airport is 47 km, about 50 minutes outside peak hours. Phuket Town and Central Phuket on Vichit Songkram Road are both 16 km, about 20 minutes.

Bangkok Hospital Phuket is 18 km and Vachira Phuket Hospital 17 km, each about 20 minutes. The British International School Phuket at Koh Kaew is 27 km, about 30 minutes. Promthep Cape is 2 km and Chalong pier 7 km.

Most routes north pass through Chalong. The first phase of the planned Phuket tram would run from the airport to the Chalong five-way intersection. In January 2026 the transport minister said the tram would follow the expressway programme, with the first phase expected after 2030. Since November 2026 the Route 8580 electric bus has run from the airport to Rawai along the bypass through Chalong. I would not price a Rawai purchase on it.

Buying and renting here: the practical part

The essentials in brief; the detail belongs with your lawyer and in the dedicated guides. A foreign buyer can own a condo freehold under Section 19 bis of the Condominium Act. That sits within the 49 percent foreign quota per building, with the purchase money brought in from abroad as foreign currency (section 19(5)). Foreigners cannot own land, so a villa is typically held on a registered lease of the land, with the house owned outright.

Treat 30 years as the term. Leases are registered for a maximum of 30 years under section 540 of the Civil and Commercial Code, and pre-agreed renewals are not enforceable as a right, per Supreme Court Judgment 4655/2566. My 30-year lease guide has the detail. A lease over three years must be registered to be enforceable beyond three.

Holding land through a Thai company with nominee shareholders is illegal, and it puts the property itself at risk. I would keep any client away from it. Structure the purchase properly and use an independent lawyer. Ownership is covered in Foreign Ownership in Phuket: How It Actually Works.

Selling in Rawai

I would expect most Rawai buyers to be people who intend to live here. So a listing should speak to the year-round resident: the garden, and the drive to Chalong and town. A clean title and a clearly stated remaining lease term will sell more easily than renewal promises. If you own here and want a read on price and timing, talk to me.

Rawai: the questions I get asked

Is Rawai a good place to buy property in Phuket?

For a buyer who plans to live here, yes. Rawai has a large long-term foreign community, and The Thaiger puts its rents and property prices below Cherng Talay. The trade is the 47 km airport run and a beach lined with boats. That weighs most for buyers who fly often or want to swim from the door.

Can you swim at Rawai Beach?

Not really. The water is shallow, the shore is lined with longtail boats and speedboats, and low tide exposes rocks and mudflats. Nai Harn, about 3 km by road, is the nearby swimming beach.

How far is Rawai from Phuket airport?

About 47 km by road, roughly 50 minutes outside peak hours and longer at busy times.

Can foreigners buy property in Rawai?

Yes, on the same terms as the rest of Phuket. A condo can be held freehold within the building's 49 percent foreign quota. A villa is usually held on a registered lease of the land of up to 30 years, with the house owned outright.

What is the difference between Rawai and Nai Harn?

Nai Harn is the bay to the west, with the swimming beach. Rawai is the fishing beach, the pier and the residential hills behind it. Both sit in Rawai subdistrict, so listings often call Nai Harn villas Rawai.

Talk to me about Rawai

If you are weighing Rawai against Nai Harn or Chalong, looking for a twelve-month rental, or want my read on a specific villa or estate in the south of the island, get in touch.

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Sources: Knight Frank, Phuket Villa and Condominium Market, year-end 2025; Phuket101, Rawai Beach and Promthep Cape guides; The Thaiger, best areas to live in Phuket for expats, 27 August 2025; Bangkok Post, "Sea people still wait for justice" (Rawai land title rulings); The Phuket News, January and February 2025 (hillside building rules, effective 14 December 2024); The Phuket Express, 9 January 2026 (Phuket tram); distances from OpenStreetMap routing (OSRM); Supreme Court Judgment 4655/2566; Civil and Commercial Code s.538 and s.540; Condominium Act s.19 bis and s.19(5). Figures and distances rechecked November 2026. This guide is general information, not legal or tax advice. Ownership structures, fees and taxes depend on your circumstances and change over time. Take independent legal advice before committing to any purchase or lease in Thailand.