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BUYER'S GUIDE

Renovating a villa in Phuket

Permits, costs and process

When a villa renovation in Phuket needs a building permit, who issues it, Phuket's hillside rules, condominium rules, published cost reference points, rainy-season timing, staged payments, work permits and snagging.

Renovating a villa in Phuket needs a building permit whenever the work changes the structure, alters a floor or roof by more than 5 square metres, or adds more than 10 percent to the load the structure carries. Like-for-like finishes such as tiles, doors, windows and ceilings do not. The permit comes from the municipality or the Sub-district Administrative Organisation (Or Bor Tor) where the villa sits, under the Building Control Act B.E. 2522. Budget from itemised quotes and keep roof and outside work out of the rainy season. Pay in stages against accepted work. A foreign owner cannot legally do the work themselves.

Do you need a building permit to renovate a villa in Phuket?

You need one for anything the Act calls a modification. Section 21 says whoever constructs, modifies or relocates a building must get a permit from the local official (the same rule applies when you build on new land), or notify them under section 39 bis. “Modify” means changing the structure or its members in shape, size, weight or area, so they differ from the original.

A ministerial regulation under the Act carves out small changes. The line sits at 10 percent of added load and 5 square metres of area, with no columns or beams added or removed.

The work	Permit needed?
New tiles, doors, windows or ceilings adding no more than 10% to the load	No
Changing one floor’s area by 5 sqm or less in total, no columns or beams touched	No
Extending a roof by 5 sqm or less in total, no columns or beams added or removed	No
Replacing timber posts or beams with the same size and material	No
Replacing concrete or steel columns or beams, even like for like	Yes
A heavier floor or wall finish adding more than 10% to the load	Yes
An extension, a new room, a new storey, or roofing over a terrace beyond 5 sqm	Yes

If a new stone floor is heavier than the old one, have an engineer run the load before you order it.

Working without a permit carries up to three months in prison, a fine of up to ฿60,000, or both, plus up to ฿10,000 a day until the breach is put right. The local official can stop the work, order you to apply retrospectively within at least 30 days, or order the building altered or demolished where it cannot be made compliant.

Who issues a building permit in Phuket?

The local authority for the land issues it. Under the Act that is the mayor where the area is a municipality (tesaban), or the chairman of the Or Bor Tor in a sub-district. Cherng Talay, which takes in Bang Tao and Layan, is run by an Or Bor Tor, so a villa there applies to its office.

The permit itself is form Or 1. Your architect or engineer prepares the drawings and submits them. The authority has 45 days to decide, and can extend that twice by up to 45 days each with written notice. The permit covers only the drawings approved, so a change of height, footprint or use mid-build means a new application.

Keep the original permit and the stamped drawings. In December 2025 a former Kathu Municipality draftsman was arrested over five allegedly forged permits, including building permits, whose holders had built or renovated without knowing. He is presumed innocent until a court rules, but a check with the issuing office is cheap.

What are Phuket's hillside building rules?

Since 14 December 2024, land between 80 and 140 metres above sea level in Phuket's Zone 6 can be built on, under strict conditions. The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment announcement replaced a 2017 rule that had expired. Zone 6 covers most of the island but excludes the coastal areas, the Nakkerd hills and Phuket Town.

- The title deed must have been issued before 2017.
- One single structure only, no higher than 6 metres and covering no more than 90 square metres.
- 70 percent of the plot stays green, and at least half of that open area cannot be concreted.
- An impact assessment by the Phuket office of the Department of Public Works and Town & Country Planning, which can refuse where there is flood or landslide risk.

On a hillside villa, a plot already built close to the limits may have little or no room to add floor area or height.

What renovations can you do in a Phuket condo?

Inside a condo, the building's own regulations decide. The Condominium Act requires every juristic person's regulations to cover the use of private and common property. Any construction that modifies, adds to or improves the common property needs a resolution of the co-owners' meeting under section 48.

Before you hire anyone, ask the juristic office for its renovation rules in writing. That means working hours, any deposit, how contractors register, and what needs approval. Work that touches the facade, the structure or shared pipes is where consent is most likely to be needed. How condo ownership works for a foreign buyer is in Freehold Condo Ownership in Thailand: The 49% Quota Explained.

How much does it cost to renovate a villa in Phuket?

I could not find a published per-square-metre renovation figure for Phuket villas that I would put my name to. The nearest published reference points are national new-build prices from house builders, and the direction of costs from the Government Housing Bank.

Reference point	Figure	Whose figure, and when
Price-sensitive new houses	฿17,000 to 18,000 per sqm (about USD 505 to 535)	Home Builder Association president, Thansettakij, 13 August 2026
Premium custom-built houses (SEACON ID)	About ฿30,000 per sqm (about USD 895)	The Nation, 26 November 2025
Standard house construction cost index, Q3 2026	Up 2.1% year on year	REIC, Government Housing Bank, Bangkok reference house, reported 13 October 2026
Construction labour within that index, Q3 2025	Up 7.9% year on year	REIC, after the minimum wage rose from ฿363 to ฿400 a day on 1 July 2025 (Bangkok reference house)

These are whole houses built new, mostly outside Phuket, without pools or hillside foundations. A renovation mixes demolition, structure and finishes in different proportions each time, so an average figure tells you little.

Budget from itemised quotes priced against the same drawings and specification, so you compare like with like. Add a contingency for what opening the walls reveals.

When is the right time to renovate in Phuket?

Plan the roof, waterproofing, render, pool and landscaping for the drier months, and keep interiors for the wet ones. Thailand's official rainy season runs from mid-May to mid-October, when the southwest monsoon arrives, and rain in the South continues into December.

Work backwards from that window. Drawings, a permit decision that can take 45 days or more and a contractor's start date all come first. Outside work in the dry season means starting drawings in the wet one.

How should a renovation contract and staged payments work?

A renovation is a hire of work under the Civil and Commercial Code. By default the contractor is paid on delivery of the finished work. Where the contract divides the work into parts with a price for each, each part is payable when you accept it.

That is the basis for staged payments: each stage tied to a defined piece of work you have inspected. You can end the contract before the work is finished, but you compensate the contractor for the loss. Put these in the contract:

- **The drawings and specification** attached, so the price refers to something fixed.
- **Who obtains the permit**, and that work needing one does not start before it is issued.
- **The stages**, each with its price and what "accepted" means.
- **A completion date**, a defined grace period, and what you are owed if it is missed.
- **The defects period.** By default a contractor is liable for defects that appear within one year of delivery, or five years for a structure on land other than a wooden building. The contract can change that, so read the clause.

- **A retention** held back from the final payment until the defects period ends.
- **Which language prevails.** Thai courts work from the Thai text.

Can a foreigner do renovation work on their own villa?

No, not without a work permit. Under the foreign worker law, "work" covers applying effort or knowledge whether or not you are paid, so labouring on your own house counts.

Bricklaying, carpentry and building construction sit on the Ministry of Labour's list of jobs a foreigner may hold only with an employer and a registration for that job. General site labour is open only to workers brought in under government-to-government labour agreements with neighbouring countries. A foreigner working without permission faces a fine of ฿5,000 to 50,000 and possible deportation.

You can choose the finishes and sign off the stages. Ask the contractor to confirm in the contract that its own workers hold the right permits, since the fines for employing without them fall on the employer.

How do you snag a villa renovation?

Walk every room with the contractor before the final payment, with a written list both of you sign. Anything on the list is fixed before the retention is released.

Run water on the roof, the terraces and every wet room, and check the falls drain away from the house. Open every sliding door, run the pool plant and the air conditioning, and look at where the condensate goes. A first heavy storm after handover is a useful second inspection, inside the defects period.

Then file the paperwork together: the permit, the stamped drawings, the as-built changes, the contract and every warranty. A buyer's lawyer will one day compare the permits with what was built, as set out in the Thailand Property Due Diligence Checklist.

Does renovating a villa increase its resale value in Phuket?

I could find no published Phuket data that separates what a renovation adds to a sale price, so this is a judgement. Work a buyer's inspection would otherwise flag tends to hold its value: the roof, waterproofing, pool plant and electrics. Taste-led interiors are personal, and the next owner may want to redo them.

Paperwork counts as much as the work. A permitted extension with drawings on file adds usable space. An unpermitted one becomes a question in the buyer's due diligence, and questions slow a sale.

If you are selling: renovate first or price it in?

Renovating before you list costs money and months, once you allow for drawings, a permit and the dry season. It also puts your taste in front of a buyer who may not share it. Pricing the work in lets the buyer do it their way, but some buyers cannot see past a dated kitchen.

My usual starting point is the middle course. Fix what an inspection will find, such as leaks, tired pool plant and missing permits, and leave the kitchen to the buyer. How a sale works is in Selling Your Phuket Property: How It Works, and the seller's costs are in What Does It Cost to Sell a Property in Phuket?.

Renovating a villa in Phuket: questions owners ask

Do I need a permit to renovate my house in Thailand?

Yes, if the work modifies the structure, changes a floor or roof by more than 5 square metres, or adds more than 10 percent to the load. Like-for-like tiles, doors, windows and ceilings do not need one.

Who issues building permits in Phuket?

The local authority where the land sits: the municipality (tesaban) or the Sub-district Administrative Organisation (Or Bor Tor). It has 45 days to decide, extendable twice.

What is the penalty for building without a permit in Thailand?

Up to three months in prison, a fine of up to ฿60,000, or both, plus up to ฿10,000 a day until the breach is put right. The authority can also order the work stopped, legalised or demolished.

Can a foreigner renovate their own house in Thailand?

A foreign owner can commission and oversee the work but cannot do it themselves without a work permit. Unpaid work on your own home still counts as work under Thai law.

When is the right time to renovate in Phuket?

Do roof, waterproofing and outside work outside the rainy season, which officially runs from mid-May to mid-October. Interiors can continue through the wet months once the building is watertight.

The read

I would get the order of work right before worrying about the budget. Drawings, the permit and the contract come first, and the outside work is fitted to the dry months.

Done in that order, you get the house you wanted and a complete file for a buyer's lawyer.

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Sources: Building Control Act B.E. 2522, sections 4, 21, 39 bis, 40 to 42 and 65 (English translation via IIBH); Ministerial Regulation No. 11 (B.E. 2528) under the Building Control Act, clause 1 (10% load and 5 sqm thresholds; concrete and steel structures excluded from like-for-like replacement); ThaiLawOnline, "Building Permit (Or. 1)" (issuing authority and 45-day decision period, section 25); The Phuket News, 2 December 2025 (Cherng Talay Or Bor Tor) and 18 December 2025 (Kathu permit arrest); The Thaiger, 12 January 2025, and The Phuket News, January 2025 (MNRE Phuket zoning announcement, Royal Gazette vol. 141, special section 342, in force 14 December 2024); Condominium Act B.E. 2522 as amended 2008, sections 32 and 48; Thansettakij, 13 August 2026 (Home Builder Association); The Nation, 26 November 2025 (SEACON ID); REIC, Government Housing Bank, house construction cost index Q3 2026, as reported by Bangkok Biz News, 13 October 2026, and REIC press release 11 November 2025 (labour, Q3 2025); thailand.go.th, "The Seasons of Thailand" (rainy season); Civil and Commercial Code, sections 587, 600, 602 and 605; Tilleke & Gibbins, 11 July 2017 (definition of work); Winrock International advocacy brief, 1 December 2022 (Ministry of Labour job lists); Pattaya Mail, 6 September 2026 (penalties for foreign workers). USD figures are approximate at ฿33.5 to the dollar. This is general information, not legal, tax or investment advice. Take independent legal advice before starting building work or signing a construction contract in Thailand.