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BUYER'S GUIDE

Where to Live in Phuket

Area by Area

Where to live in Phuket depends on what your week looks like. All 30 areas I cover, grouped, with who each one suits and the trade to weigh.

Many international buyers start their search in Bang Tao, and The Thaiger describes a large long-term foreign population in Rawai, but the right area to live in Phuket depends on what your week looks like. A family on the school run, an owner who flies monthly and a retiree who wants a hospital close will each land somewhere different. The quieter north near the airport, the south-west bays and Phuket Town and Kathu each suit a different week. Below are the 30 areas I have written guides for, grouped, with the trade in each.

How to choose an area in Phuket

- Do you want to walk to a swimming beach every day, or is the sand a weekend drive?
- Which school are your children at, and how long a run will you accept each way?
- How many times a year will you fly in and out?
- Would you rather walk to dinner, or close a gate and hear nothing?
- Will you live here most of the year, or use the property for a few weeks and leave it?

I would answer those before looking at a single listing. They usually rule out half the island.

Bang Tao, Laguna and Cherng Talay

Bang Tao is the long bay in the north-west of the island where many international buyers start their search. The beach runs roughly six kilometres, with Boat Avenue and Porto de Phuket for daily life. It suits the buyer who wants to use what is around them, and it is where I live. Buyers after seclusion should look elsewhere.

Laguna is the planned estate of roughly a thousand acres at the centre of Bang Tao bay. Lagoon paths reach the beach without touching a main road, and inside the estate you barely need a car. It suits families and first-time Phuket buyers. You weigh that against estate fees, estate rules and building noise while it is still building.

Cherng Talay is the residential area inland of Bang Tao beach, with the village, the markets and the international schools. Knight Frank recorded more villa sales here in 2025 than anywhere else in Phuket. It is the family address. The trade is traffic at school-run and evening hours, which is getting heavier.

The quieter north: Layan, Nai Thon, Nai Yang and Mai Khao

Layan is the quiet northern end of Bang Tao bay, with a beach inside Sirinat National Park and hillside villas over the Andaman Sea. It is for buyers who put privacy and outlook first. The airport is roughly twenty minutes north, and you drive for everything else.

Nai Thon is the bay after Layan: one beach road, a handful of restaurants and hillside villas facing the sea. At about twenty minutes from the airport, it suits the owner who flies often. The shops of Cherng Talay are twenty to thirty minutes away, and some beach restaurants close for weeks in the green season.

Nai Yang is a village and beach inside Sirinat National Park, about 3 km by road from Phuket International Airport. Most of the property is condos and small villa estates set back from the sand. The trade is the aircraft, which fly through the night. Stand on the balcony at 7 am and again at 11 pm before you commit.

Mai Khao is the long beach at the north-west tip, with a handful of large resorts and little in between. The airport is about 20 minutes away, while Phuket Town is 45 minutes or more. It suits a second-home buyer happy to live in a resort's orbit, less so a family on the school run.

Surin, Kamala, Patong and Kalim

Surin is a long-established villa address: a small bay, headlands of large private villas and a compact strip of restaurants. It is mainly resale territory and suits an owner who intends to hold. New off-plan stock is mostly north, in Bang Tao and Cherng Talay.

Kamala has two markets in one bay. One is a working town around a wide horseshoe beach, at prices gentler than Surin or Bang Tao. The other is the headland known as Millionaire's Mile, where estates trade rarely and privately. The international schools are a longer run north.

Patong is the island's main resort town. Behind three kilometres of beach sit Bangla Road, two shopping centres and a government hospital. It is a condo market first, for the owner whose priority is rental income and liquidity. It also suits a buyer who wants to live without a car. A family looking for a garden is usually happier north.

Kalim is the small rocky bay at the northern end of Patong Bay, about 4 km by road from Bangla Road. It is mostly hillside condos looking over the bay. Patong's restaurants and hospital are five minutes away. The beach is not one you swim from, and the sois up the hill are steep.

The south-west beaches: Karon, Kata, Nai Harn and Rawai

Karon is about 3 km of beach between Patong and Kata, with a lake park and a compact town behind it. Knight Frank ranked it second only to Bang Tao for condo units sold in 2025. It suits a buyer who wants the beach, restaurants and a market on foot. The airport is about fifty minutes away.

Kata is a pair of beaches, Kata and the quieter Kata Noi, with a resort town of family hotels and surf rental stands. It works as a family holiday base or an easy lock-up-and-leave condo. From about May to October it is surf season, and the airport is about an hour away.

Nai Harn is a small bay near the southern tip, with a public beach, a lake ringed by a path and hills of private villas. People buy here to live. The trade is distance: the airport is about 48 km by road, roughly an hour.

Rawai is the southern end of the island, built around a working fishing beach and pier. The Thaiger describes a large long-term foreign population, with rents and prices more accessible than in Cherng Talay. Rawai Beach is lined with longtails and is not a swimming beach. It suits full-time residents and anyone who wants the water by boat.

Chalong, Cape Panwa, Ao Yon and Coconut Island

Chalong is the residential middle of south Phuket, around Chalong Bay and Wat Chalong. It suits families first, with Berda Claude International School (BCIS) in Chalong itself. Phuket Town, Central Phuket and the main hospitals are all within about 15 minutes outside peak hours. The bay is a working harbour, so the beach is a drive.

Cape Panwa is the peninsula at the south-east tip, about 12 km by road from Phuket Old Town. It is a small, quiet market of hillside and headland villas above calm water. The main hospitals and Central Phuket are within about 20 minutes. The long Andaman beaches and the evening sun are on the other side of the island.

Ao Yon is a small bay on the Chalong Bay side of Cape Panwa, with two sandy beaches you can swim from. It suits a buyer who wants a calm beach on foot and Phuket Town 20 minutes away. Fish and pearl farms sit offshore, so the water is calm but can be murky.

Coconut Island, or Koh Maphrao, is a small, flat island about 850 metres off the east coast. A longtail from Laem Hin Pier takes 10 to 15 minutes. Property is mostly land and private villas. The trade is that every errand, delivery and tradesman crosses by boat.

Phuket Town, Koh Kaew, Boat Lagoon and Kathu

Phuket Town is the working capital, with the province's main hospital, its government offices and the Sino-Portuguese shophouses of the Old Town. The stock is mostly condos, townhouses and shophouses. It suits people who live here full time, including Thai buyers and Thai-foreign couples near family and work. Three hospitals sit within about 3.5 km of the Old Town. There is no beach in town, and holiday demand sits at the beaches.

Koh Kaew runs north from Phuket Town along Thepkasattri Road. Two marinas and the British International School, Phuket sit within a few kilometres of each other, and most buyers come for the school or the boat. Bang Tao and Patong are each about 25 minutes away.

Boat Lagoon is a marina and waterside estate inside Koh Kaew, with townhouses, many opening onto a mooring, plus condos and houses. Town, hospitals and the airport are all within about half an hour. If you would not use the berth, look at Koh Kaew or town first.

Kathu is the green inland valley between Patong and Phuket Town, an old tin-mining town with three golf courses. QSI International School is in Kathu itself, and four hospitals are within about 7 km. For schools, hospitals and shops within ten minutes, it is one of the first places I would look. The sea is a drive over Patong Hill.

Inland: Thalang, Thepkasattri, Si Sunthon and Pru Jampa

Thalang is the district covering the whole north of the island, so portals often file Bang Tao and Layan under it. In everyday use it means the inland part around central Thalang and the Thepkasattri Road corridor. A budget buys more house and land here than on the coast. The airport is fifteen to twenty minutes from most of it on a normal morning.

Thepkasattri is the inland subdistrict around central Thalang, not to be confused with Thepkasattri Road. UWC Thailand is in the same subdistrict, a few minutes' drive from Thalang Hospital, and Bang Tao Beach is about 15 minutes west. It suits a buyer looking for a home to live in. Holiday rental demand is thin.

Si Sunthon sits between Bang Tao and the Heroines Monument, along Srisoonthorn Road. In my read a budget goes further here than in Bang Tao, and Bang Tao Beach is about 15 minutes away. Portals draw the boundary loosely, so check which subdistrict the title deed names.

Pru Jampa is a newer villa area: Knight Frank put it second only to Cherng Talay for villa sales in 2024. The stock is almost all new-build villas, with the airport about fifteen minutes north. The neighbourhood is still forming, with construction traffic and little to walk to.

The north-east: Pa Klok, Cape Yamu and Ao Po

Pa Klok is the north-east corner of the island, facing Phang Nga Bay, with Khao Phra Thaeo National Park to the west. The British International School is about 15 minutes south. The shore is tidal, so for a swim Bang Tao is about 25 minutes away.

Cape Yamu is a small private peninsula holding a gated villa estate and the COMO Point Yamu resort. The villas on the estate are large family homes. It suits a second home or a family compound, and nothing is walkable.

Ao Po is a small bay known for Ao Po Grand Marina, which describes itself as 230-berth with 24-hour access. It is for the buyer who owns a boat, or wants one. The nearest of the main swimming beaches is Nai Yang, about 35 minutes away.

Best areas in Phuket for…

Families with school-age children. Pick the school first, then the area. Cherng Talay and Laguna serve the Bang Tao side. Kathu suits QSI families, Koh Kaew the British International School, Chalong BCIS and Thepkasattri the UWC run.

A beach on foot. Bang Tao, Laguna, Karon, Kata and Ao Yon. Rawai, Kalim, Boat Lagoon and Pa Klok have water in front of them, but not a swimming beach.

Frequent flyers. Nai Yang is about 3 km from the terminal and Pru Jampa about fifteen minutes away. Mai Khao, Nai Thon and Layan are around twenty. From Kata or Nai Harn, allow about an hour.

Full-time residents who want town close. Phuket Town first, then Kathu, Chalong and Cape Panwa. Rawai suits long-stayers too, with Phuket Town about 20 minutes away.

Boat owners. Boat Lagoon and Koh Kaew for a berth near town, and Ao Po on Phang Nga Bay.

A second home. Layan and Nai Thon for privacy and a view, Cape Yamu for a gated estate. For a condo to lock up and leave, look at Karon, Kata or Kalim.

Buying anywhere in Phuket: the rules don't change

A foreign buyer can own a condo freehold within the building's 49 percent foreign quota (Condominium Act, section 19 bis), with the money brought in from abroad in foreign currency (section 19(5)), as my guide to foreign ownership in Phuket explains. Foreigners cannot own land, so a villa is held on a registered lease of up to 30 years, with the house owned outright. Pre-agreed renewals were held void in Supreme Court Judgment 4655/2566, which my 30-year lease guide covers.

Where to live in Phuket: the questions I get asked

What is the best area to live in Phuket?

There is no single best area; it depends on what your week looks like. For schools and daily life on hand, start with Bang Tao, Laguna and Cherng Talay. For the airport, look at Nai Yang, Pru Jampa and inland Thalang, and for hospitals and town close, Phuket Town, Kathu and Chalong.

Where do families live in Phuket?

Cherng Talay and Laguna serve families at the international schools on the Bang Tao side. Kathu, Koh Kaew and Chalong suit families at QSI, the British International School and BCIS, and Thepkasattri suits the UWC run. Pick the school first, then the area.

Which part of Phuket is closest to the airport?

Nai Yang is about 3 km by road from the terminal. Pru Jampa is about fifteen minutes away, inland Thalang fifteen to twenty on a normal morning, and Mai Khao, Nai Thon and Layan around twenty.

Where can I live in Phuket without a car?

Patong, with its beach, two shopping centres and a government hospital in town, suits a buyer who does not want to depend on a car. Inside Laguna you barely need one, and Karon has the beach, restaurants and a market on foot.

Is it better to live in Phuket Town or by the beach?

It depends on whether a hospital close by matters more than the sea. Phuket Town has three hospitals within about 3.5 km of the Old Town, but no beach in town. Holiday demand sits at the beaches, so a buyer counting on holiday lets should look there.

Where do most expats live in Phuket?

Many international buyers start their search in Bang Tao, the long bay in the north-west of the island, with Laguna and Cherng Talay beside it for families at the international schools. In the south, The Thaiger describes a large long-term foreign population in Rawai, with rents and prices more accessible than in Cherng Talay.

What is the best place to buy property in Phuket?

It depends on how you will use the property. Knight Frank recorded more villa sales in Cherng Talay in 2025 than anywhere else in Phuket, and ranked Karon second only to Bang Tao for condo units sold. Patong is a condo market first, for an owner whose priority is rental income and liquidity.

Talk to me about where to live

I live and work in Bang Tao. If you are weighing two or three of these areas, or want a read on a specific property, get in touch.

Rex Butler, Managing Director

+66 93 760 8561 | rex@butlerestates.com | butlerestates.com

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Sources: Butler Estates area guides, November 2026, and the sources listed in each. Knight Frank Thailand, Phuket Villa and Condominium Market Year-End 2025 (condo units sold by zone; villa units sold by zone). Laguna Phuket fact sheet (26 August 2024). Ao Po Grand Marina website (berths and access), viewed November 2026. Lonely Planet, Hat Layan (Sirinat National Park). The Thaiger, Best areas to live in Phuket for expats (27 August 2025). Condominium Act s.19 bis and s.19(5); Civil and Commercial Code s.540; Supreme Court Judgment 4655/2566. Road distances from OSRM routing, checked November 2026. , a boutique real estate agency in Phuket. Updated November 2026. Rex Butler, Managing Director, Butler Estatesrex@butlerestates.com 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.