# How to Spend a Weekend at Koh Yao Yai Island

## Stay at the Santhiya Resort and Spa

This might sound dramatic, but Santhiya Resort & Spa is one of the best hotels we've *ever* stayed at. To get there, you'll book the resort's speedboat transfer along with your room. They'll pick you up in Phuket, take you to Ao Po Grand Marina, and from there it's just a breezy 30-minute ride to the island.

Santhiya Resort is a luxury jungle hideaway without the luxury price tag. When we visited in July, rooms started at just $72/night! Prices do fluctuate throughout the year.

The resort is perched on a hillside with sweeping views over the Adaman Sea. They have several different [room options](#) to choose from. We stayed in the Supreme Deluxe Bay View Room, and I was smitten with the outdoor tub overlooking the bay. One of my favorite memories from the trip was soaking in the tub during a summer rainstorm.

The room itself was spacious and beautiful, with intricate hand-carved wood details that are carried throughout the entire property.

The resort is huge, so you'll take open-air shuttle trucks, known as songthaews, around the property. It's a fun way to get around, but it does take a little extra time.

There are several on-site dining options. We loved the beachfront Chantar Restaurant for lunch and dinner. On select nights, they even have a fire show on the beach during dinner.

The Saaitara Restaurant was our favorite for its breakfast buffet. I couldn't believe how many different dishes they had! The restaurant is located next to the infinity pool with panoramic views of the bay.

You'll find daily activities at the resort, and be sure to schedule a beachfront massage. It was only $22 for an hour massage, and it was quite possibly the best massage of my life! For a relaxing massage, I recommend getting the neck, back, and shoulder massage instead of the

traditional Thai massage. The traditional Thai massage is quite intense, with a lot of pushing and pulling!

You can also find small massage huts right along the beach that offer one-hour massages for only $12! These are located further down the beach from the resort as you get closer to town.

One of my favorite features of the resort is the infinity pool overlooking the ocean. We loved spending our evenings watching the sunset from the pool.

There are several other accommodation options on the island, but we loved our stay at Santhiya Koh Yao Yai. It was the perfect home base for our weekend explorations!

## Rent Scooters and Ride Around the Island

We've rented scooters in other countries where traffic made the experience stressful, but Koh Yao Yai is a completely different story. The roads are quiet and scenic, making it a perfect place to ride, even if you're a beginner.

There are several rental shops in the town of Ban Lo Pa Ret. The town can be reached by walking down the beach from the resort, or you can take a hotel shuttle into town.

We rented ours from Next Step KohYao for only $6 for the entire day. The owner was friendly and relaxed, he didn't even require us to leave a deposit or sign a waiver. Just remember that they drive on the left side of the road in Thailand!

We headed north, cruising past fishing villages, rubber tree groves, and stretches of sparkling coastline.

Along the way, we stopped at the hilltop café at Koh Yao Yai Hillside Resort for a cold drink.

On our way back into town, we stopped for dinner at Issan Fine Restaurant, a cozy spot with authentic Northeastern Thai dishes (and the cutest cats wandering around). Don't skip the fried ice cream!

## Stop at Laem Had Beach

One of Koh Yao Yai's most stunning spots is Laem Had Beach, a palm-fringed beach with a sandbar that stretches into turquoise water.

It's about a 35-minute scooter ride from town, and the journey itself is gorgeous. There's a small parking area and a short path to the beach, so it's easy to access.

At low tide, you can walk along the sandbar with the sea on both sides. It is absolutely beautiful!

## Take a Day Trip to the Phi Phi Islands or Krabi

Koh Yao Yai is perfectly situated for island-hopping. Many visitors head to the famous Phi Phi Islands, which are about a 1-hour 40-minute speedboat ride away. You can book through the hotel or find a local operator in town.

Unfortunately, our Phi Phi trip was canceled due to rough seas (conditions can be very different out in the open ocean). Instead, we booked a day trip to Railay Beach in Krabi, and it ended up being a highlight of our trip!

First of all, there were monkeys everywhere! This was my first time seeing monkeys in the wild, and they were so much fun to watch.

One monkey stole a bottle of Coke, and it was so entertaining to watch him try and open it. Just be sure to keep your distance and never try to feed them ( you will be fined if you do).

I also recommend hiking up to the Railay View Point. We decided to do the hike on a whim and were not prepared. We ended up hiking up in flip flops and bare feet, which I do not recommend. The trail is steep and muddy with rope climbs. Be sure to wear durable shoes with good traction.

Drones are not allowed at Railay Beach as it is part of the national park, so this is the only way to get a birds-eye view of the island.

You can also follow the trail down to a hidden lagoon. It was even more steep and muddy, so we opted out, but I wish we had been prepared with the proper shoes because it looks beautiful from the photos.

The beaches here are beautiful! We mostly hung out on the white sand at Phranang Cave Beach. It had sea caves, a small island you could swim out to, towering limestone cliffs, emerald lagoons, a hidden beach, monkeys swinging in the trees, and a bat cave. We even spotted a huge water monitor swimming in the water!

If you're hungry, there are plenty of cafes and shops in town. It was the perfect day trip!

## Final Thoughts

Koh Yao Yai was a little slice of paradise! It is the perfect spot to relax and escape the crowds, but there is still plenty to do if you prefer a more active itinerary.

If your Thailand itinerary includes Phuket, do yourself a favor and set aside at least a couple of days for Koh Yao Yai. It might just become your favorite stop of the trip!