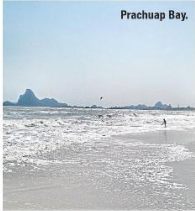


AWAY  
■ PICHAYA SVASTI



Prachuap Bay.

Tribute to HM King Bhumibol

On Dec 13, the Prachuap Khiri Khan Provincial Administration will host a special Buddhist ceremony at Phra Upakut Vilarn near Prachuap Bay in Prachuap Khiri Khan province, from 7pm-midnight, to mark 60 days after the passing of His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej.

The time was chosen according to the belief that it was a Wednesday Full Moon night when Phra Upakut, a disciple of the Lord Buddha, who lived for more than 2,500 years since the time of the Buddha, would be awakened after a long meditation.

According to this legend, Phra Upakut will disguise himself as a Buddhist novice and come to this world to seek alms. Those who make merit by giving alms to him will be saved from sin and enjoy great fortune.

Call the TAT Call Centre 1672.

Food fair in Bangkok

Until Dec 12, the "Eat Around Kao Wan" food fair will be held at Hall 3, Impact Arena Muang Thong Thani, from 10am-9pm.

It features more than 150 famous food and beverage exhibitors, who will present their products for visitors to taste and buy in an exhibition area covering 3,000m<sup>2</sup> under the concept of amazing tastes from four regions of Thailand.

Visit [www.facebook.com/Eat-AroundKaoWan](http://www.facebook.com/Eat-AroundKaoWan) or call the organiser on 02-833-5349.

Wat Maha That.



Light up Sukhothai

Until Jan 3, the "Sukhothai Historical Park's Light Up Night" will take place at Wat Maha That in the Sukhothai Historical Park, Muang district, Sukhothai, from 6-9pm every day.

The aim is to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the declaration of this park as a UNESCO World Heritage site. This activity provides new perspectives of this historic place at night. The ruins of the temple will be illuminated by hundreds of candles placed upon baked clay dishes, as well as colourful lights in various shape amid the sounds of music.

In addition, visitors will be able to try delicious local food, which is for sale on weekends and holidays.

Visit [www.facebook.com/tatsukhothai](http://www.facebook.com/tatsukhothai) or call the Sukhothai Historical Park on 055-696-310.

Fruit fest near Mae Klong

On Saturday and Sunday, the "Uncle Siri Lime Farm Festival 2016" will be held by the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) local office and the Uncle Siri Lime Farm at Uncle Siri Farm in Bang Khonthi district, Samut Songkhram.

Uncle Siri Lime Farm is an organic farm known for growing a special kind of lime, *Carissa carandas*, which is locally known as *manao lo*. It is often used in pickles, spices and beverages.

The farm is located around 8km from Amphawa Floating Market and welcomes visitors to experience a fruit orchard tour. Tourists can also enjoy the views of the lime farm and coconut plantation, taste local food, as well as healthy dishes prepared from organic ingredients from the farm and shop for souvenirs and handmade products of Samut Songkhram.

Call the TAT Call Centre 1672.

Email [pichayas@bangkokpost.co.th](mailto:pichayas@bangkokpost.co.th) if you have any news to share.

# WHERE THE QUAINNESS OF TIMES PAST STILL LIVES

The unique charms of Takua Pa old town

STORY AND PHOTOS: KARNJANA KARNJANATAWE



The vihara of Phra That Khiri Khet temple, or Wat Lum, is painted in colourful decorations.



A shophouse still preserves its old barbershop corner, now defunct, for visitors to see.



Batik sarongs are offered in an old tailor shop on Si Takua Pa Road.

"Compact and serene" can serve as a short definition of the old town of Takua Pa in Phangnga province, about 100km north of Phuket International Airport.

Both sides of Si Takua Pa Road, the main attraction of the town, are dotted with old shophouses built in the style of Sino-Portuguese architecture, like the old quarters of Phuket town but on a smaller scale.

"We also call Si Takua Pa the road of culture," said Charlemchart Jancjanprasert, a local who was born in Takua Pa and a former president of the Phangnga Tourism Association. It is because those old shophouses have been well preserved and visitors can still observe the simple way of life of the people.

Takua Pa used to be a trading hub during past times, and was known as Takola before it was called Takua Pa. The town is home to Chinese descendants. Their ancestors migrated from the southern part of China like Fujian and Guangdong to work in the tin mines. The business hit its peak during the reign of King Rama V and faded out during that of King Rama VII.

These workers married into local families, and their descendants were called Peranakan or Nyonya for women, and Baba for men.

People in Takua Pa want to preserve the Peranakan culture. One activity that locals, especially women, participate in is wearing traditional kebaya attire, also called Nyonya dress — a combination of embroidered blouse and batik sarong.

Walking along Si Takua Pa Road, visitors can stop by the old shophouses still open for business, such as a goldsmith shop, a tailor's shop that offers various styles of batik sarong and blouses of Nyonya, and old barber shops.

Si Takua Pa Road is also a venue where the street procession of the annual 10-day Vegetarian Food Festival takes place on the first day of the ninth lunar month around October. There are Chinese shrines along the street, such as the large Guan Yu shrine and Ku Chai Tueng shrine, where visitors can stop by to pay respect to the deities.

To add more colour to the street, 3D art paintings can be found on building walls — such as a barber ready to trim a customer's hair, a Chinese-style tea table and a local pickup van called *pha thung*.

Recently, the Takua Pa old-town committee launched 50m of street art on two-storey walls of two buildings on Klun Kao Road, off Si Takua Pa. The 3D art pictures tell the history of the tin-mine business in the province.

Si Takua Pa Road is also the venue for a walking street on Sunday afternoons. The market is open from 3pm until 8pm, from the last Sunday of November to the end of May. This year the opening ceremony will be hosted



Locals in traditional Nyonya attire.

on Dec 25 at 5.30pm. Those who join the event will wear their traditional dress. There will also be a photo exhibition of the old town as well as cooking contests.

In addition to Takua Pa old town, Charlemchart wanted to recommend visitors to pay respect to Buddha relics and the highly respected Buddha image called Pho Than Kaen Rak, carved from Rak Yai wood, or black-varnish tree. The image is believed to be older than 200 years, he said.

The Buddha sculpture is in the *vihara* (prayer hall) of Phra That Khiri Khet temple, also known as Wat Lum. The temple is about 500m east of Si Takua Pa Road. The *vihara* has been under construction for more than 20 years. Although the building has an eerie look from the outside, the inside is finished and painted in bright colours like red, green, yellow, pink and blue.

This *vihara* has another secret that can't be seen when visitors enter the hall, said Charlemchart, adding that there is a seated Buddha image made of jade, facing the wall at the back of the principal Buddha image. The image is also highly respected by locals, he added.

Those who visit Takua Pa should make sure to see the tsunami memorial boat — the navy patrol boat *Tor 813*. The 60-tonne vessel was washed ashore about 2km inland and remains as a memorial in Ban Bang Nieng, Khao Lak. On Dec 26, memorial services will be held at the spot, and at other memorial sites in the province as well as in Phuket and Krabi.

"There were no tourists during the first year after the tsunami hit the Andaman coast in 2004, but four years after the incident, visitors returned almost 80%," recalled Charlemchart, who is one of the survivors and the owner of the Eco Khao Lak Adventure tour company. This year will mark the 12th year. The tourism business is still bright and shining, he said.

It is estimated that there are more than 9,000 hotel rooms in Phangnga province, and the number keeps rising, as Phangnga is known for its quiet, long beaches.

Packed with a variety of attractions, Takua Pa can be an extended destination for those who like sun, sand and sea.



TRAVEL INFO

The easiest way to get to Takua Pa is to take a taxi or rent a car from Phuket Airport. Tourist accommodation is available in the form of guesthouses, but if you are looking for bungalows or three- to five-star hotels, choices are plenty along Khuk Khak and Khao Lak beaches, about 30 minutes' drive from the old town.

For more information, visit the website of the Tourism Authority of Thailand at [www.tourismthailand.org](http://www.tourismthailand.org) or call the Takua Pa municipality office at 076-424-525.

BEEN THERE  
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ROOM NUMBER  
943

POOL VILLA (FOREST VIEW)

## Muthi Maya Forest Pool Villa Resort

1/3 Moo 6, Thanarat Road, Mu Si, Pak Chong, Nakhon Ratchasima 30130  
Tel: 02-221-5255 and 044-426-000  
Website: [www.kirimaya.com/resorts/muthimaya](http://www.kirimaya.com/resorts/muthimaya)  
Email: [reservation@kirimaya.com](mailto:reservation@kirimaya.com)  
Facebook: [www.facebook.com/Kirimayalanpana](http://www.facebook.com/Kirimayalanpana)

Muthi Maya is nestled in a secluded corner of vast and peaceful estate it shares with two sister properties, Kirimaya and Atta. The resort is made up of 61 pool villas, each of which comes in similar size and design. The main difference is the view (forest, mountain and golf course) that guests can enjoy from the private pool and deck at the back. Make sure you state your preference when you book.



<b>ATMOSPHERE</b>	My cosy 164m <sup>2</sup> villa, like others in the same row, offered a decent level of privacy while still providing an open view of the lush greenery and mountains further back. For people who seek natural serenity that comes with modern convenience, this is a nice place to be.
<b>LOCATION</b>	The secluded resort sits on the northern boundary of Khao Yai National Park so it is convenient to drive to the park's many attractions as well as Khao Phaeng Ma Non-hunting Area where gaur, a kind of wild ox, can often be spotted.
<b>CLEANLINESS</b>	My villa was nicely kept, both indoors and outdoors. Even the plunge pool was free of fallen leaves. Outside the villa, common areas are well taken care of. Food at the buffet line comes in covered containers.
<b>SERVICE QUALITY</b>	From the main gate, the security guards' courtesy provided a good first impression. Once I reached the resort a couple of kilometres deeper into the estate, the receptionist and other staff members made me feel even more welcome. They were friendly, helpful but not intrusive.
<b>FACILITIES</b>	The villa comes with a 7x3m pool, patio with sunbeds and a free-standing jacuzzi. The pantry had a microwave oven, espresso machine, plus dining table and tableware. The day bed was huge and could be turned into a comfortable extra bed. Wi-Fi was fast and stable.
<b>F&amp;B</b>	Breakfast buffet offered a wide variety of food items. However, I didn't find any that were outstanding. The resort also has an Italian restaurant that serves lunch and dinner.
<b>GUEST SAFETY</b>	The property is well sealed from the outside world. Guards show good teamwork. Electrical outlets in the toilet are covered to protect them from moisture.
<b>ENVIRONMENTAL &amp; SOCIAL CONCERNS</b>	Eighty percent of the people on the payroll are locals. The resort contributes to nearby monasteries and co-operates with the national park in maintaining the fire road. Treated waste water goes to the gardens where chemical use is kept to a minimum.
<b>SPA</b>	Muthi Maya doesn't have its own spa but its sister property Kirimaya has one.
<b>RATE</b>	Rates vary depending on how much in advance you book. Also, each villa costs more on weekends than on weekdays. For example, currently the rate for the first weekend of February is 8,071 baht ++ per night, inclusive of breakfast.

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