

Diving in Thailand

Live aboards are becoming quite popular and ubiquitous in Thai waters



Dive tourism in Thailand is thriving. With a large base of dive retailers and operators, scuba diving is a cash cow for Thailand's tourism. More than 300,000 overseas visitors come to the country to dive each year, and there are also around 80,000 certified card-holding Thai scuba divers. Ko Tao is the designated destination for all dive beginners (30% of all dive certificates in the world are issued here).

Diving in Thailand is economical and available at all times of the year, although underwater visibility changes by season. In the Andaman Sea, the best time to dive is from October to April, and sites in the Gulf of Thailand are best dived from May to September.

Reputable dive shops are affiliated with PADI or other international dive bodies, and most hold courses in multiple languages. All over Thailand, you can expect modern amenities, international standard boats and professional facilities.

Groups and families can avail good live aboard operations which also cater to snorkelers and non-divers. Friends and family of divers can relax, swim,

snorkel and enjoy the food, trip, scenery and experience of cruising in some warm and beautiful seas.

WHEN TO GO

By far the best time to visit is from February to March when the weather is kind and the beaches are at their finest. The peak travel months are August, November, December, February and March, with secondary peak months in January and July. If your main objective is to avoid crowds and to take advantage of discounted rooms and low-season rates, you should consider traveling during the least crowded months (April, May, June, September and October).

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WHAT TO BRING

The climate in Thailand is best described as tropical with a range of seasons from very hot to mild (but still warm). The usual resort wear and light cotton clothing is best. Shorts, short dresses and T-shirts are the norm in most spots. If you are staying in a fancy hotel, check if there is any sort of dress code, especially for dining. Otherwise, relax. In December or January it can be cool in the evenings, so pack a thin jacket or pullover. The rest of the year is hot both day and night.

Use both a high DEET content sun-screen and long-sleeve pants, shirts and socks if you are in a malarial area. Most dive destinations aren't a problem in Thailand, but areas in the north of the

country, like Chiang Mai, can have malarial mosquitoes.

Some people travel light or arrive with near-empty suitcases in order to take advantage of Thailand's great tailors and shopping.



The Best Dives

Wreck Dive

The **HTMS Kham** was sunk especially for divers around Pattaya and is a great site for playing and training.



Shark Dive

The best chance to see a shark is at **Ko Bon**, where manta rays come in to clean

and an occasional whale shark may join in the fray. Leopard sharks rest in the sand at 100ft.

Reef Dive

Shark Point, near Phuket, is a real beauty with three pinnacles covered in sea life.

Pinnacle Dive

Western Rocky Island is an amazing formation that has macro life and tons of fish.

Critter Dive

There's lots going on all the time at **Richelieu Rock**, where frogfish, harlequin shrimp and mating cuttlefish are seen on a regular basis.

