

FROM THE BEACH TO THE STREET IN PHUKET

CHECK IN AND CHILL AT THE PULLMAN, PARTY IN PATONG OR WALK IN THE OLD TOWN. JUST THREE OF PHUKET'S MANY OPTIONS THAT MIKE SMITH TRIED WHEN HE ENJOYED A TROPICAL RETREAT.

Phuket, a rainforested, mountainous island has some of Thailand's most popular beaches including Patong with its bars and nightlife. There are also tranquil beaches off the beaten track where you can find upmarket resorts, such as Pullman Phuket Arcadia Naithon Beach, for a relaxing get away. For a complete change of scene visit Phuket Old Town which has been going through re-generation and now has trendy cafes, beautifully restored buildings and, like many cities, great murals.

SPACIOUS PULLMAN

First impressions count and the Pullman Phuket Arcadia, perched on a headland overlooking the Andaman Sea didn't disappoint. I arrived early in the morning so after a brief chat with Khun Bella, the lively PR Manager, who explained the general facilities and options at the resort I had time to chill before my room was available.

The resort design makes full use of nature in its spacious layout and the landscaping of the infinity pool and seating areas ensure great views of Naithon Beach. GM Brett Wilson stated: "A resort vacation is all about beautiful beaches, fantastic food, amazing local experiences and spectacular sunsets. Impeccable service is a given."

THE RIGHT ELEMENTS

I made myself at home! My room was excellent and a healthy walk from the lobby made sure I didn't pile on too many pounds (I did cheat and use the golf buggy shuttle service with my bags!)

Most people gravitate to the exceptional pool; I did too but was peckish so after a few photos had a seafood salad lunch which was amazingly presented in a pineapple shell at Elements Restaurant.

There is a shuttle service to Naithon Beach for those who need it and direct access via a short steep staircase at the side of the pool. The beach is spacious, clean and relaxed. There are no hawkers or touts just a few restaurants, bars





PULLMAN POOL AND
NAITHON BEACH



THE LOBBY - PULLMAN PHUKET

and spas on the road behind it if you need refreshment.

ARTISTS PLAYGROUND BY PULLMAN

Pullman hotels are committed to design, art and photography and while I was there they launched Artist Playground. They collaborate with artists and designers to create a part gallery, part studio to inspire guests. Diversity - HeForShe by Rittipong Nupon, a talented Phuket artist, was created to support efforts by male artists against inequalities faced by today's women.

The human body and complicated postures using splatter painting techniques define Rittipong's work. He gets his inspiration from photographs rather than using live models.

FROM PULLMAN TO PATONG

Day two was totally chilling!! I started off with the buffet breakfast - it was one of the best I've ever had. Bloody Mary for starters followed by every imaginable hot and cold breakfast item from sushi to baked ham to Thai delights. Just before lunch I enjoyed an amazing hot oil massage at the Spa by Pullman. After dinner I chilled some more listening to live music at C Bar.

I was reluctant to leave the Pullman, but Patong was next on my schedule. The "Heartbeat of Phuket" is loved by most, hated by some. I love it and it has greatly improved. For a start, the beach is clean of cigarette butts! Smoking is



PATONG

restricted to approved zones. The No Smoking rule is actually enforced. Great job!

ACTION PATONG

Patong is all about nightlife and water sports, be it yachting, jet ski, paddle board or para sailing. It's brash, in your face and fun. Yes, there are touts and hawkers and you have to rent a chair and umbrella on the beach, but that's ok. The



DIVERSITY - HEFORSHE WITH
KHUN BELLA AND THE ARTIST



PARASAILING PATONG

sunsets are sensational. I thoroughly enjoyed my couple of days there.

THE FACE OF THE OLD TOWN

Phuket Old Town on the other hand is rather sophisticated and perfect for a day trip. My focus was on the street art. It is best explored on foot starting at the fountain circle at the top of Yaowarat Road. I grabbed a coffee and snack at the excellent Gallery Cafe and continued to Krabi Road where there are many stunning shophouses, the superb Thai Hua Museum and the former Governor's Mansion now the Blue Elephant Restaurant.

A narrow alleyway on the left leads to the Downtown Market where you can see a few examples of street art including a large image of Mardi, the three eyed baby, by one of Thailand's most instantly recognisable artists, Alex Face. It brightens up a rather grubby wall. This, and many other murals, were drawn as part of the Food Art Town Phuket (FAT Phuket) celebrating Phuket becoming a UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy in 2015 and represents breakfast at the market.

MANY MORE MURALS

Phang Nga Road has dozens of murals. Two are by Phichit Paidaeng and located near to Yaowarat Road. The first shows an auntie in her home kitchen with two family members with her, the second depicts a hawker frying oyster omelette. By the On On Hotel, famous for being in "The Beach" movie starring Leonardo DiCaprio, Liudmila Letnikova & Lolay painted the Chinese New Year celebrations.

Opposite is a huge mural by Mue Bon which features a turtle pulling Bon's trademark 'Pukrok' bird holding a spray can. In an alley leading to a car park by the Sinthavee Hotel is an excellent selection of art including a fantastic hornbill by Charcoal. Next to it P7's tiger represents Phuket's kopi culture of drinking coffee with snacks, many of which are hidden in the image.

BABA LADY

I ended my tour of murals at Pin's Baba Lady with Desserts on Ratsada Road, near the fountain circle where the walk started. It is my favourite Phuket mural. The vivid colours, attention to detail and relaxed pose make it a truly wonderful image.

I love Phuket, the Pullman Phuket Arcadia Naithon Beach, Patong Beach and the Old Town give a great, balanced stay. ❖



ART BY RITTIPONG NUPON



AUNTIE AND FAMILY
BY PHICHIT PAIDAENG

Pocket Guide

Hotel Naithon Beach
Pullman Phuket Arcadia Naithon
Beach
www.pullmanphuketarcadia.com

Hotel Patong
Amata Patong
www.amatapatong.com



MURAL BY MUE BON



MURAL PHUKET MARKET BY ALEX IACE



CHINESE NEW YEAR MURAL BY LIUDMILA AND LOLAY



P7S TIGER MURAL



BABA LADY WITH DESSERTS