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Beyond the Beach: Four Ways to Experience Southern Thailand with OUTRIGGER Resorts

From mangrove planting and turtle conservation to seagrass restoration and local seafaring traditions, four beachfront resorts connect travelers more closely with the places they visit



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THAILAND — A beach vacation can be more than beautiful. It can leave travelers with a deeper understanding of the people, traditions and natural environments that make a destination worth visiting in the first place. That desire is growing: according to Booking.com’s 2025 global research, nearly seven in 10 travelers (69%) want to leave the places they visit better than when they arrived. Across four resorts in Koh Samui, Khao Lak, Phi Phi Island and Phuket, OUTRIGGER brings that intention to life through locally shaped experiences centered on ocean health, cultural connection and the well-being of beach communities.

Each destination tells a different story. In Koh Samui, food waste becomes nourishment for a local farm and baby crabs are returned to the sea. In Khao Lak, guests can help restore mangrove forests and learn about native sea turtles. On Phi Phi Island, the traditions of a seafaring community reveal a culture shaped by the Andaman Sea. In Phuket, an early-morning walk along Surin Beach becomes an opportunity to care for its shoreline.

Together, these locally shaped efforts are part of OUTRIGGER Zone, the company’s overarching conservation initiative guiding action to protect ocean health and support coastal communities across its global resort portfolio.

“Caring for the ocean also means supporting the people, traditions and local knowledge that have shaped these destinations for generations,” said Damian Clowes, Regional Managing Director, Asia Pacific, OUTRIGGER Hospitality Group. “By working alongside local partners, we can help guests experience southern Thailand in a way that feels more personal, meaningful and connected to place.”

OUTRIGGER PHI PHI ISLAND: BAREFOOT LUXURY & CULTURE SHAPED BY THE SEA

On Phi Phi Island, connection to the sea is expressed through the traditions of the Urak Lawoi, the seafaring people of the Andaman whose history is closely intertwined with the islands. At the newly opened OUTRIGGER Phi Phi Island Resort, handcrafted bead bracelets and other locally informed details recognize the Urak Lawoi community’s relationship with the sea and its place within the island’s living cultural identity.

That connection to place will also inspire a September 18 activity at Loh Lana Bay, where 50 OUTRIGGER hosts, students from Laem Tong School and neighboring hotel teams will join a beach cleanup in celebration of World Cleanup Day. Following the cleanup, participants will take part in a two-hour upcycling workshop, turning collected waste into useful items and exploring practical ways to reduce waste and give discarded materials a second life.

These efforts form part of the resort’s wider sustainability program, which includes on-site edible gardens and organic waste composting that supply the kitchens, wastewater recycling for irrigation, elimination of single-use plastics through reusable supplier packaging, Aqueous-Ozone cleaning systems that replace harsh chemicals and chlorine-free saltwater pools. Local sourcing is prioritized throughout — from Thai teak furnishings and Phuket-made villa amenities to seafood landed by the Sea Gypsy community on the resort beach — while electric vehicles support daily operations.

The experience offers a reminder that caring for a destination involves more than protecting its natural beauty. It also means respecting the people, knowledge and traditions that have shaped it over generations. That sense of place carries through the resort itself. Set on a secluded white-sand beach on Phi Phi Island’s northern shore, the barefoot-luxury retreat was completely transformed around Nit Thra—the Thai “soul of rest.”

Handcrafted furnishings, organic textiles and woven details inspired by southern Thailand appear throughout the resort. Accommodations include a Hilltop Ocean View Pool Villa with a private infinity pool, a Beachfront Pool Villa positioned directly on the sand and a Family Garden Villa surrounded by tropical greenery.

Guests can further explore Phi Phi’s natural and cultural landscape, from its limestone formations and Andaman waters to the ancient art found inside Viking Cave in Hat Noppharat Thara–Mu Ko Phi Phi National Park.

OUTRIGGER KOH SAMUI: FOLLOWING THE CONNECTION FROM LAND TO SEA

At OUTRIGGER Koh Samui Beach Resort, caring for the coast begins well before the shoreline. The resort works with Suk Por Tao Farm, founded by Kanit Somwong, which redirects food waste to help feed hundreds of ducks, chickens, pigs, goats and cows. The farm currently manages more than 10 tons of food waste each day, demonstrating how discarded food can be put to productive use within the local community.

The resort will continue that commitment this September with a Food Waste Management activity on September 15 at BannYa Suanpu Learning Center. More than 30 OUTRIGGER hosts will prepare food waste to feed farm animals and turn fruit waste into natural liquid fertilizer, extending the resort’s focus on keeping food and organic materials in productive use within the local community.

Closer to the ocean, the resort supports the Baan Tai Crab Bank, where community members nurture crabs before releasing their young into the sea. The initiative released a reported three million baby crabs last year, helping replenish local waters and support an ecosystem important to coastal livelihoods. The resort also supports seagrass restoration, with more than 24,000 seedlings planted. Often overlooked, seagrass provides habitat for juvenile crabs and fish, protects coastlines, stores carbon and supports water quality.

Back at the resort, the atmosphere is decidedly playful. Set along Lamai Beach, the colonial-inspired property is particularly well suited to families. Edgewater Beach Club features four swimming pools, a children's water slide, beachfront dining, a bar and massage salas. The resort offers a kids club, games room, indoor laser tag venue with brand new equipment and Muay Thai boxing classes. For the creative crown, Bangkok-based Cave Craft offers hands-on workshops where participants can create their own perfumes, candles, tote bags, poured bears and more.

OUTRIGGER KHAO LAK: PLANTING THE FORESTS THAT PROTECT THE COAST

At OUTRIGGER Khao Lak Beach Resort, guests can roll up their sleeves and help care for one of southern Thailand's most important coastal ecosystems. The resort supports the restoration of mangrove forests, which store carbon, protect coastal communities from storms and erosion and provide essential nursery habitats for fish and other marine species. More than 3,000 mangrove trees are planted each year.

On September 21, hosts will put that connection into action during a Sea Turtle Nursery Pond Cleaning at the Phang-Nga Sea Turtle Conservation Center, Royal Thai Navy. The activity will bring hosts together to clean the Sea Turtle Pond and Sea Turtle Nursery Pond, supporting the conservation work highlighted through the resort's turtle-focused experiences.

Guests can also learn about native sea turtles through release and pond-cleaning programs connected with leatherback, green, hawksbill and olive ridley turtles found in the region. Participation and release timing are determined by conservation needs and seasonal conditions.

The setting offers plenty of reasons to stay longer. Located directly on tranquil Bangsak Beach, the resort has spacious rooms and suites with balconies or terraces, along with seven standalone villas -- four featuring private plunge pools. From May through October, seasonal swells bring Khao Lak's emerging surf scene to life. Guests can spend the day catching waves nearby or taking part in a Muay Thai class before settling in for fresh seafood and sunset views at Edgewater.

The resort is certified in Child-Safe and Friendly Tourism, complementing its Coral Kids Club, spacious accommodations and family-oriented activities. OUTRIGGER Khao Lak Beach Resort was recently ranked No. 1 of 86 Khao Lak hotels on Tripadvisor and received the No. 1 honor in Trip.com's 2025 Scenic Hotel Awards. Phang Nga was also named one of the world's Most Welcoming Regions in Booking.com's 2026 Traveler Review Awards, based on millions of verified traveler reviews.

OUTRIGGER SURIN: CARING FOR THE SHORELINE, ONE MORNING AT A TIME

At OUTRIGGER Surin Beach Resort, one of the most meaningful guest experiences begins with a simple walk along the sand. Guests are invited to join early-morning cleanups on Surin Beach, helping remove waste from the shoreline while learning more about its effect on beaches and marine environments. The experience offers an approachable way to give something back to the place guests have traveled to enjoy.

The resort is also extending its care for the local community beyond the beach. On September 18, 30 hosts will take part in “From Waste to Warmth,” a month-long recycling campaign that encourages locals to collect and sort recyclable waste from home. The recyclables will be sold to SAO Chongtalay, with proceeds exchanged for eggs to support bedridden patients in the local Bangtao community.

Further inland, the resort works with a local elephant sanctuary, where guests can learn from conservationists about the care of rescued Thai elephants and the importance of responsible wildlife tourism.

The resort itself brings a boutique sensibility to Phuket. With just 60 rooms and suites, the intimate property channels Surin’s easygoing surf culture through colorful design and a relaxed social atmosphere. Accommodations range from pool-access rooms to spacious two-level suites and suites with private plunge pools. Nalu Bar & Grill and its loft bar provide a lively gathering place for globally influenced barbecue, cocktails and Phuket sunsets.

All four OUTRIGGER resorts in Thailand received 2026 Tripadvisor Travelers’ Choice Awards and participate in GHA DISCOVERY. OUTRIGGER Khao Lak Beach Resort, OUTRIGGER Koh Samui Beach Resort and OUTRIGGER Surin Beach Resort also hold Green Key certification.

Experiences and conservation activities vary by resort, season and partner availability. For current schedules, rates and reservations, please visit [OUTRIGGER.com](https://www.outrigger.com).

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ABOUT OUTRIGGER RESORTS & HOTELS

For more than 75 years, OUTRIGGER has charted a journey of discovery – expanding from Hawai’i to premier resort destinations including Fiji, Mauritius, Thailand and the Maldives. The privately held hospitality company invites guests to ‘Come Be Here’ with authentic Signature Experiences and the OUTRIGGER DISCOVERY loyalty program – a member of the award-winning Global Hotel Alliance (GHA). OUTRIGGER’s multi-branded portfolio includes OUTRIGGER Resorts, Hawaii Vacation Condos by OUTRIGGER®, The Kapalua Villas Maui and OUTRIGGER Honua Kai Resort & Spa while also managing select properties from top international hotel brands including Embassy Suites by Hilton®. Find out more at [OUTRIGGER.com](https://www.outrigger.com) or visit @OUTRIGGERResorts on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.

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