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Welcome to the Andaman Sea

The Andaman Sea is the last great discovery for yacht cruising enthusiasts. These uncrowded, unpolluted tropical waters have, with their outstanding natural beauty, earned the distinction of being Southeast Asia's glamour destination for sailing and boating in general.

The Andaman Sea is as close to cruising excellence as any sailor can hope to find on planet Earth. Moderate and steady breezes, easily navigable waters, numerous and safe island anchorages, together with some of the world's clearest waters are just some of the reasons why the Andaman Sea is rapidly earning its most-favoured-destination status.

The Andaman Sea has had to wait until the 1990s for the word to spread about these superb sailing waters and the scores of relatively unknown islands that are waiting to be visited and explored. As you will find reading *Sail Thailand*, the choice of scenic anchorages is immense, the attractions superb. To begin with, there are the warm, crystal-clear waters which lap at talc-soft white sand. Some of the world's finest unpolluted ocean abounds with stunning beauty and teems with colourful sea life. At the same time, the choice of route when sailing the Andaman is magnificently varied — each is different; each has its own distinct attractions.

Off the east coast of Phuket, for example, lies Phang Nga Bay, where sunlit *hongs*, hidden worlds, reach out to the sky from limestone karst mountains which rise dramatically from the sea.

To the northeast lie the wonderfully clear waters of the nine Similan Islands. A week's cruising here will supply a life-

time's memories of brilliantly coloured underwater coral gardens rich with ocean life of every description. Before deciding on your sailing route check weather conditions and consult the *Sail Thailand* cruise charts.

From May to October, during the months of the southwest monsoon, the waters west of Phuket should be avoided unless the crew is experienced in rough conditions. But in the remaining months conditions are near-perfect to sail anywhere the Andaman Sea beckons.

Each December, as well, the Andaman Sea comes under the yachting world's spotlight when some of the finest yachts gather for the King's Cup Regatta. After eight days of racing the yacht crews turn their attention to cruising the Andaman powered by the steady trade winds which blow in, in the early morning, and blow out in the evening for a calm anchorage.

Another of the big advantages Phuket has over other yachting destinations is the relatively small numbers of craft taking advantage of the unspoiled waters. One of the sheer delights of living is to sail without the constant worry of avoiding another boat. Unlike popular sailing destinations elsewhere in the world, where boat safety and sea traffic are major considerations, the Andaman offers miles of emptiness and relaxing solitude.

The Andaman Sea is one of the last frontiers for island cruising. So do it now — come explore this exotic tropical paradise.

By Patrick Cusick (Managing Editor, *Phuket Magazine*)

KEEP THE SEAS CLEAN

Garbage Management on Yachts, Diveboats, etc.

Phuket's yachting and dive companies are all describing the unspoilt beauty of the Andaman Sea in their brochures, while at the same time some boat crews are still dumping garbage in the sea on a daily basis. Obviously this practice must be stopped. Where there are people there is garbage, but here are a few ideas on how to minimize the impact of our presence on the environment.

The trick is in separating biodegradable waste from the rest. All food leftovers -- fruit peels, etc. -- can be thrown in the water. Often this is a source of entertainment for your customers, as the fish come and eat the handouts. Paper, such as toilet paper, or even newspapers, is also biodegradable. However, paper should only be dumped in open sea (if one really must) where it has time to dissolve and does not wash up on a beach. Better to just bring it back to shore.

NON-BIODEGRADABLE WASTE

This should never be dumped in the sea. The best method is to have a large garbage container with a lid on deck, on a place where crew and passengers have easy access to it. The person in charge of the trip should explain to the passengers that this is for non-organic waste only.

A 26-gallon container is big enough for a 5-day trip with 15 persons on board. These containers are for sale in the 'plastic shops' behind the market.

During the boat-trip a small amount of chlorine (Clorox or Haiter) should be sprinkled over the garbage in the container, so

there will be no smell.

Also the garbage needs to be compressed daily, otherwise the container will be full in three days. You achieve this by having a small plank or better yet a round piece of plywood of a diameter smaller than that of the container and get your biggest, heaviest passenger to stand on it, thereby reducing the volume of the garbage. Satisfaction guaranteed!

BEER BOTTLES

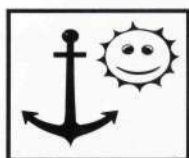
Some boats just throw them in the sea, other boats think they are doing the environment a favour by breaking the bottles first (so they don't float) and then dumping the shards. **WRONG WRONG WRONG** If future generations need the ocean bottom they are going to be most grateful to their ancestors for avoiding this practice. Out of sight is not out of mind.

When you bought the beer it was in a box (or did you already dump that box in the sea?). So why not stick the empties back in that same box, and take it back to shore. The local scrap-merchants pay between four and twelve baht for a box of empties.

Once you have managed to stop littering by your own boat it is time to look at others. If you see any boat throw plastic bags in the sea, pick them up and bring them back to that boat, at the same time politely explaining your feelings about this. Often their tourist customers witness all this, and the crew is shamed into better behaviour. If not, at least you know you tried.

Courtesy Fantasea Divers, Phuket

DAY ANCHORAGE



Locations where anchoring is feasible but where the vessel should not be left unattended. Not usually recommended for overnight stops.

NIGHT ANCHORAGE



Secure anchorages suitable for overnight stops. Refer to the text for seasonal clarification.

RESTAURANT



Covers all kinds of local restaurants from simple food stalls to international hotel standard.

WATER SUPPLY



Indicates the availability of well water, and in a very few cases of tap water, that can be transported to your boat by jerrican. If on a jetty it is mentioned in the text

SYMBOLS

FUEL SUPPLY



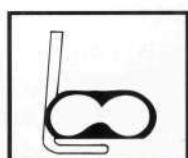
Locations where diesel or gasoline can be bought in small quantities and carried in jerricans — unless otherwise indicated in text.

PROVISIONS



Indicates populated areas ashore where shops or markets can supply a minimum standard of provisioning.

SNORKELLING



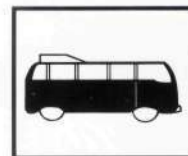
Areas where coral growth and fish life are at a depth suitable for snorkelling. Water clarity is reasonable but related to the state of the tide and the prevailing winds.

DIVING



Locations where coral, fish life, and underwater topography create an interesting dive site within easy reach of the anchorage.

TRANSPORT



Access ashore to tuk-tuks, taxis, or local buses.

TELEPHONE



A minimum standard of telephone links to Phuket.

HABITATION



Any form of dwelling or village. Does not imply shops or restaurants.

MOORINGS

Please note that while there have so far been relatively few moorings established in the anchorages suggested in this book, it is important that every effort be made to utilize those which do exist. Many wonderful coral gardens have been turned to rubble by the indiscriminate dropping of anchors.

Some moorings have been established by the volunteer efforts of local diving and watersports companies, in conjunction with government agencies, but many more

are needed. Also note that in a few cases private companies running regular cruises have put down their own moorings for their vessels.

Yachtsmen are also encouraged to make use of these private moorings. But, should any one-off sailor arrive first and tie up, the unspoken gentleman's rule requires him to untie and turn it over to the owner, should such turn up thereafter and identify himself.



PHANGNGA

Phang Nga Town

Koh Panyi

Koh Raya Ring

Koh Mak Noi

Ao Phangnga

Ao Luk

Koh Chong Lat

Laem Phrao

Koh Yai

Koh Roi

Koh Kudu

Koh Boi Noi

Koh Phanak

Koh Boi Yai

Koh Yao Noi

Koh Nakha

Koh Yao Yai

Koh Hong

Koh Nakha Noi

Ao Nang

Ao Krabi

Koh Rang Noi

Koh Dam Hok

Koh Rang Yai

Koh Dam Khwan

Koh Maphrao

Koh Khai Nok

Phuket Town

Koh Siray

Phuket Harbour

Ao Chalong

Koh Taphao Noi

Koh Dok Mai

Koh Yung

Bamboo Is

Kata

Koh Mai Thon

Koh Kai

Koh Phi Phi

Koh Lon

Koh Hi

Phi Phi Le

Koh Bon

Koh Keaw Yai

Koh Ma

Koh Racha Yai

Koh Racha Noi

Andaman Sea

To Similan Islands

Nai Yang

Lang Tao

Surin Kamala

Patong

Karon

Nai Ham

Koh Bon

Koh Keaw Yai

Phuket Town

KRABI Krabi Town

N
SAIL
THAILAND

The Andaman

Asia's New

Aquatic

Playground

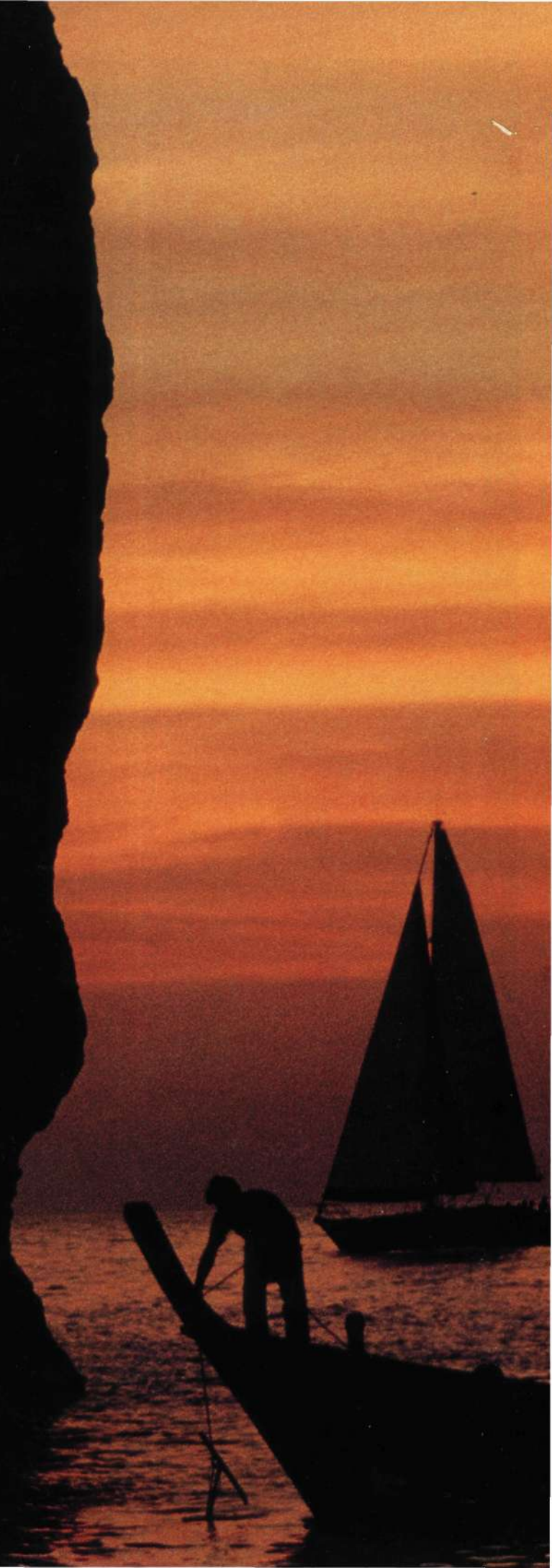
Phuket is fast gaining a world-wide reputation both as a cruising and as a yacht-racing destination. The local yacht charter business is booming, while the Phuket King's Cup Regatta, inaugurated in 1987, has already proven hugely successful with the international yachting fraternity.

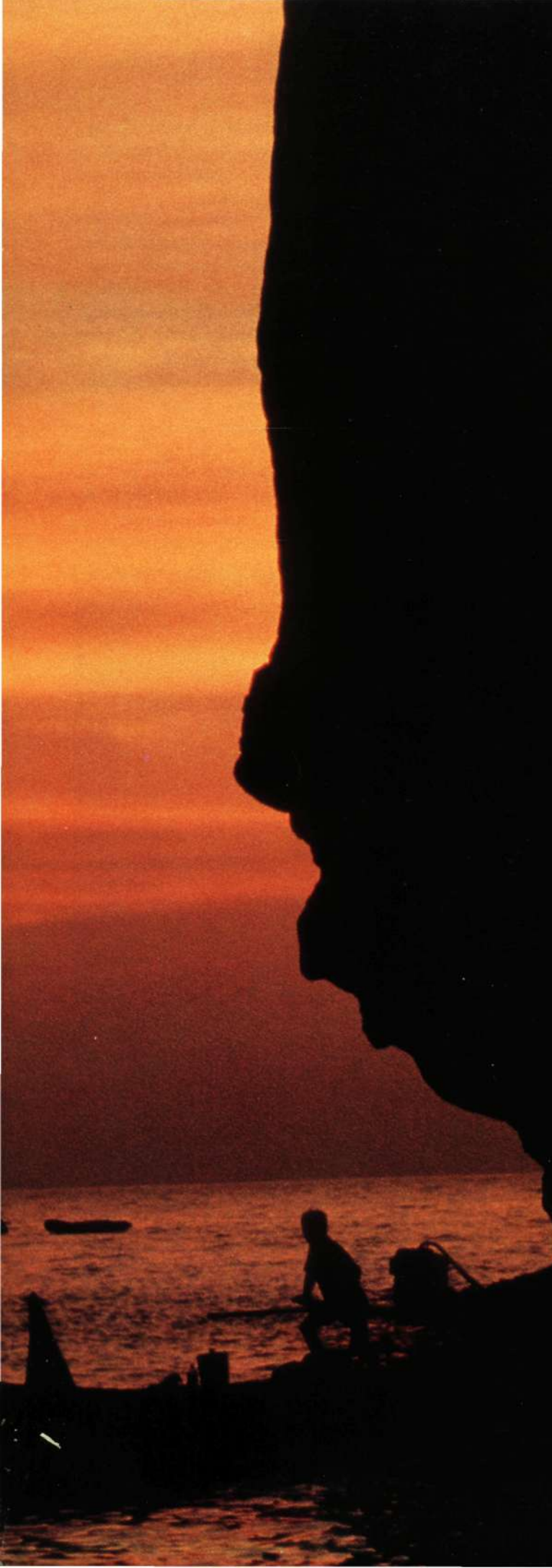
This growing popularity is explained on one hand by the scenery, at times awe-inspiring, which provides a fine backdrop for water sports of all kinds.

Phi Phi Le, for example, is a spectacular island only a few hours by yacht from Phuket. It is deserted but for a few Sea Gypsies who earn a living collecting birds' nests from the caves and crevices on the towering rock walls. A short sail away lies Phi Phi Le's sister, Phi Phi Don, with its stunning bays, lush coconut groves, and ample bungalow accommodation.

Then there are the Racha Islands, home to traditional Muslim communities out of time, still living the old ways in the midst of a vast natural bounty which includes orchards so rich the ripe fruit is often left to rot on the ground where it falls.

A 12-hour sail to the northwest brings you to the Similan Islands, scenically different from the others mentioned here, and rated by many as one of the top ten diving destinations in the world.





*From its marvellous
scenery and climate to its many
unspoiled islands to Phuket, with
its boating, entertainment, and
recreational facilities of all
kinds, the Andaman Sea
has everything a sailor
could ask for*

By Collin Piprell

Further north still, just below the border with Burma, the Surin Islands offer scenes of similar impact both on the surface and underwater.

Krabi, on the mainland coast just east of Phuket, has many islands fringed with thick jungle and surrounded by intense turquoise waters. Or explore Phang Nga Bay, off the northeast end of Phuket, one of the most memorable natural sights anywhere in the world. For sailors, this area has the added advantage of being sheltered from both the northeast and the southwest monsoons; this means year-round cruising in surroundings of unparalleled natural beauty.

The many scenic islands of Thailand's southern seas, however, are just one factor explaining the recent explosion of interest in sailing these waters.

If you should tire of desert isles and unspoiled nature, places such as Patong Beach can give you all the *haute cuisine* dining, all the high decibel nightlife you could ever want, not to mention a wide range of other land and sea recreations. Besides that, there's the climate.

There are two seasons in the south of Thailand. During the November to April northeast monsoon, the weather in the Phuket area is consistently sunny and dry with calm seas; at the same time the winds are nevertheless ideal for sailing.

The Mediterranean has nothing to compare with this. In the May to October southwest monsoon, on the other hand, heavy seas tend to roll in off the *Indian Ocean*, making the west coast anchorages insecure, while squalls may lend unwelcome spice to a day's cruising. At this time of year, yachts are generally moved from anchorages such as Patong Bay around to Ao Chalong or Laem Phrao, which are sheltered from the southwest monsoon. Or one can find safe sailing year-round in Phang Nga Bay.

PHANG NGA BAY

This is one of the most spectacular sights in Thailand, if not the whole

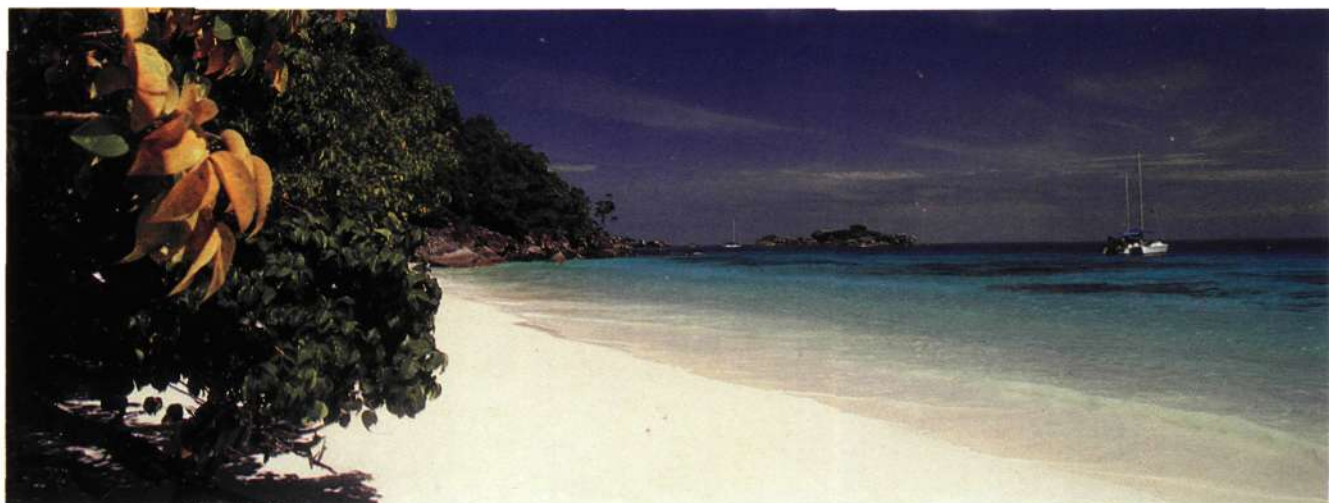
*Krabi, the
Similan Islands,
and Phang Nga Bay
between them
offer a splendid
variety of exotic
destinations*

world: a 400-square-kilometre gallery of gigantic limestone sculptures set in the shallow, milky-green waters of Phang Nga Bay.

Declared a marine national park in 1981 by the Thai government, this area so far remains largely unspoiled, timeless. Anchored in the lee of an island such as Koh Phanak, you can easily travel in imagination back thousands of years, back to the age when mysterious fishermen came in boats and painted animals and men and cryptic symbols on cliff faces and overhangs, back further still to a time before men existed at all. High above, fish eagles ride the thermals in stately silence; at dusk 'flying foxes', huge fruit bats, rush twittering from clifftops on the evening hunt.



A fishing boat takes a rest amongst the islands of Krabi



At anchor in the Similan Islands.

The scenery of this region reflects a fascinating history of geological upheaval and change. Some 200 million years ago, a barrier reef stretched for thousands of kilometres from the southern Andaman Sea through to the southern provinces of China. Over the ages, corals and other marine organisms laid down a bed of limestone hundreds of metres thick. Over the aeons, again, gigantic forces in the earth's crust pushed up the inelastic sedimentary rock, rupturing it into the sheer-sided blocks which have been then further shaped by wind and water.

Sea-levels have fluctuated by more than 150 metres with the advance and retreat of the polar ice-caps, undercutting the cliffs, boring sea-caves which in some cases are now below the waterline, and in other cases have been left staring high and dry above the sea. Meanwhile, rainwater has seeped into cracks and holes, dissolving the calcium carbonate to create sinkholes and cave-systems, most of which have never

yet been explored.

One recent addition to the attractions of Phang Nga are the so-called *hongs*, or 'rooms', which are to be found inside some of the islands. These hidden worlds of exotic flora and fauna are the result of collapsing cave systems, first discovered from the air, and only accessible through caves by canoe or dinghy.

Most of Phang Nga Bay is shallow — in some places only a few inches deep at low tide — so your boat should have a shallow draft, a depth sounder, and a

good engine in case you have to pull yourself off a mudbank. (The good news is that the bottom of the bay is mud, and if you do run aground, there will be no damage done.) But a chart really is essential, Map #333 from the Thai Hydrographic Department (Bangkok, 1931) being one which clearly indicates depths. At the end of the rainy season, however, the rivers to the north — the ones which have been responsible for depositing all that silt over the years — can temporarily extend the mudbanks farther south than is indicated on the charts, so one should be extra cautious during that period.

The seas are flat through both seasons. Phang Nga Bay is well protected even when the southwest monsoon sometimes makes the west coast of Phuket hazardous for small craft during the months of April to October. Still, the northeast monsoon — the months of November to March in particular — is most recommended simply because the consistently cool, dry, sunny weather

*Phang Nga Bay
means there is
never an off
season for yachting
in this region*



At anchor in the amazingly clear waters of the Similans

shows the islands off to their best advantage.

But you're safe sailing here any time of year without radar, simply navigating by the islands. If a big rain should come, just anchor — it's never very deep; wait till the weather passes and you can see your landmarks again. Even when there's a good wind for sailing, the seas are light. The junk-rigged *Suwan Macha* was sailing the bay when Typhoon Gay struck, in 1989. This freak storm struck so suddenly and with such force that, before they could be reefed, it stripped the sail panels from the masts. Nevertheless, recalls Captain Bernard Berteau, the waves never exceeded a metre, and there was no danger: he merely anchored till the worst of it passed.

From the point of view of passengers, the scenery and windsurfing are great. On the other hand, the beaches are a bit mucky and there isn't any snorkelling, due to the silt and shell bottom and the poor visibility.

This is no big disadvantage, however: Krabi and the Phi Phi Islands are but a short sail away. They combine scenery almost as spectacular as that of Phang Nga with clear waters and coral reefs as well.

The really serious divers, though, will want to try the Similan Islands.

SIMILANS

As you sail northwest from Patong Beach, and about the time Phuket disappears behind you, a group of nine low-lying comes up on the horizon. Until the mid-1980s the Similan Islands were one of the sailing and diving frontiers for cruises leaving from Phuket. Now, they represent more of a waystation, a stopover between all the facilities and diversions of Phuket and even remoter attractions than the Similans themselves.

The Similans offer some very pleasant anchorages in the northeast monsoon season, especially on Koh Similan (Island No. Eight) and Koh Miang (Island No. Four). In the southwest monsoon, however, there is little shelter to be found.

During the best season for sailing, underwater conditions are good enough to make the area at the same time one of the top ten dive destinations in the



Yachts of all sizes and designs find shelter in this peaceful bay on Phuket

*Fortunately,
and just in time,
the Thai government
has declared some
of these areas to
be marine
national parks*

world. (Acknowledging the value of this natural resource, the Thai government declared the area a marine national park in 1982.)

In part, this reputation is based on the variety of diving available. First of all, there is the fantastic bottom topography. Jumbled piles of enormous granite boulders fall away from surface to 35 metres and beyond, providing caves and arches for dozens of fascinating swim-throughs. Then there are the abundant fish, the many colourful coral species, the giant sea fans and barrel sponges. This reef community is occasionally enlivened, furthermore, by deep-water visitors such as whale sharks and manta rays. And the diver gets to experience all of this in waters which afford as much as 45 metres of underwater visibility (averaging 20-30 metres) and water temperatures which range from 26-28°C year-round.

If you don't have scuba gear on board, try contacting one of the several diveboat operators which can be found around the islands during the day. Some of them provide first-rate instruction, as well as equipment and local advice. Or just go snorkelling — there's lots of fine coral in shallow water.

From the Similans, you can sail north to try less frequently dived sites such as Koh Bon (where there is, however, no overnight anchorage), Koh Tachai and — the last Thai islands before you enter Burmese waters — Koh Surin. This group of islands is also a national park, a particularly lovely one, with diving of a similar standard to that found around the Similans, and with perhaps even better snorkelling.

So, from November to April, the Andaman Sea is ideal for sailing. From May to October, the weather and the seas get rather too unpredictable for some, though Phang Nga Bay is always fine for yachting, and Ao Chalong and Laem Phrao provide safe anchorages in the southwest monsoon.

It is at this time of year, as well, that some commercial sailing charter operations move to the Koh Samui side of the peninsula, in the Gulf of Thailand. Obliging enough, in the season when yachting holidays in the Andaman Sea become ill-advised for some, conditions are excellent in the Gulf, and vice versa. A sailing 'off season'? For Thailand as a whole, there is no such thing.

SIAMESE SAILING DAYS

A Nation with a Long and Proud History Under Sail

By Rosemary Whitcraft

**Thailand has been a nation
of ship-builders and sea-going traders
for hundreds of years, since at
least the Ayutthaya Period**

The history of the sea-going Siamese, from at least as early as the Kingdom of Ayutthaya (1350-1762), is one of tall and small ships both, of brave voyagers carrying the Thai colours to distant ports.

Few records exist of very early times, though sailing ships have been depicted on ancient palm-leaf volumes in temple libraries, in temple paintings, and even on the walls of seacaves on Koh Phi Phi. It is known, in any case, that from the early 1800s Thais designed and sailed their own distinctive junks, seaworthy vessels capable of both voyaging long distances in typhoons and making way in light winds. Furthermore, during the reign of Rama IV (King Mongkut, 1851-1868), Chuan Bunnag, the Treasury Minister's son, took a special interest in ship building and he is credited with starting construction of square-rigged sailing vessels in this land. By the end of King Mongkut's reign, these Siamese-made ships were replacing other indigenous and Chinese ships in carrying overseas trade to China, Japan and other distant ports.

At that time, Siam had 50 sailing vessels in the 100- to 1,000-tonne range. These ships were essentially floating stores. They transported trade goods to destinations all over Asia, staying in a place till their cargo was sold, at the same time taking aboard new goods for delivery to other ports of call.

One of the finest ships of the Siamese merchant fleet was the square-rigged ship *Thoon Kramom*. Built in Bangkok of teak with a copper-sheathed hull in 1866, she was designed along the lines of a tea clipper, and was used mostly

on the trade routes between Bangkok, Singapore, and Bombay. Danish Captain H.N. Andersen, however, took the *Thoon Kramom*, loaded with teak, all the way to Europe on a voyage out and back via the Cape. (The reported profit on the cargo was about 1000 percent.) Upon his return from a later voyage to and from Liverpool, this time loaded with coal, Captain Andersen came ashore in 1884 to found the firm H. N. Andersen and Company, the forerunner of the East Asiatic Company. *Thoon Kramom* itself was retired as a school ship for the Siamese Navy.

During the 1880s, the merchant sailing fleet steadily decreased in numbers as steamships took over the East Asia trade.

Much of what is recorded in English about Siamese sailing vessels was written by H. Warrington Smyth, the British author of *Mast and Sail in Europe and Asia* (1906). Smyth, a member of the Royal Thames Yacht Club before com-



ing East to spend five years in the service of His Majesty King Chulalongkorn's government, identified the typical sailing craft of the Gulf of Siam in those days as *rua pet* or *rua chalom*. *Rua pet* means 'duck boat', and the name referred to the fact that its hull was similar in shape to a duck. The expression *rua chalom*, alternatively, described the many other small boats with sails, no matter what type of rigging they carried.

Other typical sailing boats of the times included the *rua ta*, a junk design of Cambodian origin, the mongrol 'Bangkok lorcha', which had a Western-style hull rigged with a Chinese lugsail, and the small sailing sampan.

The *rua pet* was a deep-hulled sailing boat, broad flaring bows rising high, its whole design suggestive of a racing craft. These boats were usually built of *ton takien*, a local wood still much prized by boat builders, with most of the boatyards being located on the eastern side of the Gulf. The stern was sharp-pointed; and the rudder was mounted on the stern post, curving down and away to the keel at a considerable angle. The ship had two masts made of yellow palm and matted palm sails were preferred to cotton, since Siamese sailors claimed that this type of sail provided relief for the boat in a fresh wind, allowing a large portion of its force to pass

right through. In light winds, on the other hand, the matted sail seemed to hold the lightest air. These early sails were said to last twelve months at most. "By that time," according to Smyth, the sails were very ragged and full of holes, but the Siamese boatmen did not object to this as it saved reefing."

The *rua chalom*, by contrast, was a long, shallow-draught vessel. It was especially favoured by the Chinese and the *luk chin* — a name given to the children of mixed marriages between Chinese immigrants and Siamese women. The main peculiarity of the *rua chalom* was its steering gear, which included two rudders, each held in place



just above the blade by a stout piece of rattan. The slung quarter-rudder resembled the merchant ships of the Romans and the Greeks. The lee rudder was used only when the vessel was under sail.

Small boats of this type were used for fishing. They rowed well, with the crew standing up on the grating to work the oars. Under sail, they carried one large standing logsail, which was generally made of rectangular pieces of yellow palm matting and which was very light.

Another sailing boat was the *rua ta*, often found in small ports on the east coast. It had a lumbering hull with painted fore and stern galleries. This craft was rigged with the lug sail so common in the Gulf of Siam at the time, but one which had less peak, and it also had a mizzen. The *rua ta* ran up to sixty feet in length and had a generous carrying capacity. It was reported to be neither fast nor 'weather gallant'.

The junk rig was common in those days, the original Thai junk measuring from thirty to fifty feet and carrying a crew of four or five. Some of these vessels still survive today, but most have been converted to pleasure boats.

The Bangkok lorcha was a sailing lighter. Often loaded dockside at Koh Si Chang and Anghin, this craft was designed to carry rice across shallow bars to the ocean ships. Its hull was of good teak wood, and constructed on European lines, while it was rigged in a fashion similar to that of the Chinese three-masters. In the mid-1800s, a fleet of sixty or more of these Bangkok-built

**"The Thais
have the smartness
and pluck for
handling
their vessels making them
a seafaring class
of which any coast
might be proud"**



The revenue cutter Chase travelled the world for Thai merchants



A square-rigger from the reign of King Rama V

rarely use sails now.

Thais who live along the river or the sea continue to use a great variety of boats today, however. And the Thai Navy tends to select its recruits from provinces located on the water, thereby tacitly acknowledging the persistence of Thailand's sailing tradition and the qualities in her men which once made Thailand a major regional sea-trading nation.

Commenting on the crews of Siam's sailing vessels almost 100 years ago, Smyth wrote: "In their language, and their ways they are quite distinct from

shore going residents. They have the smartness and pluck for handling their vessels making them a seafaring class of which any coast might be proud.

"Clad often in nothing but a pair of short loose white or blue trousers coming halfway down the thigh, they face rain and sun, cold and tropic calm. Their hard brown skins glisten like oilskin coats and seem as hard and impervious to weather. Beneath a weather beaten exterior lies an honest, gentle heart that finds expression in a quiet voice and ready smile."

Like sailors around the world, Thai sailors and Thai vessels had to harness the power of the wind, and today just as in the past, though the sails are no more, local seafarers sing this song:

"Oh come Mother Wind
We want you to come and blow.
I'll cook you a little fish's head
You will enjoy it so."

craft were in the service of both local and foreign export houses.

And, finally, the sampans of early Siam closely resembled the ubiquitous little boats still seen on canals and rivers throughout the country, though they

THE LONGTAIL: A CLASSIC WOODEN BOAT

By Patrick Cusick



An estimated 500 longtails ply the waters around Phuket, most of them used for fishing and short-range cargo haulage. This classic wooden craft, known locally as a *hang yao*, is powered by a diesel engine mounted on a universal joint and it trails a prop on a long steel shaft — the 'tail'.

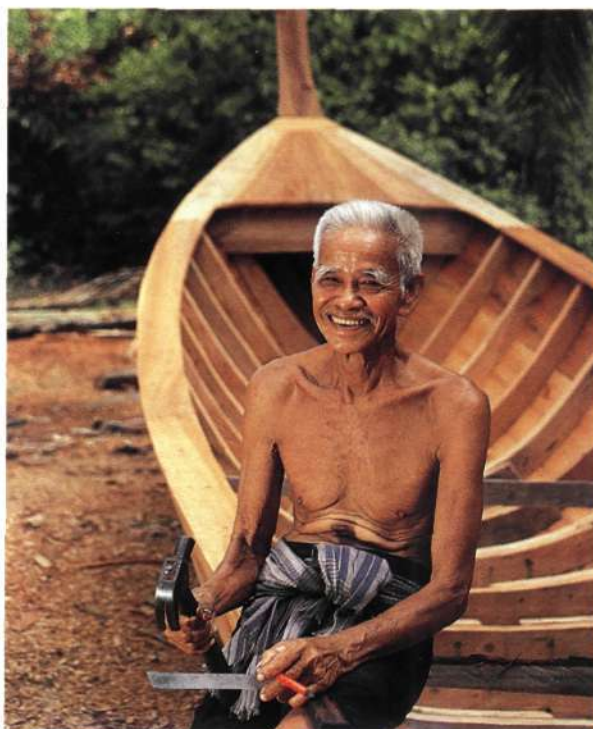
In the days long before engines, the Chao Le, or Sea Gypsies, travelled long distances by sea during their regular migrations to and from Phuket. Their wooden hulls, measuring up to 14 metres in length, were in those days still under sail, usually lateen-rigged; and they ventured from Phuket as far north as Rangoon and as far south as Malacca.

Today, local Muslim fishermen and Sea Gypsies take

these same open boats, some of them as small as five metres, to sea for periods of up to five days, travelling even to the outer islands of the Andaman Sea.

The longtail design dates back to the old Arabian boatbuilders, whose art still survives in the Phuket region. These

primitive but effective building skills have been handed down for generations, especially in Phuket, Phang Nga, Krabi, and the southern Songkhla region which is the real home of the longtail fishing and trading boat. In fact, these sturdy wooden craft have evolved little in design throughout the centuries. The biggest changes have occurred only in the past 50 years, with steel nails making wooden dowls obsolete, and with long-shaft outboard engines replac-



Southern Thailand's master builder of longtails, Don Banchong (left), works in a secluded corner of Krabi - when he can obtain enough of the right wood.

ing the traditional sailing rig.

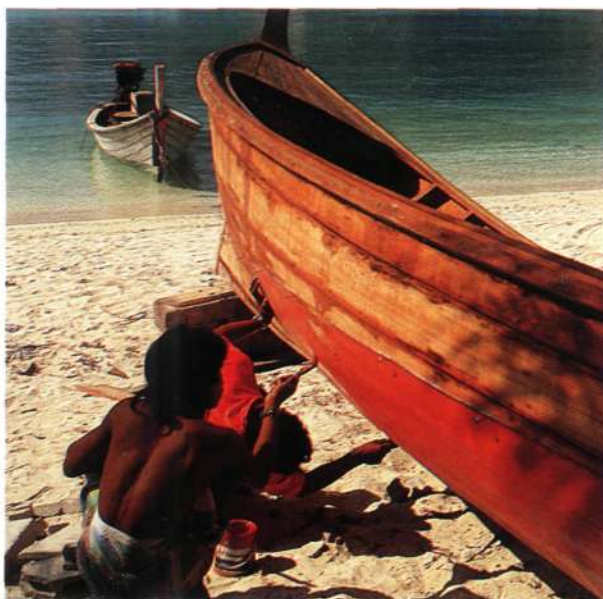
It is true that shortages of suitable trees, especially *takien tong* (golden hardwood), have reduced the production of the traditional wooden boats in recent times, while a recent logging ban has forced boatbuilders to import much of their timber from Malaysia. Yet the essential arts are still handed down from master to apprentice, often from father to son.

No drawings are used in the construction of the longtail. Instead, every line is calculated by keen eye and steady hand.

Electric drills and power saws are rarely used; instead, the ancient Phoenician adze (axe-chisel) is favoured by many boat-builders.

A longtail begins with the keel being laid in one piece. The bow and stern (sternpost), all of naturally shaped timber, are fitted next. The planking, then, is not bent into shape, as it is in the Western caravel tradition. Instead, the builders use naturally curved planks which have been hewn into shape with an adze.

In the old days, no nails were used in construction. The ribs, planking, gunnel, and sternpost were all fixed and glued with pressure-fitted wooden pins. This much has changed. But the finished hull is still caulked with woodshavings and a mixture of oily sap from the host tree mixed with lime and other



Applying anti-fouling in Phi Phi prior to launching a brand-new hull

traditional additives. This sticky, pliable resin retains a semi-elastic state for many years. Also common around Phuket is an anti-fouling device, a mixture of crushed sea-shell and coral, which dates back thousands of years. After being mixed into a clay-like slurry, it's fire-baked to the hull till it forms a thin, protective patina similar to a crude pottery glaze. (Indonesian *bugis* and *prows* use the same method.)

Local builders claim a 30-year lifespan for their longtails.

Certainly, the seaworthiness of the vessel has been tried and tested for centuries. "These

boats are as tough as any wooden craft in the annals of shipbuilding," declares adventurer and solo sailor Tristan Jones, a long-time resident of Phuket. "They ride comfortably up and down the waves, rather than smash through them." He has nothing but praise for their handling characteristics on the open sea.

Of course, they don't have any of the comforts of a modern yacht and, without a keel, they can only sail off the wind without losing a lot of ground. Yet their sturdy wooden lines conjure a sense of nautical romance for all lovers of tradition and of ocean-going wooden boats. At the same time, their graceful lines have long been an integral part of the colour and beauty of these waters.

The classic hulls afloat (below) in a classic Phi Phi Islands scene.

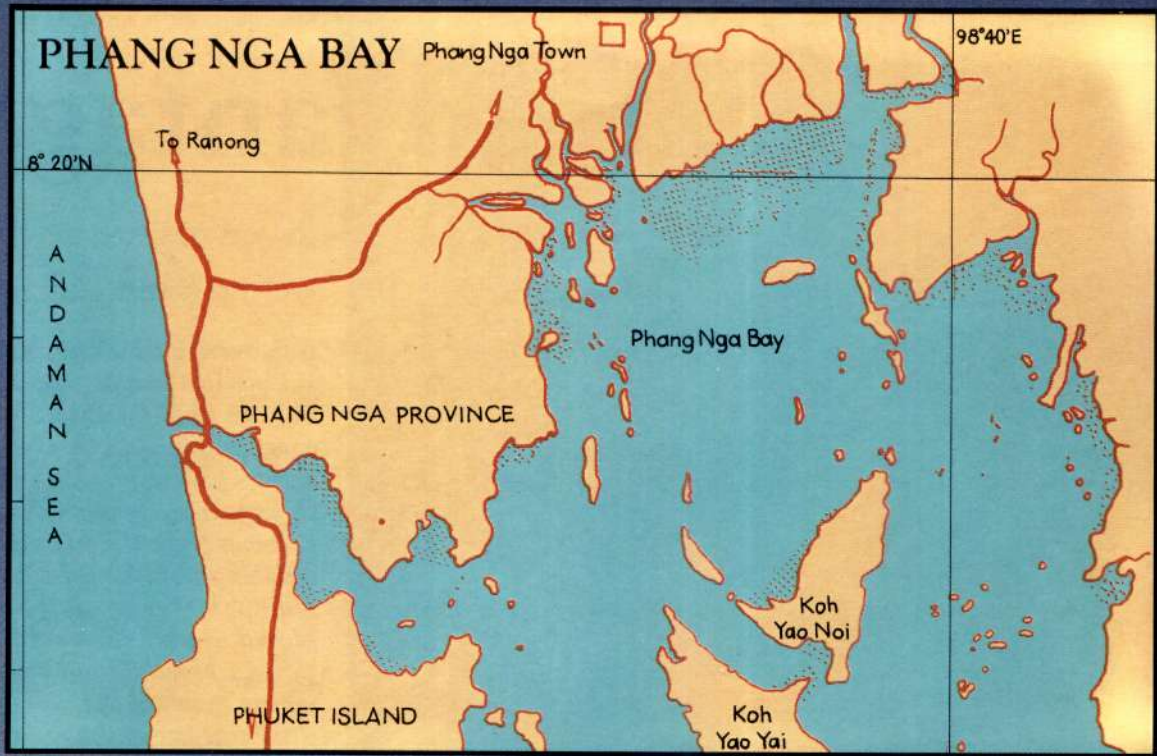


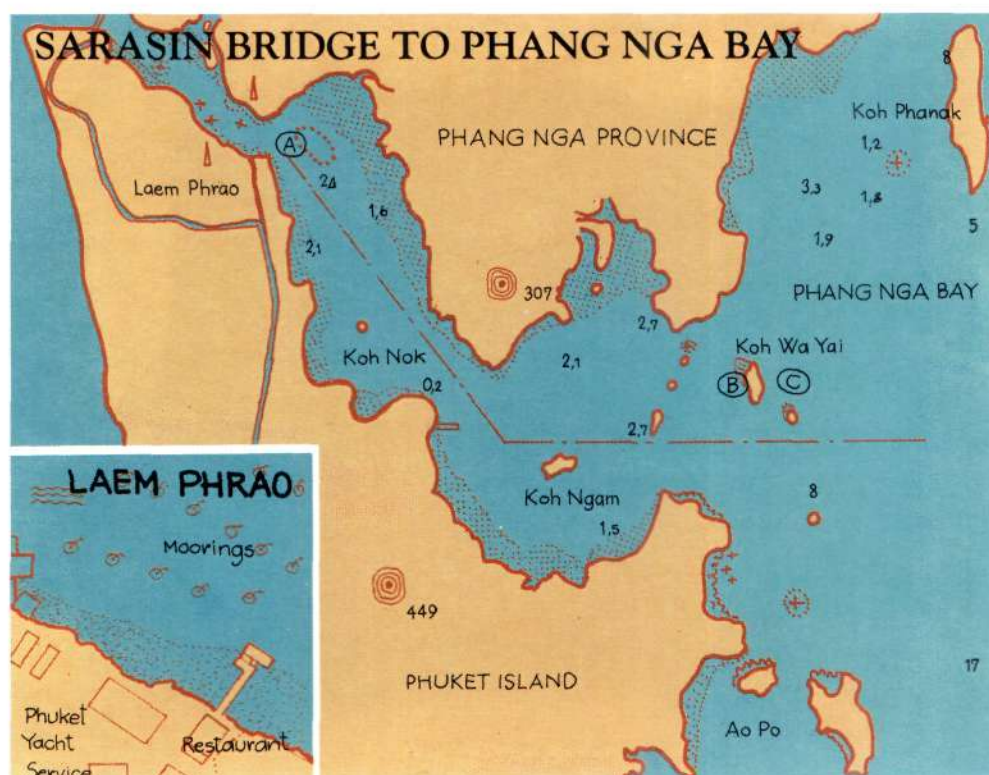
CHAPTER ONE

PHANG NGA BAY

We list only 20 of the many anchorages in this area — much of the joy of sailing in Phang Nga, after all, lies in discovering the uncounted creeks and caves and coves for yourself. Indeed, some of the most spectacular scenery in Thailand is found among the many small, sheer-sided limestone islands which rise from the northern reaches of Phang Nga Bay like natural monuments. The greater number of these islands are uninhabited, offering secluded anchorages under soaring cliffs fringed with jungle, as well as fascinating dinghy expeditions to caves and creeks not found on charts or maps of the area. Three rivers run into the head of the bay, so the water is silty (though otherwise clean): a mellow, milky green backdrop to the striking scenery. Either trolling or still-fishing can produce good results in these waters, while local fishing boats will offer freshly caught crabs, prawns, and shellfish at reasonable prices. Since a large part of the area north of Koh Yai is shallow (less than 10 metres), it is possible to anchor virtually anywhere. This chapter, then, focusses only on the better overnight anchorages—those which provide shelter from the squalls and storms which can occur at certain times of the year.







SARASIN BRIDGE TO PHANG NGA BAY

The chart shows the sound described by the northern part of Phuket Island and the mainland province of Phang Nga. At the western end of the channel, the main north-bound road crosses over the Sarasin Bridge, which has approximately 5 metres of clearance of high tide. Fishing vessels and large power craft regularly pass this way, but this route is obviously not suitable for yachts with fixed masts.

The passage out to the Andaman Sea is navigable with care, but the sand bar is constantly moving and without local knowledge this route is not recommended.

APPROACHES TO THE CHANNEL

From Phang Nga Bay, approach Koh Ngam on a bearing due west. Continue past the island on the same bearing until the northern pylon shown on the chart is sighted. Then, turn directly towards the pylon, keeping Koh Ngam astern and the pylon bearing approximately 320 degrees.

Approaching Laem Phrao, beware of shallow water on the port side after passing Koh Nok and a drying sandbank on your starboard just east of the moored yachts.

A) Laem Phrao



The minimum depth on the approach is about 2.5 metres at low tide.

Laem Phrao is a safe year-round anchorage with moorings and service facilities available. Anchorage can be found in 5-10 metres in good holding.

On shore you will find several restaurants, access to telephones, and transport to the airport (15 minutes) or Phuket Town (40 minutes).

Laem Phrao is the main base for the Phuket Yacht Service, which offers repair and maintenance facilities, fuel, water, and provisioning from a small jetty.

This base is also the year-round home of the Sunsail bareboat fleet, the Amanpuri Cruises luxury powerboat operation, and, because of its close proximity to the international airport, it is often used by charter yachts and private

owners as a pick-up and departure point. Vessels can be moored here under the care of Phuket Yacht Service personnel on either a short-term or a long-term basis.

Workshop facilities and qualified technicians can provide diesel and outboard engine maintenance and repair, aircon and refrigeration service, AC and DC electrical expertise, as well as carpentry and general labour.

Freelance captains, crew, and cooks may be contacted through the fulltime staff at the base.

B) Koh Wa Yai West

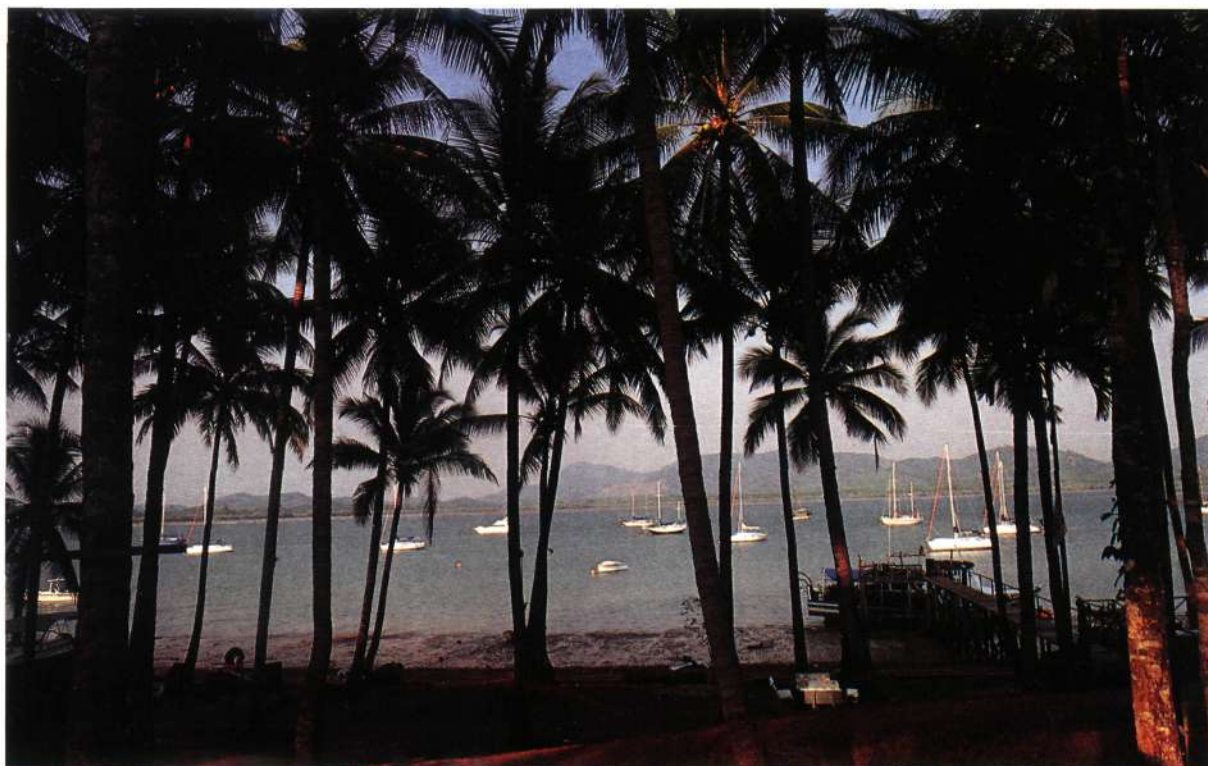


C) Koh Wa Yai East

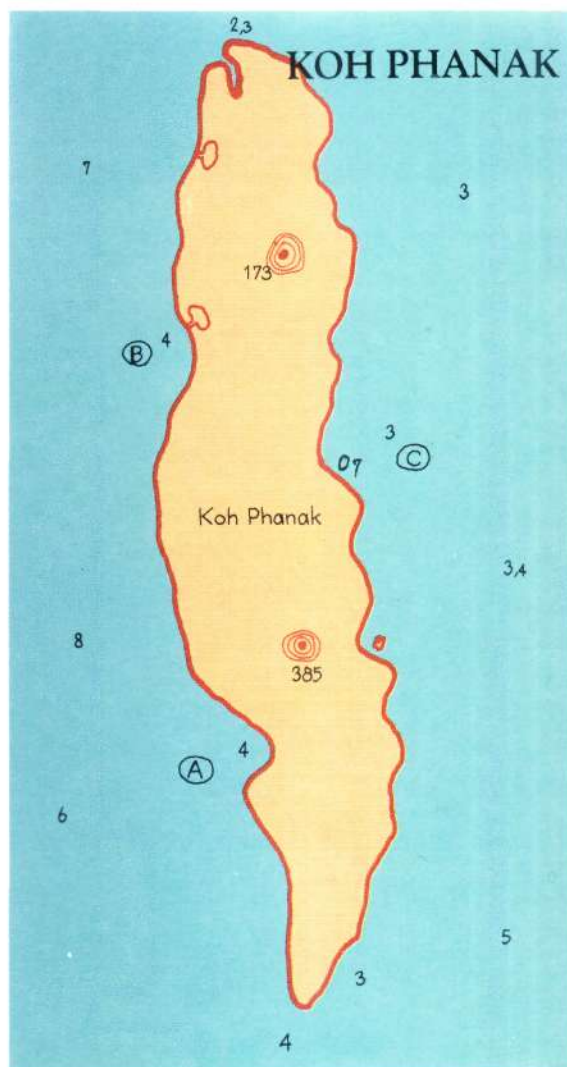


A small island at the entrance to the sound affords good shelter for either season. Anchorage is in approximately 5 metres. The passage between Koh Wa Yai and Koh Wa Noi is narrow but navigable with care.

There is a sandy beach on the northwest point.



Laem Phrao, the base for Phuket Yacht Service and Sunsail charter yachts, is a comfortable and secure all-year anchorage.



KOH PHANAK

A) Southwest Bay



A secluded anchorage in approximately 4 metres with good holding on a muddy bottom, the southwest bay is an ideal overnight haven in the northeast monsoon season.

The best exploring is done by dinghy under spectacular limestone overhangs along the west coast.

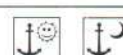
B) Northwest Bay



The northwest bay also offers good holding in approximately 5 metres.

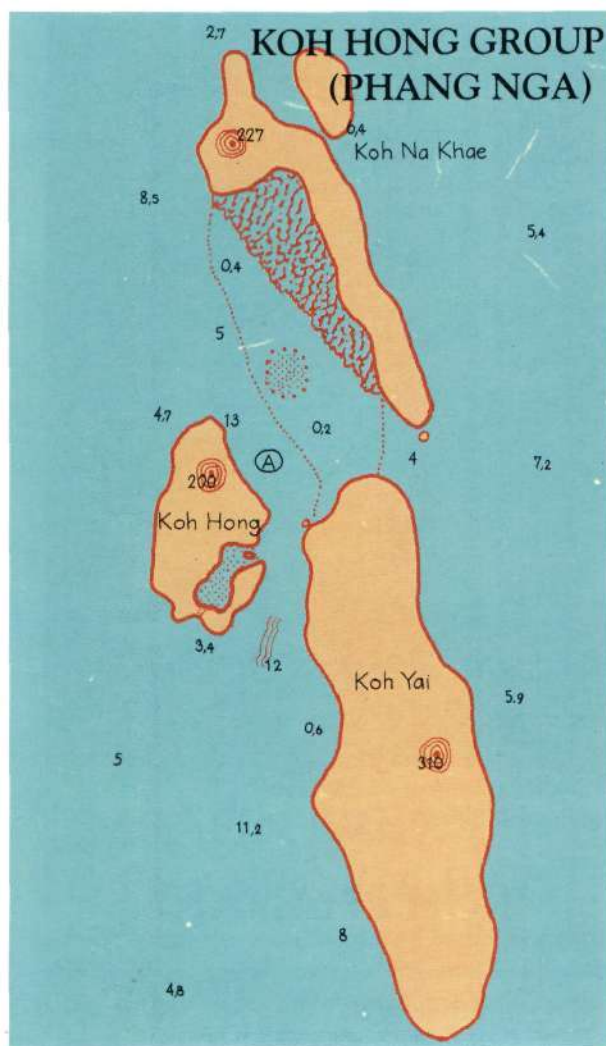
This is another fine overnight shelter, with the added attraction of the passages and lagoons (known locally as *hongs*) which lie hidden away inside the island and accessible only by dinghy at certain states of the tide.

C) East Bay



This is a recommended overnight stop during the southwest monsoon. Secure holding in mud can be found in approximately 4 metres. Vessels should approach from the east until a comfortable anchoring depth is encountered.

This coast has numerous deep caves which can only be approached by dinghy, as well as many small coves ideal for picnicking and swimming at high tide.



Much of the beauty of Phang Nga lies in its magnificent karst mountains that rise vertically from the sea.

KOH HONG GROUP (PHANG NGA)

A) Koh Hong



The only sheltered anchorage to be recommended in this group of islands lies between Koh Hong and the shallow water to the west of Koh Na Khae. Suitable for both seasons, this very picturesque anchorage has good holding in approximately 12 metres on a muddy bottom, and gives easy access to Koh Hong should you want to go ashore.

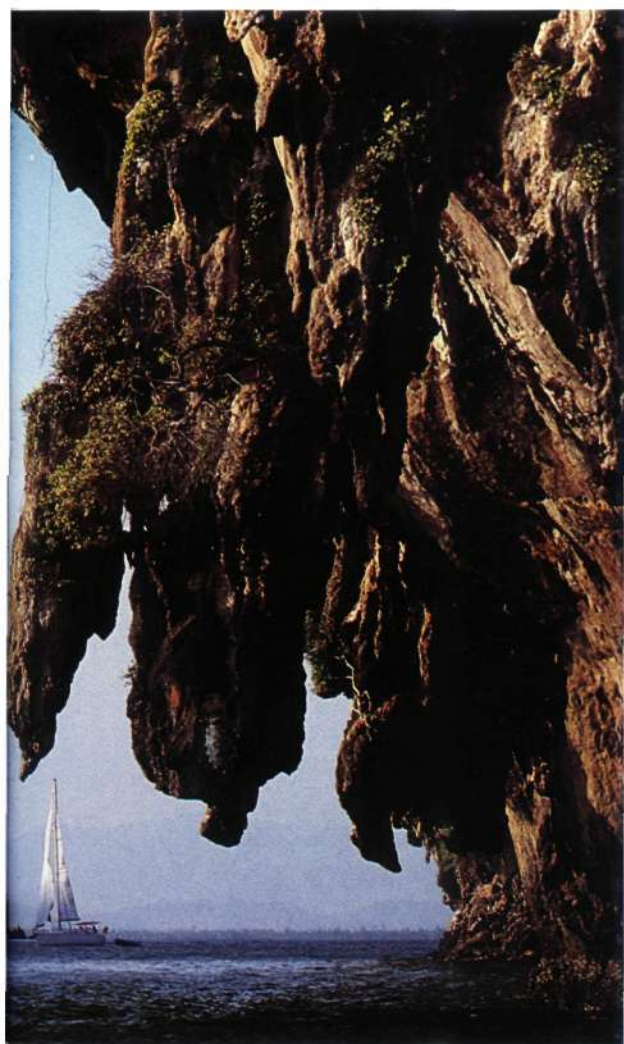
Care ought to be taken, if heading north from this location, to keep well clear of the shallow bank to the west of Koh Na Khae. The passage between Koh Yai and Koh Na Khae is not recommended for any but shoal draft vessels.

Yachts wishing to proceed east from this group should ideally pass north around Koh Na Khae or south of Koh Yai.

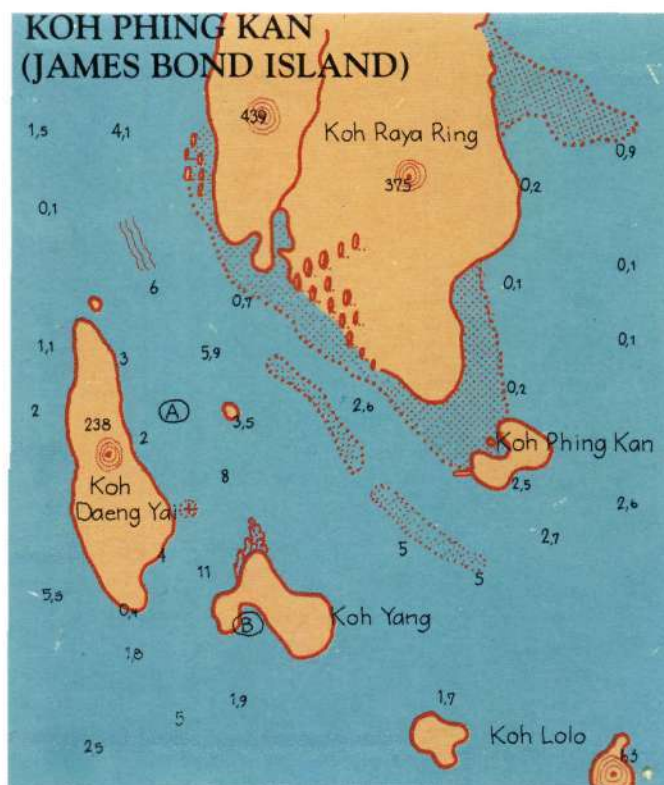
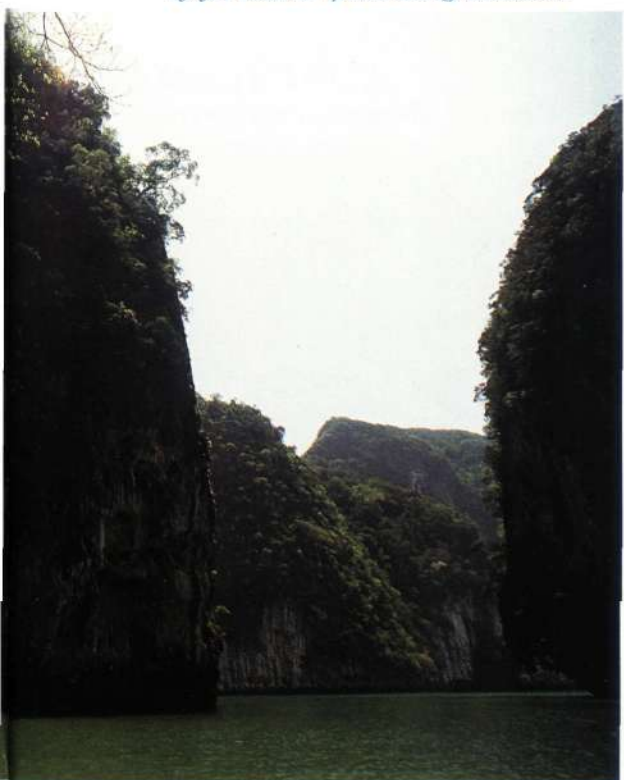
KOH HONG TUNNEL

This *hong* (Thai for 'room') can only be entered by dinghy or small motorboat from the shallow lagoon at high to middle tide, or else from the open-water entrance on the southwestern corner of the island at low tide. The *hong* which gives the island its name is a stunningly beautiful enclosed waterway with a large chimney opening to the sky. Once inside, you will find perfect opportunities for photography, swimming, and exploring.





The entry to Koh Hong is marked by yet another fascinating monolith.



KOH PHING KAN (JAMES BOND ISLAND)

Made famous by the filming of the James Bond film "The Man With the Golden Gun", this island is now a major tourist attraction, visited by hundreds of people daily, most of them coming by longtail boat from Phang Nga. Consequently, it is best visited before 10:30 a.m. or in the late afternoon, assuming one wants to avoid the crowds. Koh Phing Kan has a stunning lagoon and some interesting rock formations, though it is no more impressive than many other islands in the area.

A) Koh Phing Kan



The best anchorage in this group is found in the channel between Koh Raya Ring and Koh Daeng Yai. It can be approached either from the south, via the channel formed by Koh Yang and Koh Daeng Yai, or from the southeast, passing east of Koh Yang.

Good holding is available on a muddy bottom in 5-10 metres. The sandbank north of the anchorage is very shallow and almost dries at low tide. There is a current of up to 2 knots, strongest at ebb tide in the channel.

The lagoon on the north side of Koh Phing Kan can be entered by dinghy at high tide; otherwise access is possible by dinghy at most tides via the jetty on the southwest side. A submerged rock, one not appearing on most charts, lurks in the channel between Koh Yang and Koh Daeng Yai (see chart).

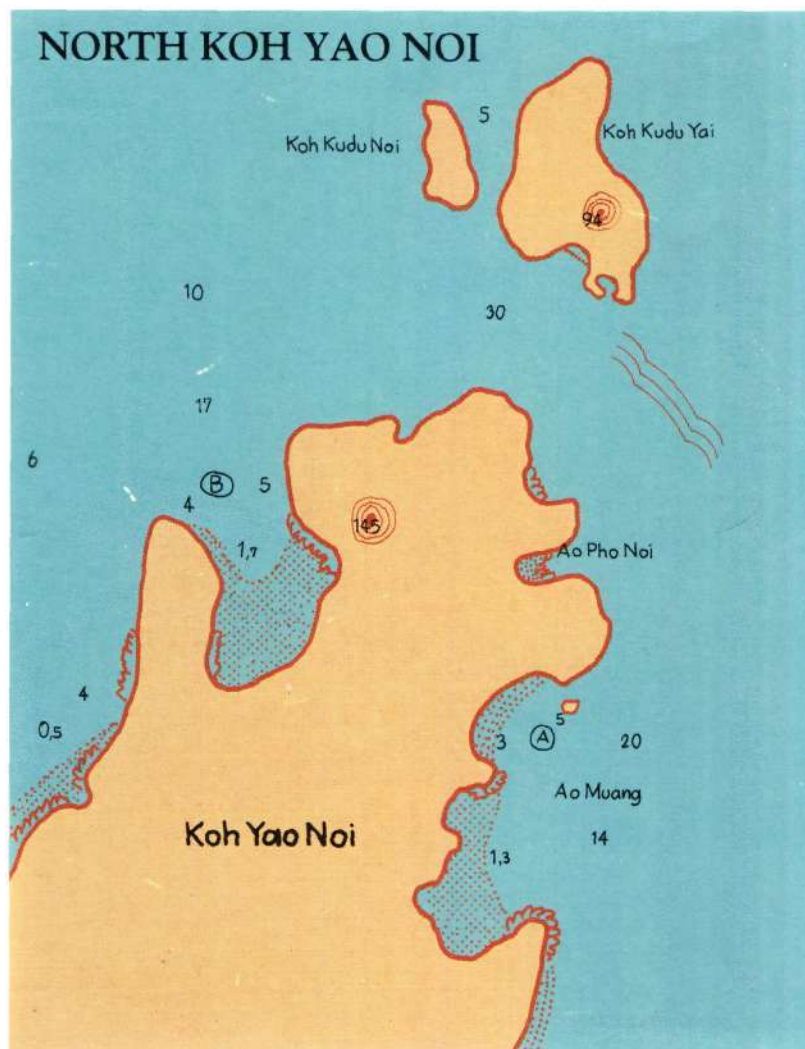
B) Koh Yang



This is a delightful, well sheltered anchorage on a small bay facing south. Good holding may be found on a muddy bottom in 4-5 metres. The approach should be made from the deep channel to the anchorage on an easterly heading, taking care to avoid the shallow bank approximately 600 metres south of the anchorage.

There is a community of five thatched houses on the beach, and coconuts and fish or prawns can often be bought from the villagers.

NORTH KOH YAO NOI



NORTH KOH YAO NOI

A) Ao Muang



Reasonably sheltered in both seasons, this anchorage is in 5 metres on a muddy bottom, tucked in 100 metres southwest of the small rocky outcrop.

A few families of fishermen live on the beach, and there are fish-farming cages together with a wooden tower inshore. Care should be taken to allow enough swinging room, so as not to foul the floating pontoons.

The bay just to the north, Ao Pho Noi, is great for dinghy excursions, and features several small beaches for landing and swimming against a backdrop of the mangroves overhung by towering limestone cliffs.

B) Northwest Bay



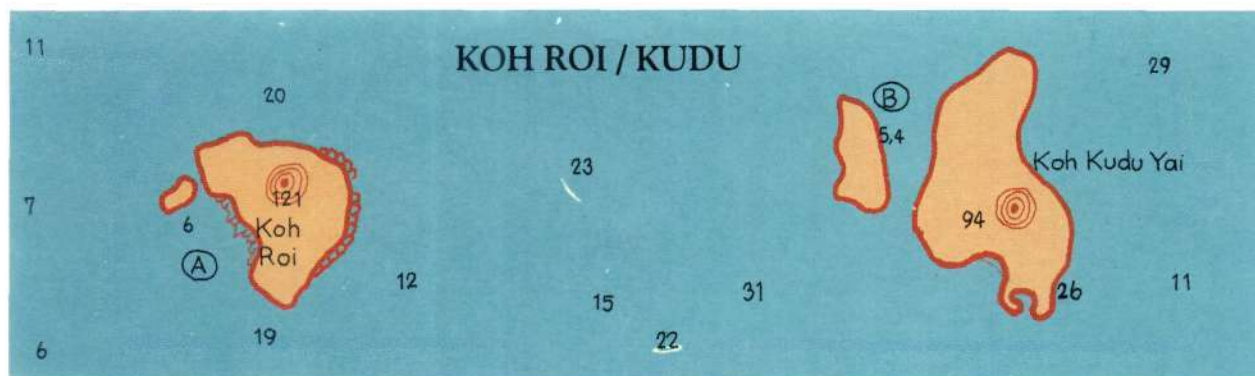
This is a pretty anchorage situated on the outer fringe of a deep bay backed by mangrove swamps and flat ground. Anchor well out in the bay in 4-5 metres and allow enough swinging room to accommodate an onshore breeze.

The northwest bay offers protection in both seasons, with good holding on a muddy bottom.

Dinghy trips ashore are possible at high tide, where one finds a beach with a few huts at the back of the bay. The bay dries a considerable distance from the beach at low tide.



Two girls enjoy the sun and scenery while heading for Krabi from Koh Yao Noi.



KOH ROI AND KOH KUDU YAI

This group of islands affords good shelter in both seasons and is a useful stopover when heading south for Krabi.

A) Koh Roi

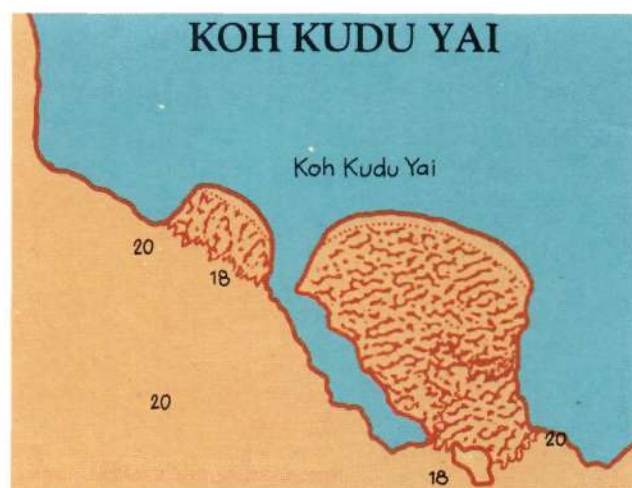


Anchorage can be found in a small southwest facing bay with a rocky off-lying islet on the north side. The bay is deep until close in and vessels can anchor in about 6 metres on a muddy bottom with some rock. There are some small huts on the beach used by fishermen, and fishing boats often anchor in the bay. Not suitable for the southwest season.

B) Koh Kudu Yai



There is an excellent anchorage for all seasons nestled between the two islands in 6 metres on a muddy bottom. The larger island has interesting caves and hong to explore by dingy, particularly on the southern point where a coral filled bay can be accessed at most tides.



This cave-like entrance leads into an easily accessed 'hong' on the south side of Koh Roi.





KOH CHONG LAT KOH KHLUI CHANNEL

Access to the channel

The deep entrance to the north of Koh Chong Lat is easily navigable, as is the middle entrance just north of Koh Khlui. The middle entrance should be approached on an easterly heading turning southeast between the islands.

Once inside the main channel between Koh Chong Lat and the mainland, immediately north of the middle passage is a dangerous area of shallow water with drying rocks. This should be left to port if heading north.

If entering the main channel from the south, it's better to stay close to Koh Khlui which will afford a minimum depth of 3 metres.

A) Northern Channel



Here is a quiet location with beautiful views of the sheer cliffs of Koh Chong Lat to the west.

The anchorage is on a direct line between the two islets shown on the chart, in approximately 5 metres near a lovely mangrove-covered flat which is awash at high tide.

This spot is good for all wind conditions, though mid-tide currents of up to 3 knots mean that care should be taken if swimming from the boat.

Local lore has it that there are no longer any crocodiles in the area.

B) Middle Passage



Anchorage can be found in the passage in 4-5 metres, making for a good overnight stop in the northeast monsoon season.

Large and scenic bays with shallow waters to the north and south are easily reached by dinghy. The bay to the south is an ideal anchorage for bilge keelers or vessels drawing less than 1 metre.

C) Koh Khlui East



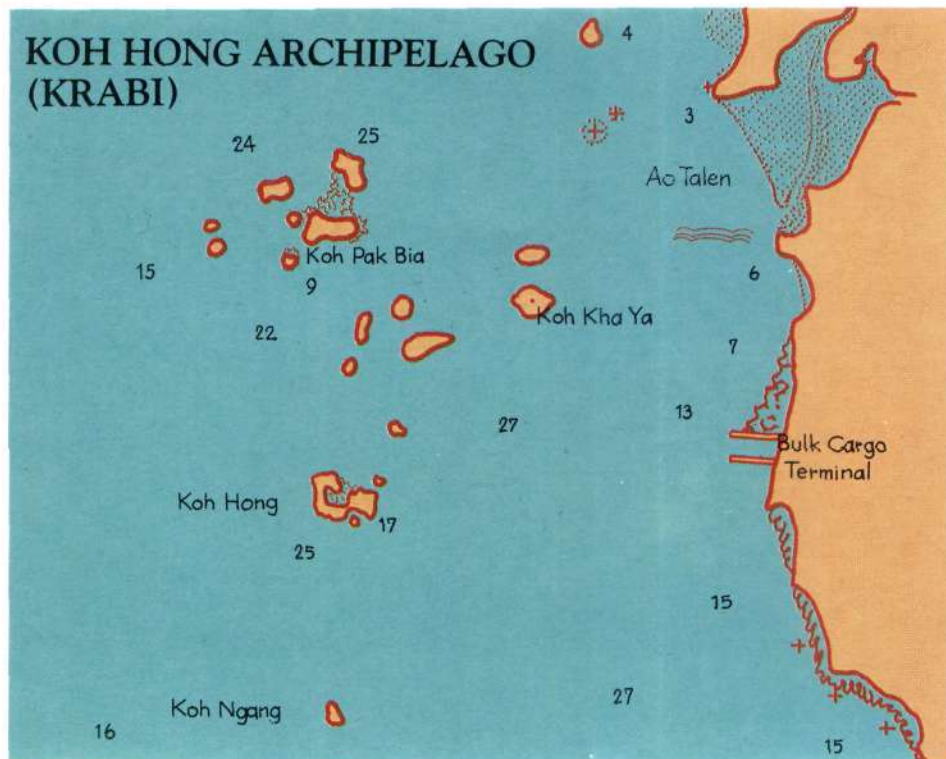
Koh Khlui East is very sheltered, with good holding in the southwest monsoon season. The best anchorage is just south of the small inlet in about 5 metres.

This is also the best place from which to explore the bay and rocky outcrops to the north by dinghy.

A yacht (right) passes one of the tiny seasonal fishing villages near the Koh Khlui channel. The view north from Koh Hong (Krabi) shows the many small and beautiful islands in this group (left).







KOH HONG ARCHIPELAGO (KRABI)

The Koh Hong archipelago is a group of small islands lying between Krabi and the northern part of Phang Nga Bay, and east of Koh Yao Yai.

Among the small islets there are many places to anchor for swimming or lunch, but in general depths are not ideal until close in. Often it is best to use a light anchor and rope for easy recovery.

Because of the depths, we only rec-

ommend one overnight anchorage in the island group (Koh Hong).

About 5 miles to the east is the mainland of Krabi Province, and in the northeast monsoon season overnight anchorage can be found in the vicinity of Ao Talen by approaching the coast until depths of approximately 6 metres are encountered.

In contrast to those of northern Phang Nga Bay, the waters are clear

enough for snorkelling, with visibility best at slack water in springs, or any tide on neaps. Many of the islands have fringing coral reefs rich in colour and marine life.

Larger fish species such as Spanish mackerel, jackfish, rainbow runners, and barracuda readily go for trolling lines in these waters. If unsuccessful at this, one can always purchase fish from the many local fishing boats.



At anchor in the east bay of Koh Hong (Krabi) — one of the most beautiful islands in this area.



KOH PAK BIA & KOH HONG (KRABI)

Another of the many small, lonely islands in the Koh Hong group.

A) Koh Pak Bia



This island offers a secluded anchorage—a useful stopover on the way to or from Krabi, and one which is acceptable overnight in the northeast monsoon season or in very calm weather. It can be recognized by a mushroom-shaped rock in the middle of a small indentation facing south. Approach from the south until the bottom shelves to about 10 metres, and anchor on the sandy bottom.

Towards the western end of the bay lies a spectacular spit of white sand which gives excellent access for swimming or exploring.

To the north of the sandy spit is an enticing bay which is particularly good for snorkelling and diving. Anchoring is not advised here, however, since large coral heads, rising from depths of about 20 metres, fringe the bay. It is best to take your dinghy from the recommended anchorage or else swim from the beach.

B) Koh Hong North



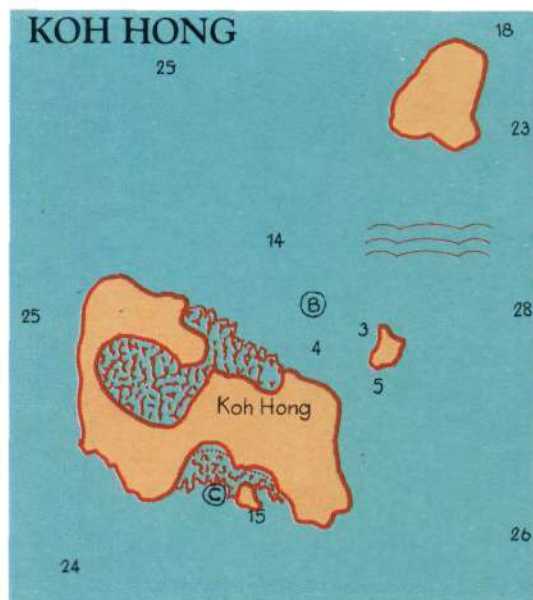
This bay provides protection with good holding in 8-12 metres in the southwest monsoon season, although an uncomfortable ground swell sometimes curves around the eastern headland. Koh Hong is so named because of its large internal lagoon, accessible only by dinghy across a shallow reef on tides above 1 metre. This large *hong* (Thai for 'room') has a small entrance which sometimes has gill nets strung across its width on the ebb tide. This *hong* is believed to be one of the biggest in the area, and the sheer cliffs on all sides make a picturesque backdrop for photography enthusiasts.

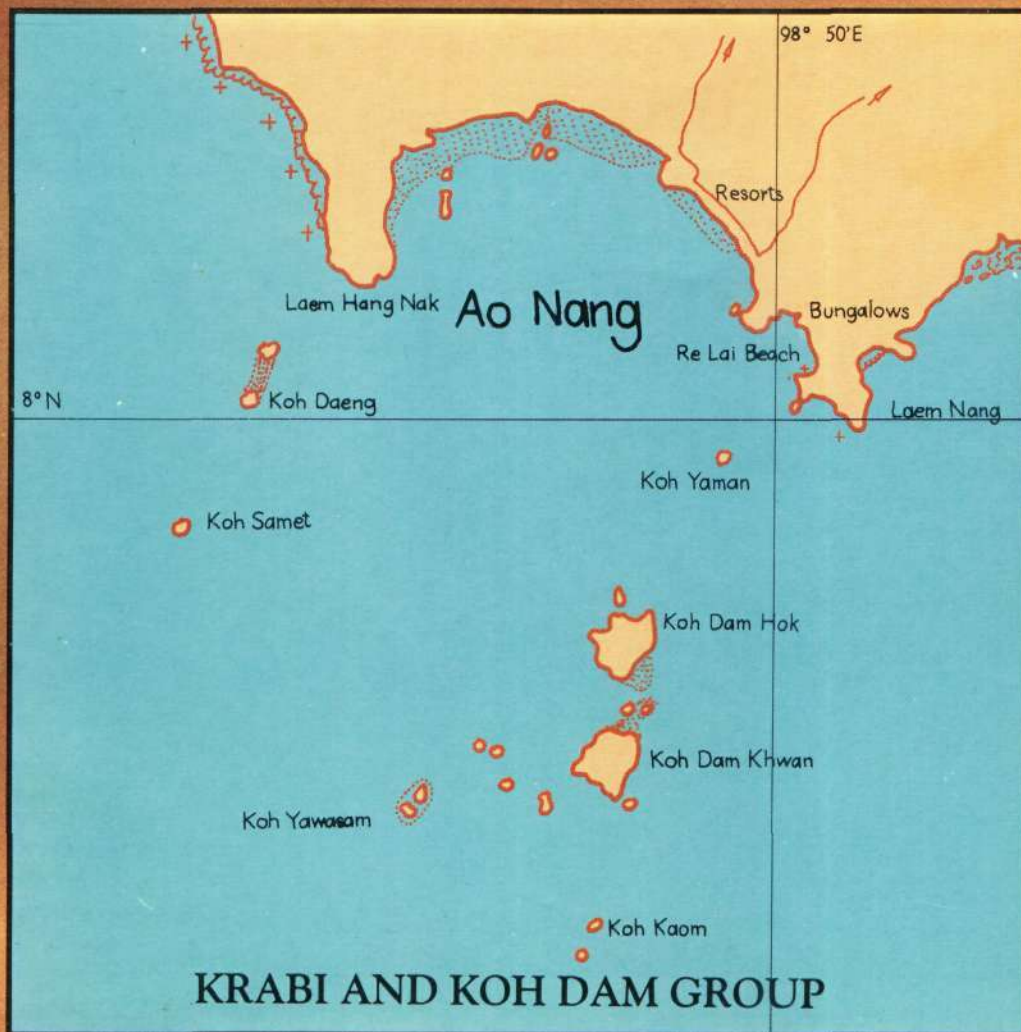
C) Koh Hong South



This is an excellent overnight stop during the northeast monsoon. Anchorage is in 10-15 metres, with good holding in sand.

A beautiful white silica sand beach is broken by huge monolithic rocks which provide shade on shore all day long. Fringed by a coral reef, this is one of the prettiest bays in the area.



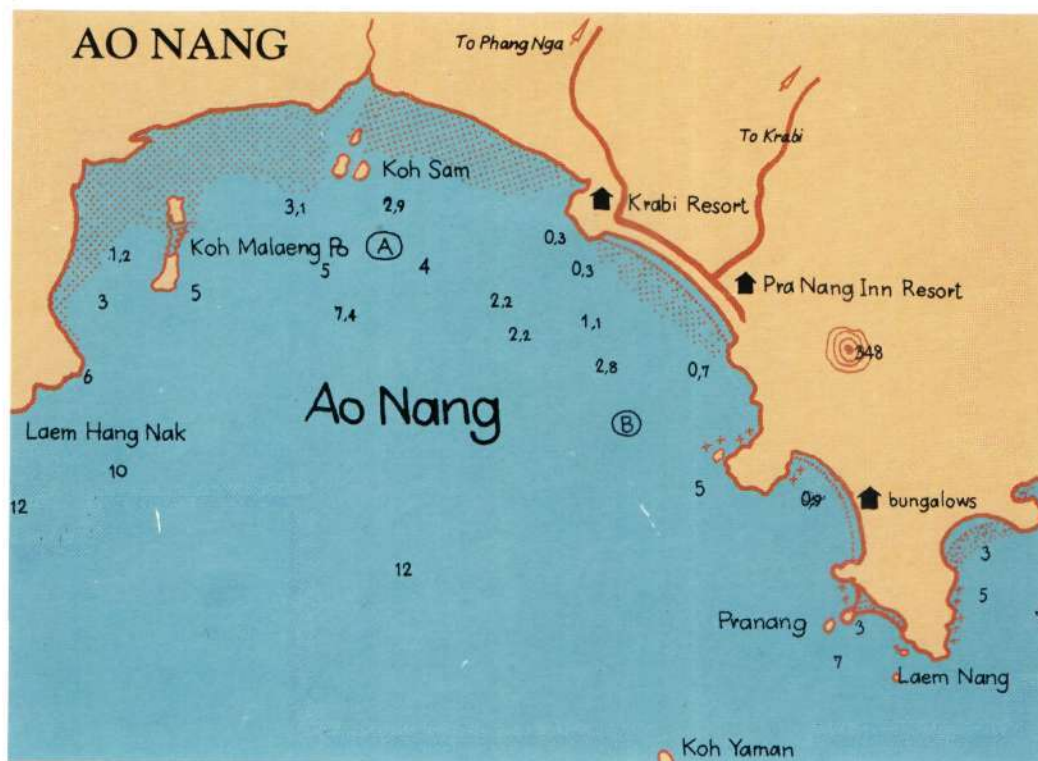




CHAPTER TWO

KRABI AND KOH DAM GROUP

The area around Krabi has some of the best scenery in the region—it is easily a match for the more widely known Phi Phi group. The sea is crystal clear in the northeast monsoon season, and offers fine snorkelling and diving. First discovered by cruising yachties and the backpack traveller set some years ago, it is just now beginning to be developed ashore, with small bungalow hotels and restaurants making their appearance. Anchorages can be found on the mainland around Ao Nang, Phra Nang Bay, and the islands to the south. Krabi Town, with provisioning of a similar standard to Phuket available, can be accessed from Phra Nang by longtail boat or by road from Ao Nang.



AO NANG

A) Koh Sam



Anchor in sand just south of the pair of islands in depths of around 4 metres. The water is very clear, and the shallow water can easily be spotted.

This is an excellent overnight stop in the northeast monsoon season.

From here you can take your dinghy up the river, keeping close to the western shore at the entrance. Once over the bar, the water is deeper and the river is bounded by sandy beaches. The entrance is also suitable for speedboats and shallow draft vessels. Inside the river are two small jetties used by small local boats. On the west bank is a small bungalow resort development and on the east bank a road provides access to the main road to Krabi.

B) Ao Nang

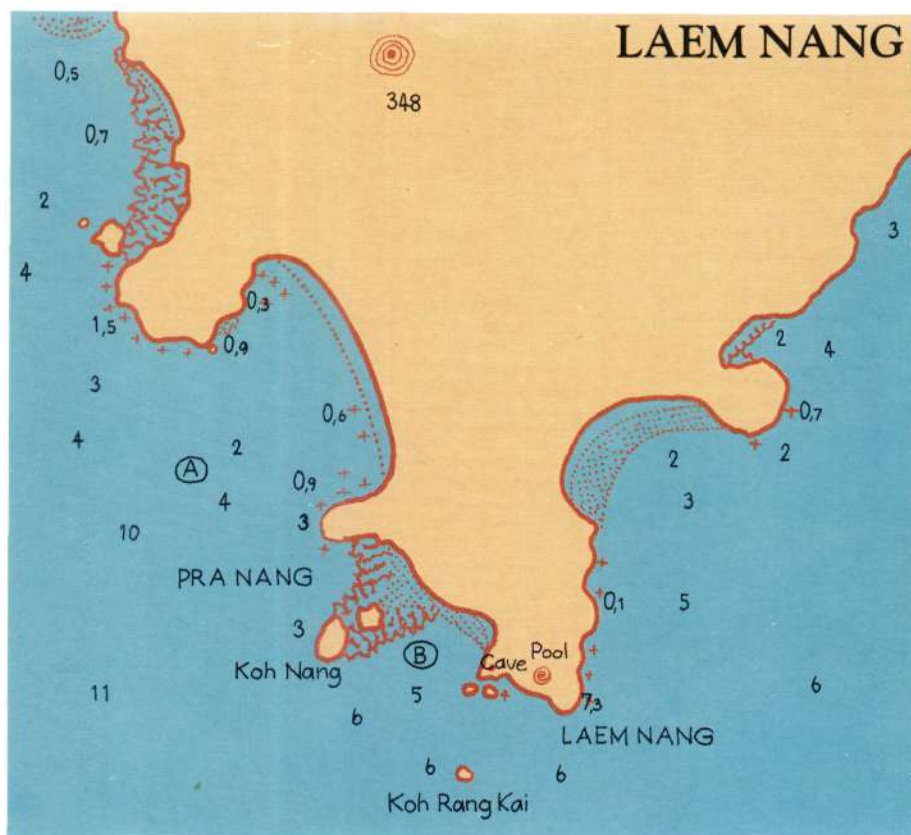


This wide, shallow bay lends a secure haven in the northeast monsoon season, with anchorage in about 5 metres well offshore.

Ao Nang is notable for its access to two beach resorts and the main road to Krabi. Telephone, transport, and all the usual amenities of a small resort are available. If these are not needed, however, the anchorages in Phra Nang are prettier.

The Krabi Resort often has bungalows available for those wanting a night ashore. They can also arrange bookings for accommodation on nearby Koh Dam Hok. Transfer by vehicle to Phuket Island takes about 2 hours. It is slightly quicker to rent a longtail boat to go to Krabi Town than it is to go by road.





LAEM NANG

A) Phra Nang North



Anchorage is in 4-5 metres on sand in the centre of the bay, well offshore.

This bay, Re Lai, has spectacular stacks of rock which form headlands to the north and south. In the shade of the coconut palms which fringe the beach, cheap restaurants and bungalow accommodation tend to be frequented by budget travellers, who contribute to the generally easy-going ambience. Extending out into the bay at the southern end of the beach there is a reef, easily seen in the clear waters and a magnet for snorkellers.

Going right on the beach, you will find longtail boats for hire; there is no access to the bay by road.

B) Phra Nang South



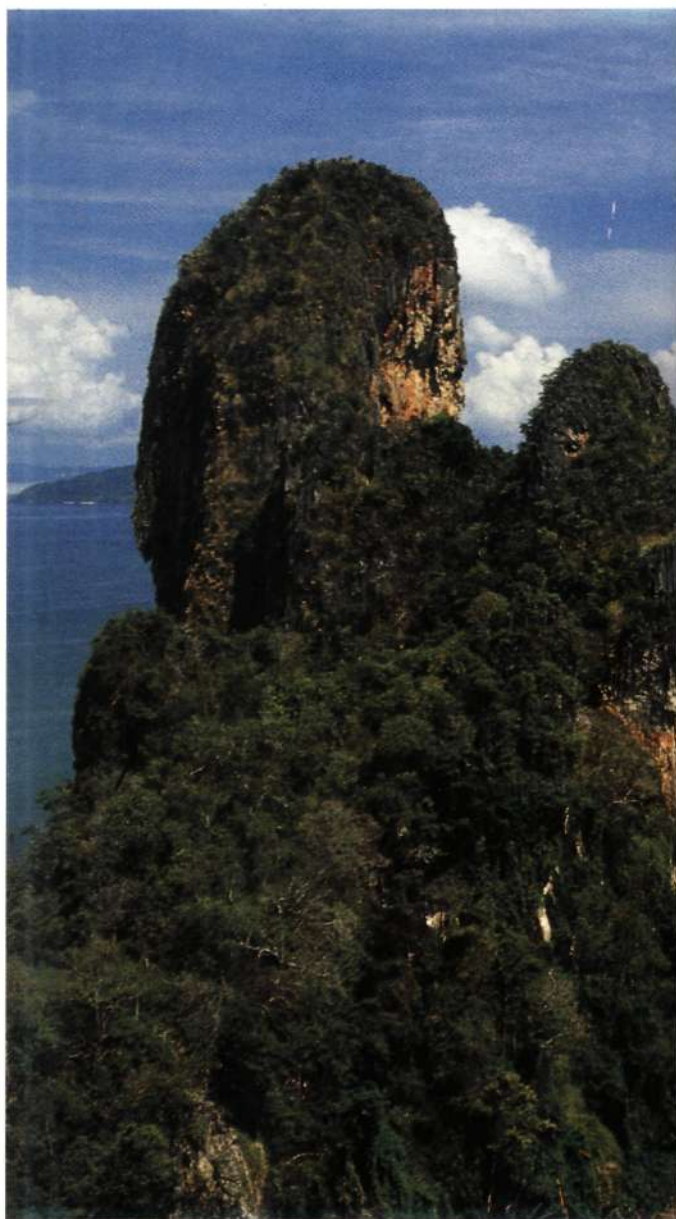
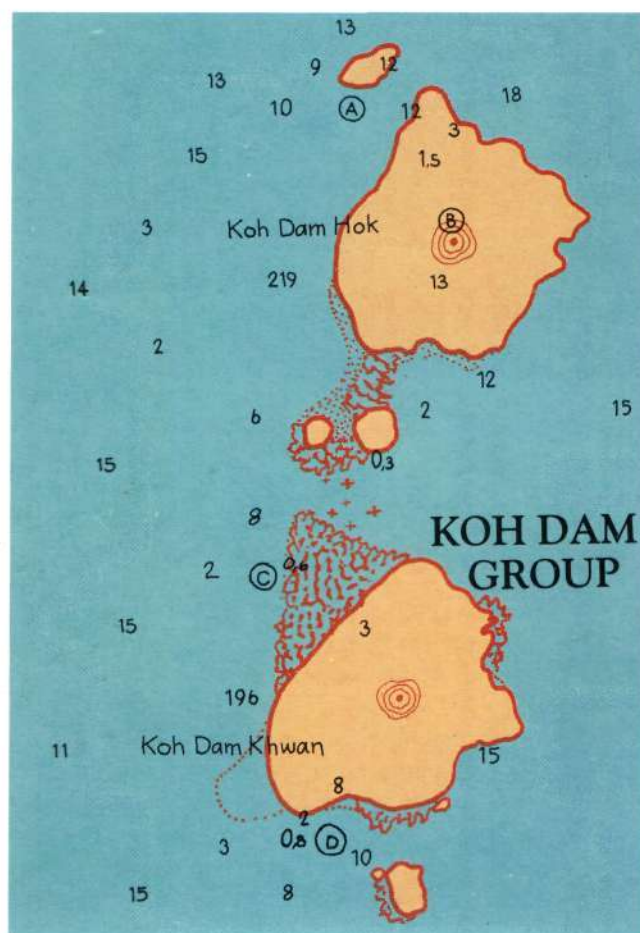
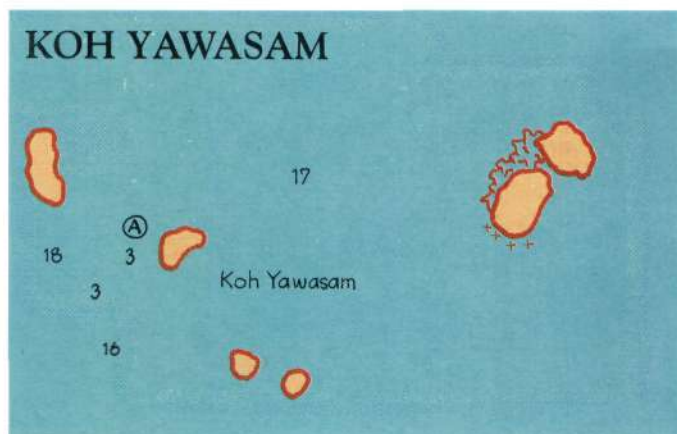
Just around the corner from the tall stack which forms Koh Nang is the most strikingly attractive palm-fringed bay in the region. Anchorage with reasonable swinging room is possible for 3-4 vessels in 5-6 metres on a sandy bottom, in the northeast monsoon season. Between Koh Nang and the beach is a colourful coral reef, excellent for snorkelling, which is definitely impassable for keelboats, and advisable even for dinghies only at high water, whatever the activities of the local longtail boats might seem to suggest.

A bar and small restaurant occupy the cave at the left end of the beach, while lots of rocky overhangs and outcrops offer themselves for exploring.

There is no access by road.

Behind this main beach at Ao Nang, Krabi (left) the road from town ends. As attractive as this scene may be, the beaches that have made this place famous are a little further south on the peninsula, accessible only by boat (right).





KOH YAWASAM

A) Koh Yawasam



The northwest side of the island has anchorage in both seasons, but only as a daytime stopover and in calmer wind conditions. Anchor in 3-4 metres on the sandy shelf between the two islands.

Snorkelling and diving are excellent, but leave enough time to make your overnight destination before sundown.

KOH DAM GROUP

A) North Koh Dam Hok



A fairly secure overnight anchorage in 12 metres exists, in both seasons, between the main island and the small islet. The bottom is sandy giving way to coral outcrops towards the beach.

On shore is a nice beach and flat sandy ground shaded by casuarinas—fine for cool walks around the island. A rather basic bungalow development with a restaurant nestles up against the hill. Snorkellers should swim off the north-eastern end of the beach, where there is an area of shallow coral reef.



This view of Krabi's Re Lai beach, Laem Nang, shows the spectacular geography that has made this region famous. Another of Krabi's islands with spectacular scenery and clear waters is Koh Hong (overleaf).

B) East Koh Dam Hok



If you are in the mood just for lunch or a refreshing swim, drop anchor in 5-6 metres on the edge of the sandy beach which projects from the northeastern tip of the island. The bottom comes up very rapidly from about 18-20 metres in crystal water, making it easy to find a good anchoring depth. Be sure to leave enough swinging room for an onshore breeze. Do not leave your vessel unattended.

C) North Koh Dam Khwan



This beautiful anchorage, secure for overnight stops in the northeast monsoon season, is situated behind a large expanse of coral reef extending from the main island to a group of rocky islets off the north end of Koh Dam Khwan.

The snorkelling is superb, and by dinghy you can easily

reach the large area of reef which closes the passage between Dam Hok and Dam Khwan. The middle of the reef is studded with coral heads, and offers good snorkelling and scuba diving.

Never attempt the passage in any vessel other than a dinghy or a longtail boat.

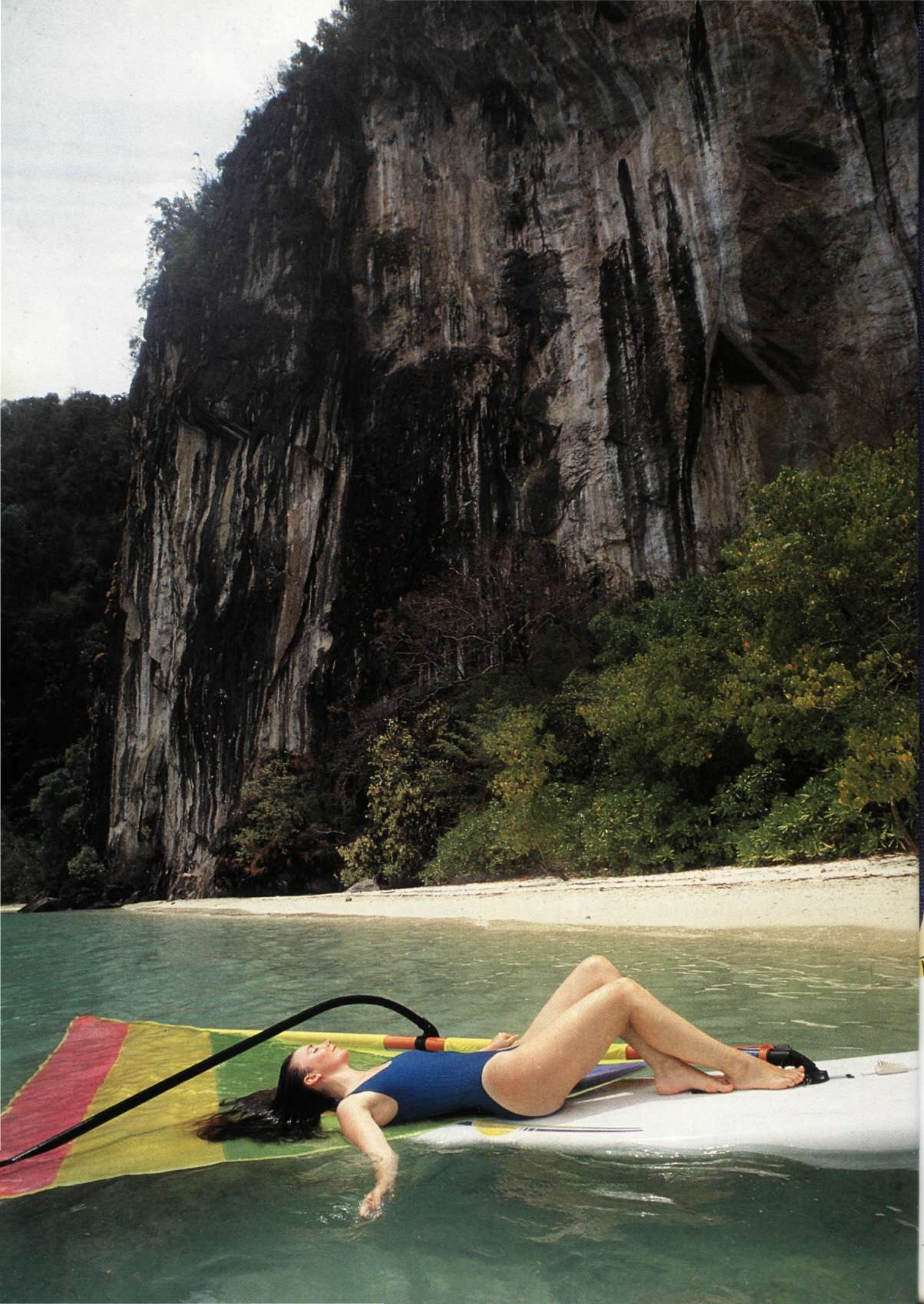
D) Southeast Koh Dam Khwan



Just north of the small island, a sandy bottom in 10-12 metres of water provides a secure overnight anchorage in either season.

Enjoy good diving and snorkelling around both the headland and the island.

It will be evident from your first sight of the anchorage why this group of islands is known locally as the 'Chicken Islands'.



98° 45'E

Koh Yung



Koh Mai Phai
(Bamboo Island)

PHI PHI ISLANDS



Hin Klang

7° 45'N



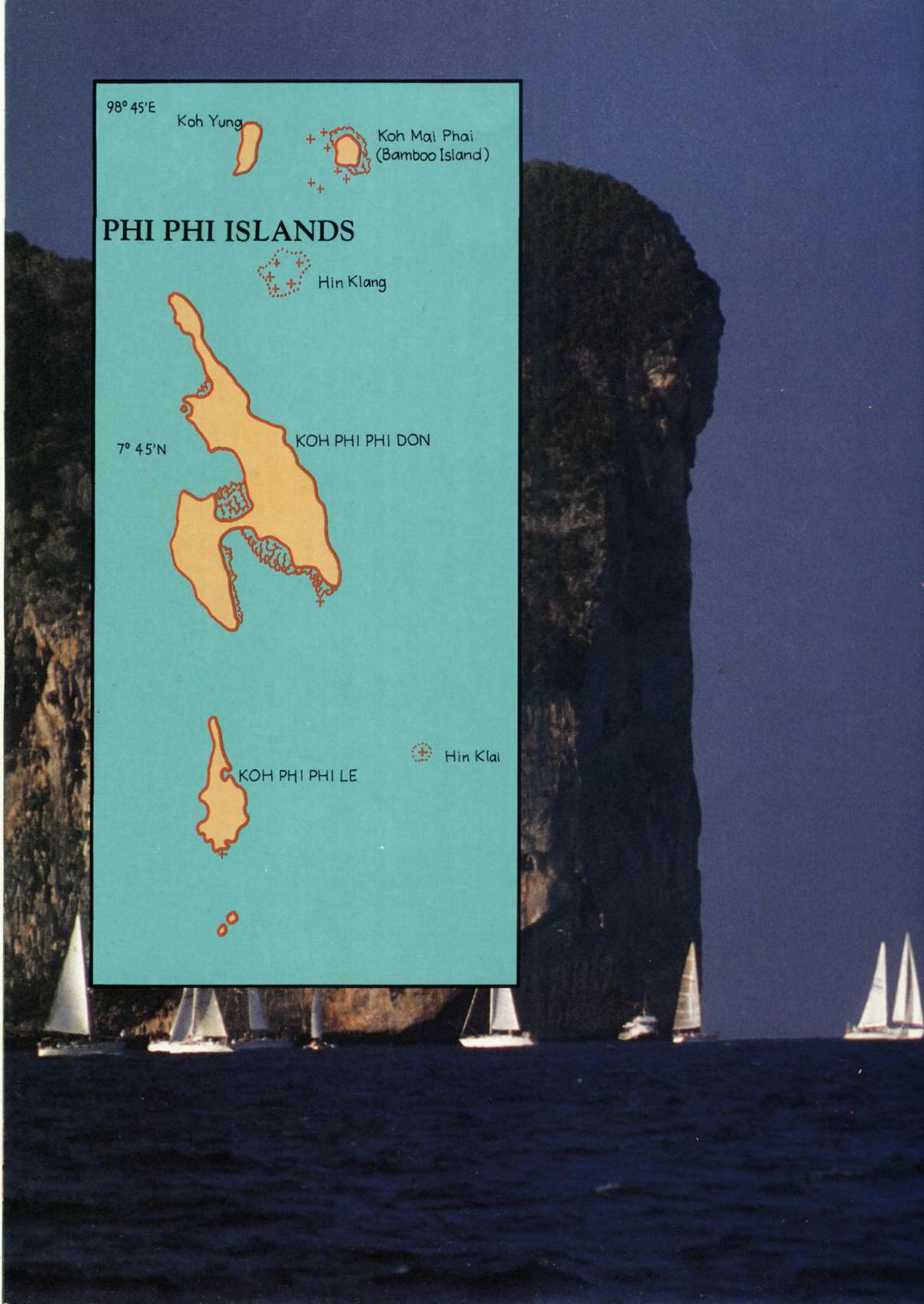
KOH PHI PHI DON



KOH PHI PHI LE



Hin Klai



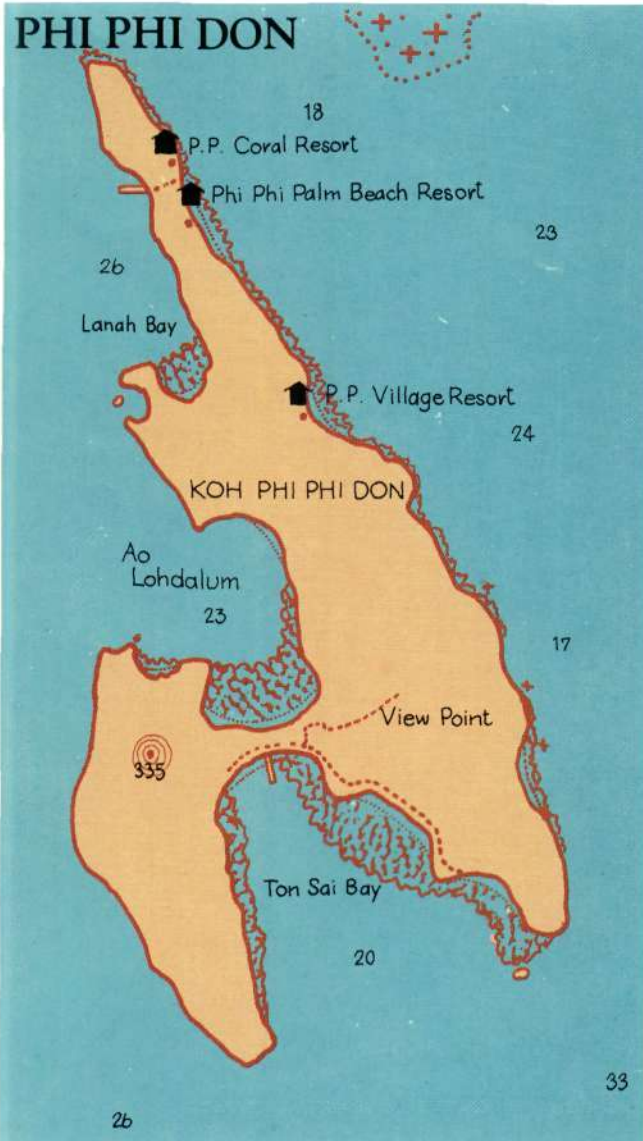
CHAPTER THREE

PHI PHI ISLANDS

Koh Phi Phi is one of the loveliest island groups to be found anywhere. As a sailing destination, it makes a fine day's jaunt from Phuket, with island exploring and snorkelling to add to the attractions. In early December, the Andaman Sea Race provides a colourful prelude to the King's Cup Regatta, with the sails of the fleet a striking complement to the dramatic cliffs of Phi Phi Le.





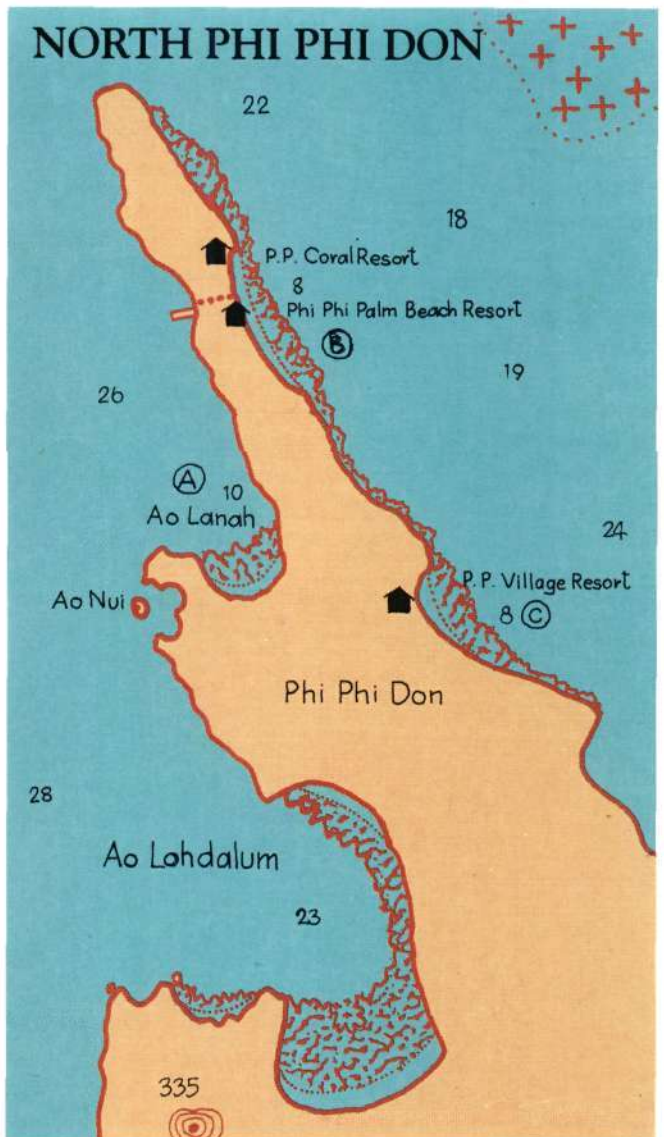
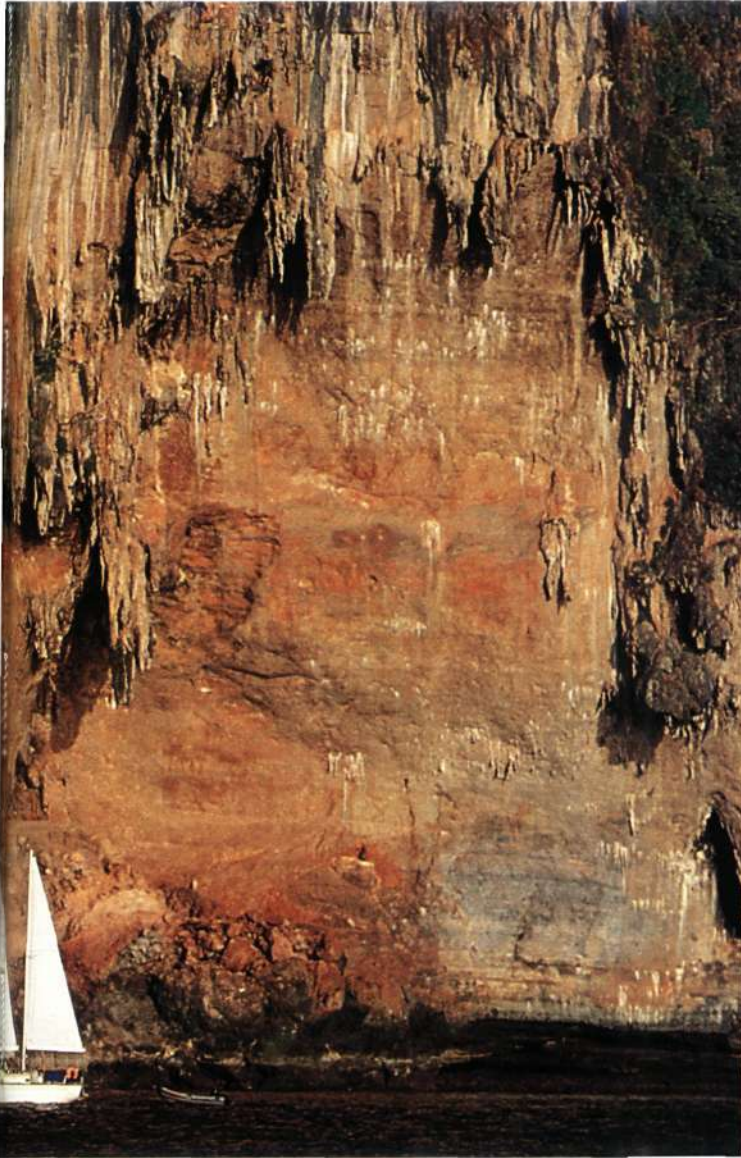


An attractive beach fringes most of Ton Sai Bay, made more dramatic by the sheer cliff faces opposite (**left**). While one sees little but the coconut trees from out in the bay, hundreds of bungalows are hidden in here, making this the major accommodation centre in the Phi Phi Islands. There are also many small shops and restaurants, some quite good and cheap. The west faces of both Phi Phi Islands are almost entirely steep rock walls (**below**), making a dramatic setting for the passing sailboat.





*Another view shows the drama in the high cliffs along Phi Phi Don's west coast (**above**). Phi Phi Palm Beach Resort (**left**) offers the best quality accommodation in these islands. Set among palms — only a few of which were cut down during construction — it won an award for environmentally friendly architecture.*



NORTH PHI PHI DON

A) Northwest Bay



Although it is not the most picturesque bay on Phi Phi, this spot is a handy anchorage in the northeast monsoon season for those arriving late from Krabi. Anchor in 10 metres on the sandy bottom well offshore; take care not to enter too far into the bay, as it is closed by shallow coral.

About 1.5 miles north of the anchorage there is a jetty which is used by ferry boats. From this point there is also a track crossing the island to a resort hotel.

B) Phi Phi Palm Beach



In the southwest monsoon season, good anchorage is available in 8-10 metres offshore from the Phi Phi Palm Beach Resort. In the northeast season anchor on the shel-

tered west coast. There's a public jetty and a short track across to the beach and resort.

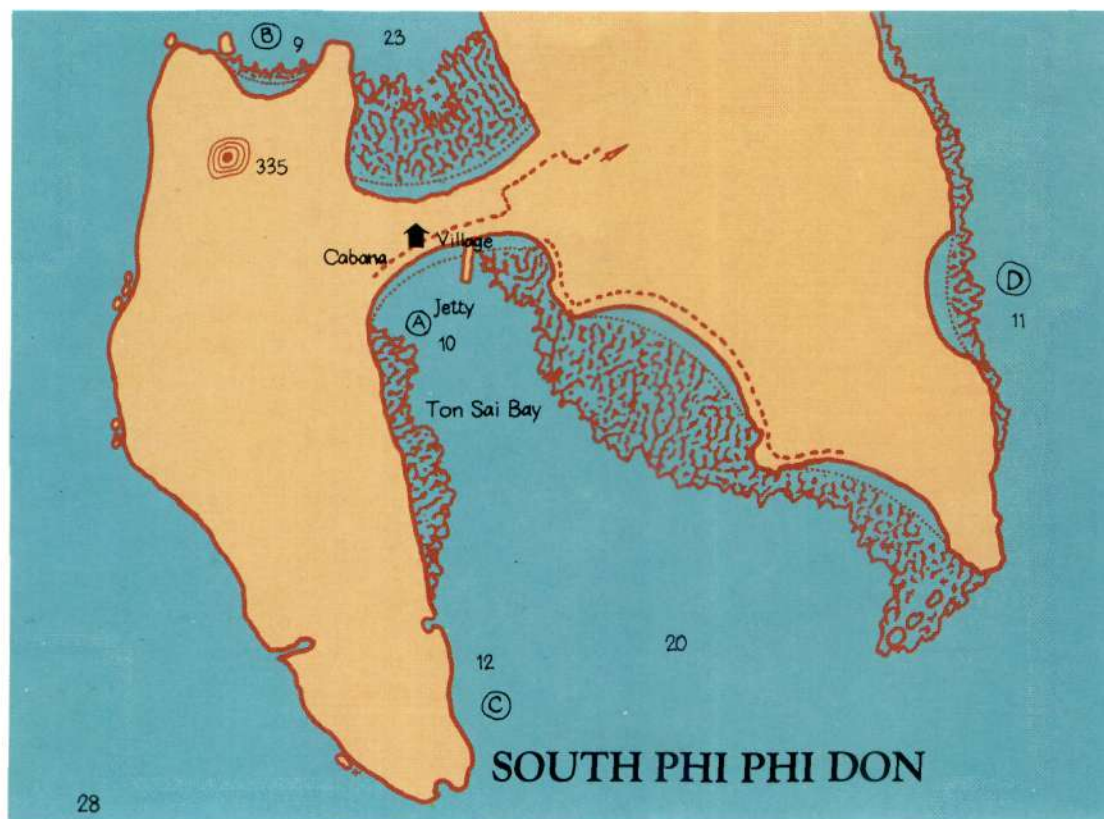
Phi Phi Palm Beach Resort, an environmentally friendly, award-winning hotel of international standard, has all usual amenities, including the island's only swimming pool. With attractive, comfortable bungalows this is Phi Phi's best quality accommodation. They offer an express transfer to Phuket Island. The beach is fringed with coral reefs, is particularly beautiful and is good for snorkelling. Longtail boats are always available for the trip to Ton Sai village.

C) Phi Phi Village



Look for good holding in 8-10 metres on a sandy bottom offshore from the Phi Phi Village Resort.

This is an attractive bungalow-style hotel with all the amenities. The anchorage has similar characteristics to that of Phi Phi Palm Beach.



SOUTH PHI PHI DON

A) Ton Sai Bay



Ton Sai Bay is secure in both seasons. The yacht anchorage is at the head of the bay, on the west side, where one avoids the regular longtail boat and ferry traffic heading for the jetty on the east side of the bay. Do not attempt to approach the jetty if you value your topsides. Entering the bay, it is wise to keep to the west since the water is deep and the coral clearly visible. The drying rock shown on the Admiralty and Thai charts as lying just to the east of the southwest headland forming the bay does not exist. Whether or not this rock ever did in fact exist, there is at this time nothing more than a shallow patch approximately 7 metres deep, which offers no danger to vessels of normal draft. The best anchorage is on sand in about 10 metres, close enough to the fringing reef to be able to swim from the boat.

The village and hotel development on the island is mostly concentrated on the narrow sand isthmus connecting the two lobes of Phi Phi Don, where you can find almost anything the visiting yachtsperson might need.

Said to be one of the three most beautiful islands in the world, Phi Phi Don is not as idyllic as it once was, what with recent commercial development and the huge numbers of daytrippers which tend to make the island a little crowded between the hours of 10:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. Still, it is a very pleasant place to spend a few days with a boat. Dive schools operate from the beach, and there are lots of opportunities for excursions in longtail boats to the *hongs* and inlets on the west coast and Phi Phi Le.

B) Yongkasem Bay



Just west of Lohdalum Bay is a smaller jungle-fringed bay with an anchorage outside the seaward edge of the coral in 8-10 metres. Yongkasem is an ideal overnight stop at any time of the year and should be used in preference to Lohdalum Bay, where numerous coral heads rise in a boat's length from 20 metres or more to dangerously shallow depths.

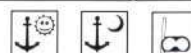
At the back of the beach, lush foliage provides shade for picnics, and the snorkelling is good. Lohdalum itself has excellent snorkelling and diving easily accessible from Yongkasem by dinghy or from the shore. Beware when visiting the restaurants or beach from this side, however, as the bay dries for 400 or 500 metres from the beach at low tide.

C) Ton Sai West Tip



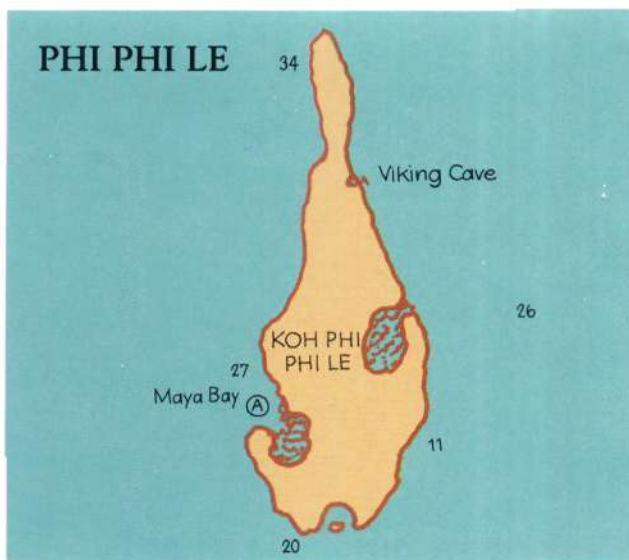
For a lunchtime dive or beach picnic, anchor in 12 metres close to a small sandy beach fringed with coral and nestled into a deep recess in the cliffs.

D) Southeast Bay



In the southwest monsoon season a reasonable anchorage is available in 11 metres off a sandy beach.

Enjoy some nice snorkelling and a restful night without the crowds.



PHI PHI LE

A) Maya Bay



Maya Bay is a spectacularly scenic lagoon. Surrounded by soaring limestone cliffs, it harbours three sandy beaches, the biggest in the south. From a yachting point of view, however, it is only worth being there in late afternoon or early morning, it probably being advisable to return to the more secure anchorage in Tonsai Bay for the night. Still, if you wish to spend the night here in the northeast season, anchorage is possible in 12-15 metres in the mouth of the bay.

Please do not anchor on the coral bank, which has already suffered considerable damage in recent years.

A large part of the bay is shallow coral, and hundreds of visitors come on day trips to snorkel and see the sights. The



Two views of Phi Phi Le: Maya Bay (above), the only anchorage here, is famous for its tranquil beauty, and yachts off the west coast of the island (left).

fish will actually feed from your hand, so it is no sport to hang a line over the side in Maya Bay.

The Viking Cave is worth a look, but anchoring here is not possible. Yachts wishing to drop people off to explore the cave should in either season hold off, delivering visitors by dinghy to the small jetty at the entrance. A better bet still is to hire a longtail boat from Tonsai Bay. This is also the preferred means of getting to the spectacular *hong* on the east side, which is inaccessible by yacht.

Bamboo Island Group

To the north of Phi Phi Don lie two small islands, Mai Phai ('Bamboo') and Yung ('Mosquito'). Between them and the northern tip of Phi Phi Don is a large area of submerged and dangerous coral reef called Hin Klang.

A) Koh Mai Phai



Anchor in 7-10 metres on a sandy patch off the southeast corner of the island. Care should be taken to see that you do indeed drop anchor over the sand, thus avoiding damage to the coral at the same time you minimize the chances of fouling your ground tackle.

There is good fishing off the reef edge. Try trolling for coral cod and jackfish from a dinghy with a shiny lure at about 4 knots on mid to high tide.

B) Hin Klang Reef



C Hin Klang Reef



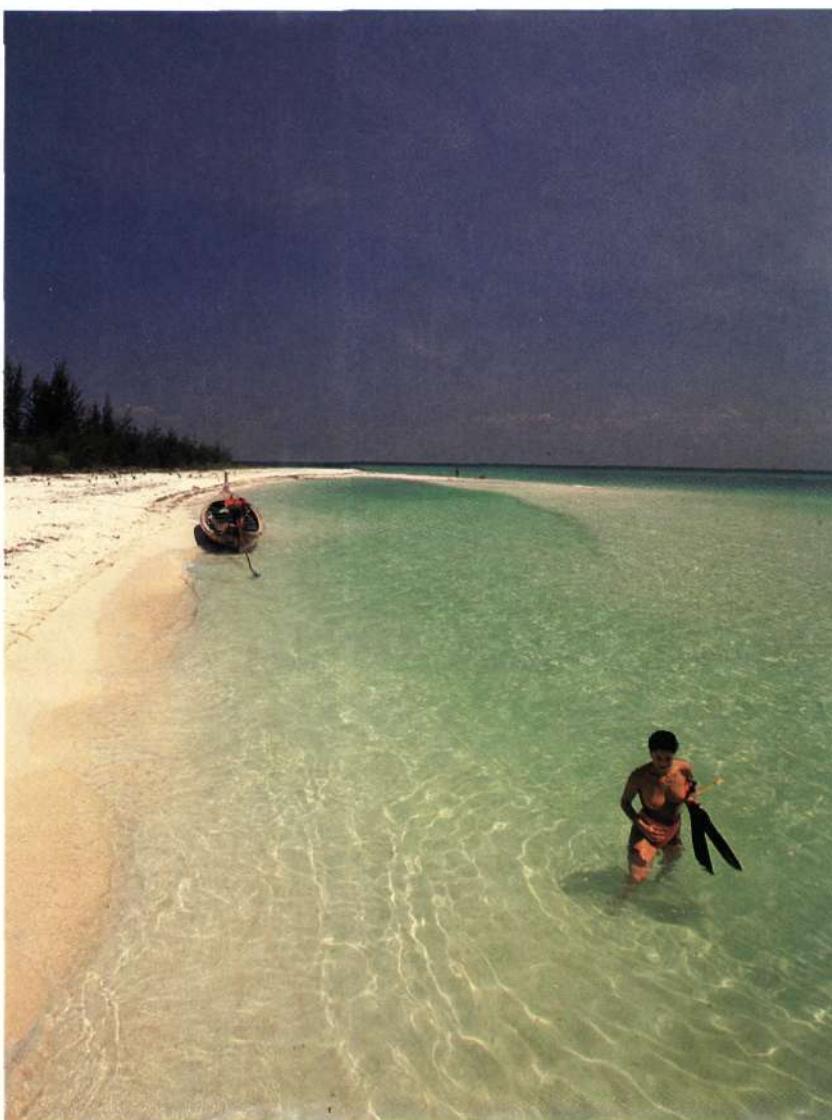
The reefs around here are arguably the best diving outside of the Similan Islands. There are no safe overnight anchorages, unfortunately, though some locations can be recommended in either season for lunchtime or diving stopovers. Even these anchorages are suitable only in relatively calm weather, and the vessel should never be left unattended.

D) Koh Yung

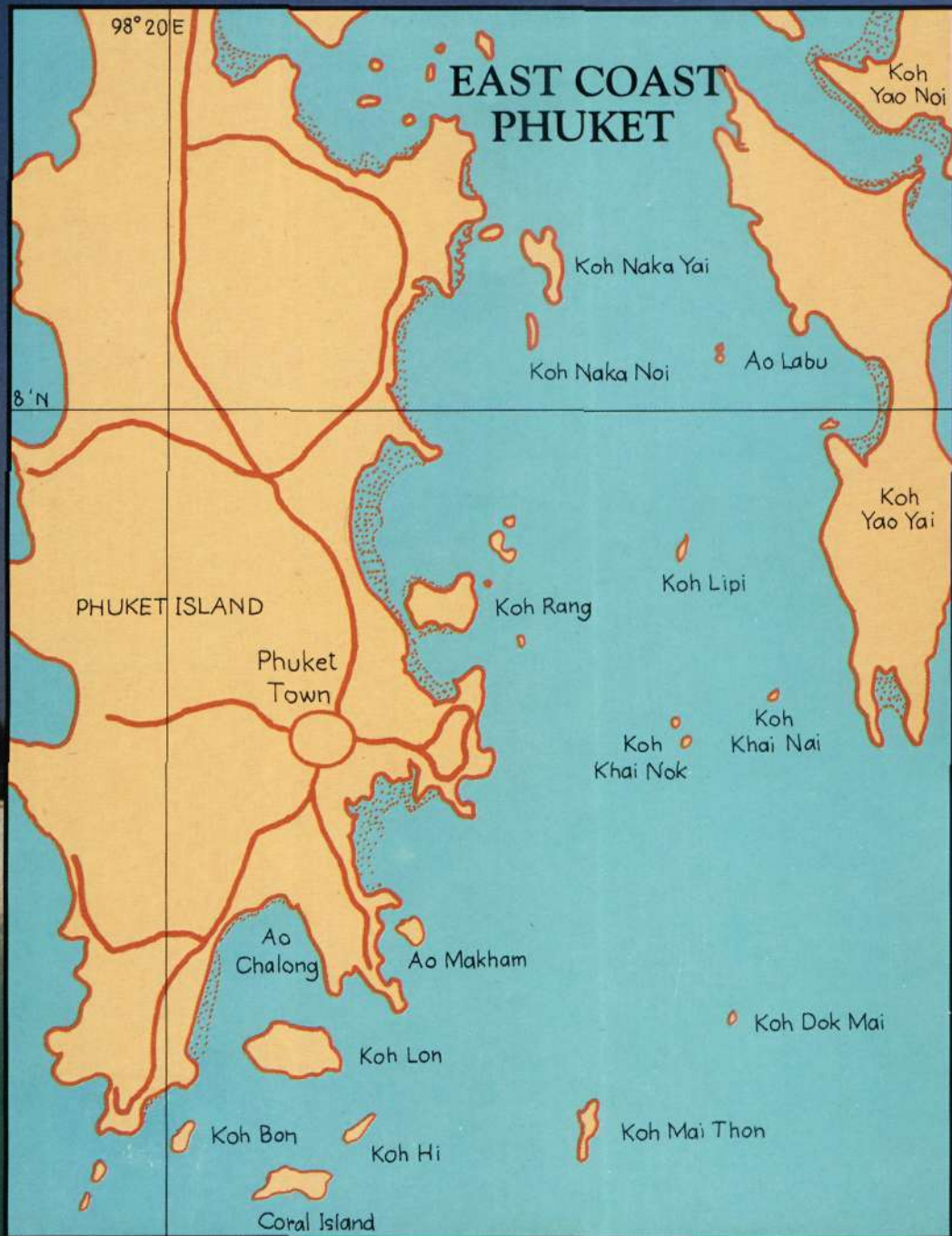


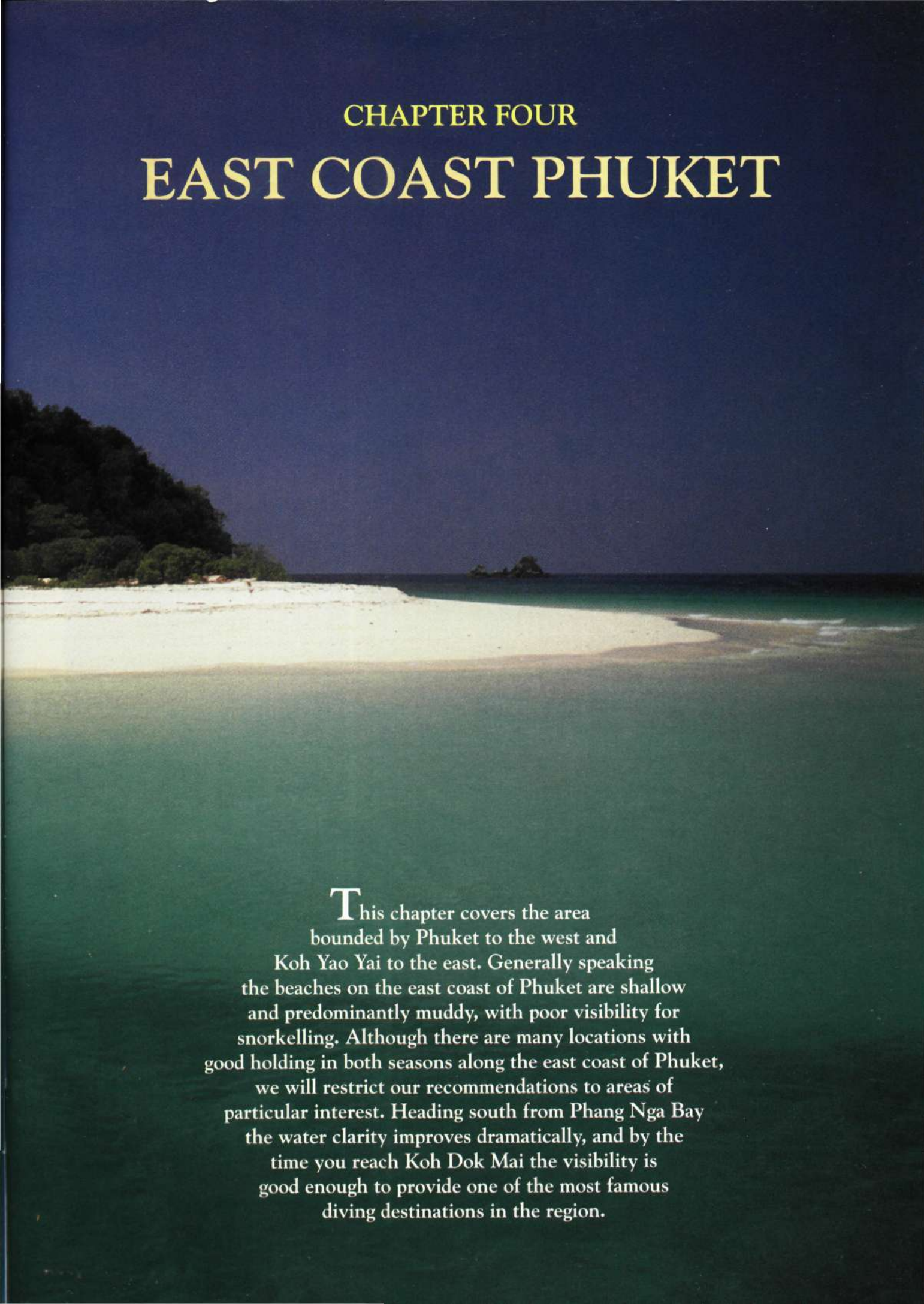
The northwest side of this island has a sandy bank studded with coral outcrops rising from deep water. Approach with care from the west. Locate a sandy patch big enough to swing your anchor in 5-10 metres.

BAMBOO ISLAND GROUP



Bamboo Island offers wonderfully clear waters and clean, white beaches



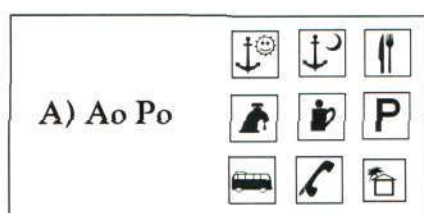


CHAPTER FOUR

EAST COAST PHUKET

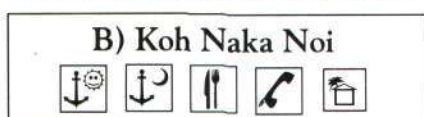
This chapter covers the area bounded by Phuket to the west and Koh Yao Yai to the east. Generally speaking the beaches on the east coast of Phuket are shallow and predominantly muddy, with poor visibility for snorkelling. Although there are many locations with good holding in both seasons along the east coast of Phuket, we will restrict our recommendations to areas of particular interest. Heading south from Phang Nga Bay the water clarity improves dramatically, and by the time you reach Koh Dok Mai the visibility is good enough to provide one of the most famous diving destinations in the region.

AO PO AND THE NAKA GROUP



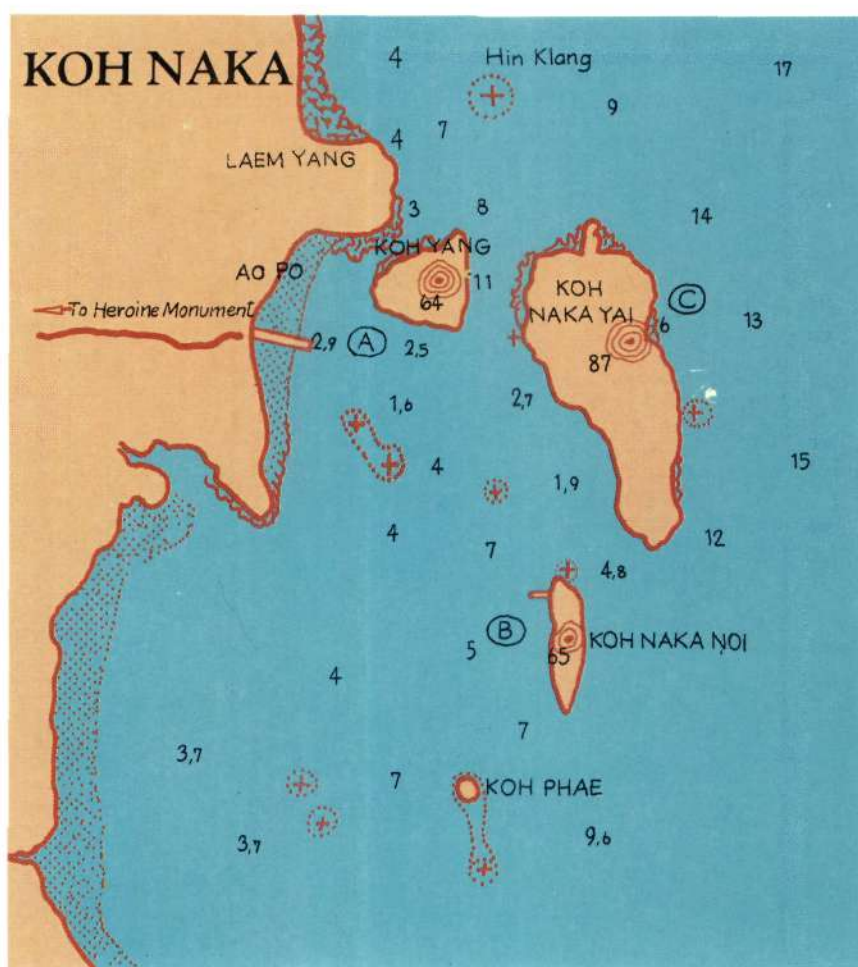
Approach this anchorage from the north using the larger passage between Naka Yai and Koh Yang. Once through the passage keep close to Koh Yang and anchor on the muddy bottom in 3-6 metres. When coming up on the anchorage from the south, stay close to Koh Naka Yai and Koh Yang. The drying rocks marked on the chart definitely exist, and none of these have any navigation markings or buoys. Approach the wooden jetty only by dinghy; never attempt to put a keeled boat alongside.

Some 200 metres long, the jetty is the main departure point for dayboats to the Naka Noi Pearl Farm. Most modern amenities and conveniences can be found ashore, with transport in 30 minutes to either Phuket Town or the airport. Fuel, provisions, and ice can be bought in the small Islamic village ashore.



The best anchorage is found in 5-8 metres to the south of the access jetty on the north of the island. Keep well clear of the rocks on the north side of Naka Noi if approaching between Naka Yai and Naka Noi, and keep Koh Phae to port if coming from the south. When leaving this anchorage and heading north, beware of a rock on the direct line of the passage between Koh Yang and Koh Naka Yai—it is visible only at low tide. Once clear of the channel, steer well offshore to avoid a second reef, one seldom visible at any tide.

Koh Naka Noi is known as 'Pearl Island' because of the cultured pearls grown in traps on its northeastern coast. Educational demonstrations on the techniques of pearl farming are given twice a day. There is a seafood restaurant at the pearl farm, as well as a souvenir shop where you can buy pearls at a discount. An admission fee is levied for going ashore via the jetty.



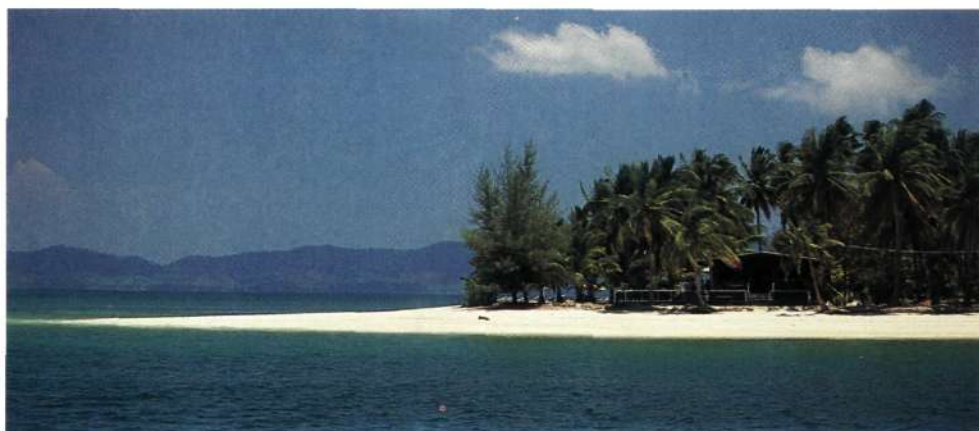
C) Koh Naka Yai

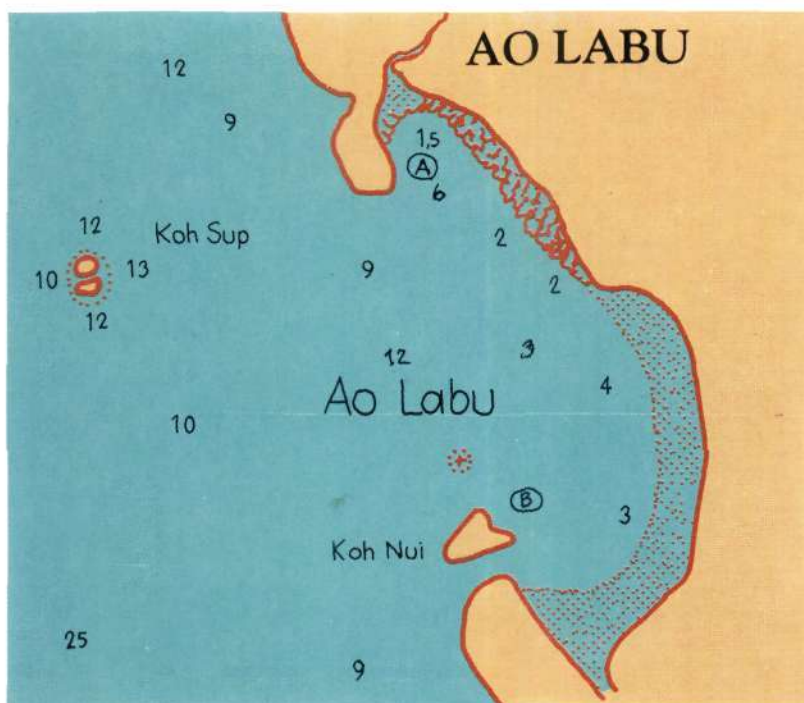


This pretty anchorage in 8-10 metres on a sandy bottom is a suitable overnight stop in the southwest monsoon season, in calm conditions.

On this coast two beaches divided by a rocky outcrop afford great swimming together with shady coconut groves.

Naka Noi Island, site of a well-known pearl farm, also has a small resort on a pleasant beach. It offers a restaurant and the standard resort facilities.





AO LABU

Situated halfway down the east coast of Koh Yao Yai, Ao Labu is easily recognized as the bay directly east of the twin island Koh Sup.

A) Ao Labu North



In the northeast monsoon season, good holding in 5-6 metres on a muddy bottom and excellent shelter can be found on a line roughly due east of the headland. It is unwise to try anchoring too close in; there are some coral outcrops in the bay, and the recommended anchorage is perfectly sheltered.

You can go ashore by dinghy, although at very low tide the bay may be very shallow some distance from the beach. Ashore you will find a long sandy beach fringed with casuarina and other tropical trees typical of the area. In the northern corner of the bay lies the mouth of a river which extends 800 metres and more into the headland toward a small settlement where coconut and rubber is cultivated. This is an extraordinarily peaceful anchorage, and it presents a rare opportunity for extended walks on level ground surrounding the bay.

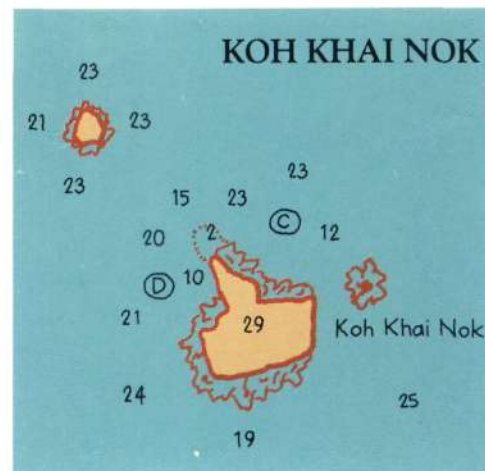
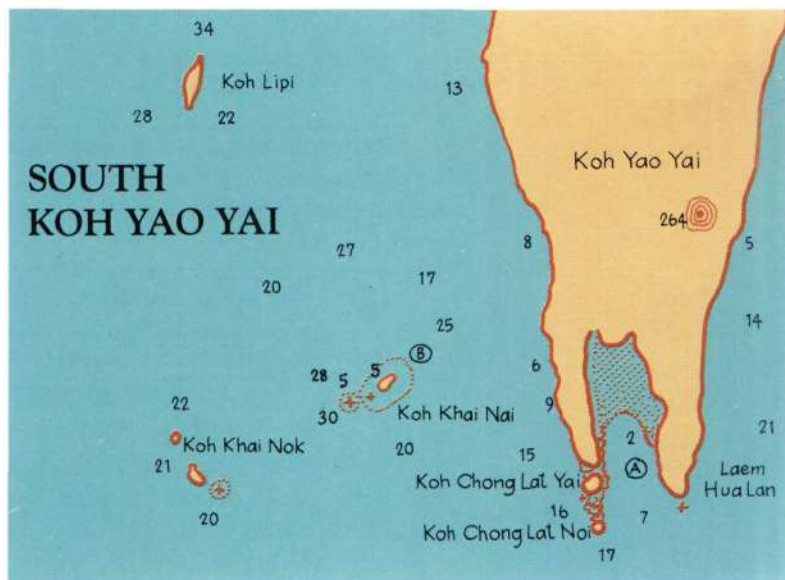
B) Ao Labu South



In the southwest monsoon season, there is good overnight anchorage in 4-5 metres behind the small island of Koh Nui. Do not attempt to get farther south in the bay, as it is extremely shallow and the channel which the local fishing boats use is constantly shifting. When approaching the anchorage, head due east to the centre of the bay before heading south, in this way avoiding a rock some 400 metres to the north of Koh Nui and just visible at high tide.

For the adventurous, a dinghy trip to the village at the southern end of the bay is an interesting experience; but do not expect restaurants or Western provisions. Once again, this is a Muslim community, and appropriate dress should be worn.





SOUTH KOH YAO YAI AND THE KOH KHAI GROUP

A) South Koh Yao Yai



Approaching this anchorage, keep well off the rocky point to the west and set your anchor on the muddy bottom in 4-6 metres. The holding is firm enough that this spot not only offers good overnight protection in the northeast monsoon season, but may be used in the southwest season as well.

You can visit a stilted Muslim village in the northwest corner of the bay. Go in by dinghy using the shallow creek on the west side of the bay, and please observe the usual dress code.

B) Koh Khai Nai



This small island offers a great daytime anchorage in 8-10 metres off the sandy point to the northeast.

Snorkelling and diving are best on the seaward edge of the fringing reef on the northeastern side of the island. There is also an all-tide access beach on the northeastern end of the

island. In either case, there is limited shade available.

C) Koh Khai Nok North



D) Koh Khai Nok West



Koh Khai Nok is another great daytime anchorage. The brilliantly white, all-tide beach on its northern end can be seen from some kilometres distant. Anchor in 10-15 metres; and be careful, as the bottom rises very quickly onto a sandy ledge scattered with coral heads. In either monsoon season, you will find a couple of places to tuck in close to avoid the occasional ground swell which can occur in this open anchorage.

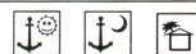
A wide variety of fish and corals make this island a favourite for scuba divers and snorkellers at slack water and neap tides. Local fishermen use the anchorage as a daytime stopover, and they can often be approached for some of their fresh catch if your provisions are running low.



Koh Khai Nok is surrounded by wonderfully clear waters

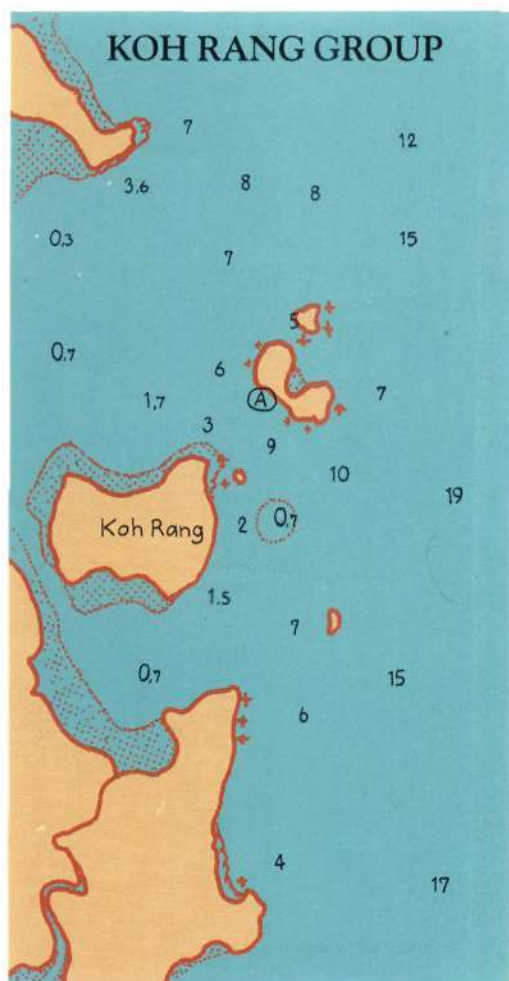
KOH RANG GROUP

A) West Koh Rang Yai

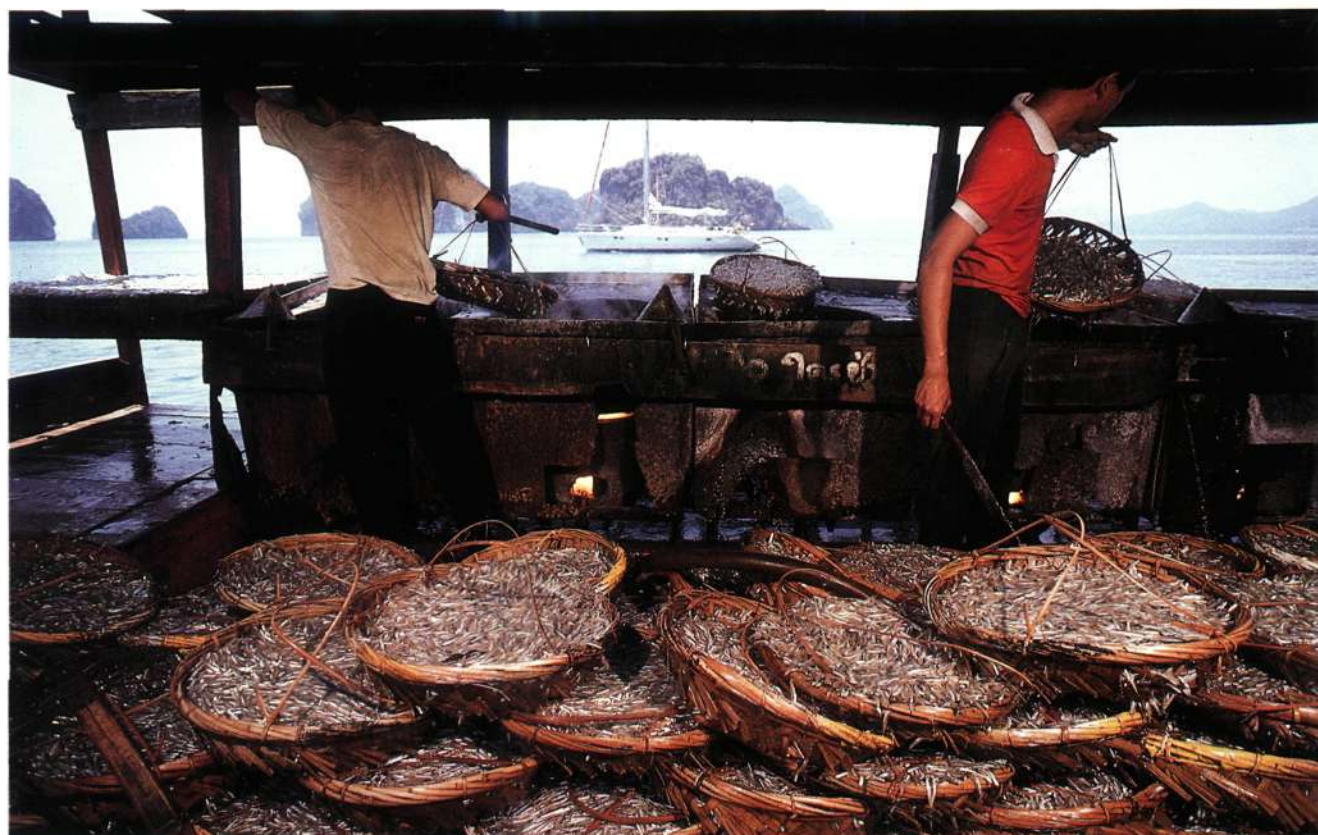


Anchor in 6-9 metres off the beach on a sand and mud bottom, with good holding in both seasons.

This is a remarkably beautiful, quite isolated area with a lovely beach. You will find access to its northern end at all tides. Given the proximity of west Koh Rang to the shallow, muddy eastern coast of Phuket, this anchorage is truly a bonus as a stopover en route either north or south.



A rendezvous with fishing boats is common in the east coast waters. These boats catch tiny baitfish, then boil them on the spot before transporting them ashore for drying.



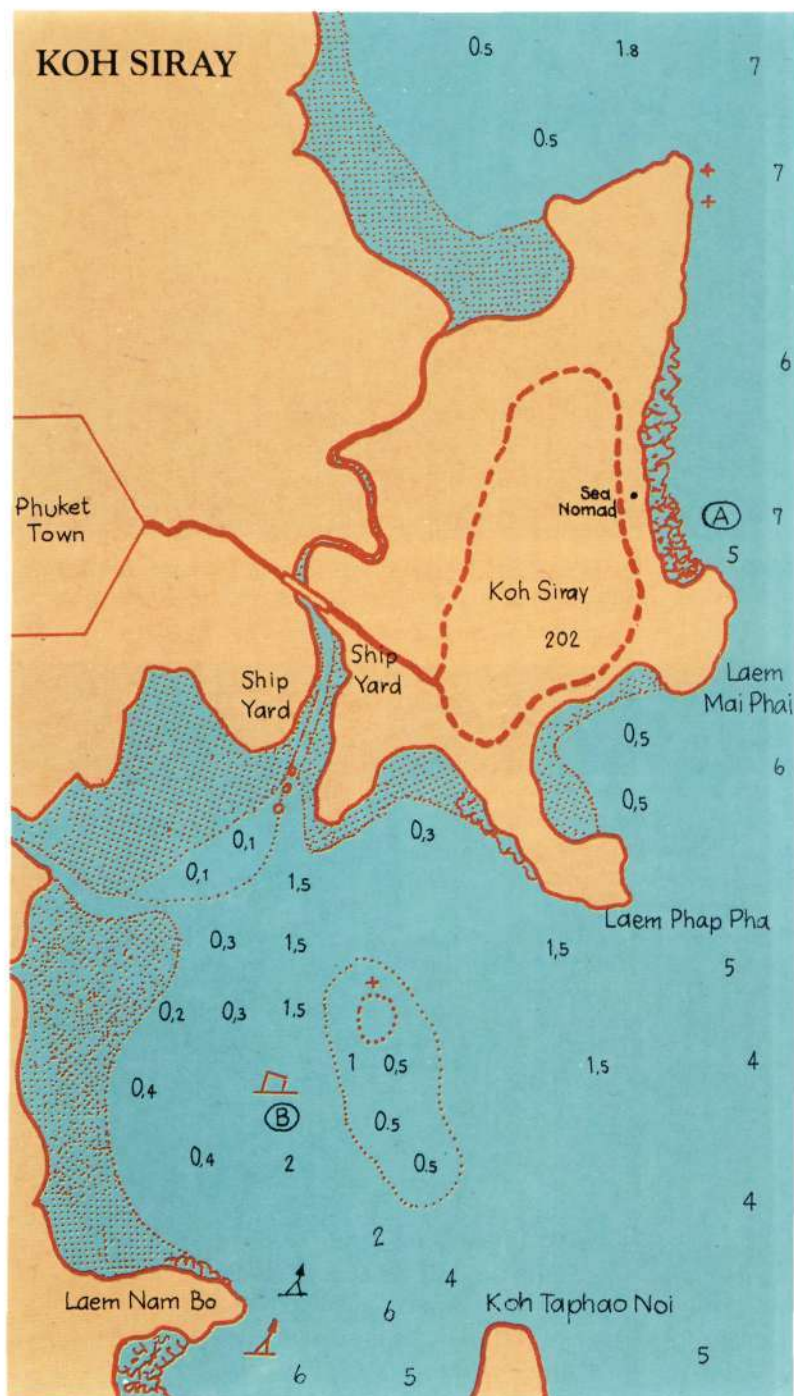
Koh Siray could be described as a hill on the eastern tip of the southern part of Phuket. It is separated from the main island by a river, however, and is therefore considered an island in its own right.

The river gives access to the area's main fishing depot, as well as to the two shipyards now in operation, one on the left, on Phuket Island, the other on

KOH SIRAY

the right, on Koh Siray. These yards mostly take care of local fishing vessels and shallow draft tour boats; but after some years' experience they have facilities quite capable of handling keel-boats. Unfortunately, the appropriate cradles are in short supply, and there is usually a long waiting list for yachts to

slip. A photograph or plan of your under-water hull shape will greatly assist the yard foreman in safely slipping your boat. Electricity and water are available in both yards, though water for wash-downs must be ordered by truck in one of the yards. If you decide to slip your boat, it would be prudent to seek the advice of one of the local yacht services first.



A) Sea Nomad, Koh Siray



A southwest monsoon season anchorage lies off a shallow bay on the east coast of Koh Siray. Anchor well offshore in 4-8 metres just north of the southern headland.

On the beach there are some small bungalow-style hotels. This beach is also home to Sea Nomad Ltd., who manufacture mainly hard-bottomed inflatable dinghies on Phuket. Dinghy and all fibreglass repairs can be done in their workshop. There is an access road to Phuket Town from Koh Siray.

Approaches to Koh Siray

B) Phuket River and Shipyards



Pass between Koh Taphao Noi and Koh Taphao Yai, and proceed to the first channel marker shown on the chart. Head directly towards the second channel buoy and then proceed directly to the headland on the east side of the river entrance. This channel is constantly moving, and the best advice we can give is to negotiate the entrance on a three-quarter tide rising, and if possible follow a large fishing boat in the river. Once in the waterway, the depth is adequate for most vessels, but the number of boats tied on each side of the river severely restricts its navigable width.

Diesel fuel in large quantities, water, ice, and provisions are available at the fishing port and the shipyards farther upstream, one yard on the left and the other on the right.



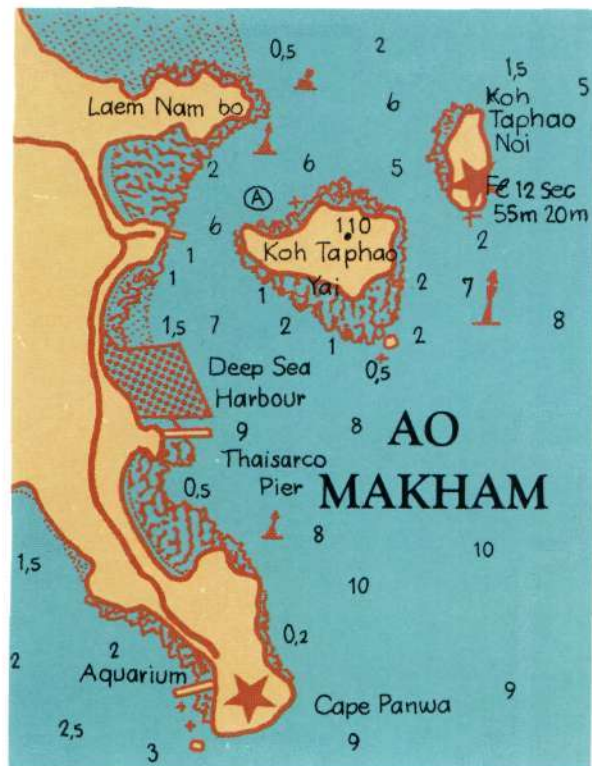
AO MAKHAM DEEP SEA PORT

The area known as Ao Makham is really a channel between Koh Taphao and the main island of Phuket north of Cape Panwa.

Recently dredged during the construction of the Phuket deep-water port, it is well buoyed and easily navigable from north or south. Customs officers can be contacted at the port, although immigration formalities still require a trip to Phuket Town.

Fuel and water can be delivered to the quayside by truck, although this is really only practical for larger vessels, since the wharf is designed for ships and is consequently not kind to topsides.

North of the port is a small jetty with a floating pontoon with road access to Phuket Town.



A) Koh Taphao Yai



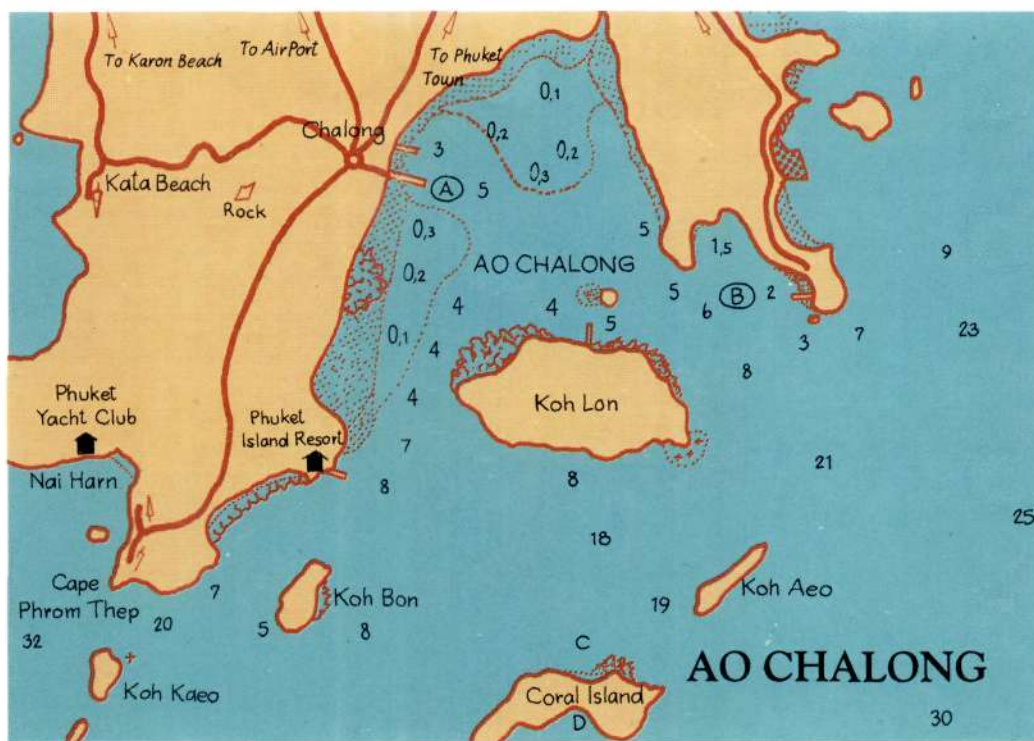
The best anchorage for yachts lies on the north side of Koh Taphao Yai in front of a small resort in 4-8 metres on a muddy bottom. It is safe in all seasons, but can be a little choppy in the northeast monsoon.

Not the most picturesque location, it is nevertheless convenient for town. There is a small graving dock on the island which, although it no longer has gates, can be used as a wall to dry out against, on suitable tides.

*In the port at Ao Makham on Phuket's central east coast (**right**) one finds all kinds of craft, including foreign fishing boats and others seized by the Thai authorities.*



*Different cultures, different craft, different purposes... cross-cultural encounters of this passing kind (**left**) are common in Andaman waters. Often the yachtsman can purchase fish from the Thai fishermen, who are almost invariably friendly and always helpful when really needed.*



Ao Chalong is a year-round anchorage at the southern end of Phuket. It is a big shallow bay facing south and protected by the large island of Koh Lon at its entrance. Only 10 kilometres from Phuket Town by road, it is traditionally the first port of call for visiting yachts, and offers many restaurants on shore. The main anchorage has two long jetties to give access at low water to dinghies and shallow draft vessels. Large areas of sticky mud dry on low spring tides, making dinghy access to

AO CHALONG

the beach impossible.

There are two approaches to Ao Chalong. From the south, care should be taken to stay closer to Koh Lon on your starboard side than to the mainland. This is because both the bank and the reef extend farther than the Admiralty and Thai charts suggest. Just south of the southern jetty there is a shallow sandbank, so do

not turn into the area where all the yachts are anchored until you are abeam of the anchorage. From the east, head just north of west toward the small island in the middle of the entrance and from there proceed towards a prominent rocky patch on the hillside directly ahead. When you reach a line between the jetty on the north side of Koh Lon and the anchored yachts, it is safe to head directly towards the anchorage, thus avoiding the shallow bank in the north of the bay.

A) Ao Chalong



Anchor on the muddy bottom in 3-7 metres well off-shore and well beyond the end of the jetty. Holding is excellent, and the biggest danger is other boats with inadequate ground tackle dragging into you in a strong wind. Try to anchor north of the jetties, as they are used daily by express ferries of all shapes, sizes, and speeds. In the southwest monsoon season, this is one of the few perfectly protected anchorages on the island (although some ground swell may be experienced). In the northeast season, on the other hand, conditions can be a little choppy because of the long fetch in the bay, and this sometimes makes long dinghy transfers to the beach uncomfortable. There are about 10 days per month when, due to the tide, dinghy access to the beach is impossible for a few hours.

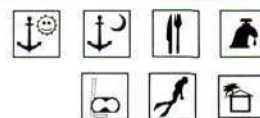
B) Aquarium



On the west side of Cape Panwa, there is a concrete jetty which serves as a base for the Hydrographic and Fisheries

Departments. On shore, you will find the Phuket Aquarium and Phuket Marine Biological Centre. Anchor in front of the beach in 5-6 metres on a muddy bottom. When rounding the cape, keep well clear of the off-lying rocks and reefs.

C) Coral Island (Koh Hi)



On the north coast of Koh Hi there is a sandy bay with good coral fringing the beach. In the southwest monsoon season, sheltered anchorage is available on a sandy bottom in 8-10 metres.

Ashore, two bungalow developments with restaurants cater to visitors, while many tour operators bring their customers for snorkelling.

D) Coral Island South



For a lunchtime stopover, try the small bay in about 14 metres on a rocky bottom on the south side of Koh Hi.

This is a very pleasant anchorage—quiet, with nice coral and lots of fish. A small sandy beach is accessible at high tide.

Koh Mai Thon is a small island only 6 miles from Ao Chalong which now has a hotel development on its east coast.

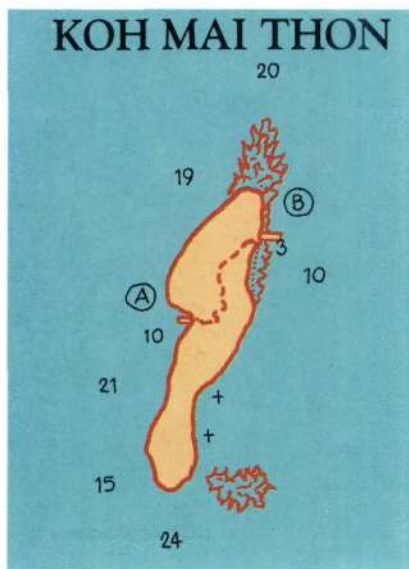
A) West Koh Mai Thon



During the northeast monsoon season, a very small bay in the middle of the west coast offers good overnight holding, for one or two boats, in 10-12 metres on a sand and rock bottom.

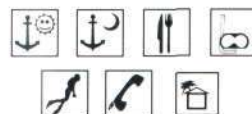
A small makeshift jetty lends access to the island at all tides, but the beach coral dries at low tide. A recently carved track leads to the new hotel development in 15 minutes of walking across the island to its east coast. This anchorage is rumoured to

KOH MAI THON



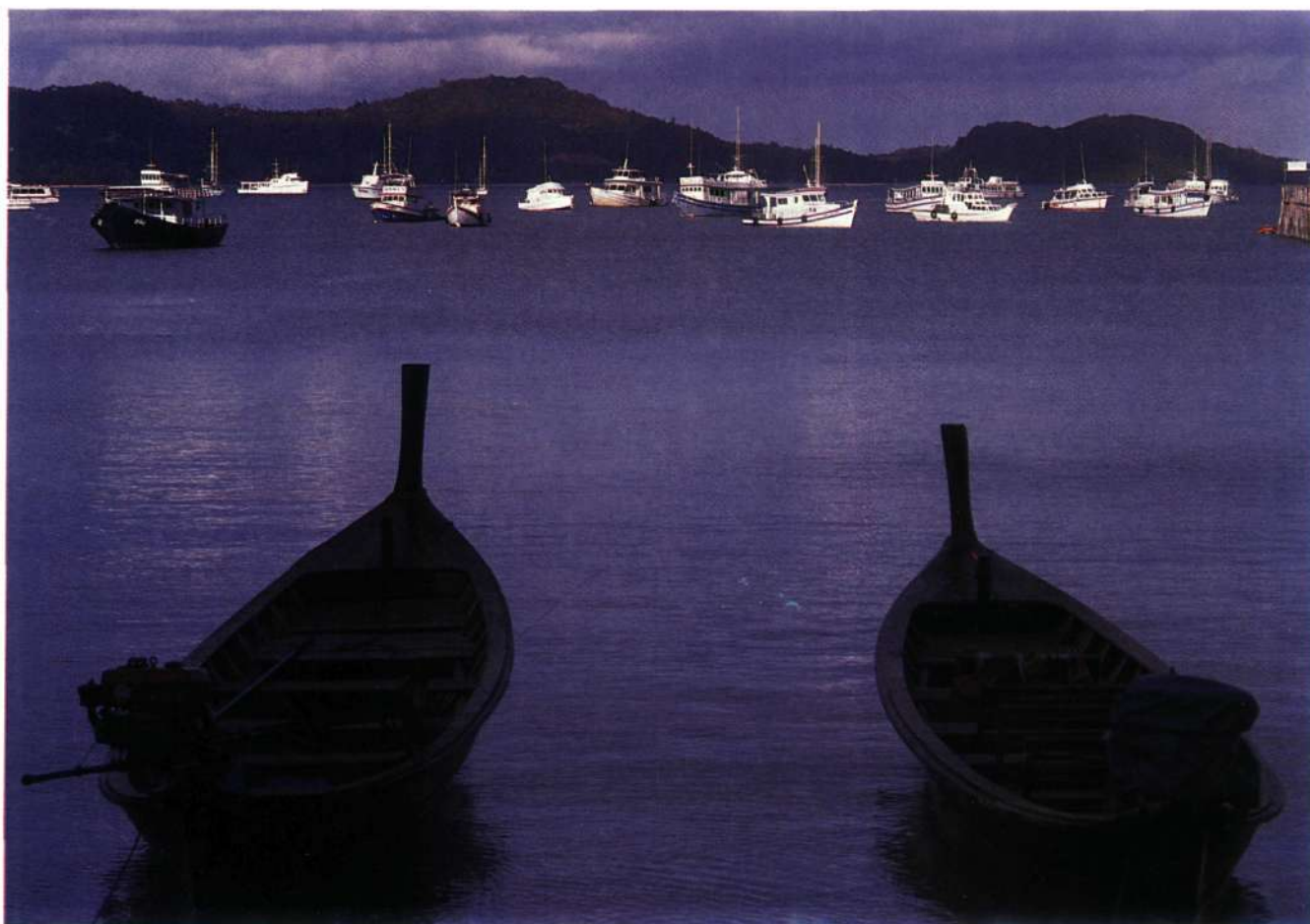
be a great spot for catching red snapper at night. Try handlines with fresh bait.

B) East Koh Mai Thon

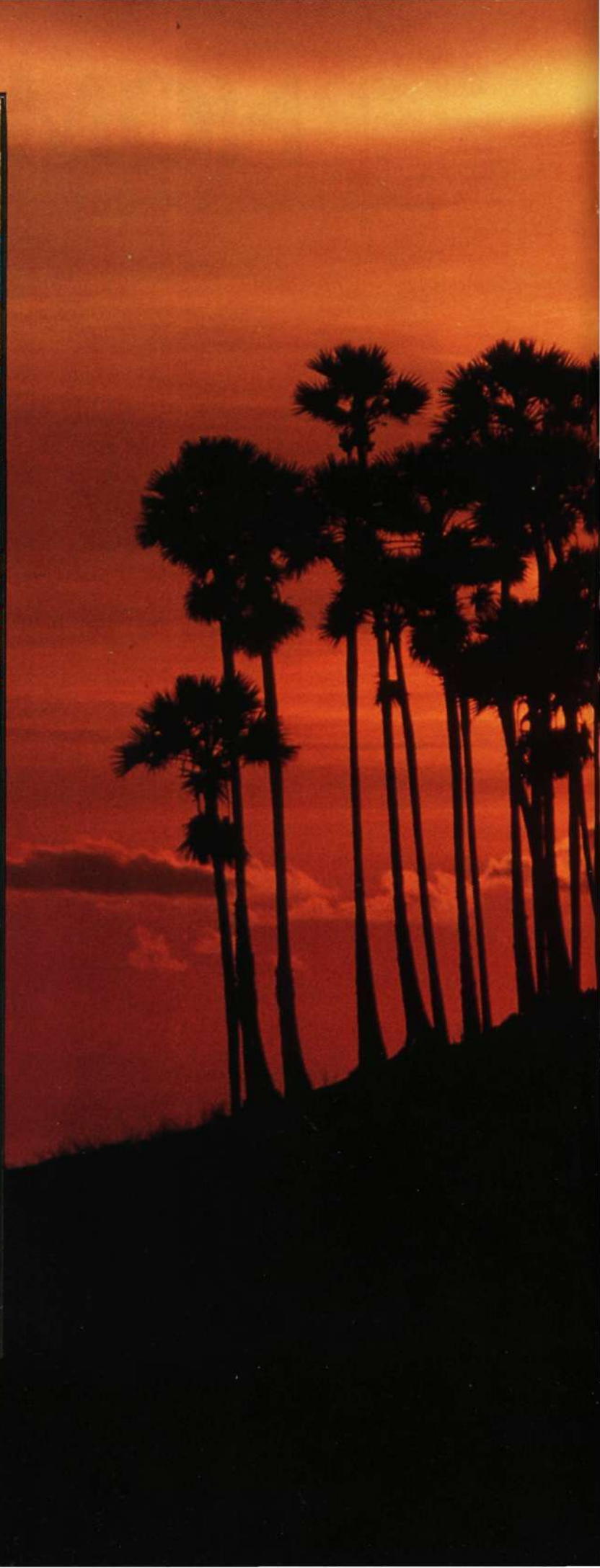
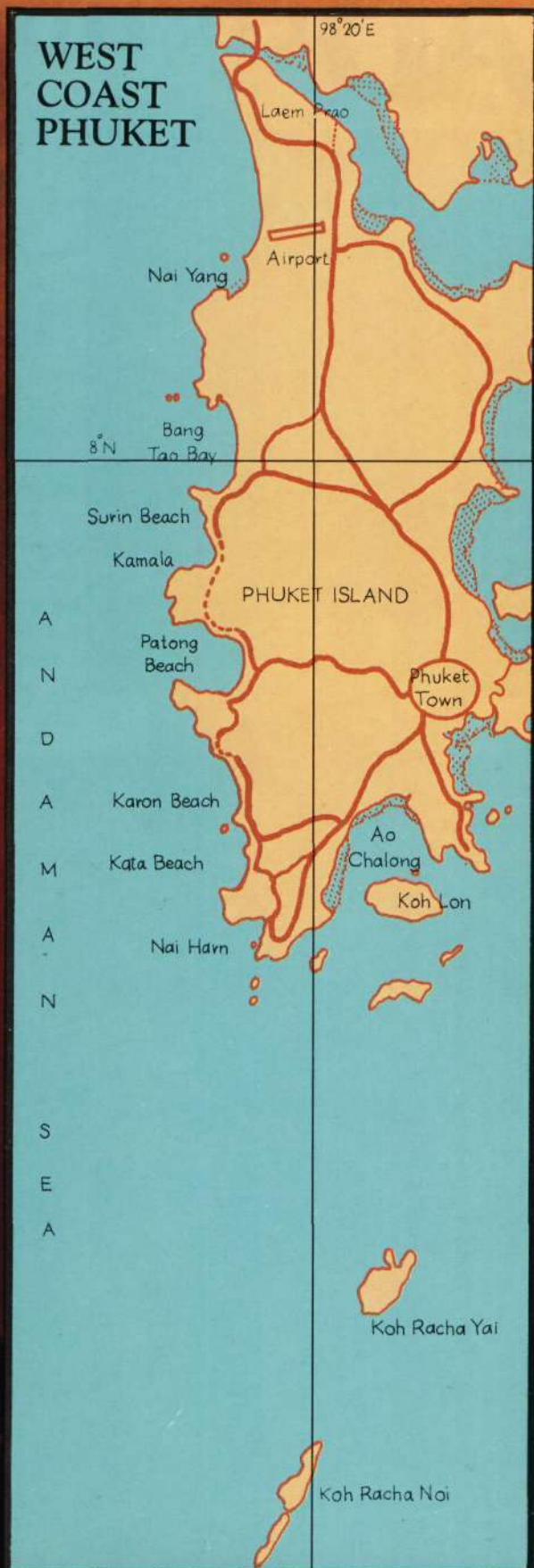


In the southwest monsoon, look for anchorage in 6-10 metres on the sandy bottom off the newly constructed concrete jetty and resort. Care should be taken when rounding both the northern and southern points of the island—give lots of clearance to both the northern and southeastern reef areas.

A new hotel should be fully operational by early 1992 and offering all the usual amenities. Good snorkelling and diving is available on the northern point of the island.



Ao Chalong is Phuket's most-used anchorage for pleasure craft. It enjoys year-round protection, though in the northeasterly season some yachts move to the prettier bay at Nai Harn.

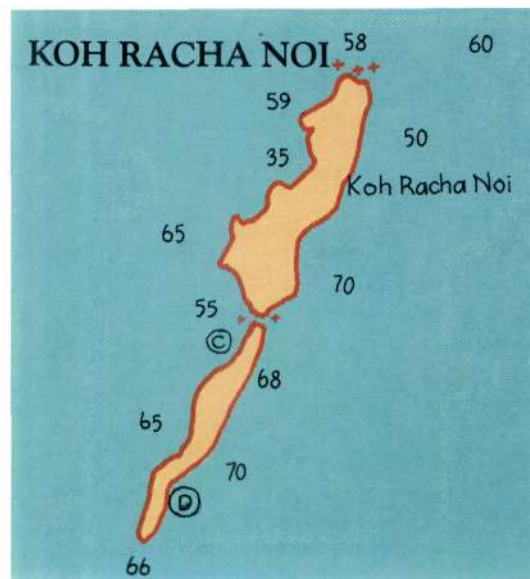
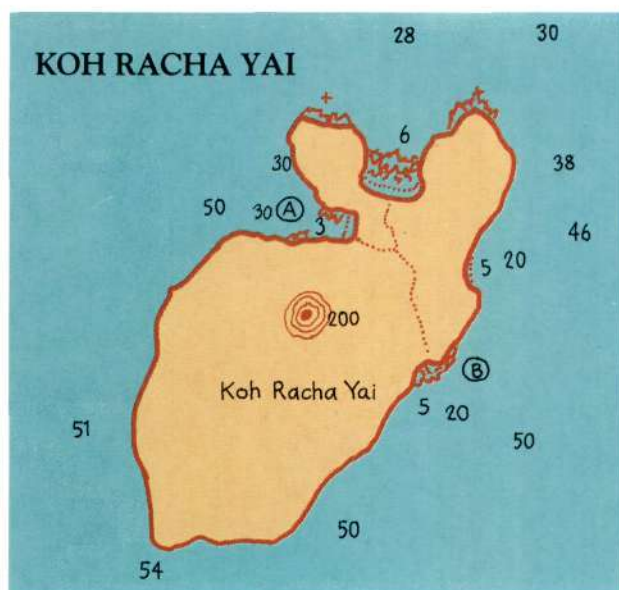




CHAPTER FIVE

WEST COAST PHUKET

This coast of Phuket, together with the islands just to the south, offers some of the clearest water and most beautiful beaches in the region. Consequently, it is here you find the biggest concentration of hotels and beachside activity in the Andaman Sea. The advantages to any visiting yacht are obvious. But the restaurants, the nightlife, the shopping, etc. may be offset by the screaming, buzzing swarms of water scooters and ski-boats, not to mention the acres of tanning flesh. In the southwest monsoon season, the anchorages are totally unsuitable, due to the short swell (as much as 2 metres), the beach break, and occasional strong onshore squalls. Although the season usually shifts to the northeast monsoon during late November, westerly squalls can come up as late as Christmas. In the northeast monsoon season, these anchorages offer perfect shelter in depths of 4-12 metres on a sand bottom. (The best anchor to use on this coast is a Bruce or a Danforth, due to the harder sand lying just below the surface.) Those anchorages mentioned in this chapter are by no means the only ones on the west coast. Indeed, the entire west coast provides good shelter, generally speaking. Later in the season, a low northwesterly ground swell can make the more open anchorages a little uncomfortable, mind you, though certainly not to the extent they become dangerous. The northeast offshore breezes provide strong conditions in relatively calm seas, making for exhilarating sailing up and down the coast. The waters between the southeast tip of Phuket and are often confused in both seasons, particularly where you have the wind against the tide. All in all, the west coast is a day-sailing delight, with numerous anchorages and plenty of action ashore.



RACHA ISLANDS

Racha Yai and Racha Noi lie 10 miles to the south of Phuket. (*Racha* means 'king', *yai* is 'big', and *noi* means 'small'). Development has yet to work its full magic here. There's nothing much but some small bungalows and restaurants on Racha Yai, although ski-boats and scooters have just recently made their debut. Good diving, snorkelling, and fishing are to be found all around this group.

A) Racha Yai Bay



This is one of the real tropical paradises of the area. A fine white sand beach frames a bay fringed on both sides with coral, the clear waters a vivid aquamarine tending to turquoise. The best anchorage is in 10-15 metres on sand and calcified coral, well away from the isolated coral heads in the inner bay. Sandy patches do exist closer in, but care must be taken to avoid damaging the reef or fouling your anchor.

Ashore there are three small restaurants where seafood is the specialty, and bungalow accommodation is basic. One little beer-bar has been established on the beach, recently, and this may add heavily amplified Black Sabbath or reggae to the sighing of the evening breeze in the coconut palms. This is progress.



The main beach and anchorage on Racha Yai

The diving and snorkelling are excellent. The beach is frequented by diveboats and daytrippers so, if you have crew leaving, opportunities for transportation back to Phuket are many.

B) Racha Yai East



During the southwest monsoon season, the east coast of Koh Racha Yai lends shelter for overnight stops in all but the strongest conditions, with deep-water anchorage in 10-20 metres on a broken coral and sand bottom.

It also affords access to two small beach areas with excellent snorkelling and diving, although sometimes there are strong currents. Local squid fishermen use this spot as a daytime haven, and a 20-minute walk can take you through the coconut plantations to the north and west beaches, which are totally deserted at this time of year.

C) Racha Noi West



This is a good lunchtime destination from Koh Racha Yai in the northeast monsoon season. Look for a deep-water anchorage in 10-20 metres close to the small gap in the island. Passage through this gap in a dinghy should only be attempted at high tide.

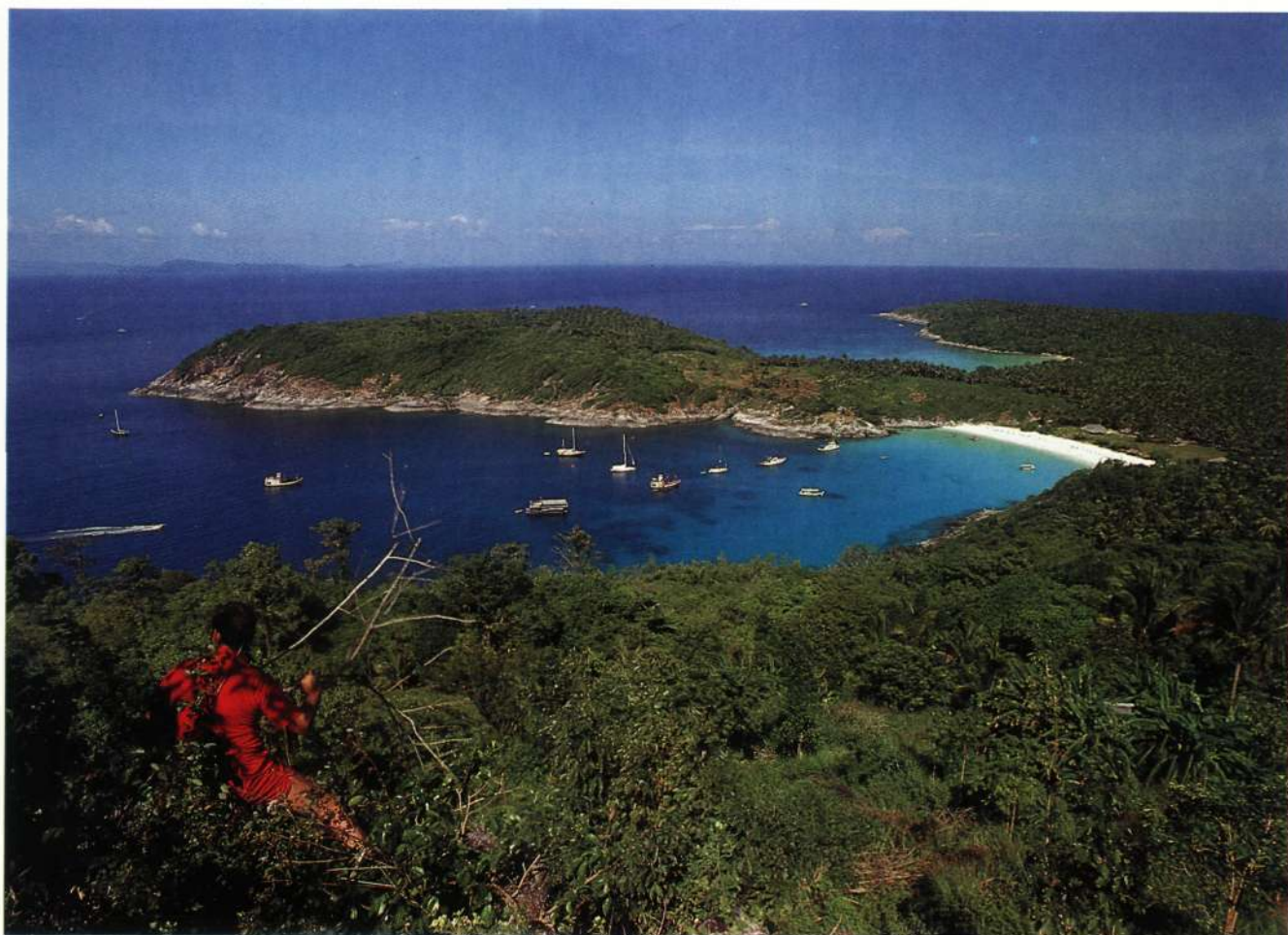
There is good diving and snorkelling on a mainly rocky bottom.

D) Racha Noi East



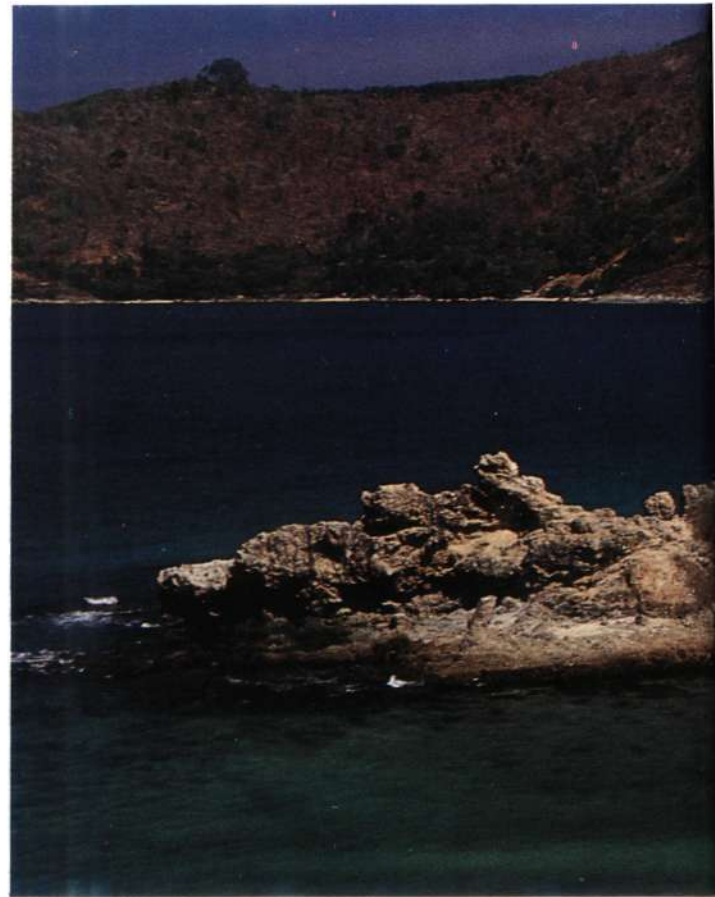
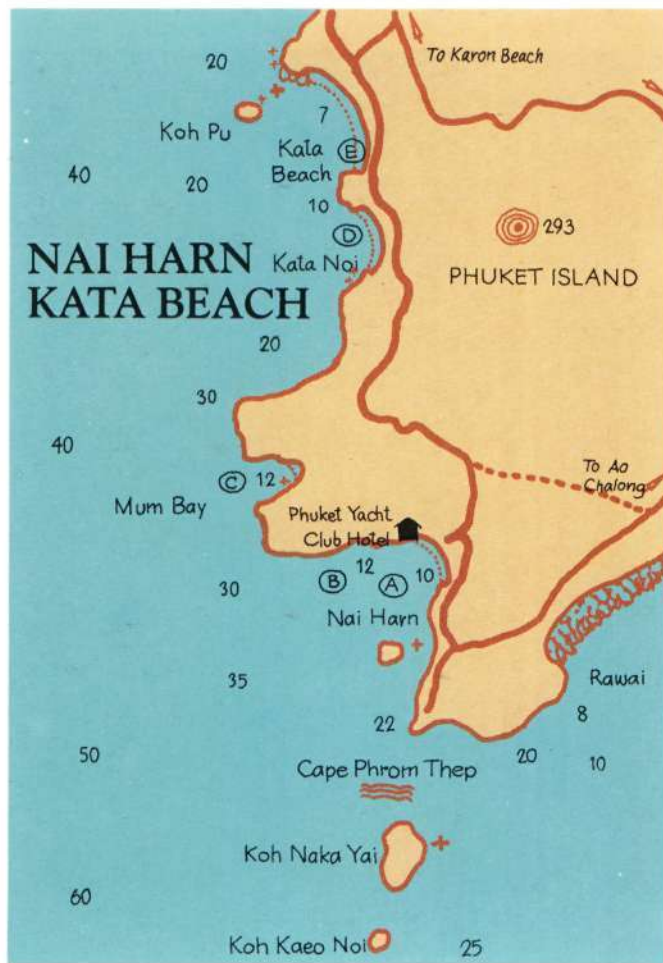
This anchorage is similar to that off Koh Racha Noi West. It makes a convenient daytime lunch stop during the southwest monsoon season.

The diving and snorkelling are great, with the added attraction of the small sandy beach which lends itself to sunbathing in all but the highest tides.



Two views of the main bay on Racha Yai's northwest side. It's well sheltered from northeasterlies, and has a wonderful beach.





Though exposed to the southwest monsoon, Nai Harn is excellent in the northeast season. Both photos feature the attractively designed Phuket Yacht Club Hotel, centre for many yachting activities.





NAI HARN TO KATA BEACH

A) Nai Harn



Anchorage is in 8-10 metres virtually anywhere in the bay. Dinghy landings can sometimes be exciting early and late in the season, because of the surf.

This is a popular spot, with Phuket Town 45 minutes away by tuk tuk. The Phuket Yacht Club, a splendid hotel perched on the north side of the bay, is every year host to the King's Cup Regatta, held in honour of King Bhumipol's birthday, which falls on the 5th of December. Cheaper fare is more readily found in the restaurants along the beach.

B) Jungle Beach



There is secure anchorage in 10 metres either in front of the Jungle Beach Resort or just to the east in front of a smaller bungalow development.

C) Mum Bay



This deep, rocky bay nestles in a deep cleft in the mountainous north headland of Nai Harn, where anchorage is in about 12 metres.

There is a small beach onshore, and swinging room for two or three boats.

D) Kata Noi



Anchorage is in 8-10 metres off a sandy beach.

Kata Noi is host to the Kata Thani Hotel and to numerous small bungalow operations. Behind the hotel there is a road which leads either to Kata and Karon Beaches, or else south to Nai Harn. It is approximately 45 minutes from Kata Noi to Phuket Town by tuk tuk.

E) Kata Beach



The southeast corner of the bay offers anchorage in 8-10 metres on sand.

Ashore you will find many restaurants and hotels. The Club Mediterranee covers about 60 percent of the beach.

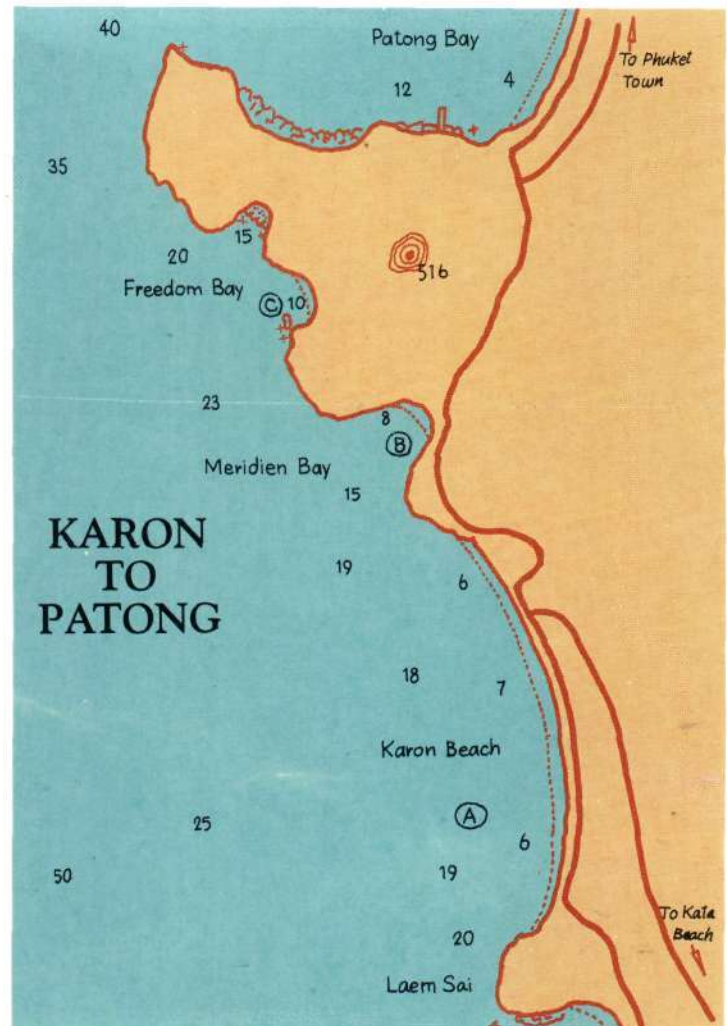
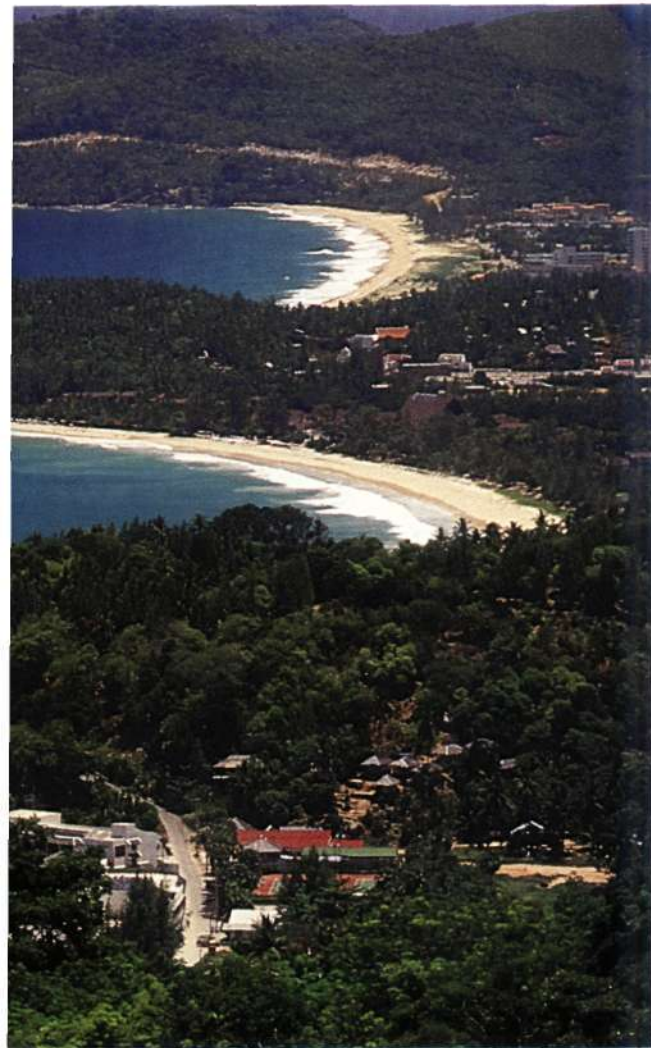
The diving and snorkelling around Koh Pu (Crab Island) is well worth trying. A note of caution, however: the passage between Koh Pu and the headland is not recommended without local knowledge, as there is a rock awash in the channel.

You can get to Kata Centre via the little road from the northeast corner of the bay. It's about 35 minutes to Phuket Town by tuk tuk.



Classic west coast views that have made Phuket a famous beach resort: the adjoining bays of Kata Noi, Kata, then Karon at back (above); Kata Noi (left); Meridien Bay (left, lower); Kata Beach (below).





KARON BEACH TO FREEDOM BEACH

A) Karon Beach



This lovely 2-mile sand beach, backed by salt ponds and dunes, provides protected anchorage in 6-10 metres on a sandy bottom along its entire length.

Karon Beach is undergoing extensive development, and several major hotels have already set up operations. Phuket Town is about 30 minutes away by tuk tuk.

B) Meridien Bay



Anchorage is in 10 metres on a sandy bottom.

This picturesque spot, formerly known as 'Relax Bay', is now completely dominated by the Meridien Hotel, which has been built around a large tree that was previously the only landmark on the bay.

In partial recompense, the hotel harbours several fine restaurants plus all the facilities of a major resort. By tuk tuk, expect to take 35 minutes to Phuket Town and 10 minutes to Patong Beach.

C) Freedom Bay



This is a favourite day excursion from Patong and Karon, since access by road is difficult. Anchorage is in 10 metres on sand.

A small restaurant caters to visitors. Off the small headland at the south of the bay, there is good snorkelling and diving. In the deeper water off the north headland, the diving is excellent.

To the north of this anchorage is another sandy beach, one which is only accessible at high tide. From this beach it is a 10-minute walk over the headland to the beach on the southern end of Patong Beach.



Patong Bay is the principal tourist centre on Phuket and, as such, it has the best nightlife, the greatest variety of restaurants, and the biggest range of hotels. Supermarkets and little fresh-food markets sell provisions, though prices are quite high.

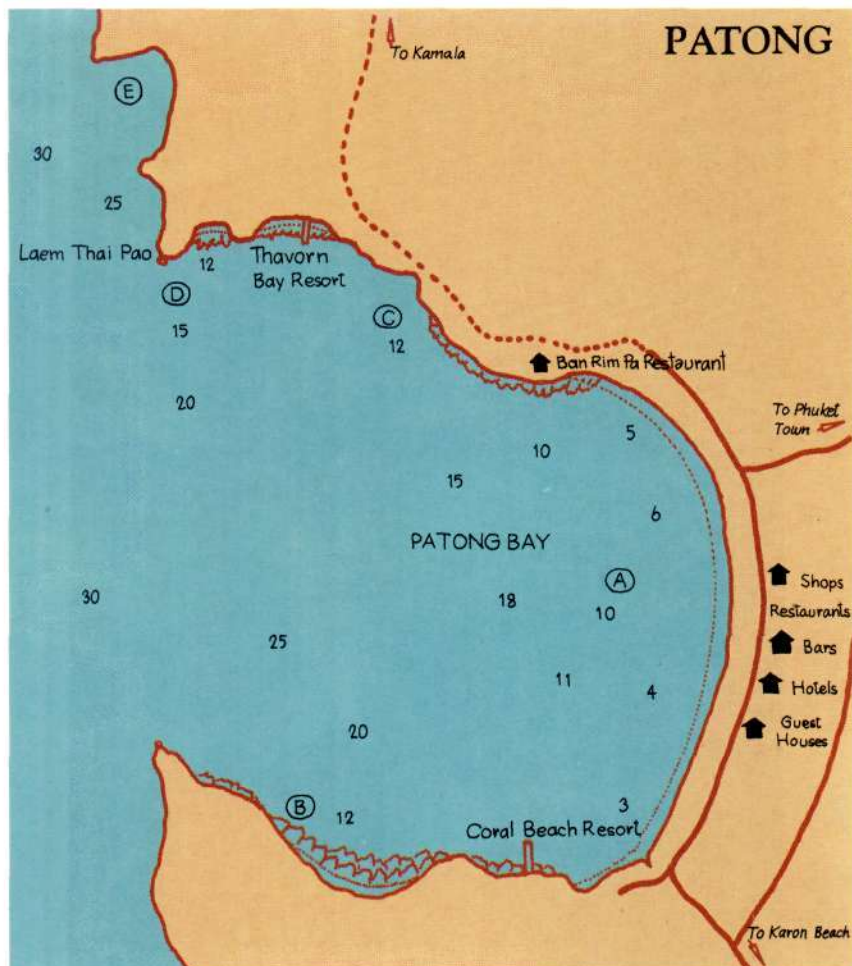
Patong Beach is famed as the nightlife centre of Phuket (left). It's also the beach with the greatest concentration of hotels, restaurants, bars, and shops on the island. For those seeking some action after a long spell at sea, this is the place.

PATONG BAY

Dinghies can generally be left unguarded near the police post in the centre of the beach.

The first high-rise buildings have

already appeared on Patong, as it aspires to be the first urban resort on the island. Although this bay provides for all the basic needs of a cruising yacht, including a rollicking nightlife, it's a noisy, hectic anchorage.



A) Patong Bay



Its gradually sloping, sandy bottom permits anchorage in 5-15 metres anywhere in this broad bay.

Patong is the most popular anchorage on the west coast, particularly around Christmas, New Year's, and the Songkran water festival.

B) South Point



Anchor in 8-10 metres on a sandy bottom off one of the small beaches. This is a good stop for the night if a southwesterly swell is running early or late in the season.

South Point is also a favourite daytime excursion for longtails operating from the main beach, with lots of divers and snorkellers coming to enjoy the underwater sights within easy range of the beach facilities of Patong.

C) North Bay



Look for a small bay slightly east of the Thavorn Bay Resort. You'll find a water hose has been laid from a hillside

spring to a buoy offshore. Good tank water is usually available for a modest fee, even at the end of the dry season.

D) North Point



Situated just inside the northernmost point on Patong, this bay has a steep coral shelf rising from a sandy bottom in about 12 metres. Lots of colourful corals and fish await the underwater explorer.

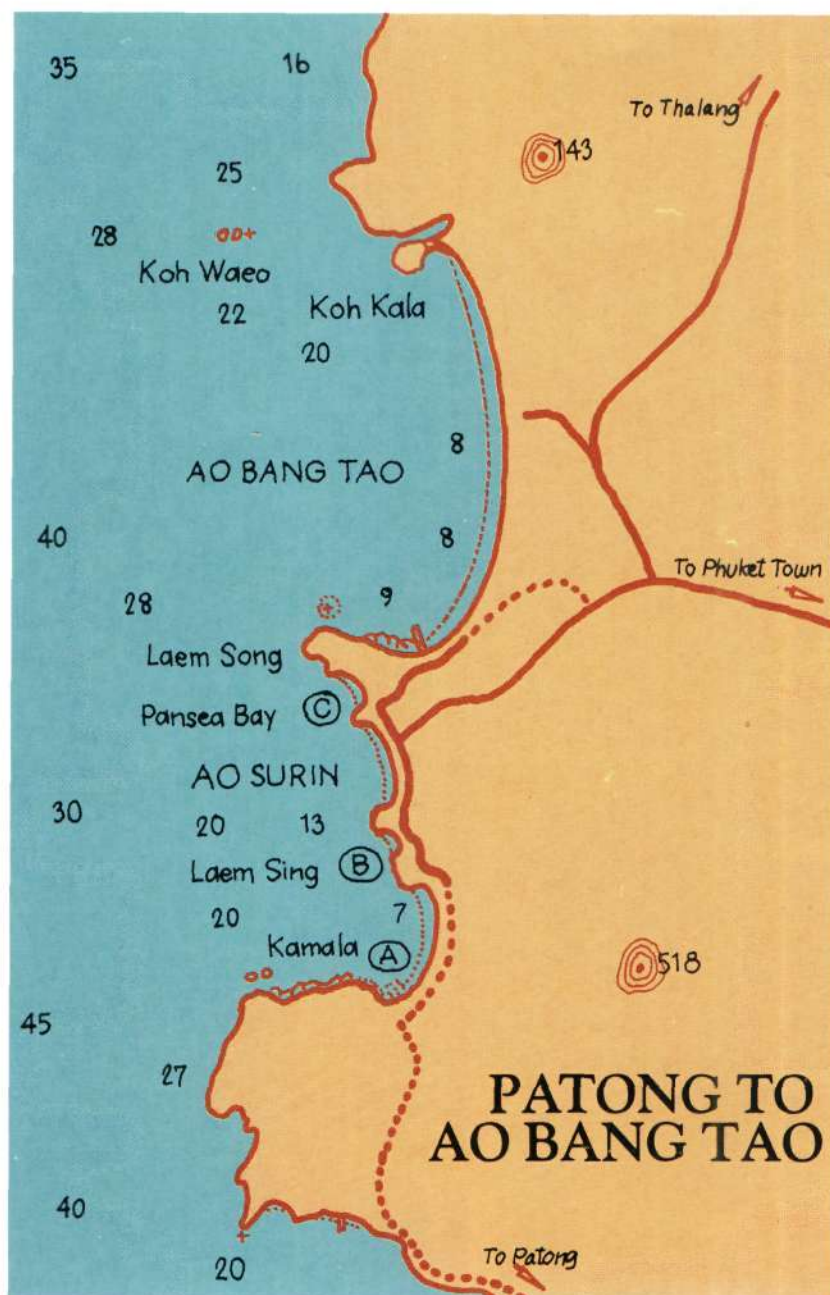
North Point is a good haven from the northwesterly swell which is common in February and March. Access to the beach is best at high water.

E) Waterfall Bay



This mere indentation in the headland affords shelter for one or two boats; anchor in about 12 metres on a sandy bottom with scattered coral.

In the corner of the bay you will find a spring which is accessible by dinghy — bring your jerricans. The spring often dries up by the end of the dry season.



PATONG TO BANG TAO

A) Kamala Beach



Anchor well out in the bay in 6-8 metres on a sandy bottom.

Kamala Beach lies in a pretty bay, one as yet unoccupied by major hotels though there are several good restaurants. These establishments are frequented mainly by long-staying visitors and expat retirees.

B) Laem Sing



Anchor in 10 metres on a sandy bottom.

Laem Sing, made famous locally by its appearance in Singha Beer commercials, is a beautiful bay framed by two rocky headlands. Impressed by its photogenic nature, a Thai TV station was led to buy the area.

C) Pansea Bay



You should anchor outside the moorings in 10 metres on a sandy bottom. This anchorage is uncomfortable when the northwesterly swell is running in February or March.

This secluded spot is named for the resort hotel which sprawls among the coconut palms on the hillside leading down to the beach. The exclusive Amanpuri Hotel has also set up further north along the beach. Yacht crews can use the hotel restaurants for that special occasion, but it is wise to make a reservation.

There is an excellent sandy beach, and good snorkelling is to be had on both points.



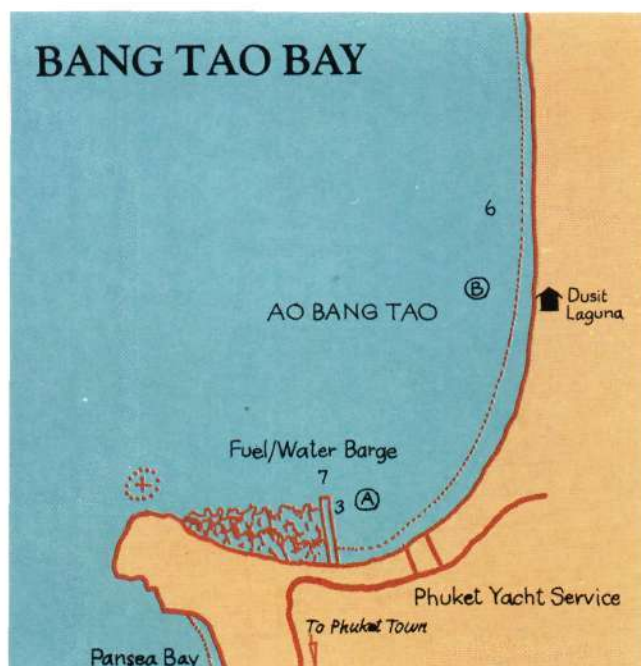
The small bays and beaches along the central west coast of Phuket are among the most beautiful here. Here is the beach in front of the luxurious Pansea Resort (left).

AO BANG TAO

Approaching Bang Tao Bay from the south, watch out for the large rock shown 150 metres off the headland on the chart. If it is visible, vessels can pass close either side, as there is 10 metres of water all around. At high water, however, give the headland a wide berth and proceed well north before turning into the bay.

Bang Thao is being developed according to an overall plan, rather than being left to the come-what-may evolution which has given us modern Patong. This lovely 2-mile beach is already the setting for the Dusit Laguna and the Royal Park hotels. Due to open soon are more luxury resorts managed by the Peninsula, Shangri-La, Sheraton, Regent, and Pacific Island Club groups.

During the northeast monsoon season, the tin-mining dredgers in the bay provide Phuket with valuable export revenue. Income from tourism is becoming more important still, however, and the pressure of resort hotel development may finally persuade the mining industry to move their operations, to set up in areas where their massive iron dredges won't be spoiling such a marketable sea view.



A) Phuket Yacht Service, West Coast Base



Anchor in sand in 8-10 metres northeast of the wooden jetty. Be careful of the many floating polypropylene lines both amongst the fishing boats and close to the beach when coming ashore by tender.

Mamma's, a small seafood restaurant next to the Yacht Service, serves wholesome local Thai dishes at reasonable prices.

Between November and April a supply barge is stationed in the bay and vessels can take on fuel, water, and

provisions alongside. Ashore, a small office and workshop offer outboard and other repairs.

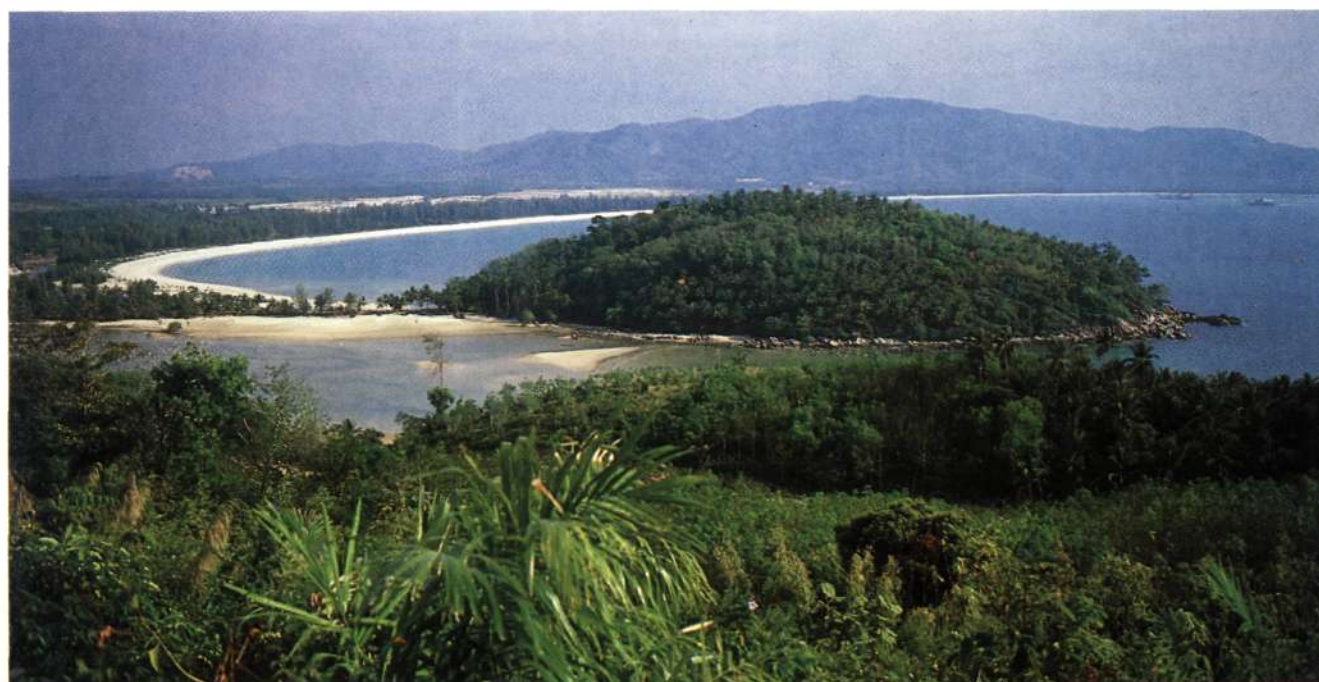
Only 25 minutes from the airport, this anchorage is often used as a charter departure point.

B) Dusit Laguna



Anchor in 8 metres on a sandy bottom in front of the hotel.

Ashore, you will find several good restaurants catering to a wide range of budgets. Just 25 minutes from the airport, this hotel is a useful pickup point for visitors.



Bang Tao Bay is one of the widest here, and it's being developed — happily in low-rise style — by five hotel chains.

AO BANG TAO TO SARASIN BRIDGE

From Bang Tao to Nai Yang Beach, there are three idyllic white sand beaches nestled between the rocky headlands. Seldom visited by large numbers of tourists, these hideaways are a welcome change from some other west-coast beaches, where jet skis and the

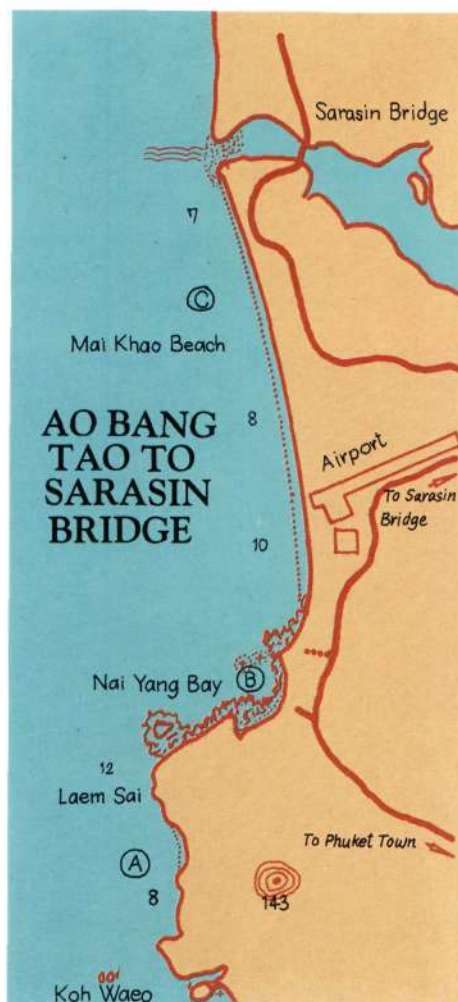
like can be a real nuisance.

North of Laem Sai, Nai Yang Beach, a 10-kilometre beach marked for future hotel development, stretches longer than any other on Phuket's west coast. A National Park borders the ocean along much of this beach. The Pearl Village

Resort is hidden behind trees at the southern end of the beach, and the Phuket International Airport terminal can be seen, about 1.5 miles north of the hotel. Transport can be arranged from the hotel either to the airport or to town.



The sun sets over the shallow southern end of Nai Yang Beach, where local fishermen keep their boats sheltered behind the small island.



A) Laem Sai Beach



The largest of the three beaches on the headland, Laem Sai offers good holding in the middle of the bay in 6-10 metres on a sandy bottom.

Good snorkelling may be found on either point. Ashore, you will see some small private dwellings and a road which leads to the airport, although it's difficult to arrange transportation from here.

B) Nai Yang Bay



Anchor in approximately 6-10 metres on a sandy bottom to the north or south of the reef outcrop in front of Pearl Village.

Good facilities are available at the hotel ashore, and regular transport to town or the airport may be arranged at the restaurant area on the beach.

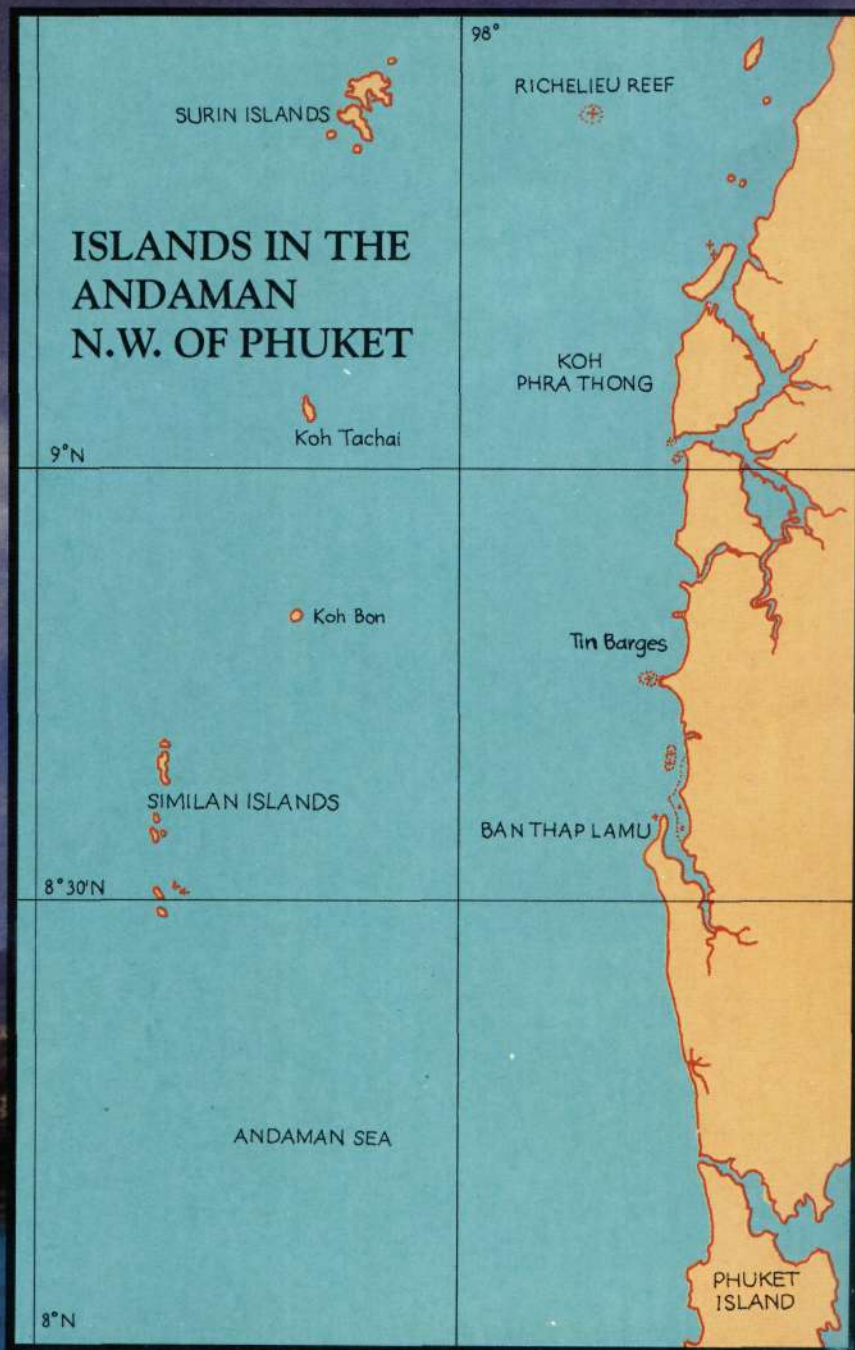
C) Mai Khao Beach



Look for anchorage 100 metres offshore from the little squatters' restaurants, about 1 mile south of the bar marking the entrance to the bridge.

The sand bars around the channel entrance are constantly shifting, and entry is not recommended in a keeled vessel. It should not be attempted without good local knowledge even in a shoal-draft boat.

The beach is steep, and the sand is more coarse than that on other west-coast beaches. The highway runs close to the beach, near the restaurants, and local buses can be hailed as they head north or south.



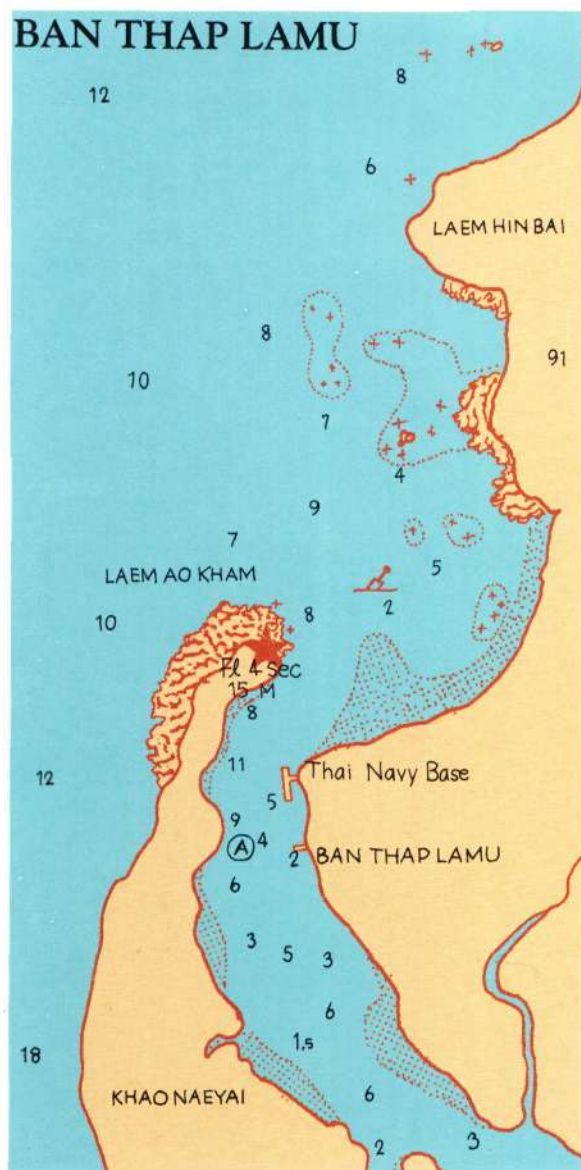
CHAPTER SIX

ISLANDS IN THE ANDAMAN N.W. OF PHUKET

Until just a few years ago, this area was a real frontier both for yacht sailing and for divers. Recently, however, more and more sailors are exploring island groups such as the Similans and the Surins, which extend all the way to within a few miles of the border with Burma. The fine open waters are best sailed during the northeast monsoon season, the southwest monsoon frequently bringing squalls and heavy seas. The exceptionally clear waters make for excellent diving on the abundant fringing coral reefs. Providing a interesting scenic contrast to the predominantly limestone islands of Krabi and Phang Nga, the islands to the northwest of Phuket are part of a north-south series of granitic outcrops.



BAN THAP LAMU



BAN THAP LAMU

This all-weather anchorage makes a good coastal stop-over on the way to the Similan or Surin Islands. It is actually an enclosed river estuary, one used regularly by the Thai navy. On the eastern side there is a small village.

Only 90 minutes by regular bus service from Phuket Town and 50 kilometres by sea to the Similans, it is the closest shore base with good facilities to these islands.

A) Ban Thap Lamu



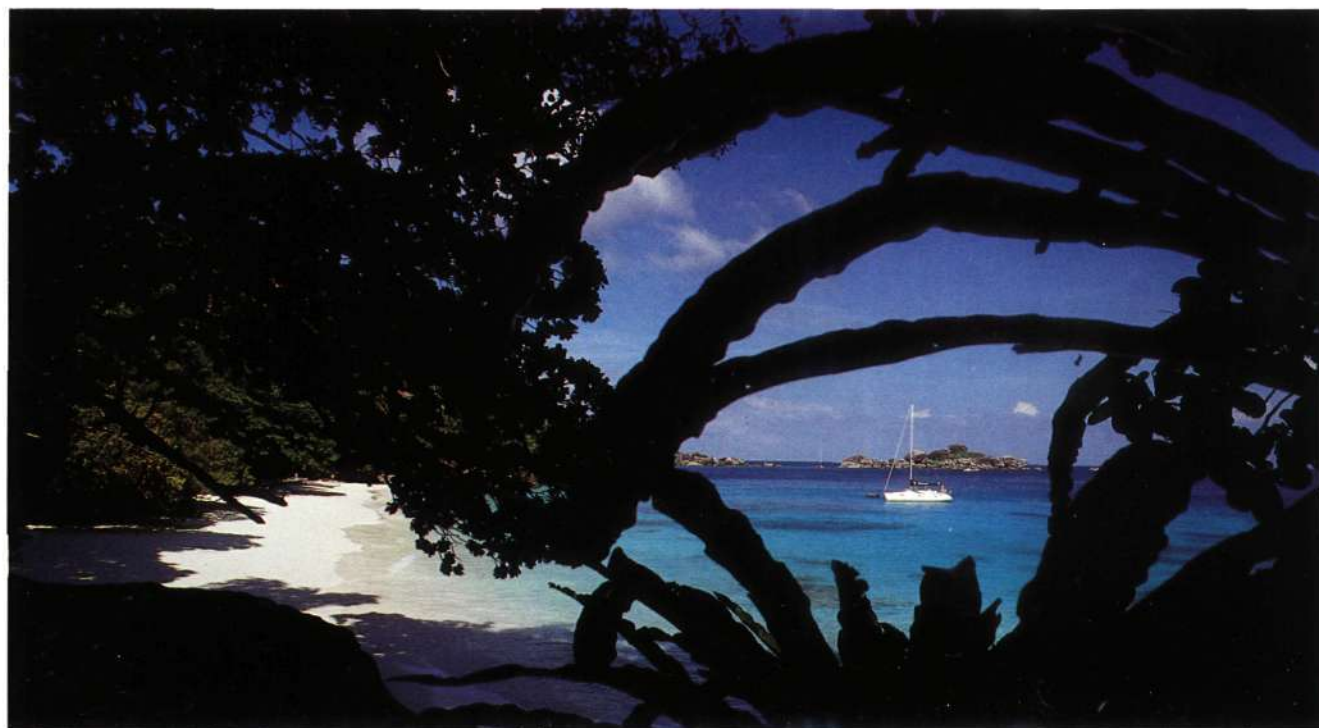
When entering the estuary, keep well clear of the coral patch on the northwest side of Laem Ao Kham. The point has a light flashing every 4 seconds, but night entry is not recommended unless it is essential.

Pass well north of Laem Kham on a heading due east towards a red buoy, but turn south before reaching it in order to stay in the deep water close to the east coast of the headland. Pass the Royal Thai Navy jetty (forbidden to yachts) to anchor in 6-9 metres in front of the village of Ban Thap Lamu. There is good holding in mud, with strong tidal currents in the passage running north and south.

The village has a seafood restaurant on the end of a little jetty.

Avoid anchoring too close to the jetty because of the longtail traffic, especially in the mornings.

A yacht anchored off the east coast of Koh Miang in the Similans.



SIMILAN ISLANDS

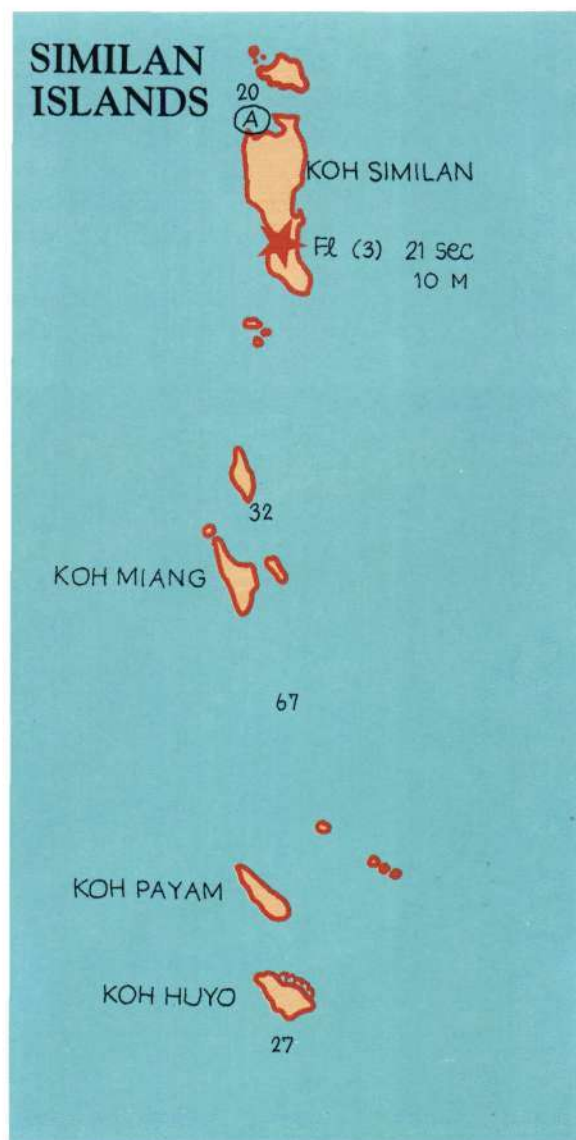
This group of rocks and islands, lying 34 miles west of Thap Lamu and 52 miles northwest of Patong, was declared a marine national park in 1982 and consequently remains largely undeveloped. The name is derived from the Malay *sembilan*, meaning 'nine', and refers to the nine main islands in the group.

Tour operators often name them from 1 to 9, running south to north such that Koh Similan itself, for example, is No. 8. Here we will instead use the names given on the chart.

The waters surrounding the Similans are teeming with tropical fish, colourful coral, and offer exceptional underwater visibility. The diving is generally considered to be the best in the region, and compares favourably with some of the best in the world. Part of the reason for this is the very interesting submarine topography, due in part to the huge granite boulders which not only litter the shorelines, but also lie in jumbled heaps beneath the waves to depths of 35 metres and beyond. On surface the boulders, together with the lush rainforest and white sand beaches, provide a peaceful refuge from the crowded beaches of Patong.

Cruising to and among the Similans is not recommended during the southwest monsoon season, due to heavy ground swells and squalls together with a scarcity of protected overnight anchorages.

Beaches are few in the Similans, but those few are of exceptional beauty.



A) Koh Similan



The bay on the northwest side of Koh Similan is the best protected and therefore the most frequented anchorage in the group. Anchor in 8-12 metres on a rocky and broken coral bottom. Beware of taking apparently vacant moorings, as dive operators usually return to pick them up in the late afternoon.

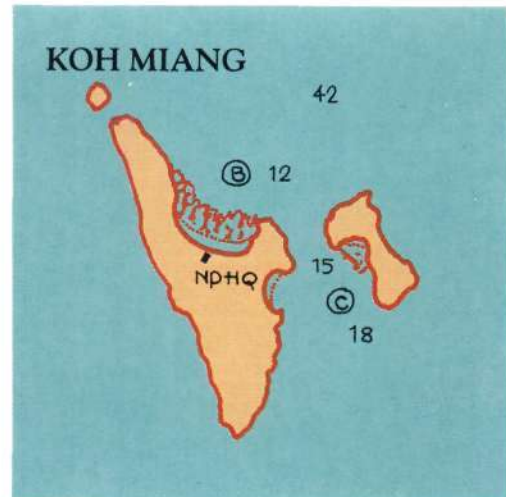
The bay has a beautiful white sand beach and interesting forest walks. The climb to the top of the distinctive rock for-

mation overlooking the north end of the beach is worthwhile. There is easy access from the beach or the boat to excellent snorkelling or diving around the rocks on the north side of the bay.

Dive operators invariably refill their tanks in the late afternoon or early evening. If you want to avoid the noise of the compressors, anchor away from this crowd — that probably means you'll have to move deeper.



The best-known anchorage in the Similans on the northwest of Koh Similan is shadowed by this famous balancing rock. While the anchorage is perfect in the northeast season, it is open to the southwest monsoon.



B) Koh Miang National Park Headquarters



Anchorage is in 12 metres, as the sandy bottom starts to fall away to deeper water. Completely open as it is to the northeast, it is not a good overnight anchorage when the monsoon is strong or unpredictable.

Beautiful white sand backs fringing coral gardens which extend some 200 metres off the beach. In the trees behind, the national park headquarters for the Similan Islands offers some basic bungalows and a small restaurant. There is great snorkelling and shallow diving on the east and west sides of the bay. Ashore you'll find easy trails for forest walks.

C) Koh Miang West

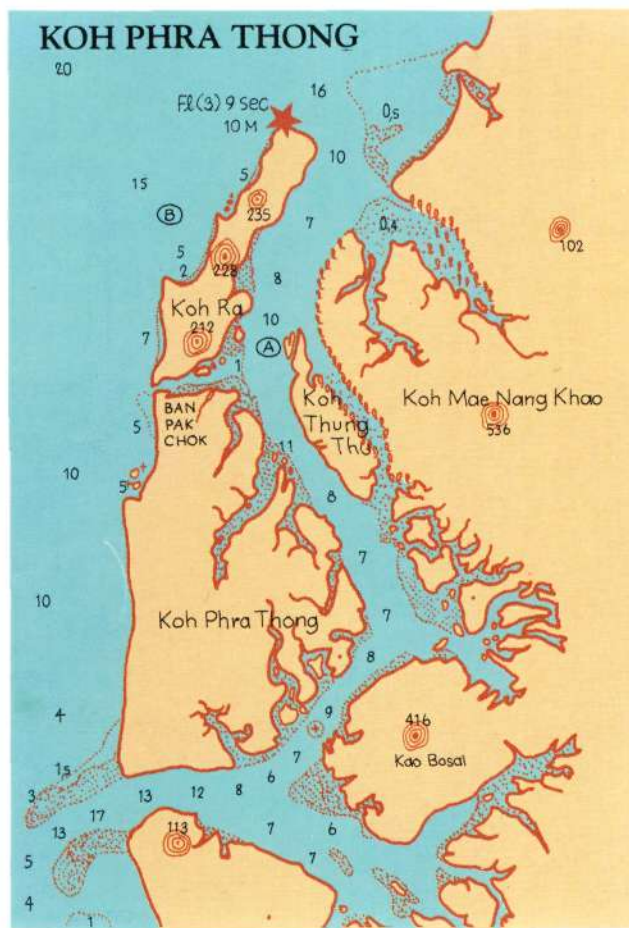


A better anchorage — one sheltered from both the northeast and the southwest — is found between Koh Miang and the small islet to the west in about 14 metres on a sandy bottom. Though a strong current runs through the channel, the holding is good.

Access either to the park headquarters beach or to a smaller beach opposite is easy by dinghy. There is a trail from the smaller beach to the park headquarters. Excellent snorkelling and diving is to be had around the small islet and among the coral heads which appear indigo against the intense blue-green of the deep, clear water.



The intense blue-green of the waters surrounding the Similans make this one of the most beautiful island groups of the region. It is also a world-class diving centre.



Views of the Similans' colourful underwater terrain

KOH PHRA THONG

The most northerly coastal anchorage mentioned in this guide is Koh Phra Thong, approximately 30 miles east of Koh Tachai and the same distance southeast of the Surin Islands.

A) Ban Pak Chok



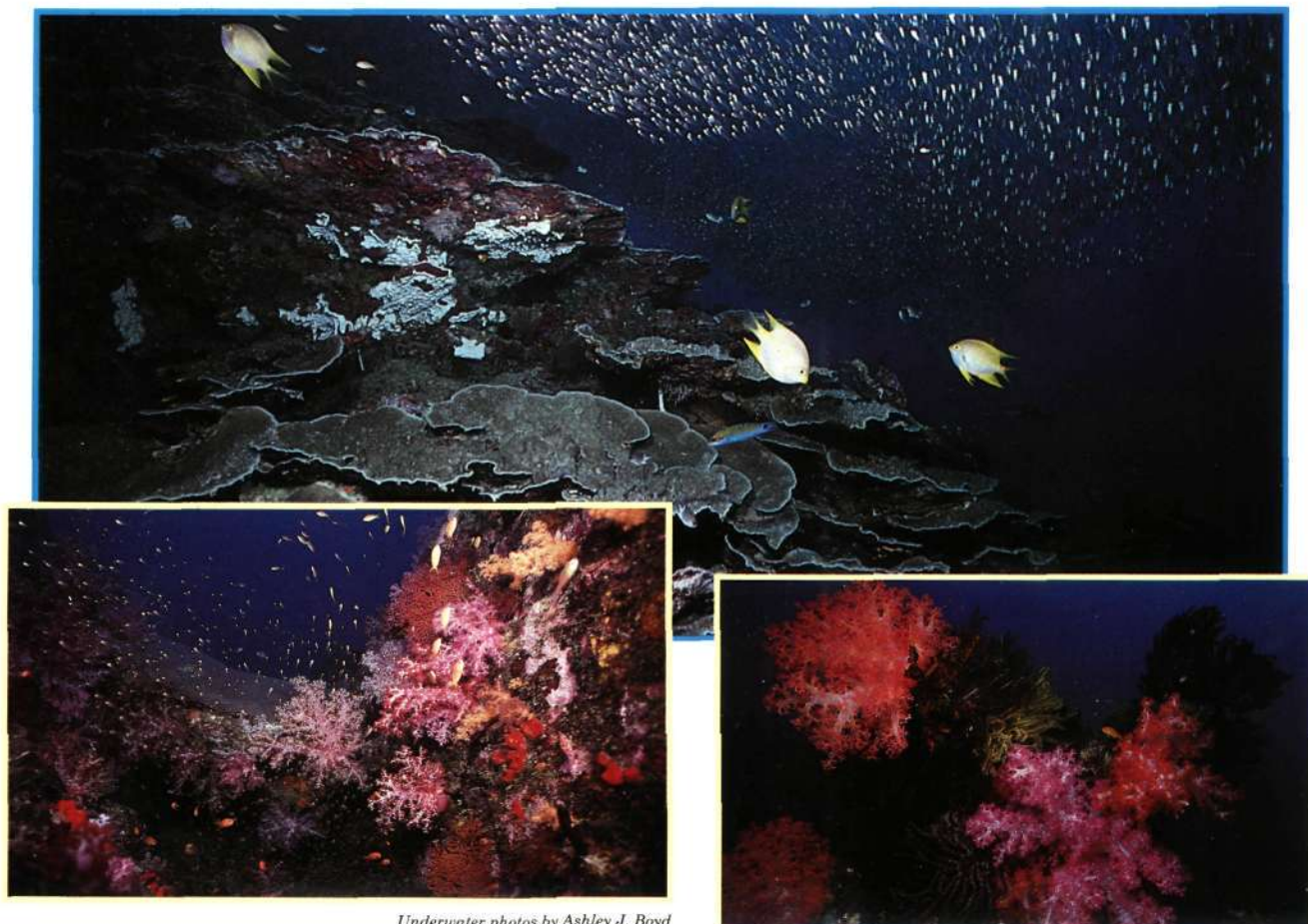
This is an all-weather anchorage lying inside an inland waterway protected from the sea by Koh Ra. Entrance from the north is easy, with deep water close to Koh Ra; the southern channel can be navigated with care, especially near the small rock mid-channel, passing to the south of the obstruction. Anchor in 6-10 metres on a muddy bottom just east of the non-navigable channel between Koh Phra Thong and Koh Ra.

About a kilometre from the anchorage look for a village with a jetty which dries at low tide.

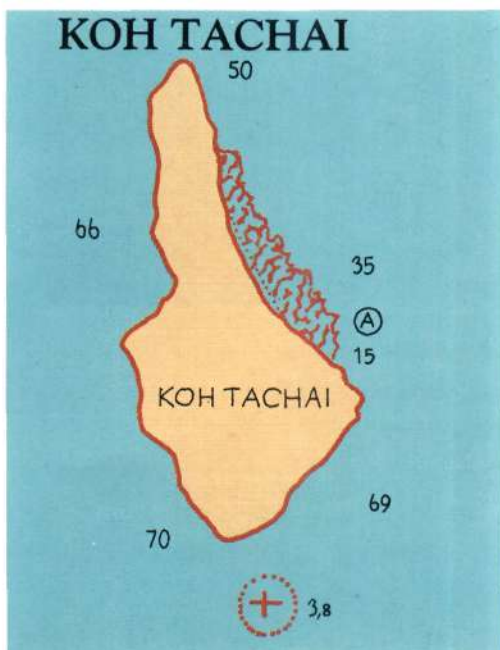
B) Beaches, West Koh Ra



The west coast of Koh Ra has several small beaches with good snorkelling and swimming, and provides safe anchorage in the northeast monsoon season. Approach from the west until encountering depths of 4-8 metres, and then anchor on a sandy bottom.



Underwater photos by Ashley J. Boyd



SURIN ISLANDS

This marine national park is the Thai island group closest to Burmese waters. The Surins are uninhabited but for a few park rangers. Nomadic Sea Gypsies, who subsist on fishing and shell collecting, frequent the area.

The Surins consist of two main islands with off-lying islets and rocks. Pretty coral and clear waters are of Similan standards, though the fish life is not as abundant.

On the south of Koh Surin Tai, between the two rocks, is a tidal anomaly which can create a dangerous standing wave with the ground swell from the west and a wind from the northeast.

The light on Koh Chi is reliable. Remember: only a few miles north is the Burmese border, and these waters are currently out of bounds for pleasure craft.

A) Koh Surin Nua



Anchor on sand in 15-20 metres on the edge of a fringing reef. The bottom rises sharply from depths of more than 25 metres, and the anchorage should not be approached without care and a good lookout.

There is good snorkelling off a fine beach backed by lush vegetation.

B) National Park



This anchorage, lying between the two islands on the northwestern side, provides a good overnight haven in the northeast monsoon season. Anchor in 18 metres on a sandy bottom, avoiding the coral heads. (These can be easily seen from the surface.)

In the north of the bay, the park headquarters on Koh Surin Nua boasts a restaurant and some bungalows. South of the bay, on Koh Surin Tai, a sandy spit with a spring at its northern end is accessible at high tide.

The channel between the two islands is not navigable.

KOH TACHAI

A) Koh Tachai



Situated halfway between the Similan and the Surin Islands, this island is far too exposed to be a good overnight anchorage. It is often used, however, as a daytime stop with very good diving and snorkelling en route.

Anchor on sand in 15 metres just north of the western point and slightly south of the reef which extends from the beach on the west coast.

The relatively long stretch of open ocean between Phuket and the Similans can provide some of the best sailing conditions in the region.