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PHUKET, THAILAND

Exploring Phuket with Prakaikaew Na-Ranong, co-owner and managing director of five-star property The Slate, a member of the Design Hotels roster.

IN YOUR OPINION, WHAT IS THE ULTIMATE REASON FOR VISITING PHUKET?

Phuket is a beautiful beach destination and also a melting pot of cultures with its rich history and tradition. It is an ideal place for travellers who want more than just sand and sea for their holiday. In 2015, Phuket was named 'A City of Gastronomy' by UNESCO. Phuket food has an interesting combination of flavours and textures, mixed between Thai, Chinese and Muslim.

HOW WOULD YOU SPEND THE PERFECT DAY IN PHUKET, FROM MORNING TO EVENING?

Morning walk on the beach at sunrise, then drive to Phuket old town to buy street food. Sunset cocktails at the beach, then head to one of my favourite restaurants: Black Ginger (Thai) or Rivet (creative Japanese).

CAN YOU GIVE US YOUR TOP FIVE RESTAURANT PICKS FOR EATING LIKE A LOCAL?

Black Ginger, LOBA Bangniew [a family-run shop named for the savoury snack made with pork offal], Khun Yai Chien Sapam Noodles [a traditional Hokkien restaurant

now run by the founders' grandchildren], Ting Lee Chicken Rice Bakuteeh [serving Hainanese chicken rice in Phuket's old town] and Raya [housed in a Sino-Thai mansion built early last century, this Thai restaurant is a favourite of locals].

WHAT SETS THE SLATE APART FROM OTHER RESORTS IN THE AREA?

The Slate is an avant-garde expression of Phuket heritage. A strikingly original manifestation of the island's core; its rich culture and traditions brought to life with bold design and fearless imagination. Where family legacy meets raw design, industrial beauty interrupts, and art converges with nature. A place of rich contrasts and unexpected elements, The Slate is a multi-faceted, intriguing experience. A captivating vision of the island's true soul.

WHERE DO YOU TAKE FRIENDS WHEN SHOWING THEM AROUND PHUKET'S OLD TOWN?

We have a shophouse on Thalang Road where I used to live so I always take my friends there. This road has many beautiful



INTERVIEW: CHLOE CANN (BANGKOK); BOOKINGS VIA DESIGNHOTELS.COM (PHUKET)



Sino-Portuguese houses. Many people still live their lives the way they used to 40 years ago. On the weekend, the road is closed for pedestrians only. There are many local food vendors and souvenir kiosks. A small lane called Romanee just off Thalang Road is a fun place to visit. Romanee used to be a red light district with opium and gambling dens which catered to Chinese labourers working in tin mines in the old days. Today you can find colourful Sino-Portuguese shophouses that are guesthouses and cafes.

WHERE ON THE ISLAND DO YOU HEAD TO WHEN YOU WANT TO ESCAPE FOR SOME PEACE AND QUIET?

Nai Yang Beach, which is in front of The Slate, is perfect for a late-night picnic. We always find peaceful spots on this beach. When we want to get away, we often ride a motorbike to watch sunrise at Samet NangChee. The view there is breathtaking; it is a refreshing way to start the day.



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BANGKOK, THAILAND

Eat your way around the Thai capital with acclaimed pastry chef Arisara 'Paper' Chongphanitkul, owner of Ici dessert bar ([facebook.com/ici.bkk](https://www.facebook.com/ici.bkk)).

WHAT IS THE ULTIMATE REASON PEOPLE SHOULD VISIT BANGKOK?

You can find almost anything you want in Bangkok. There's a huge mix of cultures, people and food. It's also a city that stays awake 24 hours a day: you can eat anywhere, anytime, whether from street food vendors or sitting down inside a restaurant. There's also every type of cuisine imaginable, from regional Thai food to Korean, Japanese, Chinese, Mexican, Lebanese and more.

HOW MUCH HAS FOOD CULTURE CHANGED IN BANGKOK IN RECENT YEARS?

Nowadays Thai people are getting more interested in what they eat and lots of fine-dining restaurants have opened in Bangkok. Young Thai chefs have also started to look back and use our local ingredients to present Thai food in their own way, which is very interesting; it helps advance our Thai food culture.

WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE RESTAURANT IN BANGKOK?

I love the food at Jay Oh, because it's street food made with quality ingredients. I've been eating at this restaurant with my family since I was little, and I still go there with my friends now. If any foreign friends ask me where to go I always recommend this place. I'll have the 'mama oho', which is a tom yum soup served with minced pork, prawn or crab meat etc. It's also very famous for its 'yum salmon' [salmon in Thai seafood sauce with fresh herbs] and crispy pork.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE THAI DISH?

I love *khanom-tom* [a coconut dumpling made with glutinous rice flour] – it's soft, chewy, and has this wonderful scent of coconut. I can finish 10 balls in two minutes!

