

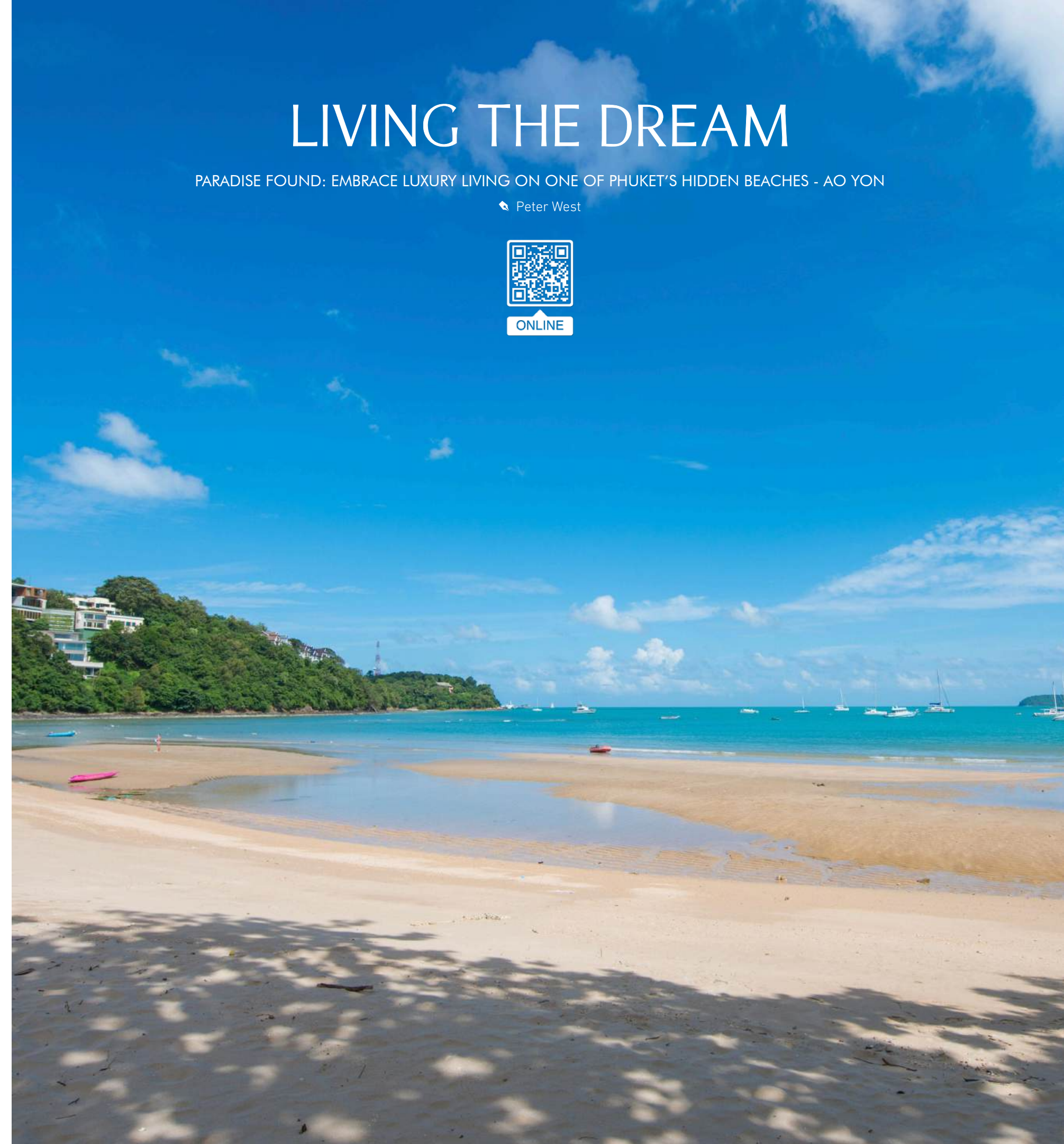
# LIVING THE DREAM

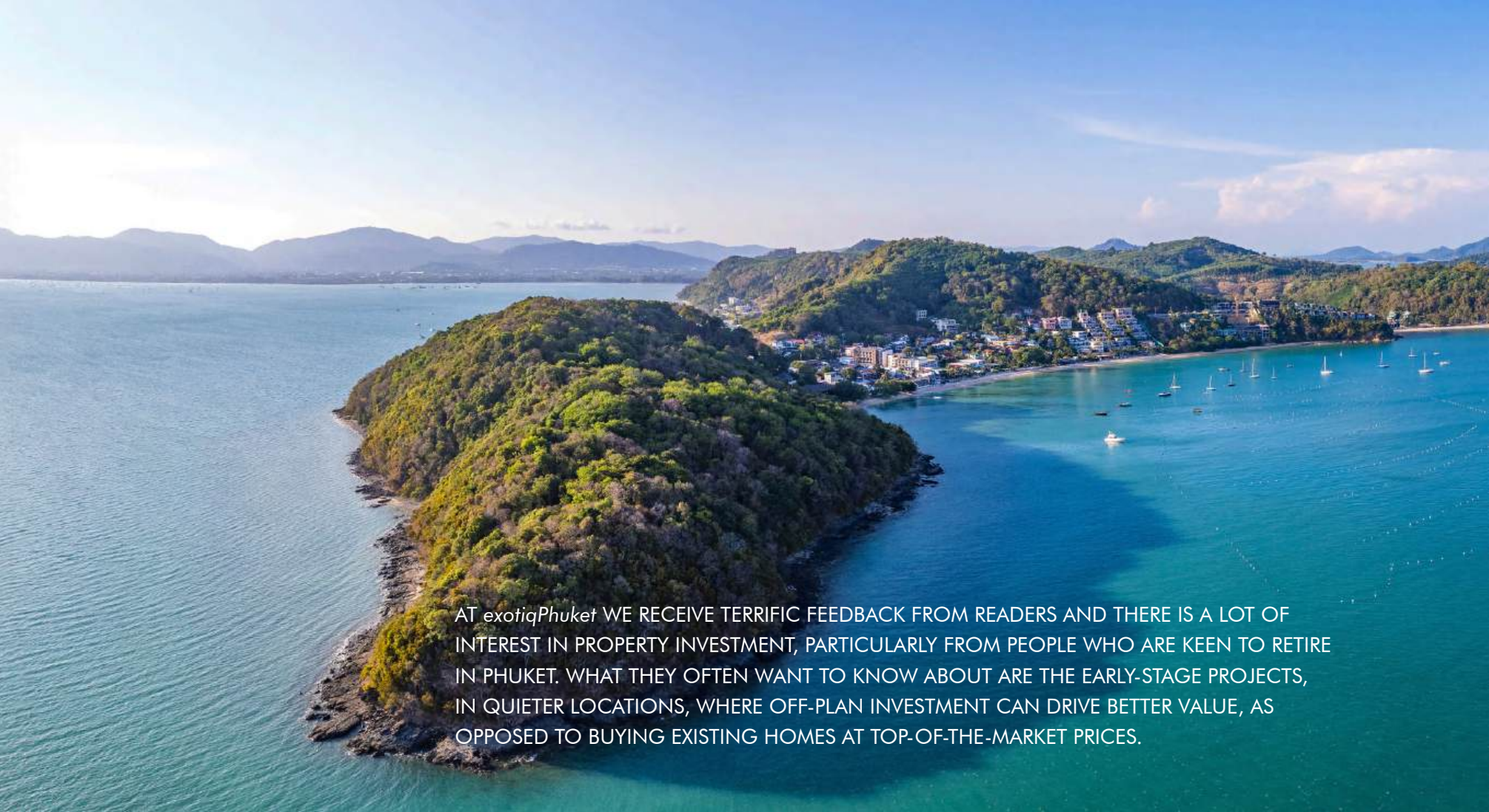
PARADISE FOUND: EMBRACE LUXURY LIVING ON ONE OF PHUKET'S HIDDEN BEACHES - AO YON

🏠 Peter West



ONLINE





AT *exotiqPhuket* WE RECEIVE TERRIFIC FEEDBACK FROM READERS AND THERE IS A LOT OF INTEREST IN PROPERTY INVESTMENT, PARTICULARLY FROM PEOPLE WHO ARE KEEN TO RETIRE IN PHUKET. WHAT THEY OFTEN WANT TO KNOW ABOUT ARE THE EARLY-STAGE PROJECTS, IN QUIETER LOCATIONS, WHERE OFF-PLAN INVESTMENT CAN DRIVE BETTER VALUE, AS OPPOSED TO BUYING EXISTING HOMES AT TOP-OF-THE-MARKET PRICES.





Ao Yon certainly hits the spot when it comes to quieter but upcoming locations. Located in the southeast corner of the island, close to the Cape Panwa peninsula, Ao Yon consists of scenic bays, prime unspoilt beaches and a handful of 5 star exclusive resorts, the most recent being *V-Villas by MGallery*, the top luxury boutique hotel brand from *Accor Hotels*. There are also beachside restaurants including the iconic *Cove* and a range of well-known spa and wellness facilities.

Next door, and just to the north of the *V-Villas* resort, we came across a plot of sloping beachfront land, which has been enclosed from the road, with billboards announcing that it will become *Ao Yon Beach Villas*. Construction had already started, with completion by the end of 2026.

*Ao Yon Beach Villas* will be an exclusive community of just seven luxury infinity pool villas, built two abreast on three levels. At the top, at road level, there are three 453 sqm (built-up space) 5-bedroom villas. On the middle level, there are two 4-bedroom villas, at 316 sqm each and at the beachfront level two more 4-bedroom luxury villas. Private for the community is a resort pool facility located right on the beach,

The slope guarantees that everyone gets uninterrupted sea views, and each home is easily accessible from the parking and the beach levels via the private hillside funicular tram that the project provides.

At only 214,000 Thai Baht per sqm, buyers get below market prices. The villas are provided leasehold under the maximum leasing duration allowed by Thai law of 30 years and suitable as luxury private residences or as rental properties or a mixture. Avoiding the need to set up complicated structures, this is an easy, secure arrangement and for most retirees 30-years is ample time to enjoy one's retirement.

Many people I meet on the island are not retired full time here, they spend 6-months in Phuket and 6-months in their home country. *Ao Yon Villas* are perfect in this scenario. *Elite Havens*, Asia's leading luxury villa holiday rental firm, have already signed up *Ao Yon Beach Villas*, which gives owners



the option of earning good incomes whilst they are not in Phuket. The Panwa peninsula is a high-end premium destination and investment projections see the villas paying for themselves within 5 to 7.5 years.

There is one type of owner *Ao Yon Villas* is perfect for, and that is someone who is into yachting. The bay offers a very sheltered anchorage, and with calm waters lapping onto the beach, it is easy to get a tender out to your yacht; and when you are not onboard you can keep an eye on the yacht from your villa bedroom window. For other times you can take a mooring in the new 2025 marina just 5 minutes away, with a drive-up pier for easy provisioning and guest arrival.

For more information about *Ao Yon Villas* please scan the QR codes.



LOCATION



EMAIL

# AO YON BAY – PHUKET’S HIDDEN GEM

IF YOU’RE SEARCHING FOR A QUIET, SECLUDED BAY IN PHUKET, AO YON IS THE PLACE TO GO. WITH ONLY A FEW PROPERTIES PERCHED ON ITS HILLS, SOME SAY THIS LITTLE GEM IS WHAT PHUKET WAS LIKE 20 YEARS AGO



READ STORY ONLINE

Despite Phuket’s growing popularity, there are still many serene, lesser-known beaches where you can enjoy a peaceful day by the sea. Ao Yon Bay is one such spot. Nestled in the southeastern corner of Phuket, Ao Yon consists of two hidden beaches located between Cape Panwa and Phuket Harbour. Both beaches, differing in size, offer a picturesque tropical setting with tall palm trees, white sand, and crystal-clear blue water.



Quiet western corner of the small beach



Sunset at Cape Panwa

## WHAT TO DO:

Nothing! Ao Yon Bay is the perfect spot to unwind, take a leisurely stroll, or enjoy a relaxing picnic on the beach. The local food stands serve up tasty snacks like fried chicken with sticky rice, refreshing tropical fruit smoothies, and a variety of classic Thai street food dishes—ideal for a laid-back al fresco meal by the shore.

For those seeking extra relaxation, you’ll find several massage parlours along the beach offering traditional Thai massages in a peaceful setting. Ao Yon also has a few small souvenir shops where you can browse intricate jewellery, clothing, and other local crafts. A must-visit is the pearl shop at the southwestern end of the larger of the two beaches. The pearls are hand-harvested from a family-run farm that has been operating in the area for generations, providing you with the chance to purchase a unique and meaningful keepsake.

If however, you’re in the mood for adventure, you can rent a longtail boat to explore nearby islands or visit Ao Yon’s hidden waterfall just a short drive away. The Phuket Dragon Boat Club also hosts social events on weekends, featuring longboat racing and beach barbecues that attract both locals and expatriates.

If the weather doesn’t cooperate, head to the nearby Phuket Aquarium in Cape Panwa. Though small, the aquarium is home to a variety of marine life, including seahorses, clownfish, and even baby turtles. They also act as a rehabilitation facility for stranded or injured sea creatures; It’s a great option for families or anyone looking for an indoor activity on a rainy day.

Just a few kilometres away, Cape Panwa offers a wider selection of restaurants and attractions, making it a convenient extension of your visit to Ao Yon.



Look carefully and you’ll see the pearl farm buoys

## WHERE TO EAT:

In addition to the local street food stalls, Ao Yon offers a few great dining choices. Here are our top five suggestions:

1. The Cove (beachside paradise on the smaller beach)
2. Flamingo Beachfront Café (usually buzzing, but currently being renovated)
3. Lae Lay (for an authentic Thai experience on the big beach road)
4. Sumpau Restaurant (accessed via a funicular at Bandara Villas)
5. Yon Ocean House and Akoya Star Lounge (rooftop heaven at V Villas)



The Cove



Flamingo



Lae Lay



Sumpau



AKOYA Star Lounge



## WHERE TO STAY:

For those looking to extend their visit beyond just a day trip, Ao Yon has several beautiful resorts and hotels:

1. V Villas Phuket – MGallery
2. The Cove Phuket
3. Bandara Villas
4. The Mooring Resort



V Villas



Cove Cottages



Bandara Villas



The Mooring Resort

A pool with a view at V Villas



Dragon Boat Club



Baby green turtles at the Phuket Aquarium



# BEACHFRONT BLISS

SPICY TOM YUM MARTINIS DELICIOUS FOOD,  
AND AN OCEANSIDE LOCATION AT *THE COVE*  
IN AO YON

◆ Madeleine Becker



READ STORY ONLINE



If you're looking for a place to eat in Ao Yon, we highly recommend *The Cove*. Nestled at the end of the smaller Ao Yon Beach, the restaurant blends seamlessly with the surrounding palm trees, providing natural shade and a tranquil atmosphere. Positioned right at the beachfront, guests can enjoy their meals while gazing out over the vast Andaman Sea.

We visited *The Cove* on a beautiful day and were seated at a cozy table for two, promptly served with cold water and menus. My colleague and I had a tough time deciding what to order. The menu offered a wide range of intriguing options—enough to spark excitement but not so overwhelming that it felt hard to choose. From classic dishes to signature creations, *The Cove* had something for everyone. We opted for a mix: the classic Pad Thai, the Thai chicken basil pizza (one of their signature creations), and the fish of the day, charcoal-grilled butterfish, highly recommended by the chef.

What we loved about *The Cove* was their commitment to fresh, locally sourced ingredients. The fish of the day changes daily based on the catch, and the staff informed us that the butterfish would take about 45 minutes to cook due to its size and the slow charcoal-grilling process. Thoughtfully, they suggested serving the Pad Thai and pizza as starters while we waited for the fish.

Both starters were delightful. The Pad Thai struck the perfect balance of spice and tanginess from the fresh lime, with every component of the dish working harmoniously. The Thai chicken basil pizza, made with homemade sourdough, was equally impressive, blending Italian and Thai flavours flawlessly. With a crispy, thin crust, the combination of ingredients was well-executed, creating a unique dish where nothing was lost in translation.

By the time we finished savouring the starters, the butterfish was ready. This dish is recommended for two, as the fish was quite large. Knowing we were going to indulge at *The Cove*, we had wisely skipped breakfast to make room. The butterfish was perfectly cooked—flaky, flavourful and well worth the wait.

To complement our meal, we enjoyed some spectacular drinks. We started with fresh coconut water to cool down from the spiciness of the Pad Thai and pizza. Then we moved on to cocktails, including the Tom Yum Martini, a standout drink recommended by the bar chef. This cocktail was another example of how *The Cove* creatively combines Thai influence with classic drinks. Not only did the martini taste amazing, but it was also beautifully presented.

*The Cove* is a must-visit when in the Ao Yon area. The restaurant is open from 7:30 am to 10:30 pm, with the bar normally closing at 11 pm, or later if demand exists. Don't miss their happy hours (2-for-1) from 2:00 pm to 5:00 pm. Along with a great culinary experience, you can also stay the night in one of the Cove's three beach side bungalows, or in a larger 2-bedroom family house; breakfast included. And if you're planning a special event, they can even host weddings for up to 150 guests.



LOCATION



WEBSITE

# CULTURING PASSION

A VISIT TO MR. UNG'S PEARL FARM IS NOT JUST ABOUT PURCHASING GEMS—IT'S AN EXPERIENCE, A GLIMPSE INTO A WORLD WHERE TRADITION, PASSION, AND NATURE COME TOGETHER TO CREATE SOMETHING TRULY EXTRAORDINARY



READ STORY ONLINE

✦ Alessia Kerr

A pearl farm is an unassuming sight—a calm stretch of water dotted with rows of buoys that barely break the surface. These buoys mark the lines where oysters are suspended, quietly doing their work below. At first glance, it might seem like just floating markers, but beneath lies a world of careful cultivation and natural beauty.

At Ao Yon's larger beach, you'll find one of these setups. Owned by Mr. Krisngsak Ung, this tucked-away pearl farm has been a family treasure since 1973. But visiting this farm isn't only about buying jewellery—it's a fascinating learning experience where you'll be seeing firsthand the dedication and tradition that goes into each pearl. Mr. Ung is always eager to show visitors the meticulous process behind his craft, from open water farming to the precision polishing that produces perfect lusters.





So, how does it work? Harvesting pearls is a careful task that requires patience and skill. Mr. Ung begins by gently lifting the oysters from the water, their shells weathered by time spent beneath the sea. Using a specialised knife, he opens each oyster with precision, ensuring neither the pearl nor the oyster is harmed. The pearls are then carefully removed, rinsed, and polished to bring out their natural lustre.

Once the pearls are ready, they're handed over to Mr. Ung's wife, Khun Nuanpit. She designs most of the jewellery herself and offers customers the chance to create custom pieces. Each pearl is unique, and so is the jewellery made from it; something to treasure for yourself, or as a gift, something unique for a loved one.

This farm isn't just any farm—it's a place of deep-rooted tradition. In 1995, Mr. Ung was recognized by the late King Rama IX, the Kingdom's beloved monarch Bhumibol Adulyadej, as "Thailand's Most Distinguished Farmer," a testament to his dedication and expertise.

For Mr. Ung, this farm is more than a livelihood—it's his life's work. Visitors leave with a greater appreciation for the pearls and the effort it takes to produce them. If you're in the area, this is a spot you shouldn't miss. The sheer pride and joy displayed by the Ung family as they explain their business are worth the visit alone, nevermind the priceless opportunity of buying some Ao Yon jewellery.



LOCATION



WEBSITE

# MAKE THAILAND YOUR HOME



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Information Card

# VIBRANT VILLAS



'V VILLAS PHUKET - MGALLERY COLLECTION', AS IT IS OFFICIALLY KNOWN, IS PART OF THE VIE HOTEL GROUP, WITH SISTER PROPERTIES IN HUA HIN AND BANGKOK. I NEVER DID FIND OUT WHAT THE 'V' STANDS FOR IN THEIR BRAND NAME, BUT HAVING JUST STAYED THERE I CAN TELL YOU THAT THE WORD 'VIBRANT' FITS NICELY

✦ Madeleine Becker

Our journey through Phuket had taken us to a variety of beautiful spots, but as the trip was nearing its end, we felt a growing desire for a final touch of luxury—a private place where time could slow down, allowing us to fully unwind and savour our last days. That's why we chose V Villas in Ao Yon, a secluded retreat that promised the perfect blend of elegance and relaxation for the conclusion of our adventure.

We checked out of our hotel in Kamala and drove the little Toyota rental toward the southeastern part of Phuket. The drive took us about an hour, skirting around the edge of Phuket Town and then cruising along some excellent wide roads, passing the island's main port, towards the Cape Panwa peninsula. The scenery shifted as we left behind the busier parts of the island and moved deeper into quieter, lush areas—hidden corners of Phuket that most visitors never get to see.



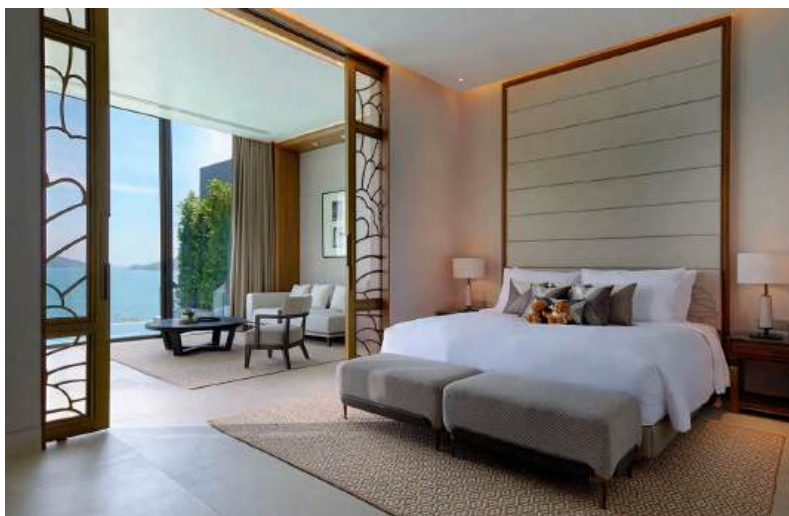
As we approached our destination, excitement bubbled up within us. "There—turn right here!" I eagerly pointed out as we neared the discreet entrance, marked by nothing more than a simple sign. Although understated from the outside, we were immediately welcomed with warm smiles by four staff members who escorted us into a small but elegantly designed lobby. The atmosphere was instantly inviting—Demie greeted us with chilled towels, lightly scented with fresh floral notes, and offered us a welcome drink called "Pinky". This refreshing blend of apple juice, lime juice, and rhubarb syrup was both sweet and tangy, setting the perfect tone for our stay. The lobby was understated yet chic, with tasteful décor.

We arrived earlier than the official check-in time, but our villa was ready, which felt like an extra stroke of luck. Our butler, Kitty, appeared promptly with a buggy to escort us to a one-bedroom villa. The buggy ride itself was an experience—a two-minute journey through a narrow labyrinth of lush greenery, with tall bushes on either side forming natural walls. The anticipation built with every turn, heightening the sense that we were being whisked away to our own private paradise.

When we finally arrived at Villa 3, it was everything we had hoped for and more. The first thing that caught our eye was the stunning view of Ao Yon, with its turquoise waters shimmering in the sunlight and a few boats lazily drifting on the horizon. The villa itself was an exquisite blend of modern design and natural elements, a sanctuary of luxury and tranquillity.

The living room greeted us with an elegantly arranged afternoon tea set, presented in an ornate LV-like mini luggage trunk, with beautifully crafted pastries and treats. Expansive windows offered an uninterrupted view of the infinity pool, which seemed to blend seamlessly with the ocean beyond, creating a visual harmony that immediately made us feel at ease. The indoor-outdoor flow of the space was thoughtfully designed, allowing one to move effortlessly between the comforts of the villa and the sun-soaked deck outside.

The bathroom was just as impressive—marble steps led to a large jacuzzi tub surrounded by candles housed in lanterns, inviting us to indulge in a moment of pure relaxation. Every detail, from the plush towels to the carefully chosen décor, reflected the high level of attention that had gone into curating this experience. It was clear that nothing had been overlooked.



On our private deck, two sun loungers were perfectly positioned to take in the sweeping views of the bay and the afternoon sun. A large umbrella provided ample shade, allowing us to enjoy the outdoors without the intensity of the rays. The villa's layout made it feel expansive and open, yet intimate at the same time—a true escape from the world.

After settling in and soaking up our surroundings, we decided it was time to explore the beach. Kitty reassured us that we could call on him anytime, and sure enough, within minutes, a buggy arrived to take us down to the shore. The beach was picture-perfect, with powdery white sand and crystal-clear waters that seemed to sparkle in the afternoon light. We couldn't resist grabbing fresh mango smoothies from one of the roadside stalls before finding a spot to relax.

That evening, we dined at the resort's Yon Ocean House, perched 39 metres above Ao Yon Bay. The restaurant's design was a perfect blend of natural wood and subtle Art Deco touches, creating a sophisticated yet relaxed atmosphere. Panoramic ocean views framed by lush greenery set the stage for what turned out to be an exceptional dining experience. We started with a plate of tuna tartar, each bite bursting with fresh flavours. For our main courses, I enjoyed the bold and spicy 'Yum Nua'—a Thai beef salad that delivered just the right amount of heat—while my boyfriend relished the 'Goong Pad Char,' a stir-fried shrimp dish with rich, aromatic flavours. We paired our meal with a bottle of Sancerre, a crisp white wine from the Loire Valley that complemented the vibrant tastes of our dishes perfectly. Encouraged by our waitress's recommendation, we finished with the 'Broken Bucket,' a creative dessert featuring mango sticky rice and coconut ice cream, served in a chocolate bowl and topped with macadamia nuts. The combination of flavours and textures was a lovely way to end a memorable meal.



The following day began with a serene early morning yoga session led by Noom. I was fortunate enough to have a private session, as no other guests had signed up that Sunday morning. The session began with deep breathing exercises, followed by a brief meditation to centre the mind. As we moved through a series of poses, I couldn't help but notice how out of shape I was. Nonetheless, Noom's guidance was gentle and encouraging, making the experience both invigorating and relaxing. We concluded with a shabda meditation—a practice focusing on sound vibrations to bring inner peace.

After yoga, I took a refreshing dip in the pool, savouring the cool water against the backdrop of the ocean. While swimming, I spotted a turtle surfacing for air. Excited, I called out to my boyfriend, but the turtle had already dived back into the depths by the time he arrived. Beyond the turtle sighting, the villa's surroundings were filled with life—vibrant butterflies, colourful birds, and the occasional insect fluttered by. It was clear that the property had been designed in harmony with nature, allowing both guests and wildlife to coexist peacefully.

Breakfast at Yon Ocean House was another highlight. The buffet offered a carefully curated selection of dishes, each one beautifully presented in individual portions. Our waitress, Olive, ensured that every detail was attended to, making us feel well taken care of throughout the meal. After breakfast, the day unfolded in a leisurely fashion—swimming, lounging, and soaking in the tranquil atmosphere.

For our final evening, we opted for a light dinner at AKOYA Star Lounge, a rooftop bar offering panoramic views with a laid-back beach club vibe. The lounge had a clever touch—each signature cocktail was timed to match the colour palette of the sky at specific moments. My boyfriend's "Crepuscular Rays," paired with 6:05 pm, was a vibrant blend of colours that mirrored the hues of the sky at that time. We sampled several cocktails while enjoying the relaxing ambiance and indulging in tapas-style dishes like the "Laab Burger" and "Avocado Bruschetta." Each dish was a delight, rounding off a perfect evening.

Our last night in the villa was spent soaking in a bubble bath surrounded by the glow of candlelight—a peaceful way to reflect on our experience. The next morning, we lingered over our final breakfast, savouring every bite as we gazed out at the ocean. Although check-out was at noon, the staff graciously allowed us to stay longer since our flight wasn't



until evening. We spent those extra hours lounging by the main resort pool, which we had all to ourselves—most guests seemed content to stay in their private villas, leaving the shared spaces wonderfully quiet.

As we lay by the pool, basking in the sun one last time, we felt a deep sense of gratitude for ending our trip in such a serene and idyllic setting. The entire experience at V Villas had been a blend of luxury, personalised service, and connection with nature. From the awe-inspiring views and thoughtful touches in our villa to the seamless transitions between relaxation and adventure, everything was meticulously designed to create a sense of peace and exclusivity.

Leaving was bittersweet, but in the end, there was no better way to close our Phuket adventure than with the vibrancy of V Villas—a retreat that left us rejuvenated, inspired, and eager to return someday.



LOCATION



WEBSITE