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# Traveltalk

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## SPECIAL REPORT

ECO-TOURISM  
IN THAILAND



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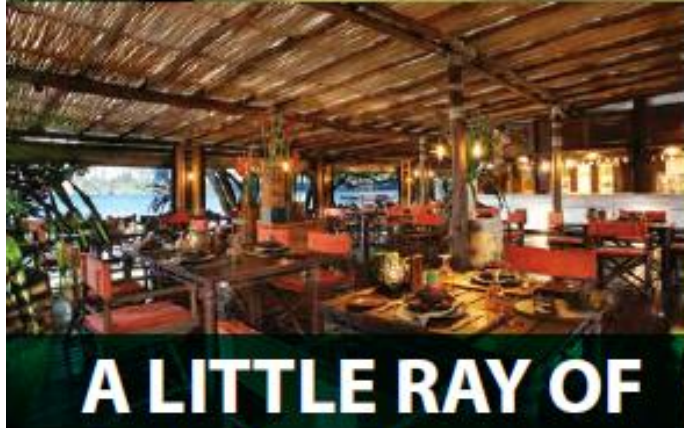
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## A LITTLE RAY OF

# SUNSHINE

I'VE EXPERIENCED many different forms of transport in my travels around the world.

From Tuk Tuks to Jeepneys, DUKW's to Segways, I've pretty much tried them all. But arriving at Rayavadee was a whole new set of wheels.

My speedboat transfer had already been entertaining with flashes of lightning piercing the night sky like sparklers on cracker night. But on arrival at the resort we were greeted by a tractor chugging towards us through the water, towing what looked like a portable greenhouse.

With an Impeccable docking procedure that NASA would have been proud of, the speedboat and the greenhouse came together and we scampered ashore. Not a pinky got wet.

This luxury resort is located on the tip of the Phranang Peninsula on the Andaman coast in the province of Krabi. It was designed by a descendant of the Thai Royal Family and opened 25 years ago, but not a single tree was lost during construction.

The habitat of the many local species of flora and fauna also went undisturbed, which was no mean feat given the resort is built on 10 hectares.

Accordingly, the property is home to more than 120 types of plants and tropical trees, while animals such as Macaque monkeys and Spectacled Langurs are frequent visitors. I spent an enchanting breakfast watching these cute critters flit from tree to tree on their way to feast on the neighbouring tamarind trees.

"We try very hard to keep the nature because if we don't have nature, we don't have Rayavadee," said Dalin Snidvongs, General Manager.

To help maintain these surroundings, Rayavadee focuses on sustainable water and waste management as well as energy efficiency, and organises regular environmental activities such as beach cleaning, mangrove planting and repopulation of marine life.

It was also a founding member of the Enlve Foundation, which brings together governmental agencies, local businesses and community members to raise awareness of the need to protect the fragile ecosystem.

"Krabi is like Phuket was 35 years ago and we want to keep it like that. If you want shopping and nightlife, it's not us. Rayavadee is a special place where you can relax and

re-charge your batteries."

A recent refurb to all 101 rooms has Rayavadee shipshape and modern, but with some undeniable Thai touches. There are 11 different room categories and I was delighted with my two-storey deluxe pavilion: the living room and bathroom were ultra-luxe and the bed was ginormous, a welcome sight after 14 hours of travel.

Food is a definite highlight here and at Krua Phranang (one of four dining options), I feasted on dishes such as green curry of Garoupa fish with eggplant, red chili and sweet basil leaf, and chicken with coconut soup with galangal, mushroom, fresh turmeric and lemon.

Other facilities include a spa offering a wide range of treatments and therapies, a boutique, large swimming pool and activities centre that can organise excursions to popular islands like Phi Phi or Phang Nga Bay. Rock climbing is particularly good here, with limestone cliffs dominating the landscape.

Sadly, my stay was way too short but even during my brief visit I could see why Rayavadee has become such a popular resort. For anyone looking to find a part of Thailand that remains largely undeveloped, yet do it in style and with responsibility, then Krabi and Rayavadee should be top of your list.

rayavadee.com