

FASHION RESTAURANTS & VILLAS
BALI & SOUTHEAST ASIAN STYLE

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FRV BALI

DINING

UMALAS, BOW, SARONG, MEJEKAWI

VILLAS

KABA KABA, AYUNG, TIRTA NILA

FASHION

LA SAL, BLUE GLUE, FASHION TENDANCE

TRAVEL

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VILLAS

FOOD

TRAVEL

FASHION

ART

WINE

RESTAURANTS

FROM KRABI

AND HUA HIN

BEACHES

WEDDING

& SPAS

One of the stunning beaches in Rayavadee.

Thailand might be close to Indonesia, but my plan to go there wasn't having any success. Luckily, this situation finally changed when my best friends Els and Rune decided to tie the knot in Krabi. It was definitely the solid reason that I needed in order to get there for the first time. Thus my trip to Thailand finally happened!



The bedroom on the second floor of the terrace pavilion in Rayavadee.



Princess Cave with all the phallic carvings.

CHAPTER 1: KRABI

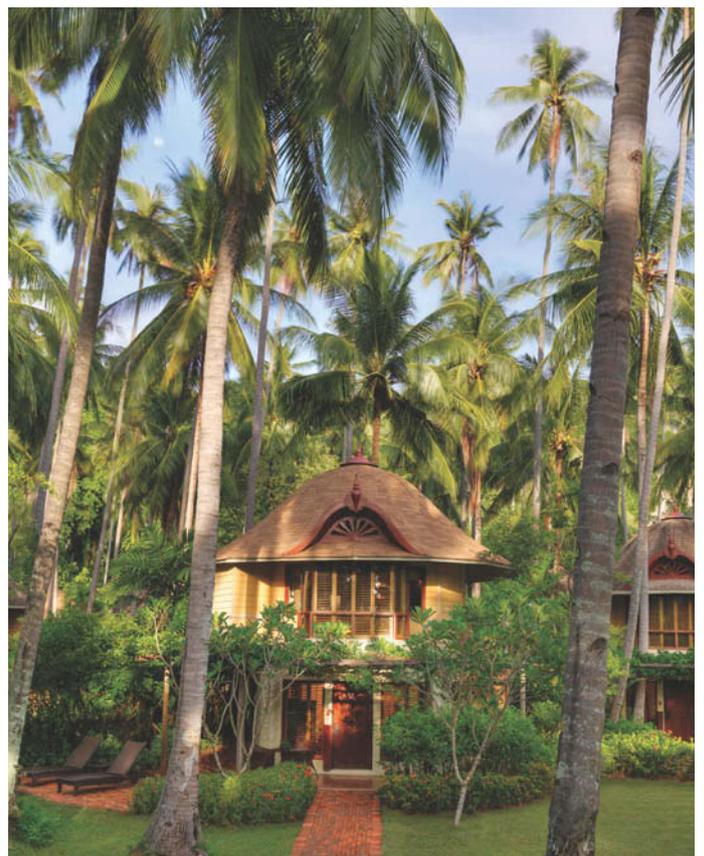
A popular beach destination on the Andaman Sea in southern Thailand, this coastal province has never ceased to impress tourists with its gorgeous white sandy beaches, crystal clear water, caves and stunning massive limestone karsts that rise vertically out of the flat rice paddies on land and from the sea. Being a newbie in this area, I decided to head away from the touristy spots and hide in the places which not only have amazing beaches, but also untouched nature. This search brought me to one of my most memorable stays, in a resort called Rayavadee.

Set on the edge of Krabi's National Marine Park at the heart of the Phranang Peninsula, Rayavadee is a little piece of hidden heaven on earth. The resort is filled with lush jungle foliage, austere yet majestic and gigantic limestone cliffs, and is surrounded by white sandy beaches and the emerald waters

of the Andaman Sea. It really is one of the most unique resorts that I have ever visited. Due to its strategic location Rayavadee has three beaches with Railay Phranang being the highlight.

The uniqueness of the natural surroundings is balanced by the great design of the resort's 98 two-storey pavilions, which have a distinctive, circular form. I stayed in the Terrace Pavilion that has a spacious outdoor terrace with an open and airy ground floor living area. It really feels like staying in a little hut on an island with all the modern day comforts. The study area, with its antique table by a big window overlooking the sea on the second floor, is without a doubt my favourite area. It is where you can imagine Rudyard Kipling finishing his chapters of *The Jungle Book*.

Rayavadee is a place where you can actually get busy doing a variety of things. Aside from 'lazing around' as an option, there are many other activities



The terrace pavilion in Rayavadee.

such as luxury speedboat rides, sea canoeing, snorkelling, wind surfing, climbing the limestone cliffs, exploring the surrounding beaches, enjoying scrumptious food from one of their four great restaurants. Or you can completely surrender to the handy masseurs at the spa, with their various treatments and massages.

For me, one of the most interesting discoveries was the Princess Cave on the east side of Railay Beach, that is still part of the resort. Known for its wonderful stalactites and stalagmites, the local fishermen believe that the cave is also the home of a mythical sea princess. The cave holds a shrine, with many people coming to pay their respects. This cave becomes more interesting with many oversize wooden phallic symbols displayed about the place, as the princess is also believed to grant not only fertility but also love to those who are still single. You can also find a massive limestone mini-island that you can visit when the tide is low.

Staying in Rayavadee is definitely a perfect option to be disconnected from the urban city life. There is no way to reach here without using a boat. Thus with this situation, you can really experience solid tranquility without any disturbances.

My stay at Rayavadee was so good that I literally had to pry myself away to get to the wedding; especially since 'yours truly' was supposed to give a speech to the newlyweds. Three days go fast when you are having such a great time, but it was time to give my fond farewells to the resort and continue my journey and to the nearby wedding.

Rayavadee
www.rayavadee.com

CHAPTER 2: HUA HIN

After the wedding, it was a long way back to Bangkok by boat, car and plane, and since it was my first trip to Thailand, I wanted to make the most of it. I



The salarai, or reflection pool, between the collonaded walkways at The Barai.

decided to take up an invitation from The Barai resort and continued my journey down to Hua Hin.

Located adjacent to Hyatt Regency in Hua Hin, The Barai is a luxurious 4.5-acre residential spa with a collection of spa suites and exotic treatment rooms, and is not your everyday spa resort. Being one of 70 Hyatt Pure spas in the world, The Barai experience offers you a journey where the art of architecture is the guest's guide. Designed by renowned Thai architect, Lek Bunnag of Bunnag Architects, The Barai is surrounded by a mysterious air, where sunlight flirts and dances with shadows, enticing your mind deeper on the inner sanctum of the spa itself.

Opened in 2007, this award-winning spa resort takes its name from the large, man-made reservoirs created by the ancient Khmers to channel irrigated water for use in their daily lives.

Through the design eyes of Lek Bunnag, this inspiring culture and history is interpreted into quite a journey. Long corridors in purplish-red hues with elongated shade of lights at the entrance are connected to another passage known as the 'Wall of Stars' – a waiting area that has cut-outs to capture light in constellation-like patterns. This leads to a stunning, open-air area with rectangular pool in the centre known as the 'Court of Tranquility'.

The corridor concept that is repeated in the spa design echoes the chanting concept in meditation. Water elements appear dramatically in the spa, and is used as subconscious therapy to cleanse the mind. From a design point of view, The Barai has a different feel in the daytime to that of the night, when the light and shadows give silent and subtle tones in a theatrical nuance that is simply not to be missed.



Barai's compress massage treatment.



The Barai Suite plunge pool.



McFarland House where guests can relax after long spa treatments at The Barai.

The elaborate design concept of the spa continues into the eight spa suites. I stayed in a spa suite on the ground floor featuring my own verandah and private plunge pool set in a lush tropical garden – a perfect place to be secluded from any urban disturbance.

Staying at The Barai also means that you get daily spa treatments that draw inspiration from the ancient traditional Thai health rituals. It is not only relaxing but also result oriented, especially if you have some muscle knots that you want released.

Being a resort inside a resort, The Barai is made in such way that your privacy is guaranteed. I was very impressed with the butler service and the resort's attention to details on what I like, dislike or am allergic to. Another good thing about staying at The Barai is that you can also enjoy all facilities at the nearby Hyatt Regency.

During my three-day stay, I didn't only feel rejuvenated from all those spa sessions, but also did some fun activities like sightseeing around Hua Hin city and taking a kick boxing class! Combine all of that with pristine white sandy beaches that stretch as far as your eyes can see, and it will surely make your holiday memorable. The Barai is definitely a resort where true holiday dreams come true.

The Barai Residential Spa
www.thebarai.com

Note: Congratulation to the newlyweds: Mr. and Mrs. Rune and Els Olsen, and baby Marcus!