

Beauty by the Beach, Anantara Resort and Spa Koh Phangan

I don't even know where to begin to describe our exceptional experience at Anantara Rasananda Koh Phangan Resort & Spa. They completely redefined the meaning of the word 'vacation'.

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WE were greeted on arrival by the friendly staff of the Anantara Resort & Spa in Koh Phangan. They

later ushered us into a speedboat to get to the resort. After the 40-minute ride, at the hotel we were given a very special welcome drink and a cold towel to freshen up a little. It seem like I was in "paradise" as I looked at the white sandy beach and the exterior leading up to the resort. Towering coconut palms, red umbrellas and red flags fluttering in the wind were the first few things that caught my eye.

We were then ushered into the lobby area where I noticed a lot of bright colours had been utilised to add to the charm of the hotel. The quirky shaped chairs and interesting lights were simply eye-catching. There were splashes of baby blue, lime green, grey and different tones of brown.

The resort is pretty much a prime location as it faces the Tong Nai Pan Noi beach. There are 64 villas and suites in the resort. I was told that if I return to the hotel during my next visit I would be offered discounts, a late checkout and an upgrade to the next site category ... and of course a discount on food and spa – my two most favourite things when I travel.

Next was the room ... it definitely did not disappoint us.



Main swimming pool overlooking ocean



Pool Suite bedroom

TYPES OF ROOMS

The lagoon pool suite was pretty romantic as it was secluded amongst the greenery of the resort. It occupies about 110 sq metres of living space and stands alone with a large wooden terrace and a sala with retractable doors for more privacy. A sala is an open pavilion which is usually used as a place to meet or to protect one from the sun and rain. It can also be used for an in-house massage.

The interior of the room has the signature colours of the resort – red. The red wall acts as a feature wall against the king size bed with pillows that come in white, dark grey, red and white. Lie on the bed and look up at the ceiling. The ceiling fan is really unique as it resembles huge dried leaves.

Be blown away as this suite comes with not only a traditional outdoor shower but also a rain shower. Other facilities in the room include a 32-inch LCD TV, home theatre system with DVD player, iPod dock, an espresso machine for coffee lovers, IDD telephone, WiFi access, individually controlled air-conditioning and not forgetting – a room bar with complimentary spirits of whisky, gin and vodka!

Besides this room category, Anantara Rasananda Resort & Spa has others that include the pool suite, garden pool suite, ocean pool suite, ocean garden pool suite, Thai pool villa and the ocean pool villa.

The pool suite, which is located on the second floor, overlooks the tropical landscape and the horizon. It is a spacious 80 square metre suite and it gives an intimate feeling. The suite has an outdoor plunge pool where guests can laze and enjoy their privacy. For guests who want something more extravagant, the fabulous ocean pool villas will be the right choice. With 220sq metres of indoor and outdoor space, this villa has its own large terrazzo tub. The bedroom overlooks the calm blue sea. An open air bathroom, a garden

courtyard, a beach front plunge pool situated on a wooden terrace and a tropical sala are the facilities offered for the perfect trip. The garden pool suite and the ocean garden pool suite have their own private garden surroundings with high walls and ancient wooden gate, each measuring 90sq metres and 200sq metres respectively. The Thai pool villa and ocean pool suite on the other hand, sit on an area of 180sq metres and

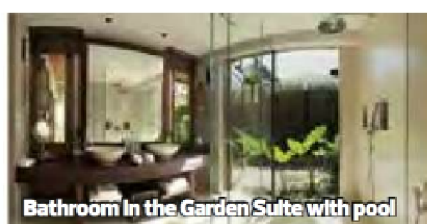
80sq metres.

WHAT'S COOKING AT THE RESORT?

I had my meals at The Bistro at the Beach which serves Thai and grilled seafood. The Bistro has chairs around the restaurant as well as some placed on the soft white sand. The food is cooked using local techniques and infused with Michelin trends. Here, you can get your breakfast from 6.30am until 10.30am. The Bistro serves lunch from 11.30am right up to 5.30pm and dinner time is from 5.30pm until 10.30pm.

If you are looking for some privacy and lighter snacks, the resort also has in-villa dining (room service). Another option for light snacks and cocktails is the Edge2O which is open from 10.30am to 11.00pm.

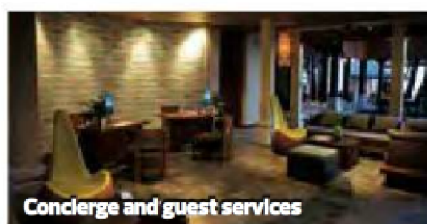
During one of my nights there we managed to experience the resort's "Dining by Design". This is said to be the ultimate dining experience where your meals are



Bathroom in the Garden Suite with pool



View from the villa



Concierge and guest services



Dining by Design

personalised by the staff and you get to enjoy a romantic and private area on the beachfront with a choice of chef-designed menus. Not only that, if you'd like to make it more memorable, you can request for matching wines delivered during a specific time of your meal which will be accompanied by some entertainment.

FACILITIES

During the day, other than indulging yourself at the spa or swimming at the beachfront infinity pool, attending yoga classes or attending fruit carving class, you can also partake in lots of other activities at the resort. These include snorkelling, riding an elephant and trekking through the forest, touring the island and even kayaking. Or, you can indulge in something different by booking the private yacht, Minor Affair. The yacht, which is 20m in length and fits up to 12 people, also has sunbathing and swimming facilities. While sailing on it you get a chance to explore the nearby islands ... at your own pace.

There are also various other attractions for guests to learn more about the culture and history of Koh Phangan and Thailand. Visit the Wat Koh Tham temple, Wat Nai temple, Kuan Yin shrine or the Ang Thong Marine park.

Meeting rooms are also available and if you are planning to have a beach wedding, this is also possible at the resort. An in-house wedding coordinator is ready to help you with your plans.

Stylish interior, glamorous atmosphere, comfortable beds, delicious food, friendliest staff, scrumptious cocktails and gorgeous sunsets. There are just so many things in Anantara Rasananda Koh Phangan that make the world of difference. I can't list them in one review. Highly recommend to stay in this wondrous hotel. **F**