

# THAILAND:

## WHERE ADVENTURE MEETS LUXURY

TONI KRASICKI FINDS A BALANCE BETWEEN SATISFYING HER NEED FOR ADRENALIN-INDUCING ACTIVITIES AND HER LOVE FOR LUXURY.



### ADVENTURE ACTIVITIES OFFERED AT THE SAROJIN

- Extreme trekking adventure
- Snorkelling or scuba diving in the Similan and Surin Island marine parks
- Sea cave and jungle canoeing
- White water or bamboo rafting
- Mountain biking
- Elephant safaris

NB: Available activities will vary.

The writer flew to Phuket courtesy of Air Australia and was a guest of Rayavadee and The Sarojin ([www.sarojin.com](http://www.sarojin.com))

**THE INVOLUNTARY** leg shake has kicked in and I'm 25 metres above sea level. Feeling more like a gecko on the wall of my pavilion than a rock climber, I am stuck with nowhere to go. Nut, my climbing guide from 'Hot Rock Climbing School', shouts up from ground level telling me to lift my left leg three inches higher and to grab hold of the rock horn to my right. Easier said than done but I manage to get my nerves under control and make the final five metres, slapping the top bolt and taking in the panoramic view splayed out behind me.

Phra Nang Beach on the peninsula of the same name in Southern Thailand's Krabi is about two hours drive and a short boat ride from Phuket Airport. Apart from island hopping and

swimming at the popular Phra Nang and West Railay beach, rock climbing is the obvious activity choice. Walk a few metres in any direction and you can't fail to notice the towering limestone cliffs – nature's skyscrapers – awaiting exploration. Although isolated, i.e., only accessible by boat, the peninsula is a magnet for tourists.

We turn up at a popular climbing area looking over Nam Mao Beach and I am reminded of Sydney's crowded surf breaks but with none of the angst. A Canadian climber chats to me about how chilled climbing is in Krabi and although it's busy, she can't believe fellow climbers are so easygoing and accommodating to one another. I put it down to the laid-back Thai culture and the holiday spirit!

I bid farewell to Nut and enter another realm less than two-minutes away. Having always associated

luxurious lodgings with sipping cocktails by the pool and sunset beach strolls, there's something quite unique about rolling back in to swanky digs after hitting an adventure high. The plush and relaxing surrounds calm my jelly legs quicker than the arrival of my mango daiquiri.

Securing a prime spot on the peninsula, the exceptional Rayavadee Resort manages to delicately place 115 lavish pavilions within 26 acres of lush foliage and karst peaks, creating a hideaway from the boatloads of daily beach visitors. My Spa Pavilion has two spa baths and two showers and I can't decide which one to use to wash off the day's activities. Nor can I choose between the three dining options.

An extreme trek sounds too good to pass up, so I switch digs to The Sarojin Boutique Resort in Khao Lak, two hours directly north of Phuket. Although not

as visually dramatic as Krabi, Khao Lak has the appeal of solitude. A great alternative to the busy resort towns on Phuket, Khao Lak's endless white sandy beaches need not be shared with many.

The Sarojin is delightful and I instantly feel at home. The vibe is definitely more chilled and although all of the 56 residences are occupied I don't see a lot of guests about.

You can't help but notice the man in the safari suit. Staff member, Dawid Koegelenberg speaks animatedly about his two passions; wine and his job as Sarojin's Imagineer. He explains it best as an engineer of the imagination. I'm not sure what he was thinking when he designed the 'Extreme Trekking' excursion that has us using a river and a ravine as a pathway through the jungle. As shoes slip on moss covered boulders, it's almost easier to wade through chest deep waterways,

tentatively putting one foot in front of the other and trying to avoid getting a foot stuck in a crevice.

It's very technical; scrambling, sliding, rope climbing, balancing, swimming. We are told that the last group through here had come face-to-face with a king cobra, but luckily we miss out today. What we don't miss out on are the relentless leeches that miraculously materialise on any part of our bodies during the bushwalk back to the car.

Thanks to Dawid and activities manager, Dan, pretty much any activity you want to do can be arranged.

And, of course, the best way to top off a great adrenalin-fuelled day is to soothe away aches and pains with a rejuvenating spa treatment. Both resorts have an extensive spa menu and I guarantee you'll be reaching for it before the cocktail list.

### ADVENTURE ACTIVITIES OFFERED AT RAYVADEE

- Rock climbing
  - Snorkelling or scuba diving at Phi Phi Island
  - Strenuous nature hiking
  - Khao Sok jungle adventure
  - Kayaking through mangrove forests, canyons and lagoons
  - Snorkelling and sea kayaking around small islands in Phang Nga Bay
- Find out more at [www.rayavadee.com](http://www.rayavadee.com)

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