

THE MANGOSTEEN RESORT & AYURVEDA SPA, Rawai, Phuket – Feb 2017

Have you ever wondered what it would be like to find yourself lying on a sunbed, overlooking the canopy of tropical plants and private thatched villas; looking out across a crystal-clear infinity pool, set within a backdrop of an idyllic aqua blue ocean; the sound of trickling water from nearby fountains..... drinking a *pina colada* and engrossed in your favourite book?

Sounds too good to be true? Well wonder no more. You could be indulging in this relaxing, luxurious, tranquil lifestyle during your stay at *The Mangosteen Resort & Ayurveda Spa*.

Arriving at Phuket Airport, we were met by a local Taxi Driver who fulfilled our pre-booked request to take us the 60minute drive through the chaotic streets of Phuket to Rawai at the south end of the island. Due to a 12-year bureaucratic wait to have the laneway road leading to the entrance of the Resort, upgraded and repaired, we initially wondered what we were coming to. Our fears were dispelled when we hit the bitumen of the Resort estate, drove up the incline and arrived at the welcoming entrance, only to be greeted by a friendly, polite Porter who took our luggage and referred us to the staff at Reception.

We had taken advantage of the 7 nights Groupon Voucher (Superior Garden Villa) and extended it by an additional 3 days in a Superior Jacuzzi Villa. (I highly recommend extending your stay and booking the Superior Garden Villa as it was much larger than the Jacuzzi Villa and suited our needs better. 'Villa 110' – just be prepared for steps and inclines)

The voucher included so many additional bonus features, not to mention the informative Membership Presentation. Richard, one of several PR Representatives was incredibly friendly, welcoming, instructive and helpful as he shared the history of the Resort, special places/events/landmarks/tours to visit, and genuinely made us feel like VIPs. He outlined the Resort Membership with clarity, knowledge, humour and company pride and we could easily see why it would have been great to take up this beneficial Membership. Despite us not being able to facilitate this amazing offer at this time in our lives, Richard continued to treat us in the same manner as if we had signed up there and then. Through an informal, respectful and laid-back but professional approach, Richard made our stay extra special; showing a genuine interest in our daily experiences and encouraging us in new ventures to explore.

The Owner who chatted with us over breakfast, welcomed us to the Resort and engaged in meaningful conversation, which would be rare to find in many other high caliber resorts. We found that the friendly, open precedent set by Management, actually filters down to the staff and even the guests. We have never been to a Resort where multi-cultural guests were so interactive, warm and friendly, but at the same time respected each other's privacy and need for solitude if and when desired! I think there is a direct correlation between the example set by upper Management and the resulting effect on the guests.

Creating a luxury 'Boutique' style Resort, The Mangosteen provides a more intimate, inclusive environment in which to indulge the senses and soak up the healing properties of sun, rest, massage, spa and not forgetting the amazing food. I can highly recommend the special Thai Food Lovers (Monday Night), & Asian Banquet Night (Thursday night) Combination. The Chefs are amazing and we enjoyed numerous meals in the resort as well as venturing to nearby venues to taste the local produce. Unlike some other popular countries to visit, the local produce in Phuket is safe, enjoyable and well worth experimenting with.

Another notable, worthwhile trip was paying 1000 THB to visit the indoor Phuket markets – fascinating! Make sure you venture to the back to see all the meat/fruit/vegetable/sweet stalls – unforgettable and very different! (Phuket lacks nick-nack local souvenirs to take back to friends and family who want more than a sarong!)

The shuttle bus which runs three times a day to nearby Nai Harn Beach, proved highly advantageous. You can take the shuttle bus in, and then on the way back, be dropped at the bottom of the lane in order to explore the local street stalls, shops and restaurants. Just be prepared for a hike back up the hill with your torch! It is worth it though, especially in the cool of the evening. I have a bad back and managed it fine – slow and steady! You can always recover with a swim, spa and massage the next day....or even a session in the onsite gym.

A highlight of our stay was the pre-booked *John Grey Sea Kayak Tour* which was excellent and well worth the money. If you can survive the drive back up to the north end of the island, through the traffic, then you will be rewarded with hours of tranquil relaxation in the most magnificent setting of 160 islands, beautiful waters, open caves (hongs) and the friendliest, skilled kayak operators around. The meals onboard the large boat were outstanding; delicious, beautifully presented, and commendation goes to the chef who prepared a large feast on primitive, basic equipment. (I will never complain about the size of my kitchen ever again!...no excuses!) For your comfort, take hand sanitiser with you for this trip as well as cool wet-wipes and sunscreen! All that is required is to lie back in a stable, comfortable kayak, listen to the sounds of water and birds, watch the monkeys on nearby beaches, embrace the cave experience, glean local knowledge from your kayak expert and enjoy the fun on board. Health, Safety and Hygiene are informatively covered and all you have to do is sit back and enjoy! For those more energetic, opportunity is given to paddle your own kayak and explore the surroundings, have a swim, take in the sights and then return to the boat at the sound of the horn! Such a fantastic, memorable, lifetime experience!

Things to note:

- Mid/late February was a fantastic time to visit Phuket
- The Mangosteen:
 - All documentation, paperwork, accounts, emails and correspondence were done to the highest standard which alleviated concerns and worries about booking online. Thanks David – your service was excellent in this regard. (Not surprising! You're a Scot!)
 - Adult Resort (Quiet and Relaxed): not geared for children
 - Steps and inclines require consideration. Ramps are available in some areas of the resort (Discuss this with administration prior to booking)
 - Membership Presentation is compulsory when using a voucher or Escapes Offer – worth listening to and considering (Relaxed and Open)
 - Resort food is excellent, romantic and worth paying for
 - Check that your Jacuzzi works when first allocated the villa and inform Reception immediately
- Beaches: Nai Harn Beach is excellent, beautiful and safe
 - You can hire padded mats and a shade umbrella for around 200 THB each time you frequent the beach (saves becoming a lobster!)
 - Nai Harn has great little eating places on the beachside – *Mamma's* was a favourite for traditional Thai food (also western available)
 - Worth a visit: walk towards the large White hotel of Nai Harn Beach, hire a taxi to take you over the hill (or enjoy an uphill walk) which takes you to a small rock cove for snorkeling and sunbathing...Great eating place right on the beach front!
 - For Brits etc: You are going to a tropical country so expect wildlife and insects (not nearly as bad as ours in Australia)
- Local taxis are very good and eager to get your business – watch the price
- Local food is well worth partaking of
- Suncream is expensive so take plenty with you (Just don't put it in your hand luggage on the way home – it will be poured out at customs!!!)

Hope this review inspires travelers to consider such a wonderful place in which to spend a portion of their life...even if it is just for a short vacation!

I Googled the words "Quite"; "Tranquil", "Romantic", "Luxury"...and that's exactly what we got!

Thank you Mangosteen Resort for looking after us soooooo well! We hope to be back again to de-stress, re-evaluate, re-focus and rejuvenate!

Les and Mandy Forwell

Scots from Auz