



KRABI'S UNKNOWN ISLAND OF KOH JUM AWAITS

A Remote Retreat

📍 Alana Morgan

KOH LANTA, KOH PHI PHI, KOH JUM.

Chances are you've heard of the first two islands in Thailand's Krabi province but even when speaking with locals, the mention of Koh Jum often draws a blank.

While the region's otherworldly turquoise waters and world-renowned sites like Maya Bay or Railay Beach have been on the tourist trail for decades, Koh Jum has managed to stay out of the spotlight even though it's just 30 minutes by boat from the mainland.

The fact that Koh Jum hasn't been overvisited like its neighbours is actually its greatest charm. It also means the island is not for everyone. If you're looking to spend your holiday in full-on resort mode, you're better off sticking to Phuket and Koh Samui. If you're in need of a quiet getaway, however, surrounded by nature and satisfied simply reading a book on the slightly rocky but deliciously deserted beach, you're in luck.

Life always moves slower on the islands, but languid Koh Jum offers an even more laid-back pace. Here, one's schedule tends to follow a natural rhythm, rising with the sun and retiring to bed soon after it sets...there's not much to do on the island after dark anyway. Instead of catering to tourists, the Muslim and Thai-Chinese locals tend to continue about their daily lives as they have for decades. Guests are welcome, but visitors haven't interrupted the island's local culture or routines.

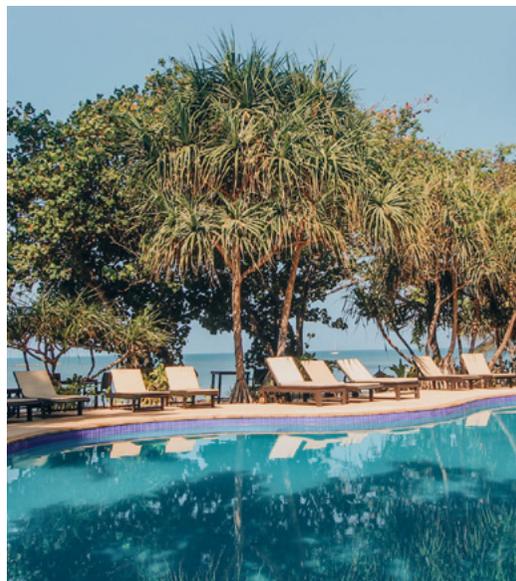
Koh Jum technically refers to the island's southern half while a different name, Koh Pu, refers to the northern part of the island including the 422-metre-tall peak, Khao Koh Pu. Though large enough to spend the day exploring by bicycle or motorbike, much of the island remains undeveloped with rubber plantations covering the interior and only one town on the island's southeast corner. For those in need of some adventure, guides can take you kayaking through mangroves or trekking up to the top of the mountain but beyond venturing out on an island-hopping day-trip, there's little in the way of excursions.

The lack of development and offerings (there aren't any ATMs or Thailand's ubiquitous 7-Elevens on the island) is pleasantly refreshing, however, as is the fact that the few visitors who do know about this hidden gem tend to return again and again. It's not uncommon to meet other travellers who've been returning to Koh Jum for



decades and appreciate that the island has held on to its core sense of self. Those who were lucky to experience the Thai isles before the days of mass tourism say Koh Jum is reminiscent of what other island hotspots were like 20 to 30 years ago.

The island's only high-end accommodation is the aptly-named **Koh Jum Beach Villas** (secret-retreats.com/kohjumvillas). Though by far the grandest property on the island, Koh Jum Beach Villas offers a unique luxury experience with a local, eco-friendly approach. The property's owners truly walk the sustainable walk rather than simply not laundering towels every day and calling it "eco-friendly." Situated along a 700-metre stretch of Golden Pearl Beach on Koh Jum's



care, trust and attention to detail is evident from the fresh plumeria blossoms on one's pillow to the fact that the villas don't lock from the outside – everyone trusts and looks out for one another. (Safes are available.)

From within this surprising sanctuary, and Koh Jum as a whole, couples desiring an intimate escape and families looking for a safe, welcoming space to host all the generations, will find a secret paradise.

WHERE TO EAT

Along with decent restaurants at the island's more established accommodations, Koh Jum has a few eateries where longtime residents go again and again.

Koh Jum Seafood (facebook.com/kohjumseafood) is known for its plates of fresh, Thai-style seafood served on a wooden pier looking out over mangroves. **Rim Tang Cooking School & Restaurant** (rimtang.simplesite.com) serves standard, tasty Thai fare and closes to the public when guests are interested in doing private cooking lessons. For beachy vibes, **Rock View Terrace** (rock-view-terrace.com) is one of the best spots to savour both the food and sunset views from its raised veranda.

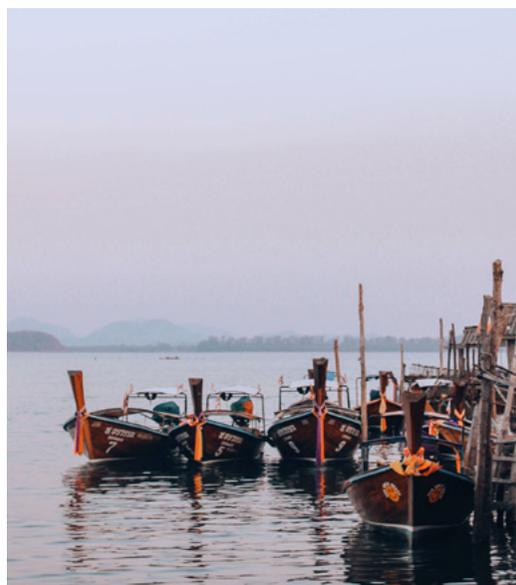
GETTING THERE

The closest airport to Koh Jum is Krabi International Airport from which you can get



west coast, the hideaway offers 18 spacious standalone villas ranging from one to five bedrooms nestled in naturally lush enclaves. Along with open-plan designs that optimise airflow and make air-conditioning unnecessary, the villas also feature glass bottled drinking water filtered on site, recycling and compost bins, and reusable bottles and bags that guests can use while on the island in lieu of plastic water bottles or shopping bags.

Koh Jum Beach Villas' sustainability efforts also extend to properly managing waste, maintaining an impressive garden and supporting the local community as the island's largest employer that also offers fair wages, benefits and the added security of staying open all year round. The sense of

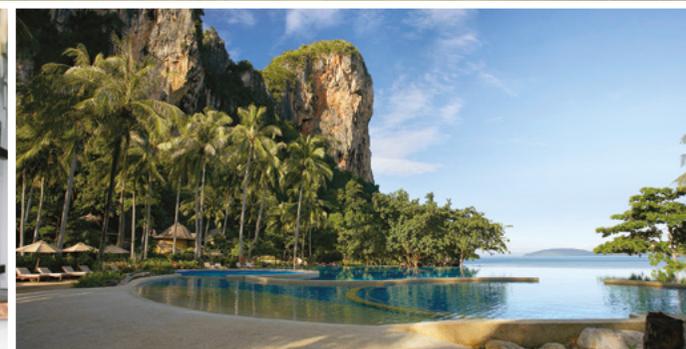


a taxi or shuttle to Krabi Town or another pier. The easiest way to get to the island is by booking a private transfer, including taxi and boat, through your chosen accommodation. For those wanting to go the public route, still check with your hotel to ensure you receive current timetables and locations for the group longtails and ferries. Along with Krabi's mainland, it's possible to organise transportation to/from other nearby islands including Koh Phi Phi, Koh Lanta and Koh Sriboya.

Note: Most Koh Jum accommodations close between May and October during the rainy season. (Koh Jum Beach Villas is open all year.) During the high season from mid-December to mid-January, book early and expect room rates to rise.

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