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Phuket is Festival Island by Lek Boonlert

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It is fun and festive but the drawback is that in a tourist mecca such as Phuket, which is already expensive by normal Thai standards â€“ it is the wealthiest province in the country â€“ room prices in Phuket hotels tend to go absolutely through the roof and often, prices are out of the budget of travelers except those who have come with very full wallets.

And if price is not enough of a discouragement, the chance of finding a room in a typical Phuket hotel during festival time without a prior booking is next to nil. Many people have to head to some of the less popular areas of Phuket to find a place to stay and the digs that they do find are often particularly less than comfortable and because taxi, songthaew and motorbike taxi prices in Phuket are so expensive, the slightly cheaper room price is offset by endless transfers back and forth to the party areas.

Speaking of party areas, it is the main beach resort of Patong that is the main focus of activity during festiuvals such as Chinese New Year, Loy Kratong and Songkran. Forget finding a square inch on the beaches of Patong during Christmas and New Year, when tourists from the northern hemisphere flock here in their tens of thousands to take their annual holidays and escape the chill of their home country.

But despite the high prices and crowds, Phuket during festival time can be an absolute joy because the mood is so high and the cheer in the air is very, very tangible. People squirt water at each other and paint their faces with chalk during Songkran, and the lighting of flying lanterns during Thai New Year is something that many first time visitors will describe as one of the all time highlights of their life of traveling experiences.

Chinese New Year is the peak festival. Do not, under any circumstances, travel to Phuket during this festival without a prior booking in a hotel or various other arrangements. Also, if crowds and noise are not your thing, do not come to the island of Phuket at this time at all. Likewise, the western New Year is a time where standing room only applies to every part of Phuket.

Sports festivals and the Phuket Vegetarian Festival are more sedate affairs and they can often offer a less commercial and certainly, a far less crowded experience than they mayhem that accompanies the craziness of the other major Phuket festivals. Otherwise, come to Phuket at any time and take the chance that a major festival wonâ€™t be taking place if you do not want all the mental atmosphere that will come with it.

Regular visitors to Phuket will tell new comers that the island is like an ongoing, annual festival with all kinds of festivities and events taking place in one form or another every week and weekend of the year. Prices in hotels are cheaper during these periods and the crowds are lower â€“ the island will seem like a private kind of retreat.

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