



THIS PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Tong sai Bay's newly refurbished villas boast stunning views and their own pool; The Source offers a range of detox programmes; Toning up at Absolute Sanctuary



panoramic sea views, a private beach and a stunning spa where the pampering options and treatments are almost impossible to resist and, arguably best of all, the resort's restaurant, Dining on the Hill, where diners can feast on spectacular Thai cuisine in an open-air pavilion with a stunning sea view.

Equally luxurious is the charming **Tong sai Bay** (tongsaibay.co.th), a five-star, family-run resort located just 10 minutes' drive from the airport yet set within 28-acre lush tropical gardens on a hillside that winds down to a serene private cove.

With an emphasis on guests being as close to nature as possible, the 83 suites, cottages and villas incorporate spacious terraces with an outdoor bathtub, dining area, sun lounger and gazebo.

A luxurious fit-out makes it tempting to do as little as possible but there are numerous reasons to peel yourself from the sun lounger and do more than simply fly and flop. Activities on offer include tennis, kayaking, windsurfing and snorkelling. Guests can also partake, for a small additional cost, in regular Thai cooking classes, which are held twice a week.

With a staff ratio of three to each guest room, the service is, needless to say, impeccable. Little wonder, then, that visitors — which run the gamut from honeymooners and couples to retirees, families and groups of friends — often return for a second stay.

Prices start from 10,000B (€280) for a suite, while cottages and villas are priced from 16,000B (€450) and 19,000B (€535) respectively. The latter are particularly luxurious, featuring their own private pool and sun deck, making them ideal for a romantic getaway or a special occasion.

HEALTH & FITNESS

While many travellers head to Samui for hedonism, there are plenty who make the trek to enjoy the various health facilities the island has to offer. Yoga is a major draw here, with just about every variety — hot, ashtanga, vinyasa, yin yan — available in various locations.



Absolute Sanctuary (absolutesanctuary.com) boasts the smartest yoga studio on the island — a state-of-the-art facility with sea and jungle views respectively — and offers as many as five classes a day. Visitors can select from a number of different packages, including drop-in class, 10-class pass or two-week unlimited pass.

The resort also runs daily pilates classes in a designated studio. Again, visitors can pay per class (1,200B/€34) or purchase a 10-class card (9,500B/€268), which is valid for two months. For the pilates devotee, however, the resort runs a popular Pilates Reformer Bootcamp holiday, which is available for both five and seven days and priced from 54,000B (€1,520).

An all-inclusive package, the Bootcamp holiday includes two group reformer packages a day, as well as a postural analysis and individual one-to-one private reformer sessions. The price also covers all of Absolute Sanctuary's signature offerings, such as a wellness consultation, three spa cuisine meals a day at the Love Kitchen restaurant, soothing massages and scheduled group fitness classes.

DETOX WITH A DIFFERENCE

Looking to boost your wellbeing while on holiday? You're in luck. Samui is home to an ever-growing number of wellness spas and detox centres. Our favourite, however, is **The Source** (thesourcesamui.com; Tel: +66 (0)77 953 163) in Lamai.

Run by an affable Dubliner, Ivor Fitzpatrick, it offers a selection of herbal detox and

weight-loss programmes (from 9,500 B) of seven, 14, 21 or 28-day duration, and which can be completed during a stay on Samui or, equally, on the hoof. The formulas, which are 100% natural and organic and have been created by a Master Herbalist, are potent and incredibly effective in both restoring health — benefits include cleansing and detoxing the whole body, elimination of Candida, parasites and bad bacteria, and rejuvenation of the organs — and promoting weight loss naturally, as well as helping reduce the likelihood of future health problems.

Taken morning and night, the set of formulas (syrups, capsules and tinctures) tastes great and you can choose what to eat each day from the prescribed healthy foods/juices list. The programmes are reassuringly simple to follow, too, allowing you to go about your day as normal without any side-effects and with good energy levels.

If weight-loss or wellness hold little appeal, The Source is well worth a visit simply to sample some of their famed fresh juices, which are arguably the finest on the island. Our recommendation? The mango and fresh coconut probiotic smoothie. **TM**

FACTFILE

GETTING THERE: Koh Samui is an hour's flight from Bangkok. At least 20 flights are available each day.

CURRENCY: The Thai Baht is the currency of Thailand. The exchange rate fluctuates often but is currently approximately ฿1 = 35 Baht.

NEED-TO-KNOW: Visas are available on arrival for a stay of up to 30 days.

Weather is sunny for most of the year, even during the rainy season, which runs from October to late December.

The best-dressed woman on any given train, boat or pavement is probably a ladyboy.