



### Cheeky Monkeys

Review by Peter Myers



Anantara Resort & Spa Koh Samui is the latest tropical retreat to open its beach-side doors from the team who bought us the Anantara Resort & Spa's in Hua Hin and the Golden Triangle.

A mere 10-minute hop from Samui airport (and a very comfortable one in the saloon pick-up), as soon as one enters the driveway of the new Anantara Koh Samui, the unmistakable extravagance of Bill Bensley's landscape design is apparent. *Flintstone*-esque orange sandstone walls surround über-tropical gardens. Cross a Thai-style moat on a very narrow drawbridge (which I crossed with a little trepidation on the jeep I subsequently hired for further Samui exploration), and you will come face to primate face with three cheeky looking, coconut-yielding monkeys which play a recurrent theme throughout the resort.

Sashay through the lobby and a spectacular vista is revealed: a long, rectangular decorative waterway (torchère-lit dramatically at night), surrounded by manicured lawns, towered over by palms, terminating at the Full Moon Italian restaurant, sheltered by a humungous, contemporary Thai *sala* cantilevered over the pool, with front view seats to the ocean ahead, and a few kilometres beyond, the island of Pha Ngan.

Between ocean and *sala* lies a curvaceous, 30-metre, pentagonal infinity pool and, beyond that, a particularly pleasant public beach. At one end of the pool, a swim-up bar is popular with role-playing kids by day, and with adults for sundowners. Even swimming laps is far from dull here: colourful fish decorate the floor; and as you perpendicularly bisect the pool in a powering front crawl, every time you take a breath, another of those saucy monkeys fill your vision. Beachside and poolside are equally popular here; the sea was an idyllic, refreshing temperature (far cooler than the usual warm bath

*Left: Three jars of fighting fish are placed in every guest room.  
Right: The view from the balcony.*

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temperature) during this writer's stay in late January, and I found myself returning to it at every opportunity - cementing my opinion that it makes such a difference for a resort to offer a swim-friendly stretch of sea.

Run-of-house rooms here are not as flamboyant as the sister property in Hua Hin, but boast an interesting raised wooden platform effect for the base-less bed. Cosy, angled balconies offer uninterrupted views of waterway or pool and beach. Proper plunger coffee and milk is freely available, which is a boon and reflects that a hotel is civilised enough to realise most of their patrons find instant coffee far from palatable. The signature spacious Anantara bath with cute, ethnic style bath rack is also most inviting, although bath salts are strangely not offered on a complimentary basis.

The spa at Anantara has incurred a significant design development from other properties, and the courtyard style high, lotus-purple walls and chic fittings create a unique, minimalistic, hip yet inherently Asian feel. A huge menu shows that Ayurvedic treatments play a big part here. There are also several treatments based around the steam room, which is good to see, yet sadly the gym does not have a steam room attached. There is a table tennis table outside the well-stocked gym, with enough playing room as to make one believe they are in a pro competition. Three games on this in the midday sun and one is more than ready for another dip in the sea. 🏊



**Anantara Resort & Spa Koh Samui**

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